

# The Elusive Moon

Mahmood Jawaid  
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Muslims, like Jews, Hindus, and Chinese, celebrate their religious festivals based on moon. Unfortunately, compared to the others, Muslim history is only 1400 years old. As such, we are still confused when to call the moon a new moon. Don't get me wrong. The moon is still the same old moon which has been there for billions of years. But every so often it disappears, only to reappear after few days. When it reappears, it marks the beginning of a new lunar month. When should we say it has reappeared? The poor moon knew it would be an object of love, but did not know that it would also become an object of contention. Had it known, it would have remained still. There is a Jewish saying that if there are three Jews, there will be four opinions. Muslims are not far behind. Like many other issues, there are four opinions on this issue among them. Some say "Seeing is believing. When you see it after its disappearance, it is a new month." Some say "Why bother. Haven't we seen enough of it? Why do you want to see it again, it is the same old moon. Don't you know '*the sun and the moon are following courses (exactly) computed?*' (*Holy Quran 55:5*). As soon as it crosses the horizon, which we can calculate, let us call it a new month." The moon is there on the horizon, but it is dark and cannot be seen. Some who do not like the dark moon, but do not want to go through the hassle of seeing it, say "Not that soon. Give me light, not Bud Lite, the sunlight. Give the sun a chance to shine some light on it in our direction." It happens when the moon sets after the sunset. It may not be visible because of the twilight and low surface brightness, but is not dark. Then there are some who want to go through the motion of seeing the moon even when it is not there and claim to have seen it. Heated discussion ensues in mosques at the beginning of Ramadhan, each group trying to prove his point. The most commonly heard phrase that night is '*wallahi, ya akhi (I swear to God, O my brother)*'. Foaming mouths, raised fists, and pointed fingers are common scenes during these discussions. Basically we end up with three starting dates for the new lunar month.

I wonder what Angel Gabriel is thinking about this fiasco. He is supposed to descend on the night of 27<sup>th</sup> Ramadhan, called the Night of Power. Worshipping in this night is equal to one thousand months of worship. He gives every Muslim he finds in worship a hug. He must be wondering which night he should descend. Should it be according to the sighted moon, the dark moon, the lighted moon, or the fake moon? Since God has promised the Night to all the Muslims, being an Equal Opportunity Bestower of Blessing, He would not let us down. He must grant a hug from Angel Gabriel to every Muslim who spends his or her night of 27<sup>th</sup> in worship. I feel sorry for Angel Gabriel. He must be putting in three long nights of hugging instead of just one. Knowing God is Just, I am sure Angel Gabriel is paid overtime for extra two nights.

As the month of Ramadhan comes to an end, it is time to celebrate Eid, the biggest Muslim festivity. We again face the same issue. When is the Eid? When should we take off from work? When should the doctors not schedule patients for visit? Which day should we tell the school to declare Eid? When should we reserve the hall for Eid prayer?

Those who believe in sighting promise us that they will let us know as soon as they will sight the moon which could be two o'clock in the morning. We all end up burning midnight oil clinging to our cell phone waiting for the news. As soon as the news

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spreads, panic sets in. Since us Americans believe in surprises, this is the ultimate surprise we can get.

Then there is the jurisprudential issue. If it is Eid, and I am still fasting, I could be committing a sin. On the other hand, if it is still Ramadhan and I intentionally break my fast thinking it is Eid, I could be penalized for sixty consecutive days of fasting. You are doomed if you do and doomed if you don't. I go with the majority. At least I will have company in the Hell. I don't mind misery as long as I have company. The whole fiasco must be causing a huge accounting havoc for the two angels who are sitting on our shoulders and writing our good and bad deeds. Should they enter my fasting/not fasting in the column of good or bad? I hope our dissension does not cause a quarrel between them, both wanting to enter fasting/not fasting in their ledger. Would I be able to sue them if they gypped me?

When should mom cook *sewai* (desert for Eid), if the father and the son are celebrating Eid on two different days? Once I called a friend of mine to extend Eid greetings. He was upset, because he was fasting. We have not talked since. Being in two different groups is worse than being a Democrat and a Republican. At least they shake hands after the voting is done. Forget about the handshake, we do not even talk for months.

### About the Writer:

The writer has authored "Secrets of Angels, Demons, Satan, and Jinns – Decoding their Nature through Quran and Science," and "Atom to Adam – How, When and Where in the Light of Quran, Bible and Science (A Study of Human Origin)," both published by InstantPublishers.com (<http://instantpublisher.com/>) and "Lessons from the Qur'an," published by Ta-Ha Publishers (<http://www.taha.co.uk/>). These books are available from Amazon.com (<http://www.amazon.com/>) and Ta-Ha Publishers (<http://www.taha.co.uk/>), respectively. He has also published many essays on religious issues in the Charleston Gazette, West Virginia and written quite a few Islamic satires. He is a Chemical Engineer and possesses Master of Science degree in Chemical Engineering and has Professional Engineers license from the State of Texas. His e-mail address is [mnajawaid@yahoo.com](mailto:mnajawaid@yahoo.com).