

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ



إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ

FRIDAY SERMON

HADHRAT MUHYI-UD-DIN AL-KHALIFATULLAH

MUNIR AHMAD AZIM

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After greeting all his disciples (and all Muslims) worldwide with the greeting of peace Hadhrat Khalifatullah (atba) read the Tashahhud, Ta'uz, Surah Al Fatiha, and then he delivered his sermon on:

MOON SIGHTING & RAMADAN FASTING

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ
وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

Shahru Ramadaa-nallaziii 'unzila fiihil-Qur-'aanu hudal-linnaasi wa bayyinaatim minal-hudaa wal-furqaan. Faman-shahida min-kumush-Shahra fal-yasumh.

The month of Ramadan (is the month) in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan), he must fast (observe the Saum during) that month. (Al-Baqara 2: 186).

Alhamdulillah, Summa Alhamdulillah, Ramadan has once again greeted us with its arrays of blessings and invites us to partake it all so that we may accede to the pleasure of Allah.

In the aftermath of a question which I received from one of my disciples in Tamil Nadu, I would like to shed some light – for the entire Muslim *Ummah* – on the issue of moon sighting and fasting in the month of Ramadan.

The Qur'an, the blessed words and commandments of Allah, as well as Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) have called our attention to moon sighting for the beginning of the fast of Ramadan, and the same applies when breaking the last fast before the Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations.

Narrated Ibn 'Umar: I heard Allah's Messenger (pbuh) saying, *"When you see the crescent (of the month of Ramadan), start fasting, and when you see the crescent (of the month of Shawwal), stop fasting; and if the sky is overcast (and you can't see it) then regard the month of Ramadan as of 30 days."* (Bukhari, Muslim).

From the Quranic verse and the Hadith which I have mentioned, it is very clear that moon sighting is very important in Islam, especially as the Islamic Calendar as approved by Allah and His Prophet (pbuh) is based entirely on the moon (i.e. the sighting of the moon – the Lunar Calendar).

And by the grace of Allah, when the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) gave his guidance on those important subjects, he had in mind the unity of Muslims in their individual countries.

Alas, today we find the *Ummah* of Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) disunited, with each group making its own decisions as to moon sighting or whether to follow such and such country or even taking optical aids – more advanced ones, and the more accessible ones such as binoculars or even the telescope to see the moon.

Disunity in the *Ummah* has brought about such disagreements, and Islam – The Quran and the Sunnah – at any point of time – have not taught us this. For everything to go on smoothly, there should be peace, harmony, unity, consultation and one final decision as decided by a common leader for all Muslims. That is why Allah sends His guidance and Messenger/ Khalifatullah (non law-bearing prophet) from time to time so that the Muslim *Ummah* keeps being united on all the tenets of Islam and implement them in their daily lives.

But the reality which we are living nowadays is different from what the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had bequeath to us – as legacy – after his demise. Today, even in one same country, there are many groups, and each group decides according to their own parameters when to fast and when not to fast, and thus in one same country, there can be different dates when Ramadan begins and ends, and consequently there are different dates when Shawwal and Eid-ul-Fitr begins.

It is true that the seven continents of the world such as: Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Australia (or Oceania), Africa and the Antarctica are really vast territories and moon sighting may vary from area to area, from one country to another. That is why, during his lifetime, Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) stressed on unity, and whenever the moon was sighted for Ramadan or for any other month for that matter, the whole congregation of Muslims in his area used to fast together and break the fast at the same time. But if other Muslims were found in another faraway place or in other countries, they used to rely on moon sighting for their country and act in unison accordingly.

With the passage of time, with the world entering new modernized eras and territories were clearly defined within those continents, therefore, each state got their own government and freedom to manage the affairs of the state; especially in respect to Islam and its principles and application in their lives. But alas, still then, new groups in Islam found the day, and day by day the breach between them widened and no consultation were done as one body of the Muslim *Ummah* to take vital decisions for the betterment of the Muslims and complying with the commandments of the Holy Quran.

That is why, nowadays, there are many disputes which arise, especially in a big country, for example, India or even Africa about whom to rely on for true moon sighting to fast Ramadan and to break the fast of Ramadan and welcome the first day of Shawwal, which is the *Eid-ul-Fitr*.

While it is true that compared to the era of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the findings of science and the study of the moon has become more precise today, nevertheless what surpass every calculation about moon phase and moon sighting for Ramadan is the actual sighting of the moon with the naked eye – an actual sighting which is worth more than any thousands of calculations. Allah knows the sight and intention of His every servant, and testimonials about moon

sighting for Ramadan and for Shawwal, as well as the other Islamic months is of key importance to constitute the Islamic Calendar for the current year.

That is why Allah and His Messenger, Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) had given a simple guideline for all Muslims so that they may be able to constitute the Islamic calendar easily according to the sighting of the new *Hilal* (crescent) of every lunar month.

Seeing all the confusions which has cropped up in Islam, I would like to give you my dear disciples and the rest of the *Ummah* some guidelines on this subject:

COUNTRYWISE

If a country/ island is small, like Mauritius, and moon sighting is fairly easy, then it is better that once the moon is sighted by the naked eye (or, if need be – in major cases – by binoculars or telescope to sight the *Hilal* – i.e. the slight silver and luminous part of the new moon), by any God-fearing Muslim (irrespective of Jamaat identity – for all are Muslims) who takes the oath in the name of Allah and brings two witnesses to confirm his report, therefore, the first of that new Islamic month (which in Islam begins after sunset) is then confirmed.

