



Eid-ul-Adha:

Going with local moon sighting or with Hajj Schedule?

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Introduction

Muslims of USA and Canada once again spend their Eid in the midst of the controversy-how to determine the day of Eid. The bottom line of the problem are two contradictory points of view:

1. Muslims all around the world have to determine the day of Eid-ul-dha according to the Pilgrimage announcement in Makkah. Unlike the month of Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr which are decided in accordance with the local moon sighting.
2. Muslims in various parts of the world should celebrate Eid-ul-Adha on the 10th of the month of Zulhijjah as per their local moon sighting irrespective of the day of Pilgrimage, as they do for the month of Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr

Now, being absolutely unbiased, dissociating ourselves from our 'back home' practice and being sincere to Allah and Islam we have to find out which of these two opinions is more valid and authentic in terms of evidences of Shari and preferable over the other. This can be done by going over the commandments of the Holy Qur'an, Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh), Life of prophet (pbuh), practice of the companions, opinions of Jurists, Consensus of scholars, and taking into consideration other historical, geographical and practical factors involved.

As far as Pilgrimage and Eid-ul-Adha are concerned, it is agreed upon that they are to be celebrated on 9th and 10th of the month of Zulhijjah respectively, just as it is agreed upon that Eid-ul-Fitr is on the 1st of the month of Shawwal. The point we need to clarify is whether the Islamic Law requires Muslims to find out which day the Pilgrimage is announced in Makkah and then declare their Eid-ul-Adha on the same day, no matter if they are living around Makkah or far away like Europe, America or India. To become more specific we need the evidence from the Islamic Law to ignore the local moon sighting on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha and follow the day announced for Pilgrimage in Makkah.

The Qur'an

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ¹
It is He Who made the sun to be a shining glory and the moon to be a light (of beauty), and measured out stages for her; that ye might know the number of years and the count (of time).

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلِ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ-²
They ask you concerning the new moon. Say: They are times appointed for (the benefit of) people, and (for) the pilgrimage.

Both these verses guide us that we need to use moons to determine various timed events in our life. These verses definitely do not give us any clue that Muslims all around the world find out the dates of Pilgrimage announced in Makkah and then determine Eid-ul-Adha accordingly, ignoring their local moon-sighting. No commentator of the Qur'an, modern or classical, has derived any command like that. On the other hand a well known commentator of the Qur'an *Ibn Jarir al-Tabari* makes it clear in his commentary of the above mentioned verse (verse # 189 of chapter:Al-Baqarah) that determination of our sacrifice day is not different from the determination of other days like days of fasting, Eid-ul-Fitr or Pilgrimage. And I quote the exact wordings of Tabari:

حَدَّثَنَا الْحَسَنُ بْنُ يَحْيَى ، قَالَ : أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ ، قَالَ : أَخْبَرَنَا مَعْمَرٌ ، عَنْ قَتَادَةَ فِي قَوْلِهِ : { مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ } قَالَ : هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي حَجِّهِمْ وَصَوْمِهِمْ وَفِطْرِهِمْ وَنُسُكِهِمْ³

Hasan bin Yahya told us that Abdur Razzaq reported to us that Ma'mar reported on the authority of Qatadah that the Qur'anic verse "مواقيت للناس و الحج" means that the events like the Pilgrimage, fasting, Eid-ul-Fitr and Sacrifice are determined by the moon-sighting.

What Ibn-Jarir Tabari, who is one of the greatest commentators of the Qur'an, tells us is that we determine our Eid-ul-Fitr and Ramadan the way we determine the time of sacrifice-by looking at the moon and not by calling Makkah to find out the day of Arafah.

We need to keep in mind that commentary of the Qur'an by Tabari is the most authentic and widely appreciated book from among the classical commentaries of the Qur'an. The opinion of scholars about this book is very clear:

"كان تفسيره من أجل التفاسير بالمأثور و أصحها وأجمعها"⁴

His commentary is among the greatest traditional commentaries, and it's the most perfect and comprehensive one.

¹ سورة يونس آية 5

² Al-Baqarah:189

³ Tafseer Tabari. Al-Baqarah:189

⁴ مناهل العرفان في علوم القرآن للزرقاني ص 281، نشره دارالكتب العلمية بيروت 2003 م

Therefore we do not find any text of the Holy Qura'n or any reference in its exegesis that indicates an obligation for Muslims from around the world to accept the day announced for Pilgrimage and thus determine Eid-ul-Adha on the next day.

