**Hijrah and the Islamic Principles**[**\***](http://www.islamonline.net/English/NewHijriYear/Reflections/02.shtml#*)

**By The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore**

We all know that the Hijri calendar began with the Hijrah, the migration of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) from Makkah to Madinah. There are many lessons to be learned from Hijrah. Today's sermon will touch upon one of the most important lessons, and that is the Prophet's approach in dealing with two very different societies — the polytheistic Makkan society before Hijrah and the Islamic society in Madinah.

In both encounters, history tells us that the Prophet never compromised Islamic principles. These principles are the building block of Islam. Without them, Islam will simply cease to be the one and true religion preferred by Allah.

These principles are of four types. The first type is the central tenets of Islamic beliefs, such as believing in Allah, the prophets, and the hereafter. The second type is the compulsory acts of worship, such as prayer, fasting, zakah, and Hajj. The third type is Islamic moral values. And the fourth type is termed as the unchanging Islamic laws.

If we look back at history, we will find that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) never compromised any of these four principles. For example, the Prophet never once compromised the central tenets of Islamic belief, neither during the time he was in Makkah before the Hijrah, nor when he was in Madinah after the Hijrah. During his time in Makkah before the Hijrah, when he was calling his people to worship Allah and not the idols they created, the leaders of the Quraish tried to negotiate with him. They would willingly worship Allah for one year, but on the condition that the Prophet and other Muslims worship their idols for one year. They thought that it was a very good deal, adopting each other's belief for one year. In this way, they could have lived harmoniously side by side with the Muslims in Makkah.

How wrong they were! Immediately the verses of Surat Al-Kafirun were revealed by Allah, as an answer to their request. Allah says:

**Say O Unbelievers! I worship not that which you worship. Nor will you worship that which I worship. And I shall not worship that which you are worshiping. Nor will you worship that which I worship. To you be your religion, and to me my religion.** (Al-Kafirun 109:1-6)

This firmness concerning Islamic worship and *tawheed* (belief in the oneness of Allah), remained even after Hijrah. Never once did the Prophet compromise the basic tenets of Islam. Prayer (*salah*) was obligatory before the Hijrah, even though it was difficult to perform because of abuse and intimidation from the unbelievers. And prayer remained obligatory after the Hijrah, even after the Muslim Ummah in Madinah managed to perform it peacefully. Nobody came to the Prophet and said, "Now that we are a strong community, and we don't have to fear any intimidation from the unbelievers, let us reduce the number of prayers. We have better things to do like strengthening our community."

There is no compromise over prayer. The five compulsory prayers must be performed in whatever condition we are in. Even if we cannot stand, we must do it sitting down. If we can't find water for our ablution, we can do dry ablution. If we are forcefully hindered from performing it, we must make up for it later when we are free. There is no compromise on prayer, as much as there is no compromise on the other fixed principle, that is, the Islamic moral values.

In this regard, the Prophet showed to us how important it is to adhere to our moral values, in whatever surrounding and circumstances. For example, the Prophet led a modest life in Makkah when the unbelievers tried all means to undermine his *da`wah* even after Hijrah, when he was accorded the proper and highest respect. He was never arrogant and never looked down on other people. In fact, he went out of his way to help the poor and destitute, be they men, women, or children.

That is an example we should all emulate and follow: to adhere to the unchanged principles of Islam, even though the world around us changes. We cannot compromise on those principles. For if we do, Islam will cease to be Islam for us.

So there is no compromise on the six articles of faith. There is no compromise on the five articles of Islam. There is no compromise on the Islamic moral values. There is no compromise on the fixed Islamic laws.

My brothers and sisters in Islam, even though there is no compromise on those fixed four principles of Islam, we should know that Islam is also a way of life and a system of belief that is relevant for every situation and across time. Islam is not something that is confined by a certain environment and a fixed period of time. Thus, in Islamic jurisprudence, there is what is termed as *ath-thawabit*, the unchanged principles, and *al-mutaghaiyirat*, the evolving rules and regulations.

