



*In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful*

## A Historical Conversion

Sh. Omar Subedar  
2006

### Introduction

The issue of moon sighting for determining the beginning of the new lunar month has been a controversial one for years on end, particularly when dealing with its requisites and methodology. It is due to the existing differences that the Muslim community at large falls in a state of disarray and confusion every time the month of Ramadhan comes around thus resulting in an increase in the undesired disunity we are witnessing in the Muslims throughout the world. As many individuals within the Muslim community become dissatisfied with their imams and community leaders over this issue due to the inconvenience they incur every year, the cries and appeals from community members to their leaders to overlook their differences and work on a united platform continues to become ever voluminous.

Recently this call has been answered by the Islamic Society of North America in the form of adopting astronomical calculations to determine Islamic dates in order to reduce the hardships and difficulties the Muslims suffer every year. However, their new stance has invited disapproval, criticism and disparagement from many other Islamic organizations throughout North America thus leaving the average Muslim lay-person in a greater state of bewilderment than ever before.

Differences are something that have always existed from the beginning of humankind and will continue to exist until the end of time. However, every difference has a solution and the solution for Islamic differences is found in none other than the Book of Allah and the practices of His final messenger ﷺ. Allah has instructed:

...And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and The Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best (way) and the best in result.

﴿... فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ  
وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا﴾

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By adopting this conduct and adhering to it wholeheartedly, we as Muslims will always remain steadfast on the straight path and will be saved from falling victim to the darkness of deviation. The Prophet ﷺ proclaimed:

I have left amongst you two things so long as you hold fast to them you will never fall astray: the Book of Allah and the code of His prophet.

تركت فيكم أمرين لن تضلوا ما تمسكتم بهما: كتاب  
الله وسنة نبيه<sup>2</sup>

Before actually jumping aboard the bandwagon of condemnation, it is imperative that a Muslim analyze the information provided about astronomical calculations and see what ground it holds within the shari'ah.

## Issue 1: Ibn 'Umar's Hadith

The first thing we want to determine is what exactly is being calculated by the organization. According to their press release, they plan to calculate the time of conjunction which is better known as the 'New Moon Birth'. This is the time when the Earth, sun and moon are in the same plane. This could occur at any time between 0:00 hrs and 23:59 hrs GMT (Greenwich Mean Time; universal time) and can be calculated with an error of  $\pm 2$  minutes, but not precisely to the second as some people claim. At that moment, the moon is totally dark and invisible; it cannot be seen even with high powered telescopes let alone the naked eye. The moon remains invisible for approximately 12 to 18 hours after the conjunction until it finally moves far enough for the waxing crescent to become visible in the evening horizon. There is no way one could actually calculate the exact time of the crescent's visibility because the time changes every month based upon the moon's speed around the Earth which varies along its elliptical orbit.

The organization has decided that if the conjunction occurs before 12:00 hrs GMT (noon), it would give enough time<sup>3</sup> to the new (invisible) moon to be visible, *weather permitting*, somewhere on the globe before the end of the night in North America.

The organization has resolved that, in conclusion, it is not necessary for anyone to go through the trouble of actually looking for the first moon in order to determine the beginning of the new lunar month, irrespective of whether the skies are clear or overcast; rather, to assume that the moon has been seen somewhere in the world (weather permitting) before dawn in North America is more than sufficient to declare the new month provided the conjunction occurs before 12:00 hrs GMT.

This decision is based on the following pieces of evidence:

Ibn 'Umar reported: Allah's Messenger ﷺ was discussing Ramadhan and said, "Do not fast (the month of Ramadhan) until you see the crescent (i.e. the first moon of Ramadhan) and do not finish fasting until you see it (the first moon for Shawwāl). If it is obscured to you, then calculate it."

أخرج مالك عن نافع عن عبد الله بن عمر أن رسول  
الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ذكر رمضان فقال: لا  
تصوموا حتى تروا الهلال ولا تفطروا حتى تروه، فإن  
غم عليكم فاقدروا له<sup>4</sup>

Ibn 'Umar related that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, "(Sometimes) the month is 29 days. Therefore, do not fast until you see the crescent and do not finish fasting until you see it. If it is unclear to you then estimate it."

وأخرج مالك عن عبد الله بن دينار عن عبد الله بن  
عمر أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: الشهر  
تسعة وعشرون فلا تصوموا حتى تروا الهلال ولا  
تفطروا حتى تروه، فإن غم عليكم فاقدروا له<sup>5</sup>

In these narrations the Prophet ﷺ has clearly instructed us to adopt calculations. Therefore, adopting astronomical calculations is seemingly in absolute compliance with the Prophet's ﷺ orders and is not against his established Sunnah.

This conclusion, although apparently true, is one that needs to be looked at more closely. Firstly, it is important to highlight all the instructions issued by the Prophet ﷺ in the aforementioned narrations. To that end we begin:

1. A lunar month is 29 days provided the crescent is sighted on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup>. ‘The crescent’ is the English translation of the word *al-hilāl* used in the narrations. The word *al-hilāl* is defined as follows:

The illuminated portion of the moon that is visible on the first night of the month.

ما يرى من القسم المضيء من القمر أول ليلة من الشهر<sup>6</sup>

2. One should not be haste in commencing the fasts of Ramadhan until the month of Ramadhan has been determined by sighting the crescent on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> (i.e. the night preceding the 30<sup>th</sup> day).
3. Similarly, one should not discontinue the fasts of Ramadhan until the crescent for Shawwāl has been sighted on the eve of the 30th.
4. However, if a community is faced with a situation where the crescent is invisible or obscured on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> due to the skies being overcast or the atmosphere being hazy or dusty, then at that time they should adopt calculations. What is unclear, however, is what exactly the community is supposed to calculate.

The words ‘estimate’ and ‘calculate’ have been translated from the phrase *fuqdurō labu* in the aforementioned ahadith. By studying various sources, we find that scholars have provided the following three interpretations for this phrase:

### First Interpretation of the Phrase “Estimate it”

‘Allāma Badruddīn al-‘Ainī has written in his classical work, ‘*Umdat ul-Qārī*, the following:

Māziri stated: The majority of jurists have interpreted the Prophet’s ﷺ words “estimate it” to mean “to complete the period of 30 days (for the month)” as he has clarified in another hadith.

وقال المازري: حمل جمهور الفقهاء قوله صلى الله عليه وسلم "فاقدروا له" على أن المراد إكمال العدة ثلاثين كما فسره في حديث آخر<sup>7</sup>

The “other hadith” to which Māziri is referring is the likes of the following:

Ibn ‘Umar narrated: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “The month (can be) 29 (days); therefore, do not fast until you see it and do not discontinue fasting until you see it. If it happens to be obscured to you then estimate 30 days for it.”

حدثنا سليمان بن داود العتكي: حدثنا حماد: حدثنا أيوب عن نافع عن ابن عمر قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: الشهر تسع وعشرون فلا تصوموا حتى تروه ولا تفطروا حتى تروه، فإن غم عليكم فاقدروا له ثلاثين

Some people have objected over using this particular hadith to explain the phrase “estimate it” due to two reasons:

1. This is the only narration from Ibn ‘Umar that requires counting 30 days in case of cloudy weather; all of his other reports confine themselves to the phrase “estimate it”. The only person to narrate the phrase “estimate 30 days for it” from Ibn ‘Umar is Ḥammād. His report is an oddly detached one and cannot be accepted against such a variety of reports from Ibn ‘Umar. Ibn Qudamah observes that:

The report from Ibn ‘Umar “count for it 30” opposes the other agreed upon narrations from him.

ورواية ابن عمر "فاقدروا له ثلاثين" مخالفة للرواية الصحيحة المتفق عليها

2. Upon recording the aforementioned hadith, Imam Abu Dāwūd has written in his *Sunan*:

Nāfi‘ said, “When the 29<sup>th</sup> of Sha‘bān would come around, the moon would be sought for Ibn ‘Umar (due to him falling blind in old age). If it was sighted, then well and good. If it was not sighted and there was no cloud or dust that obscured his view, he would rise the next morning without fasting. If cloud or dust were to obscure his view, he would wake the next morning fasting.” Nāfi‘ added, “Ibn ‘Umar would cease fasting with the people (of his community) and would not take this calculation into consideration.”

فكان ابن عمر إذا كان شعبان تسعا وعشرين نظره له، فإن رأي فذاك وإن لم ير ولم يحل دون منظره سحاب ولا فترة أصبح مفطرا، فإن حال دون منظره سحاب أو فترة أصبح صائما. قال: وكان ابن عمر يفطر مع الناس ولا يأخذ بهذا الحساب

Here Ibn ‘Umar’s action is posted against his own narration “complete 30 days if it is cloudy”. He starts fasting after completing only 29 days of Sha‘bān in case of obscurity in the horizon. Therefore, the phrase “estimate it” cannot be interpreted as “complete 30 days” in light of this narration.

These objections, as weighty as they may seem, are in reality far from being credible. As for the first objection, the truth is that Ḥammād is not the only person to narrate the phrase “estimate 30 days for it” from Ibn ‘Umar; rather, his contemporary, Ma‘mar, has narrated the very same words from Ḥammād’s teacher, Ayyōb. Ayyōb has related from Nāfi‘ and Nāfi‘ has reported from Ibn ‘Umar. The hadith is as follows:

Ibn ‘Umar related that the Prophet ﷺ mentioned about the crescent of Ramadhan, “When you see it, fast. Then when you see it (at the end of the month), finish fasting. If it happens to be obscured to you then estimate 30 days for it.”

أخرج عبد الرزاق عن معمر عن أيوب عن نافع عن ابن عمر أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال لهلال شهر رمضان: إذا رأيتموه فصوموا ثم إذا رأيتموه فأفطروا، فإن غم عليكم فاقدروا له ثلاثين يوما

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Imam Muslim has also recorded the very same words from Ibn ‘Umar in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in two different narrations through ‘Ubaidullah, another student of Nāfi‘:

Ibn ʿUmar related that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ discussed Ramadhan and counted with his hands saying, “The month is like this, like this and like this.” He folded his thumb the third time (when flashing his hands, and instructed,) “Fast upon seeing it and break your fast upon seeing it. If it is obscured to you then estimate 30 (days) for it (i.e. the month being observed).”

حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة: حدثنا أبو أسامة: حدثنا عبيد الله عن نافع عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنهما أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ذكر رمضان فضرب بيده قال: الشهر هكذا وهكذا وهكذا. ثم عقد إبهامه في الثالثة: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته، فإن أغمى عليكم فاقدروا له ثلاثين<sup>10</sup>

Ibn ʿUmar related that the Prophet ﷺ demonstrated, “The month is like this, like this and like this. If it is obscured to you then count 30 (days for it).”

حدثنا ابن نمير: حدثنا أبي: حدثنا عبيد الله بهذا الإسناد: الشهر هكذا وهكذا وهكذا. قال: فإن غم عليكم فاقدروا ثلاثين. نحو حديث أبي أسامة<sup>11</sup>

A chart is given below to show the various chains through which the words “estimate 30 days for it” have been narrated.

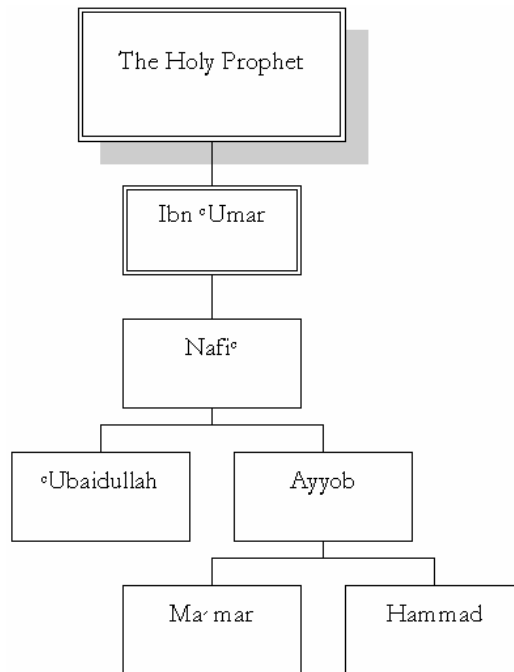


Figure 1: chains through which “estimate 30” is narrated

This makes it clear that Ḥammād’s report is not an ‘oddly detached’ report as certain individuals allege; rather, his report is authentic and fully supported through other narrative chains. Furthermore, many other narrators have also reported similar statements from Ibn ʿUmar such as the following:

Ibn ‘Umar related: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “The month (can be) 29 days, so do not fast until you see it (the crescent). If it happens to be obscured to you then complete the period of 30 days (for the month).”

Ibn ‘Umar related: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ expressed, “The month (can be) 29 (days). Do not fast until you see it. If it is obscured to you then complete the duration of 30 (days).”

‘Abdullah b. ‘Umar narrated: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ demonstrated, “The month is like this, like this and like this” three times with his hands. He folded his thumb the third time (and said,) “If it is obscured to you then complete 30 (days).”

حدثنا عبد الله بن مسلمة: حدثنا مالك عن عبد الله بن دينار عن عبد الله بن عمر رضي الله عنهما أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: الشهر تسع وعشرون ليلة فلا تصوموا حتى تروه، فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين

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أخبرنا أبو الحسن علي بن أحمد بن عبدان: أنبأ أحمد بن عبيد الصفار: ثنا أحمد بن عبيد الله النرسي: ثنا روح بن عبادة: ثنا مالك عن عبد الله بن دينار عن ابن عمر أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال الشهر تسع وعشرون، لا تصوموا حتى تروه، فإن غم عليكم فاقدروا له. قد أخبرناه أبو عبد الله الحافظ وغيره قالوا: ثنا أبو العباس محمد بن يعقوب: أنبأ الربيع بن سليمان: أنبأ الشافعي: أنبأ مالك فذكره بمثله وقال: فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين

13

أخبرنا أبو زكريا بن أبي إسحاق: ثنا أبو عبد الله محمد بن يعقوب الشيباني: ثنا إبراهيم بن عبد الله: أنبأ محمد بن عبيد: ثنا عاصم بن محمد عن أبيه عن عبد الله بن عمر قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: الشهر هكذا وهكذا وهكذا ثلاث مرات بيده ثم قبض في الثالثة إجماعه: فإن غم عليكم فأتموا ثلاثين

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أخبرنا أبو طاهر الفقيه: أنبأ أبو حامد بن بلال: ثنا أبو الأزهر: ثنا عبد المجيد بن عبد العزيز بن أبي رواد: ثنا أبي عن نافع عن ابن عمر قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إن الله تبارك وتعالى جعل الأهلة موافيت، فإذا رأيتموه فصوموا، وإذا رأيتموه فأفطروا، فإن غم عليكم فاقدروا له أتموه ثلاثين

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Ibn ‘Umar narrated: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “Allah has made the crescents time tellers. So if you see it then fast and if you see it (at the end of the month) then finishing fast. If it happens to be obscured to you then estimate it – complete it as 30.”