The Way of the Prophet (pbuh)

Next we need to look into the way of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his life. We do not see any evidence to link Eid-ul-Adha with Hajj or Arafah because Eid-ul-Adha (and Eid ul Fitr) was started by the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) in the first year of Hijra, while Hajj was not made obligatory for the Ummah of Muhammad (pbuh) until 9th or 10th year of Hijra.

"شرعت صلاة العيد سنة الأولى من الهجرة"⁵
Eid Prayer was started in the first year of Hijra"

This was when the Messenger of Allah migrated to Madinah, he found people celebrating two days every year. This is clear from the following tradition:

“عن أنس بن مالك قال كان لأهل الجاهلية يومان في كل سنة يلعبون فيهما فلما قدم النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم المدينة قال كان لكم يومان تلعبون فيهما وقد أبدلكم الله بهما خيراً منهما يوم الفطر ويوم الأضحى” - سنن النسائي

On the authority of Anas ibn Malik that in pre-Islamic period people (in Madina) used to celebrate two days every year. When Prophet (pbuh) came to Madina he said, "you used to have two days to celebrate, Allah has replaced the two days with better two days: the day of Fitr and the day of Adha."⁶

This is also confirmed by the following tradition.

"قدم النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم المدينة ولأهل المدينة يومان يلعبون فيهما بالجاهلية ، فقال : قدمت عليكم ولكم يومان تلعبون فيهما في الجاهلية ، وقد أبدلكم الله خيراً منهما : يوم النحر ، ويوم الفطر" ، سنن البيهقي الكبرى

When Messenger of Allah (pbuh) came to Madinah, people in Madinah had two days to celebrate since pre-Islamic period. The Messenger of Allah told them, "Allah has replaced the two days with better two days: the day of Fitr and the day of Sacrifice"⁷

This practice of Eid prayer and sacrifice was continued by the Messenger of Allah for the rest of his life, as the following Traditions makes it clear:

"عن ابن عمر ، قال : أقام رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بالمدينة عشر سنين يضحي"
مسند أحمد⁸

⁵ الفقه الإسلامى وأدلته للدكتور وهبة الزحيلي، ج 2، ص 362

⁶ Sunani Nisai Hadith # 1538

⁷ Sunani Baihaqee.

⁸ Musnad Ahmad, Hadith # 4935

Ibn-Omar narrates that Messenger of Allah (pbuh) lived in Madinah for ten years and during all these years he had been doing sacrifice.

Kindly note that,when Eid-ul-Adha and Qurbani was being made by the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) there was no Hajj. Hajj became obligatory several years after the Eid. The first Qura'nic verse that was revealed about Hajj was after six years of Hijra. Hajj was made obligatory with all its rituals in 9th year of Hijra.

"ورجح ابن القيم أن افتراض الحج كان سنة تسعة أو عشر"⁹
And Ibn-Qayyam preferred the opinion that Hajj was made obligatory in the 9th or 10th year of Hijra.

When all these years the Messenger of Allah did Eidul Adha without Hajj, how come today we are trying to tie up it with Hajj? The way Messenger of Allah used to determine the day of Eid-ul-Adha was by looking at moon of Zulhijjah, and this is what he instructed to the Muslims. The following Hadith makes it very clear.

عن أم سلمة أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال إذا رأيتم هلال ذي الحجة وأراد أحدكم أن يضحي فليمسك عن شعره وأظفاره - رواه مسلم في كتاب الأضاحي¹⁰
On the authority of Umme-Salma that Prophet (pbuh) said, "when you see the moon of the month of Zulhijjah and if you intend to make Sacrifice, hold cutting your hair and clipping your nails".

The above mentioned traditions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) indicate very clearly that Muslims in general should look for the moon of the month of Zulhijjah irrespective whether they are in Pilgrimage or out of Pilgrimage.

Also note the words "*when you see the moon of Zulhijjah*". These words of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) are enough to guide those Muslims that they are not in Pilgrimage to determine Eid-ul-Adha by looking at the moon and not according to the Pilgrimage day announced in Makkah. The words "*If you intend to make Sacrifice, hold cutting your hair and your nails*" indicate that the instructions in this Tradition are for those Muslims who are not in Pilgrimage. This also makes it obvious that Muslims celebrate Eid on 10th. The fasting for   Arafah day will be on 9th of their local moon, as it is clear from the following tradition:

عن جابر عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال إن العشر عشر الأضحى والوتر يوم عرفة والشفع يوم النحر - مسند أحمد¹¹
On the authority of Jabir that Prophet (pbuh) said, "The ten days are the first ten days of the sacrifice and the odd day (9th) is Arafah and the even day (10th) is the Day of sacrifice"

