DETERMINING THE START OF

RAMADAN AND EID UL-FITR!

(Explanation of Methodology)

(2015)

METHODOLOGY

The Conveners of Imams Associated with the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed use a combination of Science and Tradition to arrive at a determination of the start and end of Ramadan and the celebration of Eid ul-Fitr.

ASTRONOMICAL SCIENCE

Astronomical science is used to guide our efforts to sight the moon by projecting where and when we can best see the moon from the continental USA and we preserve the traditional ritual of physically searching for the moon with the naked eye, because of the special benefits and wisdom this practice promotes and preserves.

With respect to science, Sura 55:5 tells us that the sun and the moon follow courses exactly computed and Sura 10:5 tells us that HE created sun as a shining light and the moon as a reflecting light and HE designed her to reflect her light in phases in order that you may know the number of the years and how to determine time. Upon these verses and others, such as Suras 13:2, 31:29, 39:5, we rely upon the predictive power of the science of the heavenly bodies (astronomy) to compute these courses and help guide us in our search to sight the moon at the beginning and end of Ramadan.

A NOTE: IMAM MOHAMMED ON USING ASTRONOMICAL SCIENCE

Imam W. Deen Mohammed makes the following comments during the interview with Imam Izak El Pasha. “If we cannot sight it for some reason…it’s cloudy, the weather is bad or something, then for me, the best way to be accurate …accurate as possible, is not to join somebody outside of the time zone, but to use the scientific method.”

Imam Mohammed further explained what he meant by scientific method. He explained that the new moon is the black moon and that while you cannot see anything, science has determined that it is there (its birth). He then calculates between 30 and 48 hours after the determination and on the night of the third day we would make our prayers and intention to start fasting the next morning.

The above two paragraphs demonstrate that Imam Mohammed was supportive of using astronomical science to assist with determining the start of the fast when natural conditions prevent us from sighting the moon physically with the naked eye from the continental USA. While he used astronomy to determine the birth of the new moon and then calculated hours from that period, the Conveners of Imams’ methodology uses astronomical charts that graphically depict Imam Mohammed’s method and thus puts our method in harmony with him.

While we utilize our scientific ability to measure and calculate the motion of the moon to help us determine where and when to look for the moon, we currently do not rely solely on calculation to determine the start or end of our month of fasting, Ramadan. This is not because of any egregious flaws in the ability of astronomers to scientifically calculate the motion and location of heavenly bodies, but rather because we choose to preserve the meaning, value and benefits of the religious tradition and ritual of physically sighting that was established by Prophet Muhammad upon Qur’anic advice from Allah, the Most High.

TRADITION - PHYSICAL SIGHTING

“Yahya related to me from Malik from Nafi‘ from ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Umar that the Messenger of God once mentioned Ramadan and said: "Do not begin the fast until you see it (the crescent) and do not break the fast until you see it (the crescent). If it is obscured from you, then estimate it.” (Muslim, Muwatta of Malik)

‘Abd Allah bin Maslamah related to us: Malik related to us from ‘Abd Allah bin Dinar from ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Umar that God’s Messenger said: “A month is twenty-nine nights. So do not fast till you see the new moon, and if it is obscured for you, then complete thirty.” (Bukhari 3/131)

Furthermore, Imam W. Deen Mohammed made the following comment during an interview with Imam Izak el- M. Pasha in the August 22, 2007 issue of the Thinker newspaper. The Imam said, “I believe we should begin fasting when it’s sighted in the United States, not in some other country, because they would be outside of our time zone.” This statement indicates that Imam Mohammed supported physical sightings as the preferred method of determining the start of Ramadan.

Upon the above two ahadith, others like it, and the published comments of Imam Mohammed, the Conveners of Imams Associated with the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed follow the practice of physically sighting the moon to start the month of fasting.

We believe that this practice helps the people to preserve Allah’s exhortations for humanity to observe the signs in creation for therein is guidance and understanding. We also believe that it preserves great wisdom about the dawning of enlightenment and the process of enlightenment, which we cannot explain here. Suffice it to say that Imam W. Deen Mohammed has explained that all rituals and religious devotions contain and preserve precious wisdom and right guidance to enlightenment. See Sura 22:67. Hence, we adopt this as part of our methodology.

TRADITION – LOCAL/REGIONAL SIGHTING FROM USA

Kuraib reported that Umm Fadl, daughter of Harith, sent him (Fadl, i. e. her son) to Mu'awiya in Syria.

“I (Fadl) arrived in Syria, and did the needful for her. It was there in Syria that the month of Ramadan commenced. I saw the new moon (of Ramadan) on Friday. I then came back to Medina at the end of the month. Abdullah b. 'Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) asked me (about the new moon of Ramadan) and said: When did you see it? I said.: We saw it on the night of Friday. He said: (Did) you see it yourself? -I said: Yes, and the people also saw it and they observed fast and Mu'awiya also observed fast, whereupon he said: But we saw it on Saturday night. So we would continue to observe fast till we complete thirty (lasts) or we see it (the new moon of Shawwal). I said: Is the sighting of the moon by Mu'awiya not valid for you? He said: No; this is how the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) has commanded us.” Yahya b. Yahya was in doubt (whether the word used in the narration by Kuraib) was Naktafi or Taktafi. (Muslim Book #006, Hadith #2391)

This hadith indicates that Muslims in different areas have started and ended the fast at different times based upon physical moon sightings in their different geographical locations. If we strive for physical sightings, the possibility of a physical sighting will vary slightly by a day in most geographical locations on the globe. Hence, this is an acceptable practice.

