

## A Matter of Shariah, or a Matter of Astronomical Calculations?

Written by Jalal Abualrub

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Sadly, many Muslims bicker over an aspect that the religion has already settled for them. Allah's Final Revelation to Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, ordered all of them to, with regards the Hilal –in specific-, rely on what Imam Ibn Taimiyyah called a 'Universal Sign' that all can witness, whether they were in the desert or in the city, the lettered and the unlettered, so that they start their month and have their celebrations all together. Meanwhile, many Muslims ignore the major aspects of Islam, such as learning and practicing the pillars of Faith and the pillars of Islam.

Source: [www.islamlife.com](http://www.islamlife.com)

### Definitions:

**Shari`ah:** Sunnah; Method; Law; Way; Minhaj; Clear Way.....

**Ummi:** Unlettered.....

**Ummah:** Nation (as in the Muslim Nation).....

**Hilal:** Crescent.....

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---

**Ru`yah:** Sighting; seeing with the eye.....

**Badr:** Full Moon.....

**Hisab:** Calculations; Counting; Calculus.....

**Hasib:** One who does counting or calculations.....

**Kitabah:** Writing; Recording; Scribing.....

**Mutafiqqihah:** Those with lesser knowledge, unqualified to discuss matters of Islamic Law.....

**Shadh-dh:** A discredited opinion because it contradicts established facts.....

**Ijma`:** Consensus of the Prophet's companions (as Imam Ibn `Hazm stated).....

**Bid`ah:** Innovation (every innovation in religion is a sin: a Hadeeth collected by Muslim).....

**Fitnah:** Trials in life and religion.....

**Munajjim:** Fortuneteller

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### Guidelines:

**1. {Then We have put you (O, Muhammad ﷺ) on a Shari`ah**  
(plain way of Our

**commandment**

[legal ways and laws of Islâmic Monotheism)].

**So follow you that**

(Islâmic Monotheism and its laws),

**and follow not the desires of those who know not**

}; [45:18].

**2. {Nor does he (Muhammad ﷺ) speak of (his own) desire.**

**It is only a Revelation revealed**

}; [53:3-4].

**3. Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported that Allah's Final and Last Prophet and Messenger,**  
Muhammad, salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam, said,

**"Start fasting on seeing the crescent (of Ramadan), and give up fasting on seeing the**  
**crescent (of Shawwal), and if the sky is**  
**overcast (and**

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---

you cannot see it),

**complete thirty days of Sha`ban.**

”

4. Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated that Allah’s Final and Last Prophet and Messenger, Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, said,

**“We are an Ummi (unlettered) nation; we neither Naktubu (write; record), nor Na`hsubu (count; calculate).**

**The month is like this and this, i.e. sometimes of 29 days and sometimes of thirty days.**

”

5. The Prophet of Allah, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, accepted testimony from one man, who sighted the moon, and ordered Muslims to fast (Sahih Sunan Abi Dawud).

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□

### The Old/New Fitnah

**Shaikh-ul-Islam, Imam Ibn Taimiyyah, died several centuries ago. (728H)** Among the vast treasures of Islamic knowledge that he left behind for all Muslims to benefit from, is that he discussed the

**old/**

**new**

annual

**Fitnah**

that divides Muslims regarding moon-sighting vs. astronomical calculations.

**What he wrote on this topic is astoundingly contemporary, as if Ibn Taimiyyah is still living among us and witnessing the endless bickering between Muslims in the West, in specific, regarding when to start the Ramadhan and other religious seasons.**

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---

### Beneficial Reminders:

**1.** 'Astronomical calculations' is an ancient type of 'knowledge'. The Arabs, as well as, the Persians, Indians, Greeks, Chinese and Egyptians excelled in the 'knowledge' of astronomy and astronomical calculations. **Read any book on the history of astronomy and you shall come to know the truth of our statement here.**

**2.** Currently, many Muslims who discuss this topic are utterly unaware of or about the vast knowledge mankind had about astronomy and astronomical calculations, both before and after Islam. The fact that the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, mentioned the word '**Hisab**' is self-evident of the knowledge they had on it.