⁹ فقه السنة للسيد سابق ج1، ص 553، نشره دارالفتح للاعلام العربي، مدينت نصرت، مصر، 1412 هـ

¹⁰ Muslim, Hadith # 3655

¹¹ Musnad Ahmad, Hadith # 13987

The Practice of the Companions of prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

After Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) died, his companions lived for about 80 years of which 30 years were the period of first four caliphs. Surely they celebrated Eid-ul-Adha in Madina during all these years. How did they determine the day? Did they try to find out what day Arafah is going to take place in Makkah? We do not see any clue that indicates that any one from the companions tried to determine Eid with Arafah or even mentioned it while educating thousands about the teachings of Islam. Had this been a requirement of Islamic Law to determine Eid-ul-Adha they would have contacted Makkah from Madina very easily as the transportation system had become very fast during the reign of Omar, the second caliph. There is no evidence that any of the four rightly guided caliphs or any other companion tried to do it.

Opinion of Islamic Jurists:

No Jurist from any School of Jurisprudence have ever mentioned that Muslims should try to find out the day of Arafah in Makkah and then celebrate Eid-ul-Adha on the next day of that with out considering the dates of the month of Zulhijjahh. Among the Jurists the determination of day of fasting of Arafah, Eid-ul-Adha and the days of glorification of God are all determined by the moon of the month of Zulhijjahh and not by contacting Makkah and finding out their announcements in this regard. For instance Syed Sabiq in his well known book "Fiqh us Sunnah" describes the days of glorification of God:

"أيام التشريق وهي: اليوم الحادى عشر، والثانى عشر، والثالث عشر من ذالحجة"¹²
The days of the glorification of God are 11th, 12th and 13th of
Zulhijjahh

Now here is no conditioned set by the Jurists that this date of lunar month should come from Makkah. That is why when we look at the work of Islamic Jurists, which contains hundreds of thousands of pages and had addressed almost every minor issue, we can not discover any single opinion that Muslims while determining Eid-ul-Adha in all parts of the world would need to find out the day of Arafah in Pilgrimage.

Consensus of Scholars

After the Qura'n, the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh), the Life of Prophet (pbuh), practice of the companions and opinions of Jurists, the consensus of the scholars is the source of Islamic Law. Let's see what we find among the scholars in this regard. I will quote Mufti Taqi Usmani,

"I would like to inform you that the question of sighting the moon for each lunar month including Zul-Hijjah was thoroughly discussed at the annual sessions of the Islamic Fiqh Academy (held in Jordan, October 11-16, 1986) attended by more than a hundred outstanding scholars of Shari'ah. The academy adopted the resolution recommended that all Muslim countries should determine all the lunar months including Zul-Hijjah on the same basis for both Eid al-Fitr as well as Eid al-Adha. This resolution represents the consensus

¹² فقه السنة للسيد سابق ج 1، ص 305، نشره دارالفتح للاعلام العربى، مدينت نصررت، مصر، 1412 هـ

of Muslim jurists throughout the world. The proposal contained in the ISNA article, however, goes totally against this consensus.”¹³

Verdict of Individual Scholars

Kindly allow me to mention the individual verdict in this regard by some of the well-know scholars of our time. Let’s take two world renowned scholars of the Muslim world.

1) Famous Saudi scholar, Sheikh Mohammad Ibn Salih Al-Uthaimen, makes this point very clear when asked by a brother living in Ithaca, NY “Abdulrahman bin Abdallah Al-khalidy” about the issue. The question and answer is as follows:

Q: Should we abide by the local sighting in determining the Eid-al-Adha or should we follow the pilgrims' schedule, knowing that North America sighting of crescent may come a day before Saudi Arabia's sighting?

A: "You should abide by the city you're living in."

Q: This means that we will fast the 9th of Zul-Hijja of North America and pray Eid on 10th Zul-Hijja of North America!

A: "Yes, and this is what you should do without any (Haraj) or mental anxiety." ¹⁴

2) The Mufti of Pakistan Shaikh Taqi Usmani, who is renowned Scholar, writes in his article on the determination of Eid-ul-Adha,

“There is a clear admission in this argument that it is not obligatory according to Quran or the Sunnah to celebrate Eid al-Adha according to Saudi calendar. Had this been so, Muslims would have tried their best to find the exact date of Pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. It is not correct to say that it was not possible in those days for people living outside Saudi Arabia to know the exact date of Pilgrimage, because this date is normally determined on the first night of Zul-Hijjah. There is a nine day period until Eid, which is more than sufficient to acquire this information. However, no jurists has ever opined that such information be collected in order to celebrate Eid al-Adha according to Saudi dates.”¹⁵

The Argument

The tradition of the Prophet (pbuh) which is presented as evidence that Eid-ul- Adha must be linked with the pilgrimage dates as announced in Makkah is as follows:

¹³ Monthly Al-Balagh, Karachi, Pakistan

¹⁴ <http://www.ummah.net/ moonsighting/fatawah/saudalim.htm>

<http://www.hilaalcommittee.com/fatwas/fatwa2.html>

¹⁵ Ibid.

