



5th National Conference

Saturday & Sunday, 26 & 27 Jumada Oula 1440 H

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Venue: Madina Center, Stockton, CA

Host: Islamic Shariah Council of California



Sighting the Moon Using Binoculars and Telescopes

Compiled by the Central Hilal Committee of North America
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Definitions and Technical Details

- Telescope

 - Optical

 - Radio

- Binoculars



The Shar'i Prospective

- It is clear that it is not necessary (not wajib) to use binoculars/telescopes for moon sighting.
- It is only necessary that one simply attempts through natural (fitri)
- If it is not sighted, the month is determined to be 30 days



In Hadith

- “If it is obscured to you, complete Sha’ban as thirty (days).” (al-Bukhari: 1909, Muslim (the wording): 1081, Nasai (al-Kubra): 2439, Darimi: 1727)



The Shar'i Prospective

- “Meaning if one could not sight the moon with one’s own eyes, then you are not required (*mukallaf*) to use astronomical calculations to determine the moon’s presence or its birth, or sight through binoculars/telescopes. Instead, he said, ‘If it is obscured... then complete thirty days.’” (Ru’yat-e-Hilal, pg 12)



Hafiz Ibn Hajar (r)

- “Rather, the apparent context indicates that there is no connection with calculations at all in essence. This is explained by the previous Hadith, ‘If it is obscured on you, then complete the count of 30 days.’ He did not say, ‘then ask the people of calculation (astronomers).’” (Fath al-Bari, 4/163)



Therefore

- It is not necessary to go up into the mountains
- Use an airplane
- Binoculars/Telescopes
- It is not recommended to use either - It can only be called Jaiz (permissible) at best



Are Optical Aids Mustahabb?

- It is not a recommended act
- “The era of prophethood had no airplanes, yet Madinah had high mountains with some natives, as well as Mount Uhud situated next to the city. Makkah al-Mua’zzamah had its mountains carved out. Mount Safa and Marwah, Mount Abi Qubays are connected to the city, yet it is not found in the era of Prophethood, the Righteous Successors, nor in the Best Generations (*Khayr al-Qurun*), that the Messenger of Allah or the Sahabah sent anyone to climb the mountains to sight the moon.” (Alaat-e Jadidah: 174)



From Encyclopedia Britannica

- ▶ There were observatories before the era of the Sahabah (RA)
- ▶ “Astronomy was the first natural science to reach a high level of sophistication and predictive ability, which it achieved already in the second half of the 1st millennium BCE. The early quantitative success of astronomy, compared with other natural sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology, and meteorology ... stems from several causes. First, the subject matter of early astronomy had the advantage of stability and simplicity—the Sun, the Moon, the planets, and the stars, moving in complex patterns, to be sure, but with great underlying regularity...Second, the subject was easily mathematized...in ancient Babylonia and Greece, it was precisely because the motions of the planets could be subjected to mathematical treatment that astronomy made such rapid headway.... And third, astronomy benefited from its close connection with religion and philosophy, which provided a social value that other sciences simply could not match.



Cont.

- ▶ “The astronomical tradition is of impressive duration and continuity. A few Babylonian observations of Venus are preserved from the early 2nd millennium BCE, and the Babylonians brought their science to a high level by the 4th century BCE.
- ▶ “For the next half millennium, the greatest headway was made by Greek astronomers, who put their own stamp on the subject but who built on what the Babylonians had accomplished.



Islamic Influence



- ▶ “In the early Middle Ages the leading language of astronomical learning was Arabic, as Greek had been before.
- ▶ “Astronomers in Islamic lands mastered what the Greeks had accomplished and soon added to it. With the revival of learning in Europe, and the European Renaissance, the leading language of astronomy became Latin. The European astronomers drew first on Greek astronomy, as translated from Arabic, before acquiring direct access to the classics of Greek science. Thus, modern astronomy is part of a continuous tradition, now almost 4,000 years long, that cuts across multiple cultures and languages.”



Conclusion

- Moonsighting is a simple act of worship
- Islam is a universal religion for all
- Many people do not have access to optical aids or astronomy
- The use of optical telescopes and binoculars to sight the moon is permissible but not *mustahabb* nor *wajib* given that the necessary conditions of sighting are met
- The use of radio telescopes is not acceptable