**3.** The Quran and Sunnah are a revelation from Allah, the All-Knower of the past, present and future. Even though Allah granted mankind knowledge in astronomy both before and after He sent Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, as His Final and Last Prophet, He ordered Muslims to sight the Hilal, with their eyes.

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---

### 4. Shari`ah vs. Majority Rule:

**{It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allâh and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allâh and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed into a plain error }; [33:36].**

### 5. We hereby challenge all those who disagree with this article to a debate on: **“Moon-Sighting: A Matter of Shari`ah or a Matter of Astronomical Calculation**

”. I, Jalal Abualrub, can be reached at

[IslamLife@Gmail.Com](mailto:IslamLife@Gmail.Com)

.

Here is a translation of some excellent words by Imam Ibn Taimiyyah which I present to every Muslim who seeks that which is better with Allah: attaining knowledge **before** saying or doing anything. We collected these words from Ibn Taimiyyah’s,

**Fatawa**

, and his,

**Letter on the Hilal**

(Crescent).

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---

He stated that He made him (Prophet Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*) on a **Shari`ah** (plain way) of the Commandment (Islamic Monotheism and its Laws) and ordered him to follow it and not follow the path of those who know not. He also said,

**{And We have sent down to you (O, Muhammad ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ) the Book**

(this Qur`ân) i

**n truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it and Mohaymin**

(trustworthy in highness and a witness)

**over it**

(old Scriptures).

**So judge among them by what Allâh has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you. To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way...If Allâh had willed, He would have made you one Ummah**

(nation),

**but that**

(He)

**may test you in what He has given you; so compete in good deeds. The return of you (all)**

**is to Allâh; then He will inform you about that in which you used to differ. And so judge (you, O, Muhammad ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ )**

**among them by what Allâh has revealed and follow not their vain desires, but beware of them lest they turn you**

(O, Muhammad ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ)

**far away from some of that which Allâh has sent down to you**

}; [5:48-49].

Allah ordered him (Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*) to not follow their vain desires diverging away from the truth that has come to him, even if it was a law or a method legislated for other prophets. This is because Allah has made for every prophet a way and a **Sunnah** (legal ways; law) and warned him (Prophet Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*) against

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---

allowing [those who follow their vain desires] to divert him from a part of what Allah had revealed to him. If this is the ruling with regards to what was a law for other prophets, then, what about what is not known if it was a part of any [earlier]

### **Shari`ah**

, especially the way of those who did not receive a Book (Divine Inspiration)? Allah ordered him (Prophet Muhammad *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*) and ordered us in various parts [of His Revelation] to follow that which was sent down to us, not that which contradicts it, by saying,

{**Alif Lām Mîm Sâd.** [These letters are one of the miracles of the Qur`ân and none but Allâh (Alone) knows their meanings.] (This is the **Book** (the Qur`ân) **sent down unto you** (O, Muhammad ﷻ),  
**so let not your breast be narrow therefrom, that you warn thereby; and a reminder unto the believers.**

[Say (O, Muhammad ﷻ) to these idolaters (pagan Arabs) of your folk:]

**Follow what has been sent down unto you from your Lord**

(the Qur`ân and Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah),

**and follow not any Auliyâ'**

(protectors and helpers who order you to associate partners in worship with Allâh),

**besides Him**

(Allâh).

**Little do you remember!**

}; [7:1-4].

Further, Allah described the condition of those who inherited the Book and defied it as compared to those who held fast to it, by saying,

{**Then after them succeeded an** (evil) **generation, which inherited the Book, but they chose** (for themselves) **the goods of this low life** (evil pleasures of this world) **saying**



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---

(as an excuse): “(Everything)  
**will be forgiven to us.” And if**

(again)

**the offer of the like**

(evil pleasures of this world)

**came their way, they would**

(again)

**seize them**

(would commit those sins).