حدثنا أبو عبد الله محمد بن إسماعيل الفارسي من أصله: ثنا أبو زرعة الدمشقي عبد الرحمن بن عمرو: ثنا أبو مسهر: ثنا مالك عن نافع عن ابن عمر قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: لا تصوموا حتى تروا الهلال ولا تفطروا حتى تروا الهلال، فإن غم عليكم فصوموا ثلاثين

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Ibn ‘Umar related: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ explained, “Do not fast until you see the crescent and do not cease fasting until you see the crescent. If it becomes obscured to you then fast for 30 days.”

أخبرنا عمر بن محمد الهمداني قال: حدثنا حسين بن علي الجلي قال: حدثنا ابن نعيم عن عبيد الله بن عمر عن نافع عن ابن عمر قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: الشهر ثلاثون والشهر تسع وعشرون، فإن غم عليكم فعدوا ثلاثين

17

Ibn ‘Umar related: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ explained, “The month is (sometimes) 30 (days) and (sometimes) the month is 29 (days). So if it happens to be obscured to you then count 30 days (for that month).”

حدثنا محمد بن الوليد: حدثنا مروان بن معاوية: حدثنا ابن فضيل: حدثنا عاصم بن محمد العمري عن أبيه عن ابن عمر قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: الشهر هكذا وهكذا ثلاثين، والشهر هكذا وهكذا. ويعقد في الثالثة: فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا ثلاثين

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Ibn ‘Umar narrated: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ demonstrated, “The month is (sometimes) like this, like this and like this (a total of) 30 (days) and (sometimes) the month is like this, like this and like this.” (The Prophet ﷺ bent his thumb the third time when flashing his hands and said,) “So if it is obscured to you then complete 30 (days for that month).”

Ibn ‘Umar related: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “Allah has made the crescents measurements of time for the people; therefore fast upon seeing it and break fast upon seeing it. If it happens to be obscured to you then count 30 days for it.”

عبد الرزاق عن عبد العزيز بن أبي رواد عن نافع عن ابن عمر قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إن الله جعل الأهلة مواقيت للناس فصوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته، فإن غم عليكم فعدوا له ثلاثين يوماً

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‘Abdullah (b. ‘Umar) narrated: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ explained, “The month is (sometimes) 29 (days). Therefore, do not fast until you see the crescent and do not break fast until you see it. If it happens to be obscured to you then complete the duration of 30 (days).”

قال الشافعي: أخبرنا مالك عن عبد الله بن دينار عن عبد الله أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: الشهر تسع وعشرون فلا تصوموا حتى تروا الهلال ولا تفطروا حتى تروه، فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين

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These narrations make it clear that all of Ibn ‘Umar’s reports do not confine themselves to the phrase *fuqdurō labu* as some people write; rather, in total, Ibn ‘Umar has reported the following three instructions of the Prophet ﷺ pertaining to the crescent’s obscurity on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup>:

1. Complete a period of 30 days (for the month)
2. Count 30 days
3. Estimate 30 days

A chart is given below to display the number of chains through which these instructions have been reported:

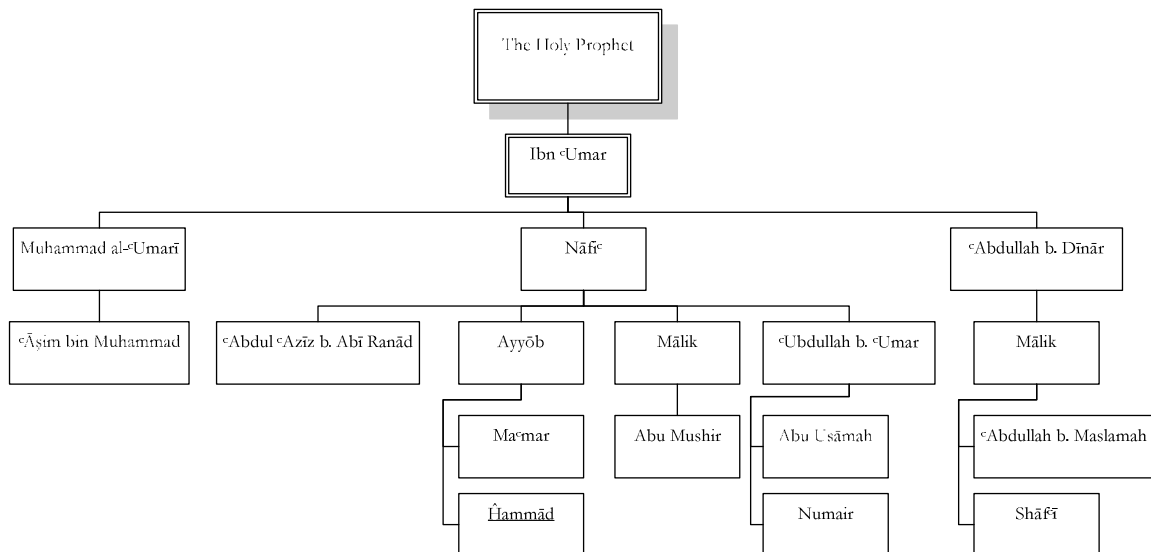


Figure 2: All chains through which instruction of “30 days” has been narrated



Through this information and clarification, one can safely conclude that the majority's interpretation of *fuqduro labu* in light of Ibn 'Umar's report recorded in Abu Dāwōd's *Sunan* is a valid and legitimate one.

There are several more important points to highlight that further support the majority's interpretation.

Firstly, the Prophet's ﷺ words "and estimate it" are technically classified as *mujmall* – ambiguous or abstract – according to the principles of jurisprudence. The ruling for ambiguous texts is as follows:

To believe in the truth of its implications and to refrain from interpreting it until it is clarified through the statement of the abstractor

اعتقاد الحقيقة فيما هو المراد والتوقف فيه إلى أن يتبين  
بيان المجمال<sup>21</sup>

The abstractor in this case is none other than the Prophet ﷺ. We have already learned that he also instructed "estimate 30 days for it" in other narrations. More interestingly, this instruction has been reported by the very same people that reported the words "and estimate it". The ambiguity in *fuqduro labu* is therefore clarified by the abstractor himself through his recorded statement "and estimate 30 days for it". This statement is thus rendered as *mufassar* – clarified or explained. The ruling for such a text is as follows:

To practice it on the compulsory basis

وجوب العمل به<sup>22</sup>

When this is the case, it becomes completely impossible to interpret the Prophet's ﷺ words otherwise, thus closing all doors for further interpretation.

Regarding the point made about the narrators, there are altogether three individuals who have narrated the prophetic words "and estimate it" from Ibn 'Umar:

1. Nāfi<sup>c</sup>
2. 'Abdullah b. Dīnār
3. Sālīm

Amongst these three, two, namely Nāfi<sup>c</sup> and 'Abdullah b. Dīnār, are the very ones who have also narrated the words "estimate 30 days for it" and "complete the duration of 30 days". This makes it crystal clear that the words "and estimate it" have no other meaning than the one recorded by these very narrators.

The second point to highlight is that, out of all the companions, Ibn 'Umar is the only one to narrate the words "and estimate it" from Allah's Messenger ﷺ. All of the other companions who have recorded something in this regard have either related the three aforementioned instructions reported by Ibn 'Umar or something the like thereof. In total, there are approximately 77 ahādēth related to this topic; 24 from Ibn 'Umar, 18 from Ibn 'Abbās, 19 from Abu Hurairah, 6 from Ḥudhaifah b. Yamān, 3 from Talaq b. 'Ali, 2 from 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 1 from Jābir b. 'Abdullah, 1 from Abu Bakrah, 1 from Barā b. 'Āzib and 2 from an anonymous group of the Prophet's ﷺ companions – may Allah's pleasure be with them all. All of these figures are merely approximates for there may be more narrations in other compilations which I have not come across. To list all 77 narrations is impractical for this article; however, several narrations are listed below for the benefit of the reader.

The Prophet ﷺ instructed, “When you see the crescent then fast and when you see it then break your fast. And if it happens to be obscured to you then count 30 (days).” Reported by Ibn ‘Abbās<sup>23</sup>, Abu Hurairah<sup>24</sup> and Jābir b. ‘Abdullah<sup>25</sup>

إذا رأيتم الهلال فصوموا وإذا رأيتموه فأفطروا، فإن  
غم عليكم فعدوا ثلاثين

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Fast upon seeing it (the crescent) and break the fast upon seeing it. If it happens to be obscured to you then count 30 (days from the month).” Reported by Abu Hurairah<sup>26</sup> and Barā b. ‘Āzib<sup>27</sup>

صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته، فإن غم عليكم فعدوا  
ثلاثين

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Fast upon seeing it and break the fast upon seeing it. If it happens to be obscured to you then complete the period of 30 (days).” Reported by Ibn ‘Abbās<sup>28</sup> and Abu Bakrah<sup>29</sup>

صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته، فإن غم عليكم  
فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Do not fast until you see the crescent and do not break fast until you see it. If it happens to be obscured to you then complete the period of 30 (days).” Reported by Ibn ‘Abbās<sup>30</sup> and Talaq b. ‘Alī<sup>31</sup>

لا تصوموا حتى تروا الهلال ولا تفطروا حتى تروه،  
فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين

Ibn ‘Abbās narrated: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “The month is (sometimes) 29 nights, so do not fast until you see it (the crescent). If it happens to be obscured to you then complete the duration of 30.”

الشهر تسع وعشرون ليلة فلا تصوموا حتى تروه،  
فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين

32

It is important to note that the final sentence of the Prophet’s ﷺ statement (i.e. “if it happens to be obscured to you then complete the duration of 30”) has been repeatedly narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās such as in Imam Mālik’s *Mu’aṭṭā* no. 631, Imam Nasa’i’s *Sunan*, no. 2126, 2127 and by Ibn ‘Umar in Imam Baihaqi’s *Sunan* no. 7926.

Ibn ‘Abbās reported: the Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed Allah has extended it (i.e. the period in which the crescent is seen) in order for it to be sighted. If it happens to be obscured to you then complete the period.”

إن الله قد أمد له لرؤيته فإن أغمى عليكم فأكملوا  
العدة<sup>33</sup>

Amīr al-Mu’minīn, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, narrated: the Prophet ﷺ said, “Do not precede this month (in fasting); fast upon seeing it and break fast upon seeing it. If it happens to be obscured to you then count 30.”

لا تقدموا هذا الشهر؛ صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا  
لرؤيته، فإن غم عليكم فعدوا ثلاثين

34

Ḥudhaifah b. Yamān reported: the Prophet ﷺ said, “Do not precede the month (of Ramadhan in fasting) until you see the crescent, otherwise complete the period (of 30 days), then fast until you see the crescent, otherwise complete the period.”

لا تقدموا الشهر حتى تروا الهلال أو تكملوا العدة ثم صوموا حتى تروا الهلال أو تكملوا العدة<sup>35</sup>

Abu Hurairah reported: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “When you see the crescent then fast, and when you see it then discontinue fasting. If it happens to be obscured to you then fast for 30 days.”

إذا رأيتم الهلال فصوموا وإذا رأيتموه فأفطروا، فإن غم عليكم فصوموا ثلاثين يوماً

36

This last hadith has been narrated through the following narrative chains:

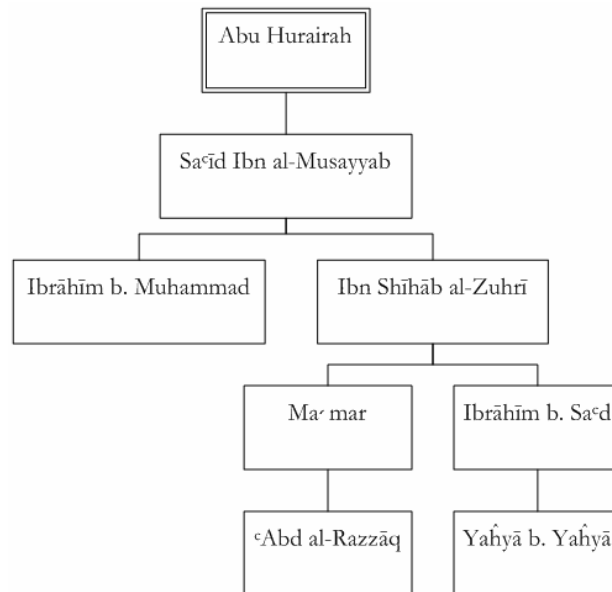


Figure 3: Chains of Abu Hurairah’s hadith regarding fasting for 30 days

The reason why the chain of this hadith has been presented here is because, surprisingly, some individuals in the present era have discredited the ahādēth of all the Prophet’s ﷺ companions except those of Ibn ‘Umar due to the variations found in the prophetic statements quoted by other companions, especially the ahādēth of Abu Hurairah narrated through Muhammad b. Ziyād. They have gone as far as to say, “The amount of variation in the language shows that the transmitters of the hadith are describing an idea freely in their own words rather than attempting to transmit the hadith with faithfulness to the original words.” This argument is clearly defeated by the aforementioned ahādith. While the first hadith is clearly *mashḥūr*<sup>37</sup>, the next three do not fall short of being *‘Aḥḍāḥ*<sup>38</sup>. As for the remainder of the listed ahādith, although they may be *gharīb*<sup>39</sup> – which does not refer to being weak, as certain individuals portray – they have been narrated through multiple chains without any variations in the text whatsoever thus leading us to the conclusion that the transmitters are not ‘describing an idea freely in their own words’. These narrations bear far more weight than the exclusive narration of Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with the two of them) of *fuqdurō labu*.

The third point to highlight is that the Prophet ﷺ used to practically complete 30 days of the month whenever the skies on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> were overcast.

ʿĀishah reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would be watchful in Shaʿbān in a manner such that he would not be as watchful in other months. He would commence the fast of Ramadhan upon sighting it (the crescent). If it happened to be obscured to him, he would count 30 days (for Shaʿbān) and then fast.

عن عائشة رضي الله عنها قالت: كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يتحفظ من شعبان ما لا يتحفظ من غيره، ثم يصوم لرؤيته رمضان، فإن غم عليه عد ثلاثين يوماً ثم صام

40

One may argue that this hadith is not free from any criticism as Ibn Jawzī has pointed out in his *al-Taḥqīq*: Yahyā b. Saʿīd was not content with Muʿāwiah b. Ṣāliḥ (one of the narrators in the chain of this particular report). Abu Ḥātim al-Rāzī remarked, “He cannot be used as evidence.” However, Ibn Jawzī’s criticism does not bear any significance whatsoever; Imam Zailaʿī has written in his *Nasb al-Rāyah* that the author of *al-Tanqīh* has stated:

Muʿāwiah b. Ṣāliḥ is reliable and truthful. He has been authenticated by Ahmad b. Hambal, ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Maḥdī, and Abu Zurʿah. Ibn Abī Ḥātim mentioned, “I asked my father about him and he replied, ‘His narrations are reliable and sound.’” Imam Muslim has used his narrations as evidence in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. He has not related anything that contradicts the reports of the authentic narrators. As for Yahyā b. Saʿīd not being content with him, this is insufficient to defame him. The reason is that Yahyā’s criterion for authenticating narrations is extreme; he himself declared, “If I were to narrate from only those people with whom I am content, I would only narrate from five individuals.” Abu Ḥātim’s statement that “he cannot be used as evidence” is also non-defamatory because he has not mentioned any reason for this claim. It should be noted that these types of words have been used repeatedly by him for many authentic narrators without discussing any reason for it, such as Khalid al-Hatha and others. And Allah knows best.<sup>41</sup>

In reality, this hadith is authentic as Imam Dar al-Quṭnī has mentioned in his *Sunan* and is more than sufficient to clarify the implications of “and estimate it”. Another similar narration is as follows

Abu ʿUmair b. Anas b. Mālik related: My paternal uncles who were amongst the Ansārī companions of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ told me, “(Once) the crescent of Shawwāl was obscured to us, therefore we fasted the next day. Towards the end of the day, a caravan arrived (in Madīnah) and testified to the Prophet ﷺ that they saw the crescent the previous day. Allah’s Messenger ﷺ then ordered the people to break their fast and to proceed to their Eid prayer place the following day.”