STATEWISE/ DISTRICTWISE

In vast territories and countries such as India, with the separation of districts and states having been made, moon sighting can be done within that distinctive state/ district. For example, in Kerala when the moon has been sighted – and after testifying to its sighting – to fast Ramadan, all Muslims in Kerala should fast Ramadan. But the reality nowadays, I know, is far from the ideal and from the wishes of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). For the time being, if the members of the Jamaat Ul Sahih Al Islam in Kerala hears about the confirmed actual sighting of the moon and people bearing witness to it in the name of Allah, then they should fast Ramadan. The same applies for Tamil Nadu and for the rest of the Indian states.

If an extensive area (coastal region) which falls under a certain state, for example, Tamil Nadu, but that place is nearer to Kerala than Tamil Nadu (for e.g. Kottar), or is found on the border of Kerala and Tamil Nadu – i.e. two states (for e.g.

Kaliyakkavilai), then the Muslims, especially the members of the Jamaat Ul Sahih Al Islam of that area/ place should fast Ramadan as soon as they hear the first claim of moon sighting.

If Kerala sighted the moon first, then they fast, or if Tamil Nadu sighted the moon first, then they fast. But in respect to the members of the Jamaat Ul Sahih Al Islam, there should be co-ordination so that everyone (in that locality) fast at the same time and prays the *Salat-ul-Eid* at the same time.

From my personal experience, when I used to work on Rodrigues Island as a missionary for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, as Rodrigues is a dependency and district of Mauritius, despite being an entirely separate island, but when I used to hear that the moon of Ramadan and/ or Shawwal has been sighted in Mauritius, I used to fast and break the fast accordingly. This is because Rodrigues belongs to Mauritius. But when I used to work in Reunion Island, despite this island being nearer to Mauritius than Rodrigues, but it did (and still does) not rely on Mauritius to fast or break the fast of Ramadan. Therefore my Eid celebrations in Reunion Island differed from that of Mauritius.

It is my humble prayer and wish that *Insha-Allah*, in the future, Allah shall give the proper knowledge and enable our Jamaat Ul Sahih Al Islam to have its own Hilal Committee (in every country and/or state), and thus: Moon sighting by our members (at least three God-fearing persons – two acting as witnesses to the one taking the oath for moon sighting) for a State/ District or Country is to apply to all Sahih al Islam members to begin the new Islamic month.

For e.g., if a Sahih al Islam member of Tamil Nadu has sighted the moon for Ramadan and brings two witnesses also to confirm the report and bears witness to this in the name of Allah, then the **WHOLE** Tamil Nadu State (all members of the Jamaat Ul Sahih Al Islam in Tamil Nadu) should fast Ramadan and break the fast together and celebrate Eid together (in their different areas). Those who live on the border of two states should follow either one of the two states which begins Ramadan first because, like I have pointed out many times, an Islamic month **CANNOT** be more than 30 days. Either 29 days or 30 days. Ramadan and any other Islamic month cannot be 28 days or 31 days.

THE IDEAL ISLAMIC SITUATION

In my personal view, I wish and see it as necessary that the time dawns when united, the Muslims as a whole and per country (whether a big or small country) – for e.g. India, everybody in one country, irrespective of boundaries/ states/ districts can follow one same Islamic Calendar. Because it is one same country. Once the new moon has been sighted by a God-fearing Muslim, and with the cooperation of the Government of India, it can be then announced that a person or a state has seen the new moon for the new Islamic month first, and thus **ALL INDIA** (all states within India – Kerala, Tamil Nadu etc.) shall celebrate *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-ul-Adha* at the same time. This is the **IDEAL**, because it is not beautiful to see Muslims of one same country having different moments when fasting or celebrating the two *Eids*, because everything is based on the Islamic Calendar which is a Lunar Calendar. And it is not beautiful to see that if a married couple do not form part of one same Jamaat, that each has his/ her own days for Ramadan fasting and *Eid* celebrations. If united, India as a whole fast at the same time, this would be ideal, and thus India will have its own unique Islamic Calendar. *Insha-Allah*.

Therefore there should be unity among the members of the Jamaat Ul Sahih Al Islam concerning fasting Ramadan and celebrating *Eid-ul-Fitr*. That is why at the head of each state, there is an Amir so that he, along with the members under his responsibility decide after moon sighting to begin and to end a month according to the Sunnah.

EXCEPTIONS

If in countries when it is virtually impossible to find the moon, in those **EXCEPTIONAL CASES**, advanced optical aids can be used to determine the actual birth of the moon, the probability of moon sighting, and its actual sighting or if such countries do not want to make use of optical aids, they can in this case rely on the valid reports of moon sighting (crescent of the new moon of the new month of the Islamic calendar) of their nearest neighbour state or country.

And like I have said, all should be coordinated as one body of Islam, Sahih al Islam to fast and break the fast and pray the *Eid Salat* in congregation. *Insha-Allah*, it is my humble wish and prayer to see the whole Muslim *Ummah* as one united

Ummah and that you acquire such a *Taqwa* that remain in your hearts and those of your generations until the Day of Judgement in the most righteous way, and that decisions be taken without defying the laws of the Quran and Sunnah, but instead taking the Quran and Sunnah as reference and to go according to them with the blessings of Allah. *Insha-Allah, Ameen.*

May Allah bless all my disciples of the Jamaat Ul Sahih Al Islam and the whole *Ummah* of Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) and make us all unite as one true body of Islam for the sake and pleasure of Allah. *Insha-Allah.* **RAMADAN MUBARAK!**