**Was not the covenant of the Book taken from them that they would not say about Allâh anything but the truth? And they have studied what is in it**

(the Book).

**And the home of the Hereafter is better for those who are Al-Muttaqûn**

(the pious).

**Do not you then understand? And as to those who hold fast to the Book**

(i.e. act on its teachings)

**and perform As-Salât**

(Iqâmat-as-Salât),

**certainly We shall never waste the reward of those who do righteous deeds**

}; [9:169-170]...

...The Prophet, salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam, has foretold that this **Ummah** (Muslims) will follow the ways of those who came before them (i.e., Christians, Jews, Fire-Worshippers), so completely, just like the feathers of the arrow are perfectly aligned, that if they enter the den of a mastigure (a type of lizard), they (Muslims) will enter it after them. Consequently, there will be among Muslims those who change the words [of Allah and His Messenger] from their proper places, by changing the meaning of the Book [of Allah, the Quran] and the

**Sunnah**

[of His Prophet] with regards to that which Allah has foretold or commanded...

...I wrote this introduction because of what I witnessed of the people during the month of the Fast as well as in other months that, among them are those who listen to what some of the ignorant people of **Hisab** (calculations) say that, the moon can or cannot be sighted. These people build on this stance [that they take] aspects that touch their inward or both their inward

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---

and outward being so much so that I have heard that some judges (or leaders) will reject the testimony of a number of trustworthy witnesses [who sighted the moon] relying on the statement of the

**Hasib** (who calculates), **Jahil**(ignorant) **Kadhib** (liar) who claims that it (the moon) can or cannot be seen. Thus, they (the judges described here) become among those who reject the truth after it has been made clear to them. He (this type of judge) may even accept testimony from those who are not trustworthy (i.e., such as the

### **Kuffar**

, who may soon replace Muhammad's Sunnah as the ultimate authority on when Muslims can start their Ramadhan and when they can have their

### **`Eed**

, deciding for Muslims –in advance- when to fast and when to break the fast). Thus, this judge becomes among those who listen to falsehood...Wicked judges accept false statements from witnesses and tale tellers who, otherwise, are not among those whose statement or news is to be accepted...Some of them (wicked judges) do not [totally] agree with what the

### **Munajjim**

(who, in this case, says the moon can or cannot be seen) says, whether inwardly or outwardly. Yet, he has misgivings in his heart regarding this topic and a strong doubt, because he trusts him (the

### **Munajjim**

) [on one hand], yet, knows that the

### **Shari`ah**

did not consider this aspect (astronomical calculations). This is especially the case if this person (wicked judge) has learned some knowledge on

### **Hisab**

(calculations) about the two bright objects, i.e., about the two cylinders (the sun and the moon) being in conjunction with each other and about them when they part with each other by so many degrees, and also [gained some knowledge about] how the new moon occurs, how it becomes full (

### **Badr**

) and how eclipse happens, either a lunar or a solar eclipse. Consequently, [this wicked judge who does not totally believe in what fortunetellers say ends up] upholding the judgment of the

### **Hasib**

(who does astronomical calculations),

### **Kadhib**

(liar) who is ignorant in sighting (i.e. as prescribed by the

### **Shari`ah**

). As for those who engage in

### **Hisab**

(astronomical calculations) and follow the positions and movements of the heavenly objects, who may give a correct report in this regard, they may be contradicted [rightfully or wrongly] by the ignorant who are unlettered, who may belong to the faith...since they witness them (those who do

### **Hisab**

) defy the religion [regarding that aspect which the

### **Shari`ah**

has settled] by using calculations instead of visual sighting and by believing in the favorable or

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---

unfavorable effects of the stars. Thus, when they see them (i.e., see those who do

### **Hisab**

) engage in this type of behavior, which is prohibited in the religion, they reject everything they say [whether true or false]... Yet this type of people (i.e. the ignorant) are better off in the religion than the first type (who do `Hisab): they reject a part of truth due to their ignorance and having the wrong interpretation; but they do not change a part of the foundation of Islam. [In contrast,] the first type [who do

### **Hisab**

] may end up changing Islam.