عن أبي عمير بن أنس بن مالك قال: حدثني عمومي من الأنصار من أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قالوا: أغمى علينا هلال شوال فأصبحنا صياماً فجاء ركب من آخر النهار فشهدوا عند النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أنهم رأوا الهلال بالأمس فأمرهم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أن يفطروا وأن يخرجوا إلى عيدهم من الغد

42

Once again this clearly shows that the Prophet's ﷺ practice was to complete 30 days of the month at times when the crescent was not visible to him on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> due to cloudy conditions.

The final point to be highlighted is that the Rightly Guided Successors of the Prophet ﷺ used to instruct their congregation in their sermons to complete 30 days of the month on occasions when the crescent would be obscured on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup>. 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) would get up after the Maghrib prayer on the 'Night of Doubt' in Sha'bān and would deliver a sermon about the blessed month of Ramadhan. In his sermon he would state:

Lo! None of you should ever precede the month (of Ramadhan in fasting). Fast upon sighting it and break the fast upon sighting it. If it happens to be concealed from you then count Sha'bān as 30.

ألا لا يتقدم الشهر منكم أحد؛ صوموا لرؤيته  
وأفطروا لرؤيته، فإن غم عليكم فعدوا شعبان<sup>43</sup>  
ثلاثين

'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) would deliver similar instructions in his sermon whenever the month of Ramadhan would draw near; he would order:

Lo! Do not precede the month (of Ramadhan in fasting). When you see the crescent then fast, and when you see it (again at the end of the month) then break the fast. If it happens to be obscured to you then complete the duration.

ألا لا تقدموا الشهر؛ إذا رأيتموا الهلال فصوموا وإذا  
رأيتموه فأفطروا، فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة<sup>44</sup>

In conclusion, the aforementioned information confirms that Hammād has not reported the phrase "estimate 30 days for it" from Ibn 'Umar exclusively; rather, it has been related by 12 other narrators, and was practically observed by the Prophet ﷺ and all of the other companions (may Allah be pleased with them) by order of 'Umar and 'Ali thus rendering the first objection baseless.

We now turn our attention to the second objection which was of Ibn 'Umar's actions being contrary to his narration of "complete 30 days if it is cloudy" due to which the phrase "estimate it" cannot be interpreted as "complete 30 days". This issue requires further clarification.

Firstly, it is important to determine what that day is termed which follows the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> when the crescent cannot be seen due to cloudy conditions. Secondly, it is equally important to be acquainted with the ruling of fasting on that particular day. Both of these issues are clarified in the following narration:

Dāwōd b. Qais related: I asked Qāsim b. Muhammad about fasting on the day when there is uncertainty over whether it is the first (day of) Ramadhan or not. He replied, "When (the night preceding that day) is overcast and information is being sought to ascertain if it is (the eve of) Ramadhan, then do not fast on that day."

قال عبد الرزاق: أخبرنا داود بن قيس قال: سألت  
قاسم بن محمد عن صيام الذي يشك فيه من رمضان،  
قال: إذا كان مغيبا يتحرى أنه من رمضان فلا  
يصمه<sup>45</sup>

In this narration Dāwōd b. Qais is asking Qāsim b. Muhammad (the grandson of Abu Bakr al-Siddīq, the student of Ibn 'Umar, Ibn 'Abbās and Abu Hurairah, raised by

Umm al-Mu'minīn ʿĀishah becoming one of her prominent students and one of the seven great *fuqahā* of Madīnah) about the permissibility of fasting on what is formally known as the 'Day of Doubt'. In response, Qāsim clarifies that if the doubt is based on the skies being overcast the night before, due to which the crescent cannot be seen, then fasting on that day is impermissible. From this particular statement we derive the following:

Firstly, if the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> of Shaʿbān is overcast, due to which the crescent is obscured, then the following day is called *yawm ush-shak* 'the Day of Doubt'. Sheikh Mubarpuri has defined the Day of Doubt with the following words:

The meaning of 'the Day of Doubt' is the 30<sup>th</sup> day of Shaʿbān when the crescent is not sighted the night before due to a cloud or something of its like. It is then possible for that day to be a day of Ramadhan or Shaʿbān.

والمراد من اليوم الذي يشك فيه يوم الثلاثين من شعبان. إذا لم ير الهلال في ليلته بغيم سائر أو نحوه فيجوز كونه من رمضان وكونه من شعبان<sup>46</sup>

If one were to argue that ʿAllāma ʿAinī has defined the Day of Doubt otherwise in the statement "The day of doubt is the day when people talk about sighting the crescent but its sighting is not confirmed. For instance, it was reported by only one witness and his report was denied, or two untrustworthy individuals reported and their testimony was rejected" and therefore the aforementioned definition is inaccurate, it should be understood that, although ʿAllāma ʿAinī has defined the Day of Doubt as such, it does not rule out or override what the ṣaḥāba and tābiʿīn understood the Day of Doubt to be. Along with Qāsim b. Muhammad's aforementioned statement, the following narration affirms the soundness of Sheikh Mubarpuri's definition:

Simāk (b. Ḥarb) related: I visited ʿIkrimah on that day in which there was doubt over whether it was (the first day of) Ramadhan and I found him eating. He said (to me), "Come close and eat." I replied, "I am fasting." He then exclaimed, "By Allah you will definitely (have to) come close and eat!" I demanded, "Then relate to me (a hadith in support of your conduct)." He narrated, "Ibn ʿAbbās (may Allah be pleased with the two of them) related to me that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, 'Do not precede the month (in fasting). Fast upon seeing it and cease fast upon seeing it. If a cloud or some dust comes between you and the place where it can be viewed then complete the period of 30 days.'"

عن سماك قال: دخلت على عكرمة في اليوم الذي يشك فيه من رمضان وهو يأكل فقال: آدن فكل. قلت: إني صائم. قال: والله لتدنون. قلت: فحدثني. قال: حدثني ابن عباس رضي الله عنهما أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: لا تستقبلوا الشهر استقبالا؛ صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته، فإن حال منظره سحابة أو فترة فأكملوا العدة<sup>47</sup> بينكم وبين ثلاثين يوماً

In this particular narration, although Simāk has not clarified what contributed to the doubt which they were experiencing, the hadith used by ʿIkrimah speaks volumes about the situation they in. ʿIkrimah, being a great scholar of hadith and a student of Ibn ʿUmar (may Allah be pleased with him), chose to relate this specific hadith from Ibn ʿAbbās in which the Prophet ﷺ explicitly mentions, "If a cloud or some dust comes between you and the place where it can be viewed..." thus leading us to the conclusion that the doubt that was being

experienced by the people was due to one of these two factors. It is quite logical that a person provide only that evidence which is suitable to the situation. Therefore, we can safely conclude that one of the valid definitions of ‘the Day of Doubt’ is the one presented by Sheikh Mubarpuri.

The second point derived from the hadith of Dāwōd b. Qais is that fasting on the Day of Doubt is impermissible. This ruling is further supported by the following hadith:

عن صلة بن زفر قال: كنا عند عمار بن ياسر فأتى  
بشاة مصلية فقال: كلوا فتحنى بعض القوم. فقال:  
إني صائم. فقال عمار: من صام اليوم الذي يشك فيه  
فقد عصى أبا القاسم – رواه جماعة، وقال الترمذي  
حديث عمار حديث حسن صحيح

Ṣilah b. Zufar narrated: We were by ‘Ammār b. Yāsir (on the Day of Doubt) and a roasted sheep was brought forth. He told us, “Eat.” One particular person sat aside and expressed, “I am fasting.” ‘Ammār then remarked, “Whoever fasts on the day in which there is doubt, he has disobeyed Abu al-Qāsim ﷺ.”

48

From the above we can see that the day on which Ibn ‘Umar chose to fast, according to Nāfī’s account, was the Day of Doubt and fasting on that day is impermissible. This raises the concern of how Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) had resorted to such an action when it was a clear violation of the Prophet’s ﷺ orders. Sheikh Khaleel Ahmad Saharanpuri has alleviated this concern by writing:

The disapproval (of fasting on the Day of Doubt) is when a person fasts (with the intention of fasting) for the month of Ramadhan. However, if a person intends to keep a supplementary fast (on that day), then there is no disapproval of his action.

الكراهة محمولة على أن يصوم من رمضان وإما إذا  
نوى نفلا فلا كراهة فيه<sup>49</sup>

This point is further elaborated by Imam Mālik in his *al-Mu’aṭṭā* in which he states:

He has heard the people of knowledge forbidding fasting on the day in which there is doubt over whether (it is a day of) Sha‘bān (or not) when a person intends that fast to be the fast of Ramadhan....

عن مالك أنه سمع أهل العلم ينهون أن يصام اليوم  
الذي يشك فيه من شعبان إذا نوى به صيام  
رمضان...

He further explains:

...However, they do not see any problem in keeping that fast as a supplementary one.

ولا يرون بصيامه تطوعا بأسا

He finally concludes:

This is our verdict and the verdict I have seen adopted by the scholars of our city (of Madinah).

وهذا الأمر عندنا والذي أدركت عليه أهل العلم  
ببلدنا

Imam Mālik’s closing statement holds great weight in correctly understanding the actions of Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both). One of the prominent scholars of Madinah was his very own teacher and the reporter of Ibn ‘Umar’s conduct, Nāfi‘. Nāfi‘, who remained in Ibn ‘Umar’s company for many years, had a better understanding of Ibn ‘Umar’s conducts than anyone else. It is quite obvious that he was well aware the intention Ibn ‘Umar would fast with on that day which lead him to adopt the aforementioned stance. Therefore, one can safely conclude that Ibn ‘Umar used to keep a supplementary fast on the Day of Doubt rather than a Ramadhan fast. Another point that supports this notion is the closing remarks made by Nāfi‘ in his report:

Ibn ‘Umar would discontinue fasting with the people (of his community) and would not take this calculation into consideration.

وكان ابن عمر يفطر مع الناس ولا يأخذ بهذا  
الحساب

This statement implies that Ibn ‘Umar never counted the fast he kept on the Day of Doubt as a fast of Ramadhan; rather he would begin and end the fasts of Ramadhan with the general public. Therefore, the fast he kept on that day would be none other than a voluntary one. As a result, his actions are in reality not at all against his own narration but fall in full compliance with it because the Prophet’s ﷺ words “Do not fast until you see it (the crescent)” imply ‘Do not keep the fast of Ramadhan until you see the crescent of Ramadhan’, and Ibn ‘Umar used to do just that. As for keeping a voluntary fast prior to the month of Ramadhan, there is absolutely nothing wrong with it as is the verdict of the scholars of Madinah. Hence the second objection used to dismiss the interpretation of “estimate it” as “complete 30 days” is based on a clear misconception and thus does not effect the relevance of the *Jambur’s* interpretation.

Some people in the present day have attempted to dismiss the aforementioned point by stating:

Some scholars have argued that Ibn ‘Umar and others used to fast the Day of Doubt with the intention of supplementary fasting and not as the day of Ramadhan. This interpretation is incorrect also. They used to fast with the intention of fasting the day of Ramadhan as is clearly reported from Imam Ahmad:

It is obligatory to fast that day as the first day of Ramadhan

يجب صومه على أنه من رمضان

Unfortunately, this is an incorrect statement – it is surprising how Imam Ahmad’s report has been used out of its context to dictate the intention Ibn ‘Umar and others used to fast on the Day of Doubt with. In reality, the aforementioned report from Imam Ahmad is one of three views he held regarding fasting and this particular day. Ibn Jawzī explains in his *al-Tabḥīq*:



**RULING:** When a cloud or some dust obscures the place where the crescent may be seen on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> of Sha<sup>c</sup>bān, then there are three reports from Imam Ahmad (regarding what should be done the next day):

1. It is obligatory to fast the 30<sup>th</sup> (day of Sha<sup>c</sup>bān) with the intention of (fasting) the month of Ramadhan.
2. It is impermissible to fast the next day (with the intention of fasting for the month of) Ramadhan or to keep a supplementary fast. However, it is permissible to keep an overdue fast, expiation fast, a fast due to making a vow and a voluntary fast that one habitually keeps on that day.
3. The decision will be in the hands of the governing imam regarding fasting (the following day; i.e. it is up to the imam to decide the next day as the first of Ramadhan or the 30<sup>th</sup> of Sha<sup>c</sup>bān.)

By studying the texts of his contemporaries, we find that Imam Ahmad was inclined to the second view out of the aforementioned three. Upon quoting the hadith of <sup>c</sup>Ammār b. Yāsir, which was just previously mentioned, Imam Tirmidhi states:

<sup>c</sup>Ammār's hadith is a reliable and authentic one. The majority of scholars from amongst the Prophet's ﷺ companions and those who came after them, i.e. the tābī<sup>c</sup>īn, acted upon this. This is the stance of Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik b. Anas, <sup>c</sup>Abdullah b. Mubārak, Shāfi<sup>c</sup>, Ahmad (b. Hambal) and Ishāq. They all disapproved of a person fasting on the day in which there is doubt.

As for the first view, Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf has dismissed it in his *Awnul Ma'bud* by stating:

And the view towards which Ahmad b. Hambal has leaned is a weak view.

One may ask how Imam Ahmad b. Hambal's first listed view is weak whereas Ibn Jawzī has written:

مسألة: إذا حال دون مطلع الهلال غيم أو قتر ليلة  
الثلاثين من شعبان فعن أحمد ثلاث روايات:  
إحدهن أنه يجب صوم الثلاثين بنية من رمضان...  
والرواية الثانية في المسألة لا يجوز صيامه من رمضان  
ولا نفلا بل يجوز قضاءً وكفارةً ونذراً ونفلاً يوافق  
عادة وهذا قول الشافعي. والرواية الثالثة أن المرجع  
إلى رأي الإمام في الصوم والفطر

50

حديث عمار حديث حسن صحيح والعمل على  
هذا، عند أكثر أهل العلم من أصحاب النبي صلى  
الله عليه وسلم ومن بعدهم من التابعين وبه يقول  
سفيان الثوري ومالك بن أنس وعبد الله بن مبارك  
والشافعي وأحمد وإسحاق، كرهوا أن يصوم الرجل  
الذي يشك فيه

وما ذهب إليه أحمد بن حنبل هو قول ضعيف<sup>51</sup>

This is the opinion of ʿUmar, ʿAli, Ibn ʿUmar, Muʿāwiah, ʿAmr b. ʿĀṣ, Anas, Abu Hurairah, ʿĀishah and Asmā (may Allah have mercy on them all), and great tābiʿīn such as Ṭaʿōs, Mujāhid, Sālim, Bakr b. ʿAbdullah, Muṭarrāf and Maimōn b. Mahrān amongst others.