Evolving rules and regulations prove the flexibility of Islamic jurisprudence to change according to every situation and condition. It allows Islamic jurisprudence to be relevant for all times. But do remember that the evolving rules and regulations are different from the unchangeable principles. The evolving rules and regulations are those that the jurists differ about. These differences arise from their approaches, their *ijtihad* (personal reasoning) and their understanding of the Islamic Shari`ah. They differ about the best method of implementing the Islamic Shari`ah.

So we should not blame others who follow a different school of law or accuse them of not following the Islamic Shari`ah, or being astray because those differences are in the area open to differences. This reflects the flexibility of the Islamic Shari`ah to cope with each and every situation. For example, we should not blame those who do not recite [*qunut*](http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503548900) [du`aa' recited before or after the first *ruku`* in prayers] in Fajr prayer as not following the Islamic Shari`ah. Nor should we blame those who do recite *qunut* in Fajr prayer as not properly following the Islamic Shari`ah. We should not blame Muslim women who do not cover their face with a veil as not following the Islamic Shari`ah, nor should we blame those who do cover their face.

All these, my brothers and sisters, fall in the category open to *ijtihad* and the differences among the scholars.

* ***Based on a Friday Sermon,*** *February 11, 2005 (*

**Where Are the Ansar Today?**

The Lost Spirit of Hijrah

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| By  [AElfwine Mischler](http://www.readingislam.com/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1154526130204&pagename=Zone-English-Discover_Islam%2FDIELayout#**1) |

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A sister once told me that she and her family had made *hijrah* to Egypt but that she couldn’t have come without her microwave oven. Hmmm. That struck me as perhaps not being in quite the same spirit as [the Muhajirun who emigrated from Makkah in 622 CE](http://www.islamonline.net/English/introducingislam/Prophet/Life/article05.shtml). But then again, maybe that’s just because when I lived in Los Angeles, I was the only person there who didn’t own a microwave.

The Muhajirun left behind not only their property but often their families, too. At that time there were very few households in which everyone was Muslim. Most families were split, with one spouse or one child Muslim and the rest of them pagan. Those who emigrated never knew if they would see their family members again. No photographs to remember them by, no weekly telephone calls or e-mails to those left behind. But the Muhajirun were willing to make the sacrifice.

Today there are still many who revert to Islam and find themselves cut off by their families. If they are still living at home at the time of their reversion, they may actually be kicked out. If they’re not still living at home, their families may just cut their relations with them. (To be fair, there are also families who don’t ostracize their Muslim member, even if they do think he or she has “gone off the deep end.”) Yet people continue to revert, unable to deny the truth any longer. So, though they may not actually move to a new land, they are in some respects like the Muhajirun, that is, in need of help.

But where are the Ansar today?

Do we have shelters for new Muslims (or for those suffering from domestic violence)? Do we have social services for them? Networks to help them find jobs? Or even just services to help them learn their religion? Or what about services for immigrant Muslims who need to settle in a new land, learn a new language? Only in limited cases, I’m afraid.

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| Rather than looking at the 90 percent on which we agree, we focus on the 10 percent on which we disagree. |

We often hear about the great sacrifices that the Muhajirun made, but they couldn’t have left Makkah without the Ansar, the Muslims of Madinah who helped them.

The Ansar did more than open their homes and help the Muhajirun financially. They knew full well that by pledging to protect Muhammad and his followers, they were challenging the whole of Arabia. We know that they realized that, because one of them stood up and warned the others just before they pledged.

Are there many of us today who are willing to help our fellow Muslims if there is any sort of risk involved? I’m afraid that where we are living comfortably, too many of us don’t want to “get our hands dirty” or get involved.

Another great thing about the Ansar. Before they became Muslim, they were divided into two tribes, Aws and Khazrah. And I mean divided, frequently at war with each other. Yet when they accepted Islam, they were able to overcome those differences and unite under Muhammad’s leadership. No more “my dad can beat your dad.” These people were serious in their devotion to Islam.

Today we see too many of us divided over minor issues—even ones as petty as the style of each other’s clothes or the length of veil or beard. Or we take an issue on which there is not unanimous consensus and let that be the basis by which we judge others. Rather than looking at the 90 percent on which we agree, we focus on the 10 percent on which we disagree. Thus we make no progress, always squabbling over petty details while our enemies continue to mow us down (literally or figuratively), drain our coffers, humiliate and debilitate us.