عن أبي قتادة قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم صيام يوم عرفة
إنني أحتسب على الله أن يكفر السنة التي قبله والتي بعده . سنن ابن ماجه
On the authority of Abu-Qatadah that Prophet (pbuh) said, " I
expect from Allah that fasting on the day of Arafah will be
kaffarah for the year before it and after it. ¹⁶

The following is derived from the above mentioned tradition:

That fasting of the day of Arafah can not be a different day than
the day pilgrims stand in Arafah and that Arafah is a specific place
so it can not be different in different places. Muslims must fast
exactly on the same day. Next day to the fasting of Arafah is the
day of sacrifice which is the Eid day.

It is a general principle agreed upon by the traditionists and jurists that Ahadith of merit (Fadail)
can not be the basis of Ahkam (injunctions). This Tradition is simply a du'a (supplication) of
Rasulullah (SAAW) . How can Ahkam of Eid ul Adha be derived from this Hadith?

More over It can not be derived from this Hadith that Muslims all over the world must try to find
out the day of Arafah in Makkah. Actually there is no such commandment in the Qura'n and
Sunnah or the practice of Sahabah and consensus of Jurists and Scholars as we have proved after
exploring various sources of Islamic Law. Any such conclusion or derivation which is not based
or supported by Sharia is out rightly rejected. The Tradition of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) says,

”من عمل عملا ليس عليه امرنا فهو رد“¹⁷

"Whosoever works a work which has for it no command of ours is to
be rejected."

The argument that, Sharia does not say any thing against this practice will not be acceptable.
Every action needs an evidence from the Qura'n and Sunnah to be proved and not the other way
around. Otherwise every practice not forbidden in Islamic Law will become part of the religion.

The fasting of the day of Arafah will simply be on the 9th of the month of Zulhijjahh. As it has
been clarified through prophetic instruction, "the odd (9th) day is Arafah and even (10th) day is
the day of sacrifice" and it has been the practice of the Muslim around the world since the time
of the companions. As for the determination of Eid-ul-Adha is concerned there are clear cut
authentic texts: as

“when you see the crescent of Zulhijjahh”¹⁸

“when the ten days of Zulhijjahh starts”¹⁹

These texts are explicit, with out any doubt, that determination of Eid-ul-Adha is on the basis of
Zulhijjahh moon sighting and not checking out dates of pilgrimage announcements.

By going through the Islamic teachings in this regard, Arafah day is the 9th day of the local lunar
calendar irrespective of the day when pilgrims leave for the plane of Arafah. Like in Makkah

¹⁶Ibn-Majah, Hadith # 1720

¹⁷ Sahih Muslim

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibn-Majah Hadith # 3140

they have a Tuesday and we have a Tuesday in US. But our Tuesday is at a different timing than their Tuesday, so is our Arafah day. To fix the same day when the pilgrims leave for the plains of Arafah, for the whole world is neither practically possible nor there is any injunctions in the Quran and Sunnah to this effect.

The Muslims living in North Africa, India, China, far East and Central Asia have been celebrating Eid-ul-Adha and fasting for the day of Arafah for the last 1400 years. How have they been determining these days? I believe they did it by the moon-sighting of Zulhijjah in their respective places. If that is the case then it was not obligatory for them to check out the date of Arafah in Makkah. Why then it has become obligatory for Muslims today in United States and Canada? If it is simply because of the communication that has become available to us today, we still need evidence to prove that when a means of communication between distant areas is available it becomes obligatory for the Muslims of the world to follow the pilgrimage schedule in celebrating Eid-ul-Adha while they stick to their local moon-sighting for the rest of the timed events like the beginning and the end of the fasting. Know that following the pilgrimage dates for Eid-ul-Adha is neither according to the universal horizon method nor the method of local horizon. This will be a new phenomenon may be called *Makkan horizon*, which has no basis in *Sharia*.