وهذا مذهب عمر وعلي وابن عمر ومعاوية وعمرو  
بن العاص وأنس وأبي هريرة وعائشة وأسماء وقال به  
من كبار التابعين طاوس ومجاهد وسالم وبكر بن عبد  
الله ومطرف وميمون بن مهران في آخرين

The answer is that some of the names Ibn Jawzī has taken do not really add up against the available narrations thus affecting the credibility of this statement. As for ʿUmar and ʿAli, the instructions they used to issue in their sermons, which were mentioned several pages ago, contradict this opinion. As for Ibn Umar, although he used to fast on the Day of Doubt, we do not find narrations reporting that he would discourage and prevent others from fasting on this day; this is illustrated in the following narration:

ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ḥakīm reported: I heard Ibn ʿUmar saying, “If I were to fast the entire year, I would definitely leave out fasting the day when there is doubt over it being (the first of) Ramadhan.” Thawrī also reported ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz said: I personally saw Ibn ʿUmar ordering a person to refrain from fasting on the Day of Doubt!

عن عبد العزيز بن حكيم الحضرمي قال: سمعت ابن  
عمر يقول: لو صمت السنة كلها لأفطرت ذلك  
اليوم الذي يشك فيه من رمضان. ورواه الثوري عن  
عبد العزيز قال: رأيت ابن عمر يأمر رجلا يفطر في  
اليوم الذي يشك فيه<sup>52</sup>

Ibn Jawzī has been hasty in discrediting the aforementioned narration by stating:

This narration is unauthentic. Abu Ḥātīm al-Rāzī has rendered ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ḥakīm a weak narrator.

أنه لا يصح وقد ضعف أبو حاتم الرازي عبد العزيز  
بن حكيم

But this criticism really does not affect the reliability of this narration due to Abu Ḥātīm being the sole critic of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and without any given reason.

As for Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), this opinion does not really fair well with the following narration:

Qatādah related that people were differing about a day which was not known (with certainty) to be a day of Ramadhan or Shaʿbān. Therefore we approached Anas and found him sitting having lunch.

عن قتادة قال: اختلفوا في يوم لا يدري أمن رمضان  
هو أم من شعبان فأتينا أنسا فوجدناه جالسا يتغدى<sup>53</sup>

As for Abu Hurairah and ʿĀishah (may Allah be pleased with them), their statements make it evident that they used to fast on the Day of Doubt only on the precautionary basis and not on the basis that they were obliged to fast that day with the intent of fasting for Ramadhan. Their statements follow:

‘Abdullah b. Abī Mōsa asked ‘Āishah (may Allah be pleased with her) about fasting on the day when people are in doubt. She replied, “To fast a day of Sha‘bān is more beloved to me than leaving out a day of Ramadhan.”

عن عبد الله بن أبي موسى، مولى لبني نصر، أنه سأل عائشة رضي الله عنها عن اليوم الذي يشك فيه الناس فقالت: لأن أصوم يوماً من شعبان أحب إلي من أن أفطر يوماً من رمضان. لفظ حديث روح، وفي رواية يزيد عن الشهر "إذا غم" ولم يقل مولى لبني نصر  
54

Abu Hurairah said, “To fast on the day in which there is doubt over it being from Sha‘bān is more beloved to me than leaving out a day of Ramadhan.”

عن أبي هريرة قال: لأن أصوم اليوم الذي يشك فيه من شعبان أحب إلي من أن أفطر يوماً من رمضان<sup>55</sup>

Upon relating this narration, Imam Baihaqi has gone ahead to discredit it by stating:

This is what has been narrated from Abu Hurairah through this chain; however, Abu Salamah’s report from Abu Hurairah from the Prophet ﷺ regarding the prohibition of preceding (the month of Ramadhan in fasting), except if that day coincides with a fast a person regularly keeps, is more authentic.

كذا روي عن أبي هريرة بهذا الإسناد ورواية أبي سلمة عن أبي هريرة عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم في النهي عن التقدم إلا أن يوافق صوماً كان يصومه أصح من ذلك

These reports clearly show that, out of the nine companions whose names Ibn Jawzī has taken, six did not hold the view of fasting with the intention of Ramadhan being obligatory on the Day of Doubt. Rather ‘Umar, ‘Ali and Ibn ‘Umar used to discourage people from fasting on that day, Anas used to discard fasting on that day and ‘Āishah as well as Abu Hurairah would fast on that day only on the precautionary basis. As for Asmā, although she would fast on the Day of Doubt, there is no narration available to clarify what intention she would fast with, unless if a person would like to speculate. Likewise, there is no report available to explain the conduct of the listed tābi‘īn. Thus the accuracy of Ibn Jawzī’s statement falls under question.

In short, Imam Ahmad’s view of having to fast on the 30<sup>th</sup> of Sha‘bān with the intention of Ramadhan, provided the crescent was obscured the night before, is an unsupported view and should not be used to dictate the intentions of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all), especially when he himself was not inclined to that opinion.

In light of all the information until now, it is safe to conclude that the interpretation adopted by the majority of jurists for the prophetic words “estimate it” to mean “complete the duration of 30 days” is a valid interpretation and the only accurate one, as will be clarified in the coming pages.

## Second Interpretation of the Phrase “Estimate it”

The second interpretation found for the prophetic phrase *fuqdurō labu* is what Ibn Qudamah writes in *al-Mughnī*:

The implication of “calculate it” is to restrict the counting for it. This interpretation is derived from Allah’s (be he exalted) statement, “...And he whose sustenance has been restricted...” i.e. limited upon him, and Allah’s statement, “...He expands provisions for whoever he likes and restricts it...” And restricting it would be by rendering Sha‘bān 29 days long. Ibn ‘Umar has explained the meanings of the hadith through his actions. He is the narrator of it and is better equipped with the knowledge of its true meanings. Therefore, it is obligatory to turn to his explanation.

In this statement Ibn Qudamah is basically saying that the meaning of *fuqdurō labu* is ‘restrict it’ based on the two quoted verses and thus the implication of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith would be ‘restrict the month of Sha‘bān to 29 days if the crescent is not sighted on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> due to obscurities.’ This means that the next day would be the first of Ramadhan and to fast that day with the intention of Ramadhan is obligatory. This was the practice of the narrator of the hadith and, because he is the narrator, he would know the implications of his narration better than anyone else. Therefore, to adhere to this interpretation is mandatory.

It should be noted that Ibn Qudamah supports the first of Imam Ahmad’s three views listed by Ibn Jawzī. Although the word *qadara* does hold the meaning of ‘restriction’, to use this meaning in this hadith out of the many other meanings this word holds would be in contrast to the other, over 70, ahādēth in which the Prophet ﷺ has instructed us to complete 30 days of the month in the case of obscurities. These instructions have also been narrated by Ibn ‘Umar himself through 12 different chains and it has already been established that Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with both of them) would keep only a supplementary fast on that day and not a Ramadhan fast. Above all, this interpretation is at odds with the authentic hadith reported by ‘Āishah:

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ would be watchful in Sha‘bān in a manner such that he would not be as watchful in other months. He would commence the fast of Ramadhan upon sighting it. If it happened to be obscured to him, he would count 30 days (for Sha‘bān) and then fast.

Ibn Qudamah has further argued his point by stating:

It has been reported from ‘Imrān that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ asked an individual, “Did you keep any fasts in the last days of Sha‘bān?” The man replied, “No.” According to another narration the Prophet ﷺ enquired, “Did you keep any fasts in the last days of this month?” The man replied in the negative. The Prophet ﷺ then instructed, “When you finish your fasts (of Ramadhan), fast for two days.”<sup>59</sup> The last days of the month are those nights when the moon is invisible and not manifest.

ومعنى "اقدروا له" أي ضيقوا له العدد من قوله تعالى ﴿... وَمَنْ قَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ ...﴾<sup>56</sup> أي ضيق عليه وقوله ﴿... يَسْطُرُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ...﴾<sup>57</sup> والتضييق له أن يجعل شعبان تسعة وعشرين يوماً، وقد فسره ابن عمر بفعله وهو راويه وأعلم بمعناه فيجب الرجوع إلى تفسيره

كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يتحفظ من شعبان ما لا يتحفظ من غيره ثم يصوم لرؤيته رمضان فإن غم عليه عد ثلاثين يوماً ثم صام<sup>58</sup>

روي عن عمران أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال لرجل: هل صمت من سرر شعبان شيئاً؟ فقال: لا. وفي لفظ: أصمت من سرر هذا الشهر شيئاً؟ قال: لا. قال: فإذا أفطرت فصم يومين - متفق عليه، وسرر الشهر آخره ليال يستر الهلال فلا يظهر

The two narrations Ibn Qudamah is referring to in this statement are as follows:

‘Imrān b. Ḥuṣein (may Allah be pleased with both of them) reported that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ asked either him or someone else, “Did you fast in the final days of Sha‘bān?” He replied, “No.” The Prophet ﷺ then instructed, “When you finish your fasts, fast two days.”

عن عمران بن حصين رضي الله عنهما أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال له أو لآخر: أصمت من سرر شعبان؟ قال: لا. قال: فإذا أفطرت فصم يومين<sup>60</sup>

‘Imrān b. Ḥuṣein (may Allah be pleased with both of them) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ asked a man, “Did you keep any fasts in the final days of this month?” The person answered, “No.” The Prophet ﷺ then said, “When you finish the fasts of Ramadhan, fast two days in its place.”

عن عمران بن حصين رضي الله عنهما أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال لرجل: هل صمت من سرر هذا الشهر شيئاً؟ فقال: لا. قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: فإذا أفطرت من رمضان فصم يومين مكانه<sup>61</sup>

In these ahadith we can clearly see that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ ordered one of his companions to make up for two fasts which he did not keep in the final days of Sha‘bān. Through this, Ibn Qudamah has attempted to establish that it is obligatory for one to fast on the final day of Sha‘bān with the intention of Ramadhan whenever the crescent is obscured the night before. However, by taking a careful look at these ahadith we find that they do not support Ibn Qudamah’s view in any way; rather, they are totally unrelated to the topic being discussed. In these ahadith, the Prophet ﷺ is asking a particular companion whether he fasted in the final days of Sha‘bān or not. The phrase ‘final days’ has been translated from the Arabic word *as-sarar*. ‘Allāma ‘Ainī has quoted ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb’s definition of this word in his *‘Umdat ul-Qāri* to be:

*as-sarar* is the end of the month when the moon becomes invisible; on the eve of the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

السّرر آخر الشهر حين يستسرّ الهلال لثمان وعشرين ولتسع وعشرين<sup>62</sup>

This definition is acknowledged by Ibn Qudamah in his statement:

And the *sarar* of the month is the end of the month; the nights when the moon is invisible and not manifest.

وسرر الشهر آخره ليال يستر الهلال فلا يظهر

The invisibility of the moon on these nights is not due to obscurities in the sky, but due to completing it’s lunar phases. At this point the moon appears so close to the sun in the sky upon completing its cycle that it cannot be seen even near sunset or sunrise. At this point, the moon is known as the Dark Moon and may last from 1.5 to 3.5 days. The conjunction occurs within this period and that is why we look out for the first moon on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup>.

In light of this information, we come to understand that the Prophet ﷺ was asking that particular person whether he fasted on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of Sha‘bān, and upon receiving

a response in the negative, he ﷺ instructed him to make up for those two fasts after Ramadhan. What the Prophet ﷺ was clearly not asking was whether the man fasted on the 30<sup>th</sup> of Sha‘bān with the intention of Ramadhan due to the crescent being obscured the night before.

One may argue: How is it possible that the Prophet ﷺ ordered that individual to make up for the fasts of the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of Sha‘bān when he has prohibited fasting on these days – a ruling to which the following ahadith are witness?

Ibn ‘Abbās reported: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “Do not precede the month (of Ramadhan) by fasting for one or two days except if it is a fast that you regularly keep. Do not fast until you see it and do not cease fasting until you see it. If a cloud comes in the way then complete the period of 30 and then discontinue fasting. The month is sometimes 29 days.”

عن ابن عباس قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: لا تقدموا الشهر بصيام يوم ولا يومين إلا أن يكون شئ يصومه أحدكم، ولا تصوموا حتى تروه ثم صوموا حتى تروه، فإن حال دونه غمامة فأتموا العدة ثلاثين ثم أفطروا، والشهر تسع وعشرون<sup>63</sup>

Abu Hurairah reported: the Prophet ﷺ said, “Do not precede the month (of Ramadhan by fasting) by one or two days except if that day coincides with a (day of) fasting you regularly observe. Fast upon seeing it and cease fast upon seeing it. If it is obscured to you then count 30 (days for the month) and then break the fast.”

عن أبي هريرة قال: قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: لا تقدموا الشهر بيوم ولا بيومين إلا أن يوافق ذلك صوما كان يصومه أحدكم؛ صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته، فإن غم عليكم فعدوا ثلاثين ثم أفطروا<sup>64</sup>

Imam Nawawi has responded to this objection by quoting al-Mazri in his commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*:

This person used to regularly fast at the end of the month or he had vowed to fast in this period; however, he abandoned the fasts over the fear of them being under the prohibition of fasting prior to Ramadhan. Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ clarified to him that habitual fasts are not under the prohibition. He only prohibited those fasts (in these days) that are not kept habitually. And Allah knows best.

هذا الرجل كان معتاد الصيام آخر الشهر أو نذره فتركه لخوفه من الدخول في النهي عن التقدم رمضان فبين له النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أن الصوم المعتاد لا يدخل في النهي وإنما ينهى عن غير المعتاد، والله أعلم

Subsequently, the Prophet ﷺ instructed him to make up for those two missed fasts after Ramadhan in order that he maintain his practice because “The most beloved deeds to Allah are those that are consistent even though they may be little.”<sup>65</sup>

In conclusion, Ibn Qudamah’s interpretation of *fuqdurō labu* is not supported by any prophetic tradition and, rather, it is at odds with the authentically confirmed instructions and practices of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ.

### Third Interpretation of the Phrase “Estimate it”

The third available interpretation for the words *fuqdurō labu* is what Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar writes in *Fath al-Bārī*:

Its meaning is that estimate it by calculating the phases.

معناه فاقدروه بحساب المنازل<sup>66</sup>

In other words, if the horizon is cloudy on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> due to which the crescent cannot be sighted, then the people should resort to astronomical calculations to determine whether the crescent is in the sky or not. Thereafter, based on the available astronomical data, they should decide whether the following day would be the 30<sup>th</sup> of Sha‘bān or the first of Ramadhan. Ibn Ḥajar further writes:

This interpretation was adopted by Abu al-‘Abbās b. Suraij from amongst the Shāfi‘ī scholars, Muṭarrāf b. ‘Abdullah from amongst the tābi‘īn and Ibn Qutaibah from the scholars of hadith.