Where are the Ansar?

When my husband and I visited Madinah some years ago, I commented to our host that I was disappointed that the Prophet’s house and original mosque had not been preserved as a museum. I would have liked to see the simple way he lived. (I can see it now—an Arab Williamstown with the reconstructed or preserved buildings, the main part of each room roped off, all the artifacts left “just the way the owner left it,” employees in period costumes, $20 admission.) Our host replied that, first of all, the mud brick they used back then didn’t last long, so there was no way to preserve it. And that that was not in the spirit of Islam, Islam was for progress.

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| Some of us are suffering as the Muslims of Makkah did—sometimes worse—but the question remains, where can we go that’s better? |

Well, yes, we should be progressing materially, while not letting that become our be-all end-all. In fact, the Prophet’s main concerns in Madinah were not for the economic revival or the pursuit of wealth, but simply that the Muslims might be safe and secure—able to walk the streets without being hassled or molested—and free to worship.

As the [beginning of another Hijri year](http://www.islamonline.net/English/In_Depth/Hijry/1425/index.shtml) arrives, we need to take stock of where we stand as individuals and as an Ummah. In the West we are facing more restrictions on our freedom of religion, especially our right to dress in accordance with our religion. As a repercussion of 9/11, in some places we are still assaulted, harassed, or unjustly treated by civilians and police alike. In other parts of the world most of us suffer, some worse than others, under dictatorships by “Muslims” who torture, maim, and kill those who strive to enact Shari`ah again.

There are enough of us world wide who are suffering as the Muslims of Makkah did—sometimes worse—but the question remains, where can we go that’s better? And where are the Ansar to help us?

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**Hijrah Still Offers Valuable Lessons**[\*](http://www.islamonline.net/English/NewHijriYear/Reflections/03.shtml#*)

**By** [**Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi**](http://www.islamonline.net/livefatwa/english/Guestcv.asp?hGuestID=S3j4xb)

February 06, 2005

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A new year begins. Islamic history is full of days and great occasions that are good to celebrate - taking from them that which guides us to the right path in difficult times.

The noble Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah is one of the grandest events in the history of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) gives us through the two migrations - the first Hijrah of the Muslims to Ethiopia and his own to Madinah, then called Yathrib - many lessons and examples. He teaches us that change requires hard work and sacrifice.

When the followers of the Prophet were harmed in Makkah and could find no one to champion them and feared sedition, the Prophet reviewed all the countries of the neighboring world for a place to command them to migrate to. If they went any region in the Arabian Peninsula they would be returned to Quraysh. Persia was overlooked because the Persians were idolaters, and the Romans, though people of the book, were known for being tough and tyrannical. The Prophet thought Ethiopia would be the best. He ordered the companions to migrate to Ethiopia. “**Go to Ethiopia,**” he told them, “**there is a king there who is just.**” This Hijrah was termed the migration to the abode of safety, while the migration to Madinah was termed the migration to the abode of belief.

We thus learn from the Prophet that when we plan for something we should make our plans considering all aspects of the situation. He planned for the method of travel, the provisions and who would lead the way. When everything was meticulously planned, he put his faith in Allah.

In the grand welcome the Prophet received upon arriving in Madinah we find lessons and examples. For the people of Madinah welcomed him and the immigrants with great hospitality, knowing that they would have to share with the immigrants their money and homes and become their family - for the immigrants had left their families behind in Makkah - and asked rewards only from Allah. In this way, the Prophet achieved brotherhood between the Ansar (helpers of the Prophet) and the Muhajirun (migrants), and they became an example of the depth of belief.

The lessons and examples in the life of the Prophet and the Hijrah to Madinah should not simply be seen as a historical story to enjoy reading or hearing but one that we should consider a model for our own actions, so that we may truly be one of his followers.

O! Lord, do not deny us the joy of looking upon Your noble face for our failings or the intercession of the Prophet or Heaven.

*\***Excerpted with modifications from:* [*www.aljazeerah.info*](http://www.aljazeerah.info)*.*

The significance of Hijrah (the migration of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from Makkah to Madinah) is not limited to the Islamic history or to the Muslims. The Hijrah not only reshaped — socially and politically — the Arab Peninsula, but also had its impact on worldwide civilizations.  
  
