



170701 - Why Does Ramadan Change Every Year?

the question

I hope that you can explain with regard to the Hijri calendar: why does Ramadan come thirteen or fourteen days later than the Gregorian date?

Summary of answer

Ramadan changes every year because the Islamic calendar follows the lunar cycle, which is about 10-11 days shorter than the solar year. This causes Ramadan to shift across different seasons over time.

The Quran emphasizes the importance of the lunar calendar in determining Islamic dates, including fasting and Hajj.

Unlike the Gregorian calendar, which lacks a fixed natural sign, the lunar calendar relies on the visible phases of the moon, making it a clear and divinely ordained system.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Understanding the Lunar and Solar Calendars

It is well-known that different nations and peoples use different calendars. There is the solar calendar, the beginning and end of which are based on the movements of the sun; it has 365 days.

And there is the lunar calendar, which is based on the appearance and disappearance of the moon at the beginning and end of the month; it has 354 days.

The solar calendar is similar to the lunar calendar with regard to the number of months, but it differs from it with regard to the number of days. So it is eleven days longer than the lunar



calendar.

The Difference between the Gregorian and Hijri Calendars

The Gregorian calendar is based on the solar year, whereas the Hijri calendar is based on the lunar year. It is for this reason that the beginning of Ramadan every year differs in relation to the Gregorian calendar, and as a result of that it moves through the four seasons.

The Quranic Basis for the Lunar Calendar

The lunar calendar is the calendar that must be followed, because Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {It is He Who made the sun a shining thing and the moon as a light and measured out its (their) stages, that you might know the number of years and the reckoning.} [Yunus 10:5]

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said: From the sun the days are known, and from the phases of the moon the months and years are known. (End quote from Tafsir Ibn Kathir, 4/248)

How the Moon Determines Islamic Months

The sun defines day and night only; as for the moon, Allah – may He be Glorified and Exalted – has made it a measure for the months and years, as He says: (interpretation of the meaning): {... and measured out its (their) stages, that you might know the number of years and the reckoning.} [Yunus 10:5]

And Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {Verily, the number of months with Allah is twelve months (in a year), so was it ordained by Allah on the Day when He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are Sacred, (i.e. the 1st, the 7th, the 11th and the 12th months of the Islamic calendar). That is the right religion, so wrong not yourselves therein.} [At-Tawbah 9:36]

The words “That is the right religion” indicate that this calendar is the correct way that Allah has



approved for us, and that anything other than it, that is customarily used by other nations, is not correct, because it is subject to mistakes and confusion.

Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: This verse indicates that what is required is to connect the rulings on acts of worship and other matters to the months and years as known to the Arabs, and not the months that the Persians, Romans and Copts follow. (End quote from Al-Jami' li Ahkam Al-Quran, 8/133)

Ash-Shawkani (may Allah have mercy on him) said: This verse states that no attention should be paid to the months used by the Persians, Romans and Copts, some of which they make thirty days long, and others they make more or less than that. (End quote from Fat-h Al-Qadir, 2/521)

Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {They ask you (O Muhammad SAW) about the new moons. Say: These are signs to mark fixed periods of time for mankind and for the pilgrimage.} [Al-Baqarah 2:189]; i.e., they are signs for the people with regard to entering and exiting ihram [for Hajj]; for beginning and ending the fast; for marriage, divorce and `Iddah; for dealing, trade and debts; for both their religious and worldly affairs.

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Here Allah tells us that they are signs to mark fixed periods of time for mankind. This is general in meaning and applies to all their affairs. Thus Allah has made the new moon signs to mark fixed periods of time with regard to the established rulings of Islam... That includes the fast, Hajj, `Iddah, and expiatory fasts. (End quote from Majmu' Al-Fatawa 25/133)

The Lunar Calendar Is More Reliable

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said: As for the Western calendar, there is no tangible, rational or religious basis for it. Hence you will find some of the months having twenty-eight days, some having thirty days, and some having thirty-one days, with no known reason for this difference. Moreover, these months have no tangible sign that people may refer to in order to work out times, unlike the lunar calendar which does have a physical sign that is known



to everyone. (End quote from Tafsir Al-Baqarah, 2/371)

Find further clarification in these answers: ([2122](#), [69741](#), [170242](#), [170242](#), [110350](#), [1226](#))

And Allah knows best.