قاله أبو العباس بن سوريح من شافعية ومطرف بن عبد الله من التابعين وابن قتيبة من المحدثين

However, Ibn Ḥajar is haste in challenging the significance of this interpretation by firstly trying to ascertain whether these personalities really maintained this view, as it is widely believed, and, if they did, whether they were of a position as to issue such a fatwa. He writes:

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr mentioned: This view is incorrectly attributed to Muṭarrāf (i.e. there is no authentic chain through which we can trace this view back to him.) As for Ibn Qutaibah, he is not amongst those upon whom one can rely in such matters (i.e. although he is a scholar of hadith, he is not of such calibre that people can turn to him for jurisprudence related issues; being an expert in hadith does not imply that one automatically qualifies as an expert if jurisprudence. Therefore, his view is negligible.)

قال ابن عبد البر: لا يصح عن مطرف، وإما ابن قتيبة فليس هو ممن يعرج عليه في مثل هذا

In short, out of the three names listed, Muṭarrāf did not really hold such a stance on this issue, and as for Ibn Qutaibah, although he did maintain this view, he was not qualified enough to issue such verdicts.

As for the Shāfi‘ī scholar, Ibn Suraij, his view on astronomical calculations is not free from any complexity; Ibn Ḥajar writes:

Ibn al-‘Arabī quoted Ibn Suraij that the Prophet’s ﷺ statement “and estimate it” is addressed to those people whom Allah has favoured with this knowledge (of astronomy), and his ﷺ statement “complete the duration” is addressed to the general public. Ibn al-‘Arabī observers, “That means, according to him, the means through which Ramadhan becomes compulsory vary. It is compulsory on some people through calculations of the sun and moon while on others it becomes mandatory through counting (the days).” He then concludes, “This (interpretation) is farfetched from the highly intellectual.”

ونقل ابن العربي عن ابن سريح أن قوله "فاقدروا له" خطاب لمن خصه الله بهذا العلم وأن قوله "فأكملوا العدة" خطاب العامة. قال ابن العربي: فصار وجوب رمضان عنده مختلف الحال يجب على قوم بحساب الشمس والقمر وعلى آخرين بحساب العدد. قال: وهذا بعيد عن النبلاء<sup>67</sup>

Ibn Suraij's view becomes even more complicated as latter day scholars differ amongst themselves over whether he maintained that following astronomical calculations was simply a legitimate option or an obligation. Ibn Hajar writes:

Ar-Rōyānī reported from Ibn Suraij that he did not say that this method is mandatory. He only mentioned it being permissible. This is the adopted view of Qaffāl and Abu Ṭayyib. As for Abu Ishāq in *al-Mubathab*, he has quoted Ibn Suraij that fasting is mandatory in this scenario (i.e. it is obligatory to fast by determining the presence of the crescent in the horizon through astronomical calculations.) Consequently, the opinions have become multiple on this issue, specifically in regards to calculations. (Those opinions are as follows):

1. It is permissible to use calculations; however, they are insufficient to determine the obligatory fasts.
2. It is permissible and sufficient.
3. It is permissible and sufficient for astronomers but not an astrologer.
4. It is permissible for them and for others to follow a particular astronomer but not an astrologer.
5. It is generally permissible (to rely on calculations) for them (the astronomer and astrologer) and others.

In short, it is quite difficult to ascertain exactly which view Ibn Suraij maintained. One thing is for sure and that is that none of the Prophet's ﷺ companions, the people who were most acquainted with the meanings and implications of the Prophet's ﷺ words, had ever resorted to such an interpretation even though the method existed in their time and vicinity. The Jewish community was already practicing astronomical calculations in those days to determine the birth of the new moon, yet none of the Companions (may Allah have mercy on them all) had ever adopted that methodology even though it was available in their own backyard. Rather, the Prophet ﷺ, while making direct reference to this practice, ruled out the usage of astronomical calculations by proclaiming:

We are an unlettered nation; we neither write nor calculate. The month is like this and this. I.e. sometimes 29 days and sometimes 30 days

Qādī 'Iyyād' remarks:

The only reason the Prophet ﷺ described them with this quality (of illiteracy) was to abolish the practice of counting the phases (of the moon) and all the other ways of calculating non-Arabs used to adopt in determining the (dates) of their fasts, breaking fasts, and seasons.

ونقل الروياني عنه أنه لم يقل بوجوب ذلك عليه وإنما قال بجوازه وهو اختيار القفال وأبي الطيب، وإما أبو إسحاق في المذهب فنقل عن ابن سريج لزوم الصوم في هذا الصورة فتعددت الآراء في هذه المسألة بالنسبة إلى خصوص النظر في الحساب والمنازل: أحدها الجواز ولا يجزئ عن الفرض. ثانيها يجوز ويجزئ. ثالثها يجوز للحاسب ويجزئه لا للمنجم. رابعها يجوز لهما ولغيرهما تقليد الحاسب دون المنجم. خامسها يجوز لهما ولغيرهما مطلقاً<sup>68</sup>

إنا أمة أمية لا نكتب ولا نحسب؛ الشهر هكذا وهكذا، يعني مرة تسعة وعشرين ومرة ثلاثين<sup>69</sup>

وإنما وصفهم بذلك طرحا للإعتداد بالمنازل وطرق الحساب الذي تعود عليه الأعاجم في صومها وفطرها وفصلها<sup>70</sup>



Ibn Hajar writes in *Fath al-Bārī*:

The Arabs were called unlettered because writing skills were lacking amongst them. Allah most high has said, “It is He who sent among the illiterates a messenger from amongst themselves...” One cannot object that there were among them those who could write and calculate (therefore, why have they been labelled illiterate?). It is because writing skills were rare amongst them. The meaning of “calculate” in this narration is astronomical calculations. That they did not know much about that either, except for an insignificant amount. Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ made the ruling of fasting and other things contingent upon actual sighting to remove all types of hardship from them by taking up astronomical calculations. This ruling will continue (in determining the commencement of) the fasting period even though there may be people (that will emerge) after them who will be acquainted with this science. Rather, the apparent context of the hadith indicates towards the rejection of connecting the ruling (of fasting) with calculations altogether. The Prophet’s ﷺ statement in the past hadith clarifies this – “if it happens to be obscured to you then complete the period of 30 days.” He did not instruct ‘then ask the astronomers.’

وقيل للعرب أميون لأن الكتابة كانت فيهم عزيزة؛  
قال الله تعالى ﴿هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا  
مِّنْهُمْ...﴾<sup>71</sup> ولا يراد على ذلك أنه كان فيهم من  
يكتب ويحسب لأن الكتابة كانت فيهم قليلة نادرة،  
والمراد بالحساب هنا حساب النجوم وتسييرها ولم  
يكونوا يعرفون من ذلك أيضا إلا التزير اليسير فعلق  
الحكم بالصوم وغيره بالرؤية لرفع الحرج عنهم في  
معاونة حساب التسيير واستمر الحكم في الصوم ولو  
حدث بعدهم من يعرف ظاهر السياق يشعر بنفسه  
تعليق الحكم بالحساب أصلا ويوضحه قوله في  
الحديث الماضي "فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة  
ثلاثين" ولم يقل فسلوا أهل الحساب<sup>72</sup>

The argument that is used by people today that moon sighting was prescribed by the Prophet ﷺ to confirm the month of Ramadhan because it was the only available method in those days to attain certainty is a clear display of ignorance. Calculating lunar conjunctions was practiced by Babylonians before 300 BCE. The value they used to measure the interval between lunar conjunctions was 29 days, 12 hours and 793 parts (or 29-12-793). This value was later adopted by the Greek astronomer Hipparchus (c. 190-120 BCE) and the Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy (c. 90-168 CE).<sup>73</sup> Its remarkable accuracy was achieved by using records of lunar eclipses from the eight to fifth centuries BCE. The value 29-12-793 was almost exactly correct at the time of Hillel II.

Hillel II was a Jewish communal and a religious authority (c. 330-365 BCE) and is regarded as the creator of the modern fixed Hebrew calendar. Rabbinic tradition ascribes to him an enactment that proved to be extremely beneficial to his co-religionists of his own and of subsequent generations. To equalize the lunar year with that of the solar, and thereby render possible the universal celebrations of the festivals on the days designated in the Bible, occasional intercalations of a day in a month and of a month in a year were required.

These intercalations were determined at meetings of a special commission of the Sanhedrin. But Constantius II, following the tyrannous precedents of Hadrian, prohibited the holding of such meetings. However, despite all odds, Hillel II went ahead and devised a fixed and authorized calendar for all time to come.<sup>74</sup>

This newly introduced calendar consisted of 12 lunar months with an additional month added every two or three years to be in accordance with a 19-year cycle of 235 lunar

months (12 regular months every year and seven embolismic months every 19 years). Each month is tied to an excellent calculation of the average time taken by the moon to cycle from lunar conjunction to lunar conjunction.

This calendar was later embraced by the international Jewish community. It was the very calendar followed by the Jewish community of Madinah and is the very calendar adhered to by present day Jews. This makes it clear that astronomical calculations are not the innovations of modern science; rather, these calculations (in specific, the calculations used to determine lunar conjunction) have been introduced and were in use centuries before the Prophet's ﷺ era. Although they may have not been as precise as they are today is really not an issue. The very fact that they were being practiced is what really matters in our case. Therefore, to contend that moon sighting was prescribed by the Prophet ﷺ in those days because it was the only way to achieve certainty is absolutely incorrect.

If the Prophet ﷺ really wanted us to resort to calculating lunar conjunctions on an overcast eve, even if it were the case that no one was familiar with this science, he would have surely appointed a team of his companions (or at the very least a single companion) to learn this methodology especially when it was being used by his own neighbours. When he appointed Zaid b. Thābit (may Allah be pleased with him) to learn how to write in Hebrew when Zaid was only 11, what prevented him from forming a team to learn this beneficial science? Imam Mazzi has related the following narration in his extraordinary book, *Tabdhib al-Kamāl*, while discussing the biography of Zaid b. Thābit:

Khārijah b. Zaid b. Thābit related from his father: I was brought to the Prophet ﷺ upon his arrival in Madinah. People told him, "O Allah's Messenger ﷺ this is a boy from the clan of Banu Najjār. He has learned 17 surahs from the revelation that has come down upon you." I then recited to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and the recitation pleased him. He then requested, "O Zaid, learn the Jewish script for me (i.e. the Hebrew language). By Allah I do not trust the Jews with my letters." I then learned the language and mastered it in half a month. Thereafter I began writing letters for Allah's Messenger ﷺ (in Hebrew) whenever he wanted to send a letter to them (the Jews). And whenever they would write to him, I would read those letters to him.

وقال خارج بن زيد بن ثابت عن أبيه: أتى بي النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم مقدمه المدينة فقالوا: يا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم هذا غلام من بني النجار قد قرأ مما أنزل عليك سبع عشرة سورة. قال: فقرأت على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فأعجبه ذلك فقال: يا زيد تعلم لي كتاب يهود فإني والله ما آمن يهود على كتابي. قال: فتعلمته فما مضى لي نصف شهر حتى حدقته فكنت أكتب لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم إذا كتب إليهم وإذا كتبوا إليه قرأت له. أخبرنا بذلك أبو الحسن ابن البخاري قال: أنبأنا عبد الله بن دهب بن كاره الحريمي قال: أخبرنا القاضي أبو بكر الأنصاري قال: أخبرنا أبو الحسين بن المهتدي بالله قال: أخبرنا أبو القاسم بن الجراح قال: أخبرنا أبو القاسم البغوي قال: حدثنا داود بن عمرو الضبي قال: حدثنا عبد الرحمن بن أبي الزناد عن أبيه عن خارجة بن زيد بن ثابت عن أبيه فذكره<sup>75</sup>

Some people in the present day defend the interpretation of astronomical calculations by writing:

Although this interpretation is at odds with the majority opinion, it is in line with the linguistic meanings of the word *fuqdurō labu*. The same phrase is used in the famous hadith of Dajjal in which the Prophet (PBUH) informed the Companions that at the time of Dajjal the real time would seem to be extending tremendously so much so that a day, during that period, will be equal to a year, to a month or even to a week. The Companions asked how to perform the five daily prayers then. In response the Prophet (PBUH) replied, “*fuqdurō labu*, meaning do calculations for it.” There is no way to interpret the phrase as 29 or 30 days or completion. It definitely means estimations. The hadith is as follows:

Nawwās b. Sam‘ān al-Kilābī reported: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ discussed Dajjal and stated, “If he is to emerge while I am among you then I will be his opponent in your defence. However, if he is to emerge while I am not among you then every man is his own defendant and Allah is my deputy upon each Muslim. Whoever meets him from amongst you, he should recite the opening versus of Surah Kahf for it will definitely serve as your protector from his corruption.” We asked, “How long will his stay be within the Earth?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “40 days; one day the equivalent of a year, another day the equivalent of a month and another day the equivalent of a week. The remainder of the days will be like your regular days.” We then asked, “O Allah’s Messenger, this day that will be equivalent to a year, will the prayer for one day and one night be sufficient for us within it?” The Prophet ﷺ answered, “No; rather you will have to make calculations for it.”

حدثنا صفوان بن صالح الدمشقي المؤذن: أخبرنا الوليد: أخبرنا ابن جابر: حدثني يحيى بن جابر الطائي عن عبد الرحمن بن جبير بن نفير عن أبيه عن النواس بن سمعان الكلابي قال: ذكر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم الدجال فقال: إن يخرج وأنا فيكم حجيجه دونكم وإن يخرج ولست فيكم فامرؤ حجيج نفسه والله خليفتي على كل مسلم، فمن أدرك منكم فليقرأ عليه بفواتح سورة الكهف فإنما جواركم من فنتته. قلنا: وما لبته في الأرض؟ قال: أربعون يوماً؛ يوم كسنة ويوم كشهر ويوم كجمعة وسائر أيامه كأيامكم. فقلنا: يا رسول الله هذا اليوم الذي كسنة أتكفيها فيه صلاة يوم وليلة؟ قال: لا، اقدروا له قدره<sup>76</sup>

What is being stated here is absolutely true. There is no way to interpret the phrase *uqdurō labu* in this hadith as ‘complete 30 days’. Without a shadow of a doubt, this phrase does refer to estimations and calculations. However, what is being overlooked here is that the conjunction of *uqdurō labu* used in this narration differs from the conjunction in the ahadith related to the commencement of the fasting period. In this hadith the Prophet ﷺ has used the words *uqdurō labu qadrah*. Here the verb *uqdurō* (“estimate it”) is followed by an unrestricted object, *qadrah*. This unrestricted object is technically known as *al-Maf’ol al-Muṭlaq* according to the rules of Arabic grammar. Its function is to affirm and emphasize the meaning of the verb preceding it. By issuing these instructions in this particular manner, the Prophet ﷺ has emphasized the usage of calculations but has left the actual method of calculation unspecified since that would depend on the available information and analytical tools of the time. On the other hand, the conjunction used in the ahadith of fasting is *uqdurō labu thalāthīn*<sup>77</sup>. In this phrase the Prophet ﷺ has mentioned a direct object after the verb. By doing so, he has restricted the actual calculation to the mentioned figure thus leaving no

room for further interpretation. Therefore, when there exists such a tremendous difference between the two conjunctions, one cannot be used to determine the meaning of the other.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, there are a total of three interpretations for the words *uqduro labir*:

1. Calculate the month as 30 days; i.e. complete 30 days of the month
2. Restrict the month to 29 days
3. Estimate the position of the moon through astronomical calculations

After carrying out a thorough analysis of each interpretation, we can safely conclude that the most accurate one is the first, the one adopted by the majority of scholars. The last two, although correct from a linguistic stand point, do not comply with the detailed narrations pertaining to the matter and nor are they in line with the established practices of Allah's Messenger ﷺ. Therefore, Ibn 'Umar's hadith (may Allah be pleased with them both) cannot be used as evidence to support the validity of adopting astronomical calculations in determining the new lunar month.