Throughout the history of Islam, the migration was a transitional line between the two major eras, regarding to the message of Islam; the era of Makkah and the era of Madinah. In its essence, this signified a transition from one phase to another, as follows:

* Transition from the position of weakness, where the non-believers of Makkah — particularly the people of Quraish — humiliated, tortured and killed Muslims, to the position of strength. This is where Muslims were allowed to defend themselves and were able to defeat their adversaries.
* Transition form spreading Islam through individual *dawah* (inviting others to Islam) to the spreading of Islam through institutionalized *dawah*, initiated by the state.
* Transition from a position where Muslims represented a small group of people, surrounded by enemies and threatened by death, to the position of a regional power with a strong central leadership. This was one that was surrounded by a large number of followers and allies.
* Transition of *dawah* from regionalism, in which the focus was only on Quraish and the tribes surrounding Makkah, to the phase of universalism. This is where the Muslim State began reaching out to Persia, Egypt, and the Byzantine Empire.
* Transition from being a simple Islamic group of believers, to being the Islamic Ummah (nation). This is which was an organized Islamic state, with a central leadership and other organizations.
* Transition, which is most significantly for early Muslims, to the phase in which Islam was not only the act of worship, but a way of life. This was encompassing politics, economy, social interactions and every other aspect of life. This was the first time when Islam was looked upon as a comprehensive religion.

This contrast between the two periods is clearly noticeable in the Quranic discourse. Muslim scholars describe the part of Quran that was revealed in Makkah as the Makkan Quran, and that which was revealed in Madinah as the Madani Qur'an.  
  
Although both parts are intermingled in the Quran and constitute one divine script, the discourse of both parts is clearly distinguishable. Whereas the part revealed in Makkah concentrated on *tawhid* (the Oneness of Allah/monotheism), the part revealed in Madinah covered rules regarding Islamic life in general.  
  
There is no doubt whatsoever that the migration of Prophet Muhammad to Madinah was the crucial event, which established the Islamic civilization. This was a civilization that thrived for many centuries.

Hijrah, the turning point in Islamic history, as you have stated. Hijrah, no doubt, kindled the light of hope in the hearts of the early Muslims who set a shinning example for all Muslims, in every generation, to emulate.   
  
Hijrah, in essence, is a process of transfer to a better situation. It is not meant to find a comfortable place where one would relax and stop endeavor. Rather, it is a search for an environment more favorable to continuous and constructive effort. Immediately after reaching Madinah, the Prophet undertook an all-embracing process to establish a faithful and strong society. This is a significant aspect and important lesson to learn from Hijrah.

Responding to the question, **Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi**, President of the Fiqh Council of North America, states the following:

In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah, Most High, says, **Those who believe, and migrate and strive in Allah’s cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah: they are indeed the successful people. Their Lord does give them glad tidings of a Mercy from Himself, of His good pleasure, and of Gardens where enduring pleasure will be theirs: They will dwell therein forever. Verily in Allah’s presence is a reward, the greatest (of all).**  (Al-Tawbah 9: 20-22)  
  
We are approaching the New Year of Hijrah. Our religious calendar is the Hijri calendar. It is important for us to keep in mind the meaning and significance of Hijrah.  
  
Hijrah was one of the most important events in the history of Islam. It is for this reason `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) adopted Hijrah date to calculate years. Muslims chose Hijrah as the focal point to reckon their chronology. In physical terms, Hijrah was a journey between two cities about 300 miles apart, but in its grand significance it marked the beginning of an era, a civilization, a culture and a history for the whole mankind. Islam progressed not only from the physical Hijrah, but because Muslims took Hijrah seriously in all its aspects and dimensions.  
  
When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) made the Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah, he did not just transfer his residence or took shelter in another city, but as soon as he arrived in Madinah he began the transformation of that city in every aspect.  
  
It is important for us to study and reflect on the things that he did in Madinah. There are many lessons for us in that history and we can learn many things for our life.  
  
**1. *Masjid* (Mosque):** The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) first established a *Masjid* for the worship of Allah. He himself worked in carrying the stones and building that small, humble but most powerful structure. This was the beginning, but soon other *Masajid* (mosques) were established in Madinah.  
  