Again, referring to the quote from the interview with Imam W. Deen Mohammed in the Thinker newspaper cited earlier, the Imam’s statement, “I believe we should begin fasting when it’s sighted in the United States, not in some other country, because they would be outside of our time zone,” indicates his support for local/regional sighting as a methodology, rather than a global or calculation approach.

In addition, in this same interview Imam Mohammed commented about the people within the USA who would report the sightings. He said, “they should be reliable and truthful.” In order to know if someone is reliable and truthful, they should be known by someone at a masjid in our association. This is why we look for reports given by people in our association who are known by local Imams or leaders of established organizations in our community.

We give preference to sightings from members of our association if possible, not because we don’t trust that Muslims outside of our association are reliable and truthful, but because there is better chance of us knowing our people and their reliability and truthfulness.

It is upon these ideas and additional information that the Conveners of Imams Associated with the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed follow Imam W. Deen Mohammed’s leadership of defining our regional sighting location as the continental United States. The vast majority of our masaajid and members are spread across the continental USA and hence, we currently employ this practice as a part of our methodology.

NOTE: 29 OR 30 DAYS OF FASTING AND DETERMINING EID UL-FITR

After determining the first day of the Ramadan fast, we proceed to fast for the entire month of Ramadan, which has either 29 or 30 days. It is important to understand what is meant by a day in a calendar.

A day is a 24 hour period. In a solar calendar (calendar based upon the sun cycle), a day starts at 12:00am (the darkness of midnight) and continues through the daylight and into the darkness until 12:00am the next day (24 hours later).

Similarly, in a lunar calendar (calendar based upon the moon cycle), a day starts at sunset (the darkness of maghrib time) and continues through the daylight hours of the next day until the darkness of sunset (maghrib time) the next day (24 hours later).

So, 29 days of fasting includes the nighttime hours and the daylight hours of the next day. 30 days of fasting means you would fast an additional night and an additional daylight period.

The Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar and as such its months are either 29 or 30 days (24 hour) periods, as described above. This means that we will fast 29 or 30 days during the month of Ramadan. Thus, after determining the First day (24 hour period) of Ramadan, we will count 29 days (periods), which ensures that we have fasted the minimum of 29 days.

That next night, which will be the 30th night, we search the sky for the crescent moon. If we see the crescent moon, fasting stops at 29 days and we celebrate the Eid ul-Fitr the next morning. However, if we cannot see the crescent moon, we estimate or determine the month to be 30 days and thus, we fast the following 24 hour period completing 30 days of fasting and Eid ul-Fitr would be celebrated the following day or daylight period.

“Yahya related to me from Malik from Nafi‘ from ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Umar that the Messenger of God once mentioned Ramadan and said: "Do not begin the fast until you see it (the crescent) and do not break the fast until you see it (the crescent). If it is obscured from you, then estimate it.” (Muwatta of Malik and Muslim)

‘Ubayd Allah bin Mu‘adh related to us: My father related to us: Su‘bah related to us from Muhammad bin Ziyad who said: I heard Abu Hurayrah saying that the Messenger of God said: "Start fasting on seeing it, and end fasting on seeing it, and if the month is obscure for you, count 30 (fa ‘uddu thalathin)." (Muslim 13/2/19)

‘Abd Allah bin Maslamah related to us: Malik related to us from ‘Abd Allah bin Dinar from ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Umar that God’s Messenger said: “A month is twenty-nine nights. So do not fast till you see the new moon, and if it is obscured for you, then complete thirty.” (Bukhari 3/131)

Thus, upon the basis of the above explanation of a lunar day and the above ahadith and others like it, the Conveners of Imams Associated with the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed currently utilize astronomical science to guide to determining when and where we are most likely to be able to physically sight the moon with the naked eye in the continental USA.

Because we are preserving the tradition and custom of physical sighting of the moon, we recognize that the number of days of fasting will be either 29 or 30 and therefore we currently do not subscribe to methods of calculation or counting that fix the number of days of fasting, without respect for the tradition and practice of physical sighting.

CONCLUSION

We have provided a detailed explanation of our Ramadan and Eid ul-Fitr announcement as well as the foundations and logic for the methodology that we use to assist our community and all other Muslim Americans begin and end this most special Islamic holiday.

We pray that the efforts of all of us together helps to establish a strong foundation of practice for the believers and we ask Allah to forgive us for any mistakes we may have made in our effort to apply and practice the Deen and follow our Prophet. Ameen. We also ask Allah to grant us the flexibility and humbleness to make adjustments and corrections if we find the need to do so in the future. Ameen.

We pray that all Muslims, regardless of where they are in the world and regardless of what day they start or end their fast and celebrate their Eids, will have received the great blessings of Allah during this special month and will have the most joyous of Eid celebrations!!! Ameen!

If you have any questions or need additional information please feel to contact send us a message or comment on our website: www.iwdmcommunity.com.

Peace and Blessings,

***Imam Bashir Ali,***

***National Convener, on behalf of the Sectional Conveners***