Besides this we should also keep in mind that Eid-ul-Adha is an Islamic *Ibadat*. In Islam, *Ibadat* and their timings are locally determined according to the movements of the moon and the sun as the Holy Qura'n says,

"It is He Who made the sun to be a shining glory and the moon to be a light (of beauty), and measured out stages for her; that ye might know the number of years and the count (of time).²⁰

Islamic *Ibadat* are not based on the fax, internet emails or telephone.

The Geographical Factor

Now let's look at the geographical and practical factors in this Hukm of Sharia. Islam had spread from Morocco to India to Central Asia since the time of Uthman رضي الله عنه, the third caliph. For centuries Muslims around the globe have been looking at the moon of the month of Zulhijjah and celebrating the Eid-ul-Adha on 10th of Zulhijjah. We do not find any clue that they even tried to know the Pilgrimage day in Makkah.

Most of the Middle Eastern countries, since they are around Makkah go for their Eid-ul-Adha with the Pilgrimage as it falls in the same horizon while Muslims living far away from Makkah in a different horizon do their Eid-ul-Adha on the 10th of the month of Zulhijjah as per their local moon sighting. Kindly look at the list of countries officially celebrated Eid-ul-Adha last year posted by www.moonsighting.com

OFFICIAL Day of Eid-al-Adha in Different Countries in 1426 and 1427 AH

1426 AH

1427 AH

²⁰ Surah Yonus:5

Tuesday, January 10, 2006:

1. UAE
2. Kuwait
3. Qatar
4. Saudi Arabia
5. Bahrian
6. Jordan
7. Egypt
8. USA (Fiqh Council of North America)

Wednesday, January 11, 2006:

1. Australia
2. Bangladesh
3. India
4. Pakistan
5. Zanzibar
6. UK
7. Morocco
8. South Africa
9. USA (Most Organizations)²¹

Saturday, December 30, 2006:

1. Bahrain (Follow Saudi Arabia)
2. Jordan (Follow Saudi Arabia)
3. Kuwait (Follow Saudi Arabia)
4. Nigeria
5. Oman (Follow Saudi Arabia)
6. Qatar (Follow Saudi Arabia)
7. Saudi Arabia (claimed to see on 28th Dhul-Qi'dah)
8. UAE (Follow Saudi Arabia)
9. Yemen (Follow Saudi Arabia)

Sunday, December 31, 2006:

1. Fiqh Council of Canada
2. Guyana
3. Indonesia
4. Iran
5. Islamic Society of North America (USA & Canada)
6. Malaysia
7. Mauritius
8. Morocco
9. Norway
10. South Africa
11. Tanzania
12. Turkey²²

May be, I am not sure, that those of us who migrated here in United States and Canada from Middle East just want to continue the 'back home' practice of going to Eid-ul-Adha with Pilgrimage.

My humble recommendation would be: we need to understand that here in the United States or Canada we are all geographically far away from Makkah whether we are coming from a Middle East, India or Pakistan. The Islamic way of determining Eid-ul-Adha (As Eid-ul-Fitr and Ramadan as well) for Muslims living far away from Makkah had been to follow local moon sighting. So we need to get together in celebrating Eid-ul-Adha by determining it with the local moon sighting. If it coincides with the Pilgrimage date its well and good if not, we should still be together and united on a stronger and preferable basis and that is going with our local moon sighting.

The Unity Question

Let's not confuse this purely legal issue with emotions of unity. To have unity of Muslims on the eve of Eid-ul-Adha is a totally foreign idea, to Islamic Law. Unity is not defined any where in Islamic Law as doing Eid-ul-Adha together. Had it been such a great idea Omar, the second caliph could have easily implemented it at least between Makkah and Madina as he did in case of traweeh prayer by uniting Muslims together in a Mosque. (In the time of Omar the news of Arafah date could be conveyed from Makkah to Madinah with in a day or two, which was sufficient time as the day of Arafah is known nine days ahead of time.)

²¹ <http://www.moonsighting.com/1426zhj.html>

²² <http://www.moonsighting.com/1427zhj.html>

Unity can not be achieved by going with a weaker opinion lacking enough evidence from Islamic Law. This will only tear us apart further. Unity will be, God-willing, an act which is closer to the way of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and that is Eid-ul-Adha with local moon sighting. In the words of Mufti Taqi Usmani,

What does the Muslim unity mean? It means that all Muslims should treat each other with brotherly sympathy and affection and should not spread disorder and dissention among them. Nor should they invent new ideas foreign to the teachings of Qur'an and the Sunnah which may lead to division and conflict among Muslims.²³

May the Almighty guide and join us together on the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh)

أستغفر الله لى ولسائر المؤمنين وآخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين

²³ <http://www.hilaalcommittee.com/fatwas/fatwa2.html>