**This is because we know as an established fact of the religion of Islam that, with regards to the Hilal of the Fast, Hajj, Iddah**

(prescribed lunar period before a divorced woman can remarry),

### **Ilaa**

{

**Those who take an oath not to have sexual relation with their wives must wait for four months...**

}; [2:226])

**and other aspects of the Islamic law that are connected to the Hilal, it is not allowed to follow the news of the Hasib that the Hilal can or cannot be seen.**

There are many narrations collected from the Prophet, salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam, asserting this aspect. Further, Muslims have agreed on this. There is no reported difference [between respected scholars] with regards to this aspect whether before or during this time, except that some

### **Mutafiqqihah**

(i.e., who have lesser knowledge) who came after the third hundred [of

### **Hijrah**

] claimed that if the

### **Hilal**

(new moon) was shielded from sight, then, it is allowed for the

### **Hasib**

(i.e. who does astronomical calculations) himself to follow the

### **Hisab**

(astronomical calculations) and fast, if

### **Hisab**

has indicated that sighting the moon is possible; otherwise, he does not fast. This statement, even though tied to the moon being shielded from sight and only for the

### **Hasib**

to use, is a

### **Shadh-dh**

(rejected) opinion that is contrary to the

### **Ijma'**

that preceded it and which contradicts it. As for doing this (i.e., fasting if

### **Hisab**

says the moon can be sighted and not fasting if

### **Hisab**

says otherwise) when the moon is not shielded from sight or regarding it as a valid implication of

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---

the general ruling (i.e., “  
**Start fasting on seeing the crescent**  
”, which the scholars said is a general ruling for the entire  
**Ummah**  
), then no Muslim has said this [so far].”

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**Imam Ibn Taimiyyah also said** these words in his, **Fatawa**, “Our **Ummah** (Muslims) is not like the People of the Scripture who do not memorize their Holy Books by heart. Rather, if all copies of the Quran vanished, the Quran would still be kept in the hearts of the

**Ummah**

. Hence, Muslims are an

**Ummi Ummah**

from this perspective, after the Quran was revealed and memorized by heart. The Sahih [collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim] reported that Abdullah Ibn Umar said that, the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, said,

“**We are an Ummi nation; we neither Naktubu** (write; record), **nor Na`hsubu** (count; calculate).”

**month is like this and this, i.e. sometimes of 29 days and sometimes of thirty days.**

”

**The**

Note that he, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, did not say, ‘We cannot read a book or memorize

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---

(especially since many companions knew how to read, write, count and memorize).’ Rather, he said, **‘We do not write or count’**, i.e., our religion does not need to be recorded and calculated for as is the case with the People of the Scripture who know the timings of their fast and breaking the fast [and other religious activities] by using records and calculations. Thus, their religion is tied to books, which if they disappear, they would not know their religion. This is why most of the people of

**Sunnah** memorize the Quran and **Hadeeth**

more so than those among the people of

**Bid`ah**

who do so. People of

**Bid`ah**

are similar to the People of the Scripture in some ways. The Two Sahihs stated that the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, said,

**‘You will follow the wrong ways, of your predecessors so completely and literally, just as the two feathers of an arrow are perfectly aligned, that if they should go into the hole of a mastigure, you too will go there.’**

They said, ‘O, Allah’s Prophet! Do you mean the Jews and the Christians?’ He replied,

**‘Whom else?’**”

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**Muslims Did What the Prophet Said They Would Do**

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---

### **Kafir Astronomers Deciding for Muslims When to Fast; Ru`yah Almost Abandoned**

Sadly, many Muslims bicker over an aspect that the religion has already settled for them. Allah's Final Revelation to Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, ordered all of them to, with regards the Hilal –in specific-, rely on what Imam Ibn Taimiyyah called a 'Universal Sign' that all can witness, whether they were in the desert or in the city, the lettered and the unlettered, so that they start their month and have their celebrations all together. Meanwhile, many Muslims ignore the major aspects of Islam, such as learning and practicing the pillars of Faith and the pillars of Islam.