**2. *Madrasah*( Islamic school and educational institution for the community):**. The first school under the supervision of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was the school of *Suffah*. Later many other schools were opened. According to Maulana Shibli Numani, there were nine schools opened in Madinah alone in the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).  
  
**3. *Mu'akhah*:** He established brotherly relations between the *Muhajirun* (Muslims who migrated from Makkah) and the *Ansar* (residents of Madinah who helped the Prophet and his Companions). *Masjid* and *Madrasah* were not enough; what was also important was to have good relations between Muslims. They should have their brotherhood on the basis of faith, not on the basis of tribes as they used to have prior to Islam.  
  
**4. Intercommunity and Interfaith Relations:** Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) also established good relations with other communities living in Madinah. There was a large Jewish community as well as some other Arab tribes who had not accepted Islam. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) prepared a *Mithaq* (a covenant or a constitution) for relations between these communities.  
  
**5. Cleaning the City:** Yathrib (previous name of Madinah) was a dirty city. When the *Sahabah* (Prophet's Companions) came from Makkah to Madinah, many of them got sick and did not like that city. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) asked them to clean the city and remove its dirt and filth. `Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, said: “We came to Madinah and it was the most polluted land of Allah. The water there was most stinking. (Al-Bukhari, 1756)  
  
**6. Water System in the City:** The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) asked the *Sahabah* to dig wells in different parts of the city. It is mentioned that more than 50 wells were opened in the city of Madinah and there was enough clean water for every one.  
  
**7. Agriculture and Gardening:** The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) encouraged the *Sahabah* to cultivate the land and make gardens. He told them that any one who would cultivate any dead land, would own it. Many people started working and cultivating and soon there was enough food for every one.  
  
**8. Poverty Eradication:** In a short period of time it happened that there were no poor people in Madinah. Every one had enough and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to give gifts to coming delegations.  
  
**9. Safety, Security, Law and Order:** Madinah became the safest city in the world. There were very few incidents of theft, rape, drunkenness or murder and they were immediately taken care of.

In short, Hijrah teaches us that wherever Muslims go, they should bring goodness to that land. Muslims should work for both moral and material goodness of the society.

**The Blessings of the Lunar Calendar**

By Karima Burns (MH, ND)

When Al-Baraa’ was asked, "Was the face of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) (as bright) as a sword?" he answered, "No, but (as bright) as a moon” (Al-Bukhari).When the Prophet was asked about those entering paradise, he responded, "The first batch (of people) who will enter Paradise will be (glittering) like a full moon..."

The Islamic calendar, based purely on lunar cycles, was first introduced in 638 C.E. by the close companion of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and the second Caliph, `Umar ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), who lived from 592 to 644 C.E. in an attempt to reconcile the various, at times conflicting, systems being used for dating during his time. However, the Hijrah calendar is not just a sentimental system of time reckoning for Muslims; rather, it has a deep religious and historical significance, and has had many scientific influences on our daily lives in the areas of psychology, physiology, and the environment.

By returning to the use, or at least the recognition, of the lunar calendar we gain many benefits as Muslims. From a historical angle, all of the events and celebrations of Islamic history are recorded in the Hijrah Calendar. The start of Ramadan is determined by the sighting of the crescent-moon (hilal). The Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) has said, "Fast at its sighting, and terminate the fast at its sighting" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim). Our use of the Gregorian calendar makes us forgetful of the spirit of these events and the lessons we can learn from them.

The Qur’an says, [And He hath constrained the night and the day and the sun and the moon to be of service unto you, and the stars are made subservient by His command.] (An-Nahl 16:12) Many scientists believe that “constrained” in this context implies much more than simply being the basis for a calendar. Studies have shown that the moon, in fact, influences our moods and physical cycles.

Although most people today cannot tell you when the new or full moon will appear, these same lunar cycles can provide us with so much insight into fertility and mood cycles. It is more than obvious that the effects of the lunar cycle and its phases can be seen in numerous life forms, including fish, shellfish, insects, mammals (including humans), and plants.

For example, shellfish renew their shells, and undergo regeneration and sexual activity in accordance with the lunar tidal cycle. Guppy-fish have color sensitivity on their back that is most responsive during the full moon, and least responsive at the new moon. The golden hamster displays lunar rhythms in activity, and urinary volume and acidity.