Suppose we assume the third interpretation is the correct one. It still cannot serve as evidence to justify the stance adopted by the organization. The reason is that the hadith, in this scenario, allows us to resort to astronomical calculations only when the crescent cannot be sighted due to obscurities. But if the skies are clear, then the community is obliged to resort to actual sighting. The organization, on the other hand, maintains that actual moon sighting is not required in any situation – whether the skies are clear or cloudy – and that relying on astronomical calculations for determining the new lunar month is sufficient in all conditions.

## Issue 2: Ibn Daqīq's Statement

The second piece of evidence that is used to justify the stance of the organization is a statement issued by Ibn Daqīq al-Eid in *Iḥkām al-Abkām* where he mentions:

The actual sighting is not a prerequisite to fasting. There is agreement (among the jurists) that if someone was imprisoned in the basement and knew, either through completing 30 days or through estimation by following the signs, that the month of Ramadhan has started, then he is required to start fasting even if he has neither sighted the moon nor was informed by the one who actually sighted it.

وليس حقيقة الرؤية بشرط من اللزوم لأن الاتفاق  
على أن المحبوس في المظمورة إذا علم بإكمال العدة  
أو بالإجتهد بالإمارات أن اليوم من رمضان وجب  
عليه الصوم وإن لم ير الهلال ولا أخبره من رآه<sup>78</sup>

This statement is countered by Muhammad Fāris in his commentary on Ibn Jawzī's *al-Tabḥīq* in which he remarks:

Regarding the analogy made upon a person imprisoned in a basement (in order to dismiss the obligation of moon sighting), this is an incorrect analogy. The reason is that it is impossible for a person imprisoned in a basement to perceive the stipulated concept (of moon sighting) to the extent that, if people were to sight it (outside), he would still be unable to see it. Therefore, for him to turn to calculations and signs is a necessity because there is nothing else available for him through which he can be informed about the fasts. How can it be possible (for people) to turn to the information provided by astronomers when the law giver is telling us “If it happens to be obscured to you then complete the period of 30 days.”

وإما القياس على من حبس في مظمورة فقياس مع  
الفارق إذ من في المظمورة تعذر عليه معرفة المدرك  
المنصوص عليه حتى لو رآه الناس لما رآه فرجوعه إلى  
الحساب والقرائن بالضرورة لأنه ليس في حقه شيء  
يعرف به الصوم إلا ذلك، وكيف يرجع إلى قول  
الحاسب والشارع يقول: فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا  
العدة ثلاثين<sup>79</sup>

In other words, the reason why the imprisoned person is required to begin the fasts of Ramadhan based on his personal calculations is because it is impractical for him to exercise the instructions laid out by the Prophet ﷺ in this situation. In such circumstances, the following juristic principle will take effect:

Dire necessities legitimize forbidden things.

الضرورات تبيح المحظورات

As such, an injunction of this nature cannot be used to set a general principle for the masses, as is well known by the students of jurisprudence.

### Issue 3: Calculations as a Means to an End

Another argument used to legitimize astronomical calculations in lieu of physical sighting is: Moon sighting in itself cannot be the sole reason for prescribing the month of Ramadhan or the act of fasting; it must be a means to achieve the goal of certainty. Now if the goal of certainty can be achieved through a different and, in fact, more precise method, then following such a method would be as Islamic as sighting the moon with the naked eye. Currently, astronomical calculations are more precise than the sighting method. Therefore, the Islamic months should be confirmed by calculations and not by actual sighting.

This argument, as logical as it may seem, does not really fall in line with the reality of the matter. The beginning of Ramadhan (as well as the other 11 months of the lunar year) is determined by one of two factors:

1. The first moon is sighted on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> of Sha‘bān
2. Sha‘bān is completed as 30 days due to the crescent not appearing on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup>, or due to it being obscured by clouds

This is affirmed through the following hadith:

‘Abdullah b. ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with both of them) related: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “The month (can be) 29 nights, so do not fast until you see it (the crescent). If it happens to be obscured to you then complete the period of 30 days.”

عن عبد الله بن عمر رضي الله عنهما أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: الشهر تسع وعشرون ليلة فلا تصوموا حتى تروه، فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين<sup>80</sup>

Now when the crescent’s emergence in the evening horizon is the determining factor for the new lunar month, the question arises as to whether the means for confirming the crescent’s appearance is restricted to physical sighting by the naked eye or whether its appearance can be affirmed through other available analytical tools. The answer to this inquiry is found in the following ahadith:

Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allah be happy with both of them) said: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ explained, “Allah has undoubtedly extended it (the visibility of the crescent) in order for it to be seen. So if it happens to be obscured to you, then complete the period.”

قال ابن عباس رضي الله عنهما: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إن الله قد أمده لرؤيته، فإن أغمى عليكم فأكملوا العدة<sup>81</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās reported: the Prophet ﷺ said, “Certainly Allah has extended it (the visibility of the crescent) in order for it to be seen. If it is obscured to you then complete the period of Sha‘bān as 30 (days).”

قال ابن عباس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: إن الله أمده لرؤيته، وإن أغمى عليكم فأكملوا عدة شعبان ثلاثين<sup>82</sup>

Upon analyzing the Arabic text of these ahadith, we find that the verbal noun *ar-ru’yah* is preceded by the letter *lām*, which stands for *ta’lil* (to explain the reason). The function of this *lām* is to explain the motive behind the action portrayed before it through the verbal noun that is brought immediately after it. In these ahadith, the Prophet ﷺ is clearly explaining to us that the purpose behind Allah exposing the crescent in the evening sky is so that it be sighted and seen. This sighting is the goal for the crescent’s appearance and hence sighting is determined to be the sole means for confirming its emergence. This is why the Prophet ﷺ has repeatedly ordered, “Do not fast until you see the crescent and do not cease fasting until you see it”, “Fast upon seeing it and finish fasting upon seeing it.”

To this day, physical sighting is the only method available to affirm the crescent’s presence in the evening horizon. There is no such calculation currently in existence through which one can precisely predict the time and date of the crescent’s visibility with accuracy. The U.S. Naval Observatory has published on their website:

The visibility of the lunar crescent as a function of the Moon's "age" - the time counted from New Moon - is obviously of great importance to Muslims. The date and time of each New Moon can be computed exactly (see, for example, Phases of the Moon in Data Services) but the time that the Moon first becomes visible after the New Moon depends on many factors and cannot be predicted with certainty. In the first two days after New Moon, the young crescent Moon appears very low in the western sky after sunset, and must be viewed through bright twilight. It sets shortly after sunset. The sighting of the lunar crescent within one day of New Moon is usually difficult. The crescent at this time is quite thin, has a low surface brightness, and can easily be lost in the twilight. Generally, the lunar crescent will become visible to suitably-

located, experienced observers with good sky conditions about one day after New Moon. However, the time that the crescent actually becomes visible varies quite a bit from one month to another. The record for an early sighting of a lunar crescent, with a telescope, is 12.1 hours after New Moon; for naked-eye sightings, the record is 15.5 hours from New Moon. These are exceptional observations and crescent sightings this early in the lunar month should not be expected as the norm. For Islamic calendar purposes, the sighting must be made with the unaided eye.<sup>83</sup>

The renowned Muslim astronomer, Dr. Khalid Shauket has published in the FAQ's Moon section of his website, [www.moonsighting.com](http://www.moonsighting.com):

1.4 Question: Does determining the birth of the 'Hilal' depend on mathematical calculations only or with the aid of other factors such as observatories on earth and those orbiting?

Answer: Again, there is no such thing as birth of the 'hilal'. New Moon birth calculations are based on observation by observatories and they are not just mathematical calculations. What we calculate today for future may not be exact, because the orbits and speeds of (the) moon and (the) earth change[s] slightly and may be different 5 years from now.

1.5 Question: Does science absolutely negate[s] the possibility of seeing the 'hilal' with the human[e] eyes unless its age is for example 14 hours? At what age can the Hilal be seen with various tools including the naked eyes?

Answer: Science can give approximate hours (in which the) hilal can be seen with (the) naked eye, binoculars or (a) telescope. There is no exact answer, because there are many other factors that are more important for visibility.<sup>84</sup>

This clearly proves that the notion of calculations of the crescent's visibility being more precise than the sighting method is nothing but a myth.

It is true that the Qur'ān and Sunnah do not ban the use of calculations in religious matters (that is why we adopt it in matters of inheritance, prayer timings, determining the qiblah and so forth) but, when it comes to accurately calculating the time of the crescent's visibility, this is simply impractical and that is why calculations cannot be adopted in determining the date of the new lunar month. In the case of prayer, the stipulating cause for its compulsion is the arrival of its time. Ibn Nujaim writes in *al-Babr ur-Rāiq*:

Its stipulating cause is its timings according to the jurists

وسببها أوقاتها عند الفقهاء<sup>85</sup>

The timings of prayer are based upon the movement and position of the sun. Allah most high has commanded:

Establish prayer from the decline of the sun (from its meridian) until the darkness of the night (i.e. Ḍhuhr, °Asr, Maghrib and °Ishā) and (also) the recitation of dawn (Fajr). Indeed the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed.

﴿ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۚ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا ۗ ﴾<sup>86</sup>

The method for determining the position of the sun has never been fixed by neither Allah nor His Prophet ﷺ. During his era, the Prophet ﷺ would decide the time of Ḍhuhr and °Asr by either observing the sun or the shadows of the objects around him, the time of °Ishā by observing the twilight in the horizon and the time of Fajr by observing the first light in the skyline. He is not recorded to have ever instructed the likes of 'Pray upon seeing the

sun in a certain position in the sky and finish praying upon seeing it.’ Rather, Ibn ‘Abbās has reported:

حدثنا هناء بن السري: حدثنا عبد الرحمن بن أبي الزناد عن عبد الرحمن بن الحارث بن عياش بن أبي ربيعة عن حكيم بن حكيم - وهو بن عباد (بن حنيف): أخبرني نافع بن جبير بن مطعم قال: أخبرني ابن عباس أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: أماني جبريل عند البيت مرتين، فصلى الظهر في الأولى منهما حين كان الفياء مثل الشراك، ثم صلى العصر حين كان كل شيء مثل ظله، ثم صلى المغرب حين وجبت الشمس وأفطر الصائم، ثم صلى العشاء حين غاب الشفق، ثم صلى الفجر حين برق الفجر وحرم الطعام على الصائم. وصلى المرة الثانية الظهر حين كان ظل كل شيء مثله لوقت العصر بالأمس، ثم صلى العصر حين كان ظل كل شيء مثليه، ثم صلى المغرب لوقته الأول، ثم صلى العشاء الآخرة حين ذهب ثلث الليل، ثم صلى الصبح حين أسفرت الأرض. ثم التقت إلي جبريل فقال: يا محمد هذا وقت الأنبياء من قبلك والوقت فيما بين هذين الوقتين<sup>87</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ mentioned: Jibrīl led me in prayer for two days by the house (of Allah; the Ka‘bah). He led Ḍhuhr on the first day when the shade was equivalent to a shoelace, ‘Asr when every object was equal to its shadow (in length), Maghrib when the sun had set and a fasting person breaks his fast, ‘Ishā when the twilight disappeared and Fajr at first light when eating becomes prohibited for a fasting person. On the second day he led Ḍhuhr when the shadow of every object was equal to the size of that object i.e. at the time of ‘Asr the day before, ‘Asr when the shadow of everything was twice its size, Maghrib at the same time as on the first day, ‘Ishā when a third of the night had passed and Fajr when the earth was full of light. Thereafter he turned to me and said, “O Muhammad, these are the (prayer) timings of the prophets before you. The time (of each prayer) is between these two timings.”

In this hadith the Prophet ﷺ observed Ḍhuhr and ‘Asr behind Jibrīl (peace upon him be) for two days after affirming their timings through the size of the shadows of the objects around them. However, in another hadith we find that the Prophet ﷺ would also observe these two prayers based on the sun’s position in the sky:



Abu Mōsa reported that a person approached Allah’s Messenger ﷺ and asked him about prayer timings. The Prophet ﷺ did not give him any reply. He later performed Fajr at daybreak when people could just about recognize one another. Then he ordered (Bilāl to call the athaan) and performed Ḍuhr when the sun moved (from its meridian), a time when a person would have said, ‘It has just become midday’; however the Prophet ﷺ knew better than them. Thereafter he ordered (Bilāl to give the athaan) and then performed ‘Asr while the sun was still high in the sky. Afterwards he ordered (Bilāl to call the athaan once again) and then performed Maghrib at sunset. Later he instructed (Bilāl to give the athaan) and then performed ‘Ishā when the twilight disappeared.

(The next day) he delayed Fajr to the extent that he turned away (after completing the prayer) when a person would have said, ‘The sun has risen’ or ‘It has almost risen.’ He delayed Ḍuhr until it was almost the (same) time as ‘Asr the day before. He delayed ‘Asr to the extent that he turned away (upon finishing the prayer) when a person would have said, ‘The sun has become red.’ He delayed Maghrib until it was about time for the twilight to disappear and he delayed ‘Ishā until the end of the first third of the night.

The next morning the Prophet ﷺ called the person and explained, “The (prayer) time is between these two (timings).”

We also find that the Prophet ﷺ instructed his companions to determine the time of Maghrib not only by seeing the sunset, but by witnessing the darkness of the night approaching from the east as well:

‘Abdullah b. Abi ‘Awfā related: We travelled with the Prophet ﷺ while he was fasting. When the sun had set he instructed, “Get down and mix the drink for us.” One person suggested, “O Allah’s Messenger, if only you would wait for the night.” He ﷺ replied, “Get down and prepare the drink for us.” The person expressed, “O Allah’s Messenger, there is still daylight upon you.” The Prophet ﷺ once again ordered, “Get down and make the drink.” A person then finally got down and prepared the drink. Thereafter the Prophet ﷺ explained “When you see the night approaching from there then the fasting person’s fast is over” and he pointed with his finger to the east.

