



الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ



*Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the
Worlds;*

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

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Appendix IX

Comparative Chronology of the Early Years of Islam

(see paras 8 and 11 of Appendix VIII)

The dates after the Hijrah, when given according to the Arabian Calendar, can usually be calculated exactly according to other Calendars, but it is not possible to synchronize exactly the earliest dates of the Arabian Calendar with the dates of the Christian Calendar, and for two reasons.

- In the first place, there seems to have been some discrepancy between the Calendars in Madinah and in Makkah.
- In the second place, the Arabian Calendar was roughly luni-solar, before the years of the Farewell Pilgrimage (Dhu al Hijjah, 10 H. i.e. March 632).

The Pagan Arabs were in the habit of counting months by the appearance of the moon, but irregularly intercalating a month once in about three years to bring the calendar up into conformity with the seasons.

They did not do it on any astronomical calculations or on any system, but just as it suited their own selfish purposes, thus often upsetting all the old-established conventions about the months of peace and security from war and thus getting an unfair advantage for the clique in power in Makkah over their enemies (see [note 1295 to 9:36](#)).

Unless exact mathematical calculations are applied and reduced to a well-established system, there is apt to be confusion, and this can well be taken advantage of by arbitrary cliques in power.

After the Holy Prophet's adoption of the purely lunar calendar for ecclesiastical purposes, there is no confusion. Every date after A.H. 10 is exactly convertible into a corresponding date in any other accurate calendar. Wustenfeld's and other Comparative Tables of Muslim and Christian dates may therefore be relied upon for dates after A.H. 10, but much caution is necessary in synchronization for earlier dates.

Mawlana Shibli, in his *Sirah al Nabi*, Vol I, p124 (edition of 1336 H., 1918 C.), adopts for the Prophet's Birthday the date 20th April 571, following Mahmud Pasha. They go the basis of an astronomical event, the total eclipse of the sun that was visible in Madinah on the day that the Prophet's son Ibrahim was taken to the mercy of Allah. But there is no agreement among the authorities as to the exact date either by the Christian or the Arabian Calendar. Shibli, following Mahmud Pasha, takes the date of the eclipse to be the 7th November 632. Muir (Life, ed. 1923, p. 429), assumes some date in June or July 631.

L. Caetani (*Chronographica Islamica*, A. H. 10) gives the date of the eclipse as 4th or 5th July 631, which he synchronizes with the 28th or 29th of Rabi 1, A.H. 10, but he quotes authorities for the death of Ibrahim as on the 16th June 631, synchronizing it with the 10th of Rabi 1, A.H. 10. there is something wrong here, as the death and the eclipse occurred on the same day.

Waqidi gives the month as Rabi 1, A.H. 10, and gives Ibrahim a life of 15 months. But if Abu Dawud and Bayhaqi are correct, Ibrahim lived only 2 months and 10 days, and as his date of birth is given in Dhu al Hijjah A.H. 8, the date of death according to these authorities would be in Rabi 1, A.H. 9. on a review of all the authorities I feel inclined to accept the date for the eclipse and death of Ibrahim as 28th or 29th of Rabi 1, A.H. 10 i.e. 4th or 5th July 631. but this cannot be asserted with certainty.

The French work of reference, *Lart de verifier les dates*, Paris 1818 (Vol. I, p. 310), gives the date of the solar eclipse as the 3rd of August 631, 2:30 P.M. and according to the system adopted in that book, the corresponding Hijrah date would be the 28th Rabi 2, A.H. 10.

Even if this particular date was certain and exact, a certain amount of uncertainty remains in counting dates backwards. Most authorities assume a purely lunar year of 254 days for working backwards.

Probably the Muslims in Madinah counted in this way even before the lunar year was fixed exactly in A.H. 10. but the mass of Pagan Arabs in Makkah and elsewhere probably were all the time intercalating a month roughly once in three years, as has been stated before, until their power was utterly destroyed by the conquest of Makkah; and therefore precise exactitude in pre-Conquest date or in the counting of people's ages in years before 8-10 A.H. is unattainable.

See a note on this subject in *MKargoliouth's Life of the Prophet* (p. xix. Of the 3rd edition) and in *Muir's Life* (p. x. of the 1923 edition).

The date of the actual Hijrah as given in Caetani may be accepted as September-October 622, being in the month of Rabi 1 if the ninth of that month would be accepted as the date of departure from the cave of Thawr, the best synchronized date would be the 22nd of September 622 C. but as the first month of the Arab year was (and is) Muharram, the Hijrah year 1 is counted as beginning on the 15th or 16th July 622 (1 Muharram A.H. 1).

The formal adoption of the Hijrah era in official documents date from the Khalifah of Umar-from the year 17-18 H. according to Tabari.

Sir Wolseley Haqiq's Comparative Tables of Muhammadan and Christian Dates (London, Luzac, 1932), gives in a handy form three comparative Tables which enable the synchronization of Hijrah years from A.H. 1 to A.H. 1421.

The main table for these years was printed earlier at the end of S. Haim's New English-Persian Dictionary, Tehran, 1931. the exact title of Wustenfeld's German Tables is: Wustenfeld-Mahler, Vergleichungs-Tabellen, Leipzig, 1926 (2nd edition).



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