Moon cycles are well known to hunters and fishermen. Sea creatures show a high lunar sensitivity; their reproductive cycles being affected by the rhythms of the moon. Exact lunar rhythms have been demonstrated in the reproductive cycles of fish. Oysters open their shells at high tide. Shrimpers flock to a full moon, at which time they predictably rise to the surface to feed.

Animal studies show that physical activity, metabolism, aggression, and sexual behavior are dramatically increased in many species at the time of the new and full moons. To deny that the moon affects the human species as well is shortsighted; however, many people around the world still feel compelled to debate and research the topic.

One Italian study (Ghiandoni et al, European Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology, March 1998, vol. 77, pp. 47-50) found a correlation between spontaneous full-term deliveries and the lunar month, with delivery day being correlated with the first or second day after the full moon. Most importantly, fertility cycles are synchronized with the moon; thus, couples wishing to conceive have the best results when they observe the moon’s cycles rather than solar cycles.

A Russian study (Lucatelli and Pane, Biofizika, Sept.-Oct. 1995) has found that in some cases of manic-depressive illness, "planetary locations in relation to the lunar month could be correlated with the susceptibility to bipolar manic-depressive syndrome. Other studies have found large correlations in emotional (including violent) acts around the full moon and a tendency for people to become depressed or introspective during the waning of the moon.

Traditional moon wisdom states that on the day of the New Moon the body's capacity for detoxification is at its highest. This is a time, tradition says, to make healthy lifestyle changes, break bad habits and withdraw symptoms of imbalance. This is in complete synchronization with the fact that the prophet used to fast on the days of the full moon, saying, "It is like fasting the whole year."

The Qur’an says, [It is He who made the sun a shining and the moon as a light and measured out stages that you might know the number of years and reckoning.] (Yunus 10:2) The moon, in fact, is a reckoning for many events. Farmers are known to say, “A circle seen sometimes around the moon means it will rain or snow soon.” Scientists say this circle is caused by refraction of light through ice crystals that are quite high in the troposphere and are usually associated with a thin layer of cirrus clouds. Often, this layer of ice crystals will precede a developing storm by 24 to 36 hours. Although the circle does not necessarily mean rain or snow, it can be an indicator that there is a chance of precipitation over the next couple of days.

Tradition also says, "If the new moon holds the old moon in her lap, expect fair weather." Scientists say this is so because, during fair weather conditions, the air is more stable, which minimizes turbulence. Research has linked hurricanes to full and new moons. Data has also shown that rainfall is more likely to occur at the first crescent than at the first quarter of the moon, and at the disseminating moon phase rather than at the third quarter.

Both the sun and the moon affect our water supplies (all water, including the water within the earth, and not just large bodies of water such as the oceans and rivers) through their magnetic pulls. Although the sun is much bigger than the moon, the moon is much closer to earth and so, its pull is greater. The movement of the moon is connected to the rising and falling of the tides. Seeds sown and crops planted while water is rising during the waxing or increasing moon can more easily absorb water than those sown in the waning or decreasing phase. Therefore, we plant crops that thrive in dry conditions during the waning phase, and aboveground crops that need lots of water during the waxing phase.

Certainly, Allah has subjected us to the moon. We would be wise to bear this factor in mind, and keep our Islamic calendars close by our Gregorian calendars at all times.

**The Beginning of the Beginning**

Hijrah

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| By  [AElfwine Mischler](http://www.readingislam.com/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1154526128529&pagename=Zone-English-Discover_Islam%2FDIELayout#**1) |

Although Muslims do not actually celebrate the Muslim new year in the way other people celebrate their respective new year, the first day of the lunar month of Muharram is a legal holiday in many Muslim countries.

The Islamic calendar is counted from the year of Prophet Muhammad’s flight from Makkah to Madinah in September 622 CE, known as the Hijrah (or hegira in English from Latin from Arabic). This journey is one of the most important events in Islamic history.

The early Muslims in Makkah were harshly persecuted and tortured by the ruling pagan Quraysh tribe. The Muslims were few in number and many of them were slaves. With no power to repel their persecutors, they could only wait patiently until Allah (God) opened a way for them.