What was meant for them to be a wonderful experience that they all can share, regardless of the location and degree of education, they take away from the eye and give it to those who use astronomical calculations. What happened to the Prophet's specific instruction to not use Hisab? Just add it to the ever growing list of consistent defiance of the Sunnah that Allah revealed to His Prophet, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*. One should ask himself this question: when the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, said this Hadeeth about Hisab, this being a matter of the religion, did not Allah know that in the future, mankind will be able to see the moon around the clock? Still, Allah revealed this clear, plain Hadeeth wherein the matter of the Hilal is entrusted to the eye, not made a monopoly between the educated.

Finally, if one reads the horrific differences between those who calculate just about this coming Eed, one will further know the error of the Hisab method. Just compare the various calendars

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---

they use and the decision issued by various 'Astronomical Societies' about when the new moon for Shawwal will be.

May Allah save us from error and make us among those who follow Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alaihi wa-sallam*, in all that Allah has revealed to him, without exception.

**Jalal Abualrub**

Source: [http://www.islamlife.com/readarticle.php?article\\_id=1](http://www.islamlife.com/readarticle.php?article_id=1)

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**Allaah (ta'aalaa) says:**

If anyone contends with The Messenger even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that of The Believers (i.e. the companions), We shall leave him in

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---

the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell, what an evil refuge! (An-Nisa 4:114)

But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission. (An-Nisa 4:65)

The only saying of the faithful believers, when they are called to Allâh (His Words, the Qur'ân) and His Messenger, to judge between them, is that they say: "We hear and we obey." And such are the prosperous ones (who will live forever in Paradise). (An-Nur 24:51)

O you who believe! Obey Allâh and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allâh and His Messenger, if you believe in Allâh and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination. (An-Nisa 4:59)

And let those who oppose The Messenger's commandment (i.e. his Sunnah legal ways, orders, acts of worship, statements, etc.) beware, lest some Fitnah (disbelief, trials, afflictions, earthquakes, killing, overpowered by a tyrant, etc.) befall them or a painful torment be inflicted on them. (An-Nur 24:63)

### **The Messenger of Allaah said:**

"Let me not find none of you reclining on his bed, the order comes to him on an affair which I am commanded to do or not to do, he says: 'I do not know, whatever is found in the Book of Allah, we follow.' " (Tirmithi). According to another report: "What is found in The Book of Allah as 'Haram' we pronounce it 'haram' (forbidden). Surely, I am given The Qur'an and its example with it.' Yet, according to another report: "What the Messenger of Allah has forbidden, Allah has prohibited it. "

"He who turns away from my Sunnah is not from me." (Al-Bukhaari, Muslim, an-Nasa'i)

"All of my Ummah will enter Paradise except those who refuse." It was said, "Who will refuse?" He replied, "Whoever obeys me enters Paradise and whoever disobeys me has refused." (al-Bukhaari)

"I have left you upon clear guidance. Its night is like its day. No one deviates from it after me, except that he is destroyed." (Ahmad Ibn Maajah, al-Hakim)



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---

مَنْ تَكَلَّمَ فِي مَقَامِ الْكَوَاكِبِ فَهُوَ فِي بَعْضِ أَسْوَاقِ السِّحْرِ

Whoever talks in the matter of the planets, then he has entered into part from the parts of magic.

Sunan Abu Dawood (Saheeh with the authenticity of Imaam Muslim)

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**Did the best of Mankind, Muhammad ﷺ ever do it?**

**Did the best of all generations, Muhammad's Companions ever do it?**

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---

...even though they had the technology...

**So Then Are We Better than Them?**