حدثنا محمد بن عبد الله بن نمير: حدثنا أبي: حدثنا بدر بن عثمان: حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي موسى عن أبيه عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه أتاه سائل يسأله عن مواقيت الصلاة. فلم يرد عليه شيئاً. قال: فأقام الفجر حين انشق الفجر والناس لا يكاد يعرف بعضهم بعضاً، ثم أمره فأقام بالظهر حين زالت الشمس. والقائل يقول: قد انتصف النهار وهو كان أعلم منهم، ثم أمره فأقام بالعصر والشمس مرتفعة، ثم أمره فأقام المغرب حين وقعت الشمس، ثم أمره فأقام العشاء حين غاب الشفق، ثم أمره فأقام الفجر من الغد حتى انصرف منها. والقائل يقول: قد طلعت الشمس أو كادت، ثم أمره فأقام الظهر حتى كان قريباً من وقت العصر بالأمس، ثم أمره فأقام حتى انصرف منها. والقائل يقول: قد احمرت الشمس، ثم أمره فأقام المغرب حتى كان عند سقوط الشفق، ثم أمره فأقام العشاء حتى كان ثلث الليل الأول، ثم أصبح فدعا السائل فقال: الوقت بين هذين<sup>88</sup>

حدثنا مسدد: حدثنا عبد الواحد: حدثنا الشيباني سليمان قال: سمعت عبد الله بن أبي أوفى رضي الله عنهما قال: سرنا مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وهو صائم، فلما غربت الشمس قال: أنزل فاجدح لنا. قال: يا رسول الله لو أسست قال: أنزل فاجدح لنا. قال: يا رسول الله إن عليك نهاراً. قال: أنزل فاجدح لنا. فترل فجدح ثم قال: إذا رأيتم الليل أقبل من ههنا فقد أفطر الصائم. وأشار بإصبعه قبل المشرق<sup>89</sup>

These narrations clearly demonstrate that the Prophet ﷺ never adhered to a specific method in judging the sun's position in order to determine the time for prayer; rather, he adopted whatever method was conveniently available. Today, astronomical computations of the sun are a reliable way of knowing the sun's position at any given time and thus have been accepted and adopted by scholars to fix prayer timings.

However, the case for Ramadhan fasts is quite different. The stipulating cause for these fasts is witnessing the month of Ramadhan. Ibn Nujaim writes:

The stipulating cause for (the fasts of) Ramadhan is to witness even a portion of the month without any difference of opinion (between the jurists).

وسبب رمضان شهود جزء من الشهر اتفاقاً<sup>90</sup>

This principle has been derived from the following Qur'ānic verse:

...So whoever witnesses the month, he should fast it....

﴿... فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ...﴾<sup>91</sup>

The month of Ramadhan (along with all the other months of the lunar calendar) can be determined only through one of two methods (as has already been discussed in detail):

1. By observing the crescent on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup>
2. By completing 30 days of the month due to not having sighted the crescent on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup>

Allah has made the crescent (the illuminated portion of the moon which is visible on the first night of the new month) a time telling instrument. He explains:

They ask you (O Muhammad) about the crescents. Say they are measurements of time for the people....

﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلِ صَلَّى قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ ...﴾<sup>92</sup>

One of its functions is to tell the time of the new lunar month. It's appearance in the evening horizon indicates the arrival of the new month. This is why the Prophet ﷺ stated:

Certainly Allah has made the crescents measurements of time for the people; therefore fast upon seeing it and finish fast upon seeing it. If it happens to be obscured to you then count the month as 30 days.

إن الله جعل الأهلة مواقيت للناس قصوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته، فإن غم عليكم فعدوا له ثلاثين يوماً<sup>93</sup>

In this hadith the Prophet ﷺ has pointed out the time-telling instrument to be used for determining the new month and has then explained how it is to be used. To replace this prescribed method with astronomical calculations is a colossal mistake for two reasons:

1. It is against the orders of Allah's Messenger ﷺ
2. It is not even a reliable method because of its impracticality

## Issue 4: the Prophet's Sighting

The advocates of astronomical calculations have also contested that the Prophet ﷺ himself started or ended the month without resorting to actual sighting or completing 30 days, by citing the following hadith:

Umme Salamah related that the Prophet ﷺ vowed to keep aloof from his wives for a month. When 29 days had passed, he went back to his wives either in the morning or afternoon. Someone said to him, "You vowed to not enter (your wives' homes) for a month." He replied, "The month is 29 days."

عن أم سلمة رضي الله عنها ان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم آلى من نساءه شهرا. فلما مضى تسعة وعشرين يوما غدا أو راح فقبل له: إنك حلفت أن لا تدخل شهرا. فقال: إن الشهر يكون تسعة وعشرين يوما<sup>94</sup>

Upon quoting this hadith, they remark, "It seems from this hadith that the Prophet ﷺ determined the month just by counting 29 days and not by actual moon sighting or completing 30 days. By now it should be clear enough that the entire Ummah or all the jurists have a consensus that the Islamic lunar month cannot be determined without actual moon sighting is not authentic and is simply not true."

This conclusion is an extremely premature one. Had the advocates adopted a wider scope for their study rather than limiting themselves to a few sources, they would have realized that their conclusions are nothing but mere assumptions and Allah has made it clear:

...And indeed assumption avails not against the truth at all.

﴿... وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا﴾<sup>95</sup>

There were two methods the Prophet ﷺ adopted in concluding the month as 29 days:

1. By personally sighting the crescent on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup>

Talḥa b. ʿUbaidullah related: Whenever the Prophet ﷺ would see the crescent, he would supplicate, "O Allah, make it appear upon us with prosperity and faith, and with safety and submission." – Imam Tirmidhi stated that this hadith is reliable and Gharīb<sup>39</sup>.

عن طلحة بن عبيد الله أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كان إذا رأى الهلال قال: اللهم اهله علينا باليمن والإيمان والسلامة والإسلام. ربي وربك الله. – رواه الترمذي وقال هذا حديث حسن غريب<sup>96</sup>

2. By having people testify to him that they witnessed the crescent

(Ibn ‘Abbās reported:) a Bedouin came to the Prophet ﷺ and claimed, “I saw the crescent.” The Prophet ﷺ enquired, “Do you testify that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad is his slave and messenger?” He replied in the affirmative. The Prophet ﷺ then announced, “Everyone should fast (tomorrow).”

جاء أعرابي إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال:  
رأيت الهلال. فقال: أتشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وأن  
محمدًا عبده ورسوله؟ قال: نعم. فنادى النبي صلى  
الله عليه وسلم أن صوموا<sup>97</sup>

(‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Zaid said in a sermon:) I sat in the company of the companions of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ and asked them questions. They related to me that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “Fast upon seeing it and discontinue fast upon seeing it and exercise piety throughout it. If it happens to be obscured to you then complete 30 (days). If two people testify (that they saw the crescent) then fast and finish fasting (based on their testimony).”

ألا إني جالست أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه  
وسلم وسألتهم وإنهم حدثوني أن رسول الله صلى الله  
عليه وسلم قال: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته  
وانسكوا لها، فإن غم عليكم فأتوا ثلاثين، وإن شهد  
شاهدان فصوموا وأفطروا<sup>98</sup>

As for the aforementioned hadith of Umme Salamah, Imam Nasaī has recorded it in his *Sunan* on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās in greater detail – the hadith follows:

أخبرنا عبيد الله بن سعد بن إبراهيم قال: حدثنا عمي قال: حدثنا أبي عن صالح عن ابن شهاب أن عبيد الله بن عبد الله بن أبي ثور حدثه، ح: وأخبرنا عمرو بن منصور قال: حدثنا حكيم بن نافع قال: أخبرنا شعيب عن الزهري قال: أخبرني عبيد الله بن عبد الله بن أبي ثور عن ابن عباس قال: لم أزل حريصاً أن أسأل عمر بن الخطاب عن المرأتين من أزواج رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم اللتين قال الله لهما ﴿إِنْ تَتُوبَا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا...﴾<sup>99</sup> وساق الحديث وقال فيه: فاعتزل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم نساءه من أجل ذلك حين أفشته حفصة إلى عائشة تسعة وعشرين ليلة. قالت عائشة: وكان قد قال "ما أنا بداخل عليهن شهراً" من شدة موجته عليهن حين حدثه الله عز وجل حديثهن. فلما مضت تسعة وعشرون ليلة دخل على عائشة فبدأ بها فقالت له عائشة: إنك قد كنت آليت يا رسول الله أن لا تدخل علينا شهراً وإنا أصبحنا من تسع وعشرين ليلة نعدّها عدداً. فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: الشهر تسع وعشرون ليلة.<sup>100</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās related: I was eager to ask ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb about (who) those two women (were) from amongst the wives of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ about whom Allah stated, “If you two repent to Allah, (it is best because) your hearts have deviated....” (The narrator said that Ibn ‘Abbās then) related the hadith in its entirety and mentioned while relating it:

Allah’s Messenger then separated from his wives for 29 days due to that reason – i.e. when Ḥafsah disclosed (some private information about the Prophet ﷺ) to ‘Āishah. ‘Āishah mentioned that he ﷺ said, “I am not going to enter upon them for a month” due to his intense anger with them when Allah informed him about their discourse.

When 29 days passed, The Prophet ﷺ approached ‘Āishah and began with her. ‘Āishah expressed to him, “You had sworn, O Allah’s Messenger, that you will not enter upon us for a month and this morning we are rising after 29 days. We were actually counting the days.” Allah’s Messenger ﷺ replied, “The month was 29 days.”

Upon recording this narration, Imam Nasaī then relates in the next hadith how the Prophet determined the month to be 29 days:

Ibn ʿAbbās narrated: the Prophet ﷺ mentioned, “Jibrīl, upon him be peace, came to me and said, ‘The month is 29 days.’”

أخبرنا عمرو بن يزيد، هو أبو بريد الجرمي بصري،  
عن بهز قال: حدثنا شعبة عن سلمة عن أبي الحكم  
عن ابن عباس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال:  
أتاني جبريل عليه السلام فقال: الشهر تسع وعشرون  
يوماً<sup>101</sup>

This shows that the Prophet ﷺ did not determine the number of days in the month by merely counting the days, as the advocates allege; rather in this case he concluded it as 29 days due to receiving word from an extremely high authority; the Trustworthy Spirit, Jibrīl. Therefore, to use this narration in order to dismiss the criterion for determining the new month taught to us by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in numerous ahadith is extremely inappropriate.

## Issue 5: The Length of a Month

The most disturbing argument presented by the advocates is: The so called majority’s opinion of completing 30 days of Shaʿbān and Ramadhan in case of cloudy whether could lead to a number of practical difficulties of ending up fasting sometimes 28 and sometimes 31 days of Ramadhan in reality.

The true reality is that there is nothing practical about this argument and it is totally hypothetical. When is the last time in Islam’s 1,400 year history that a Muslim community faced this ‘difficulty’? Are we trying to say that the Prophet ﷺ prescribed an erroneous method for his nation and that that nation has senselessly followed this faulty technique until ISNA finally got it right in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? There is no desire here to display disrespect to anyone regardless of their views; however, it’s baffling to see how some of us disconnect ourselves from the realities of life and produce a mirage to push our point.

These ‘practical difficulties’ were not experienced during the Prophet’s ﷺ era as the following narrations confirm:

Ibn Masʿūd said: We did not fast for 29 days with the Prophet ﷺ more than we fasted 30 days with him.

عن ابن مسعود قال: لما صمنا مع النبي صلى الله عليه  
وسلم تسعا وعشرين أكثر مما صمنا معه ثلاثين<sup>102</sup>

Abu Hurairah related: We did not fast during the time of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ for 29 days more than we fasted 30 days.

عن أبي هريرة قال: ما صمنا على عهد رسول الله  
صلى الله عليه وسلم تسعا وعشرين أكثر مما صمنا  
ثلاثين<sup>103</sup>

Saʿīd b. ʿAmr reported that ʿĀishah was told, “This month was viewed to be 29 days!” ʿĀishah expressed, “What surprises you about that? I personally did not fast with Allah’s Messenger ﷺ for 29 days more than I fasted 30 days.”

عن سعيد بن عمرو الأموي قال: قيل لعائشة: روي لهذا الشهر لتسع وعشرين! قالت: وما يعجبكم من ذلك؟ لما صمت مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم تسعا وعشرين أكثر مما صمت ثلاثين.<sup>104</sup>

Jābir said: Do not ever say that the month was incomplete. We did not fast with Allah’s Messenger ﷺ for 29 days more than we fasted 30 days.

عن جابر قال: لا تقولوا نقص الشهر، لما صمنا مع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم تسعا وعشرين أكثر مما صمنا معه ثلاثين.<sup>105</sup>

These narrations make it evident that the months observed by the Companions were confined to 29 and 30 days upon adopting the sighting/completion method prescribed by the Prophet ﷺ - not a day more nor a day less. Had this method led to the ‘practical difficulties’ pointed out by the advocates, it should have been experienced at least one during the Prophet’s ﷺ era.

The only time some confusion would be experienced by a community is when they complete the month of Ramadhan as 30 days, due to not sighting the crescent on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup>, and were later to find that the month was in fact 29 days, or if they observed the month as 29 days, due to a reported sighting, and later it was revealed that the testimony was false. Even in this circumstance the Prophet ﷺ did not leave us without guidance. Interestingly, Imam Abu Dāwūd has presented a chapter in his *Sunan* titled *When a Community Makes an Error About the Crescent*. In this chapter he has recorded the following hadith:

Abu Hurairah related: the Prophet ﷺ said: The time for finishing your fasts is the day when you (collectively) finish your fasts and the time for offering your sacrifice is the day when you (collectively) offer your sacrifice. The whole of Arafat is a waiting place and the whole of Mīna is a place for offering your sacrifice. Every mountain pass of Makkah is a sacrifice area and the whole of Jamʿ (Muzdalifah) is a waiting place.

حدثنا محمد بن عبيد: حدثنا حماد في حديث أيوب عن محمد بن المنكدر عن أبي هريرة ذكر النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فيه قال: وفطركم يوم تفطرون وأضحاكم يوم تضحون وكل عرفة موقف وكل منى منحر وكل فجاج مكة منحر وكل جمع موقف.<sup>106</sup>

While discussing this hadith, Muhammad Ashraf writes:

Khata'bi states: The meaning of this hadith is that the sin is removed from people in those areas where some practical effort is required. If a community tried (to sight the crescent) and they did not see it except after 30 days and subsequently did not finish their fasts until they completed (the period of) 30 days and then they received confirmation that the month was in fact 29 days, then their fasts and their time for finishing their fasts are done. There shall be no sin or reproach on them. Similar is the case of Hajj; if a community were to make a mistake in (fixing the date of) the day of Arafah, they will not be obliged to repeat (the rites of that day). Likewise their sacrifices will also suffice them. This is nothing but ease from Allah and a (display of) kindness to his servants.

قال الخطابي: معنى الحديث أن الخطأ موضوع عن الناس فيما كان سبيله الاجتهاد. فلو أن قوما اجتهدوا فلم يروا الهلال إلا بعد الثلاثين فلم يفطروا حتى استوموا العدد ثم ثبت عندهم أن الشهر كان تسعا وعشرين فإن صومهم ونذرهم قاض لا شيء عليهم من وزر أو عتب. وكذلك هذا في الحج إذا أخطأوا يوم عرفة فإنه ليس عليهم إعادته ويجزيهم أضحاؤهم كذلك. وإنما هذا تخفيف من الله سبحانه ورفق بعباده<sup>107</sup>

Therefore, in the first case the community will have nothing to worry about while in the second case they can keep an additional fast at a later date to make up for the missed day. This is the true meaning of "Islam is based on ease."

Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf also writes in the next paragraph:

Manthuri mentions: Scholars have stated that in this hadith is an indication to the Day of Doubt; it should not be fasted out of precaution. A person should only fast when everyone else fasts (i.e. on the first official day of Ramadhan). Scholars have also pointed out that this hadith rejects the claim of those who say that it is permissible for a person who knows the moon has risen by calculating its phases to fast and finish fasting but not for that person who does not know. Scholars have also said that, if a single witness sees the crescent and the (local) judge does not pass a ruling in favour of his testimony, the next day will not be a day of fasting for him just as it will not be for the masses.

قال المنذري: وقيل فيه الإشارة إلى يوم الشك لا يصام احتياطا وإنما يصوم يوم يصوم الناس، وقيل فيه الرد على من يقول "إن من عرف طلوع القمر بتقدير حساب المنازل جاز له أن يصوم به ويفطر دون من لم يعلم"، وقيل إن الشاهد الواحد إذا رأى الهلال ولم يحكم القاضي بشهادته أن هذا لا يكون صوما له كما لم يكن الناس<sup>108</sup>

There are many instances when people get frustrated over a community beginning Ramadhan one day and another community on another day, or over people celebrating Eid on different days. Many people view this to be a clear display of disunity within our community. However, this factor was never regarded to be detrimental to Muslim solidarity during the era of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all). Kuraib narrates:

Umme al-Fad'l bint al-Hārith sent him to Mu'āwiah in Syria. He relates: I arrived in Syria and got her job done. Meanwhile, Ramadhan came around while I was still in Syria. I personally saw the crescent on a Thursday evening. Later I travelled back to Madinah towards the end of the month. 'Abdullah b. 'Abbās asked me some questions (upon my arrival) and also brought up the issue of the crescent. "When did you see it?" he asked. "We saw it on Thursday evening." I replied. "Did you see it yourself?" he enquired. I answered, "Yes, and the people (of the vicinity also) saw it. They (therefore) fasted (the next day) and so did Mu'āwiah." Ibn 'Abbās then remarked, "But we saw it on Friday evening and therefore we will continue fasting until we complete 30 days or we see it." I asked, "Will you not suffice with Mu'āwiah's sighting and fasting?" He answered, "No, this is what Allah's Messenger ﷺ instructed us."

حدثنا يحيى بن يحيى ويحيى بن أيوب وقتيبة وابن حجر: قال يحيى بن يحيى "أخبرنا"، وقال الآخرون "حدثنا" إسماعيل - وهو ابن جعفر - عن محمد - وهو ابن أبي حرملة - عن كريب أن أم الفضل بنت الحارث بعثته إلى معاوية بالشام، قال: فقدمت الشام فقضيت حاجتها واستهل علي رمضان وأنا بالشام فرأيت الهلال ليلة الجمعة، ثم قدمت المدينة في آخر الشهر فسألني عبد الله بن عباس ثم ذكر الهلال فقال: متى رأيتم الهلال؟ فقلت: رأيناه ليلة الجمعة. فقال: أنت رأيته؟ فقلت: نعم ورأه الناس وصاموا وصام معاوية. فقال: لكننا رأيناه ليلة السبت فلا نزال نصوم حتى نكمل ثلاثين أو رأيناه. فقلت: أو لا تكفي برؤية معاوية وصيامه؟ فقال: لا، هكذا أمرنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم<sup>109</sup>

If anything has really disunited the Muslims it is their separation from Allah and His beloved Messenger's ﷺ obedience. For many today, Islam is viewed as a cultural identity rather than a complete way of life. That is why we are divided today as practicing and non-practicing Muslims. The non-practicing Muslims boastfully label themselves as secular, while the 'practicing' ones are divided between being progressive, moderate, traditional, fundamental and extreme. If it's unity that we are worried about, we should try to accomplish it in the way Allah has ordered us:

And hold firmly to the rope of Allah (i.e. the religion and the Book of Allah) all together, and do not become divided....

﴿وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا...﴾<sup>110</sup>

Today we have let go of this rope and have grasped the rope of materialism. We have abandoned the racecourse towards the hereafter and have wholeheartedly joined the rat-race of the West. That is why it is so inconvenient to wait *sometimes* a few extra hours in the evening to confirm whether the next day is Eid or not or whether the next day is the first of Ramadhan or not. But we are perfectly fine with attending a wedding, a movie, a cricket match, or other social gatherings until the late hours of the night knowing that we need to be at work the next morning. We can conveniently call in sick on a day in which we do not feel like going to work but we find it extremely difficult to tell our employers that we need to take a day off for a religious festival.

Because of our heavy engagement in the Western rat-race, we tend to cater our religion to suit our worldly pursuits. This is why we love to compromise our religious practices so often. However, in the Companions' era, the Muslims would cater their worldly pursuits to suit their religion, even though they had far bigger families to support than we do and far fewer luxuries to enjoy. Today we can receive confirmation of the next day's date (i.e.



whether it is the 30<sup>th</sup> of the present month or the 1<sup>st</sup> of the new month) within seconds through modern technology once it has been decided, but still become frantic if the decision was made an hour or two late. In the Companions' time, people would sometimes receive confirmation of the next day's date the following day and would still not mind at all. Abu Dāwōd has recorded:

Ribʿ b. Ḥirāsh related from one of the Prophet's ﷺ companions: People differed regarding the last day of Ramadhan (on one occasion). Later (in the day) two Bedouins came and testified to the Prophet ﷺ that, by Allah, they saw the crescent yesterday evening. Allah's Messenger ﷺ then ordered the people to break their fasts and head to the (Eid) prayer area the next morning.

عن ربي بن جِراش عن رجل من أصحاب النبي  
صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: اختلف الناس في آخر يوم  
من رمضان فقدم أعرابيان فشهدا عند النبي صلى الله  
عليه وسلم بالله لأهلاً الهلال أمس عشية. فأمر  
رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم الناس أن يفطروا،  
زاد خلف في حديثه وأن يغدوا إلى مصلاهم<sup>111</sup>

At times like this, we do traditionally ask the Almighty for guidance, but guidance will only come to us if we are ready to embrace it:

...Should we force it upon you while you are averse to it?

﴿... أَنلَزِمُكُمْوَهَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَرِهُونَ﴾<sup>112</sup>

May Allah instil the importance of Islam within our hearts and grant us the correct understanding of it. Āmīn.

## Conclusions

Upon thoroughly analyzing the evidence used to justify astronomical calculations in lieu of moon sighting, we finally draw the following conclusions:

1. Using calculations to determine Islamic dates is contrary to the Sunnah.
2. The claim of reliable astronomical methods now being available to provide a sound basis for determining the dates of Ramadhan and the two Eids is a myth. The new lunar month is determined by the crescent appearing in the evening sky and the U.S. Naval Observatory has clearly stated "The time the moon first becomes visible after the New Moon (i.e. lunar conjunction) depends on many factors and cannot be predicted with certainty."
3. Sighting the crescent is not just a means to know with certainty the beginning of the new month; rather it is the sole motive behind Allah making it appear in the evening sky.
4. Astronomical calculations are not the innovations of modern science; they are centuries old. They were being used during the Prophet's ﷺ era and in his own vicinity however he ﷺ disapproved of adopting them.
5. By adopting calculations to determine the new lunar month, we are practically confirming the Prophet's ﷺ prediction: You will follow the (erroneous) ways of those before you hand span by hand span, arm's breadth by arm's breadth, to such a degree that, if they went down a lizard's hole, you would also go down the hole.<sup>113</sup>

6. No classical scholar has ever allowed calculations in lieu of physical sighting. The only instance where some scholars have allowed calculations is when the crescent is obscured in the horizon on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup>. Replacing physical sighting altogether with calculations is a step that no classical scholar has ever taken in our 1,400 year history.
7. We are doing a great disservice to ourselves and the community at large by guising our personal preferences as the necessity of the time.

And Allah knows best

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<sup>1</sup> Surah 4:59

<sup>2</sup> Mālik: 685

<sup>3</sup> Note that the time difference between the US and GMT is anywhere from -5 hrs (in states such as Maine) to 10 hrs (in places like Alaska and Hawai'i)

<sup>4</sup> Mālik: 317

<sup>5</sup> Ibid: 318

<sup>6</sup> *Muḥjam Luḡḡah al-Fuqahā*. p. 495

<sup>7</sup> al-<sup>c</sup>Ainī: vol. 8 p. 29

<sup>8</sup> Abu Dāwūd: 2320

<sup>9</sup> <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Razzāq: 7307

<sup>10</sup> Muslim: 2499

<sup>11</sup> Ibid: 2500

<sup>12</sup> Bukhari: 1907

<sup>13</sup> Baihaqi: 7925-7926

<sup>14</sup> Ibid: 7930

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: 7931

<sup>16</sup> al-Dār Quṭnī: 2147

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Ḥibbān: 3442

<sup>18</sup> Ibn Khuzaimah: 1909

<sup>19</sup> <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Razzāq: 7306

<sup>20</sup> Shāfiʿī: vol. 2 p. 99

<sup>21</sup> *Nūr al-Anwar*: p. 962

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 91

<sup>23</sup> Baihaqi: 7946

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Ḥibbān: 3434

<sup>25</sup> Ahmad: 14463

<sup>26</sup> Baihaqi: 7935

<sup>27</sup> Ṭabrānī: 4804

<sup>28</sup> Nasaʿī: 2126

<sup>29</sup> Baihaqi: 7938

<sup>30</sup> Mālik: 631

<sup>31</sup> Baihaqi: 7951

<sup>32</sup> Bukhari: 1907

<sup>33</sup> Muslim: 2530, Baihaqi: 7936, Ibn Khuzaimah: 1915, al-Dar Quṭnī: 2190

<sup>34</sup> Baihaqi: 7945

<sup>35</sup> Ibid: 7950, Abu Dāwūd: 2326, Ibn Ḥibbān: 3449

<sup>36</sup> Muslim: 2514, Nasaʿī: 2121, Ibn Mājah: 1655, Baihaqi: 7934, al-Dar Quṭnī: 2145, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Razzāq: 7305

<sup>37</sup> A hadith narrated by more than two people in each of the three eras of the ṣaḥāba, tābiʿīn and tabʿī-tābiʿīn

<sup>38</sup> A hadith narrated by only two people in each of the three eras

<sup>39</sup> A hadith narrated by only one person in any of the three eras

<sup>40</sup> Abu Dāwūd: 2325, al-Dar Quṭnī: 2130, Ibn Ḥibbān: 3435, Ḥākim: 1540, Ibn Khuzaimah: 1910

<sup>41</sup> Zailaʿī: vol. 2 pp. 459-460

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Mājah: 1653, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Razzāq: 7339

<sup>43</sup> Baihaqi: 7953

<sup>44</sup> Ibid: 7955

<sup>45</sup> <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Razzāq: 7326

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- 46 *Tuhfa al-Ahwal*. vol.1 p.910
- 47 Ḥākim: 1547, Ibn Khuzaimah: 1912, al-Dārimī: 1683, Nasaī: 2191
- 48 Tirmidhi: 686, Abu Dāwūd: 2334, Nasaī: 2190, Ibn Mājah: 1645, Baihaqi: 7952, al-Dar Quṭnī: 2131, Dārimī: 1682, Ḥākim: 1542
- 49 *Badhl al-Majhūd*. vol. 4 p. 129
- 50 Ibn Jawzī: vol. 2 p. 68
- 51 *Annul Ma'bud* P. 1028
- 52 Baihaqi: 7958, *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaibah*
- 53 Baihaqi: 7960
- 54 Ibid: 7971
- 55 Ibid: 7972
- 56 Surah 65:7
- 57 Surah 13:26, 17:30, 30:37, 34:36, 39:52, 42:12, etc
- 58 Abu Dāwūd: 2325, al-Dar Quṭnī: 2130, Ibn Ḥibbān: 3435, Ḥākim: 1540, Ibn Khuzaimah: 1910
- 59 Reported by Bukhari and Muslim; refer to the following two ahadith
- 60 Muslim: 2751
- 61 Ibid: 2752
- 62 al-ʿAinī: vol. 8 p. 211
- 63 Abu Dāwūd: 2327, Baihaqi: 7948
- 64 Tirmidhi: 684, Baihaqi: 7944, al-Dar Quṭnī: 2141
- 65 Bukhari: 5861
- 66 Ibn Ḥajar. vol. 4 p. 157
- 67 Ibid
- 68 Ibid
- 69 Bukhari: 1913
- 70 *Ikmal al-Muʿlim*
- 71 Surah 62:2
- 72 Ibn Ḥajar. vol. 4 p. 163
- 73 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew\\_calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_calendar)
- 74 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel\\_II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel_II) (modified)
- 75 *Tahdhib al-Kamal*
- 76 Abu Dāwūd: 4321
- 77 Muslim: 2499-2500, Abu Dāwūd: 2320, Nasaī: 2120, Ibn Ḥibbān: 3433, ʿAbd al-Razzāq: 7307
- 78 *Ikḳām al-ʾAḳām*
- 79 Muhammad Fāris: vol. 2 p. 69
- 80 Bukhari: 1907
- 81 Muslim: 2530, Baihaqi: 7936, Ibn Khuzaimah: 1915, al-Dar Quṭnī: 2190
- 82 al-Dar Quṭnī: 2152
- 83 <http://aa.usno.navy.mil/faq/docs/islamic.html>
- 84 [http://moonsighting.com/faq\\_ms.html](http://moonsighting.com/faq_ms.html)
- 85 Ibn Nujaim: vol. 1 p. 423
- 86 Surah 17:78
- 87 Tirmidhi: 149, Abu Dāwūd: 393
- 88 Muslim: 1393
- 89 Bukhari: 1956
- 90 Ibn Nujaim: vol. 2 p. 448
- 91 Surah 2:185
- 92 Surah 2:189
- 93 ʿAbd al-Razzāq: 7305, Ibn Khuzaimah: 1906, Baihaqi: 7931
- 94 Bukhari: 1910
- 95 Surah 53:28
- 96 Tirmidhi: 3451
- 97 Nasaī: 2114
- 98 Ibid: 2118
- 99 Surah 66:4
- 100 Nasaī: 2134

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- <sup>101</sup> Ibid: 2135  
<sup>102</sup> Abu Dāwōd: 2322, Tirmidhi: 689, Ibn Khuzaimah: 1922  
<sup>103</sup> Ibn Mājah: 1658  
<sup>104</sup> *Musnad Ahmad*  
<sup>105</sup> Ṭabrānī. *Muḥjam al-Awsaṭ*: 5334  
<sup>106</sup> Abu Dāwōd: 2324  
<sup>107</sup> *Annul Ma'bud*. p. 1029  
<sup>108</sup> Ibid  
<sup>109</sup> Muslim: 1087  
<sup>110</sup> Surah 3:103  
<sup>111</sup> Abu Dāwōd: 2339  
<sup>112</sup> Surah 11:28  
<sup>113</sup> Bukhari: 3456

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