In the twelfth year of the Prophet’s mission, 12 men from the city of Yathrib (later to be known as Madinah) came to Makkah during the Hajj season and met with Muhammad at Al-`Aqabah. Having heard of his mission, they became Muslim and pledged their faith in the first covenant of Al-`Aqabah. The Prophet sent Mus`ab ibn `Umayr back to Yathrib with them to teach them the religion. Mus`ab succeeded in converting many of the people of Yathrib to Islam. The following year, in June 622 CE, 73 men and 2 women from Yathrib came to the Prophet during the Hajj and pledged allegiance to him in the second covenant of Al-`Aqabah. They promised to protect him and help the Muslims of Makkah to resettle in their city.

This delegation was the core of what came to be known as Al-Ansar, the Helpers, the Muslims who were natives of Yathrib, later known as Al-Madinah Al-Munawwara—the Illuminated City—or Madinah. The Muslims gradually left Makkah a few at a time so as not to attract the attention of the Quraysh. Eventually the Quraysh realized what was happening and tried to stop many of them from leaving. History tells many stories of these men and women who gave up their homes, wealth, and families to be able to freely practice their religion in Madinah.

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| It is significant that when the second caliph standardized the Muslim chronology, he chose the Hijrah as the starting point. |

Only after several months did Allah grant the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) permission to leave Makkah. Shortly before his departure, Jibreel (Angel Gabriel) told Muhammad that the Quraysh had devised a plot to stab him while he was sleeping. On the night of the planned assassination, his cousin `Ali ibn Abi Talib slept in Muhammad’s bed while the latter escaped with his friend Abu Bakr As-Siddiq to a cave south of Makkah, opposite the direction to Madinah. Fortunately for `Ali, the assassins looked at his face before stabbing him and left him alone when they realized they had been outwitted.

Muhammad and Abu Bakr hid in the cave for three days while the Quraysh searched all around Makkah. At one point, their enemies were only a few feet away outside the cave, but Allah protected them by simple everyday “miracles.” A spider spun its web across the mouth of the cave, pigeons nested and laid eggs in front of it, and the branches of a small tree blocked it. Thus the pursuers assumed no one had entered the cave recently and did not search it.

The two then made their way, led by a pagan guide, to Madinah via a coastal route to throw off the pursuit. When they finally arrived in Madinah, Muhammad let his camel wander where it willed until it sat in one place. The owners of the land where the camel sat were paid, and the Prophet’s mosque and living quarters were built on the site while the Prophet and Abu Bakr lived as guests of the Ansar.

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| The Hijrah was also significant for the unselfish brotherhood demonstrated by the Ansar towards the Muhajirun |

The Hijrah, at last, gave the Muslims a place where they could openly declare their Islam and worship in peace. It was the beginning of the Islamic state. The Qur’anic verses revealed in Makkah had dealt mainly with the nature of Allah and man’s relationship to Him. In Makkah, there had been very few households in which all of the members were Muslims. At the time, Islam appeared to be concerned only with the individual and the hereafter. In contrast, the verses revealed in Madinah dealt more with man’s relationships with others—the social, political, and economic aspects of Islam that could not be developed under persecution.

The Hijrah was also significant for the unselfish brotherhood demonstrated by the Ansar towards the Muhajirun (immigrants from Makkah). The Ansar were not wealthy, yet they took in the Muhajirun, shared their food and homes with them, and helped to establish them in trade or work. Further, the Ansar were well aware that by doing so they were challenging the Quraysh and all the pagan tribes of the whole Arabian Peninsula. Indeed, the pagans did launch several battles in an attempt to snuff out the nascent Muslim state. But the Ansar remained faithful followers of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and were always loved and praised by him.

It was the second caliph, `Umar ibn Al-Khattab, who chose the year of Hijrah to be the starting point of the Muslim calendar. Before that, each province marked the years as the nth year in the reign of so-and-so, or the year when such-and-such happened. `Umar standardized the chronology, and it is significant that he chose the Hijrah—rather than the birth or death of Muhammad or the first revelation of the Qur’an—as the starting point. The Hijrah was the beginning of Islam as a complete way of life affecting all aspects of Man’s existence.

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