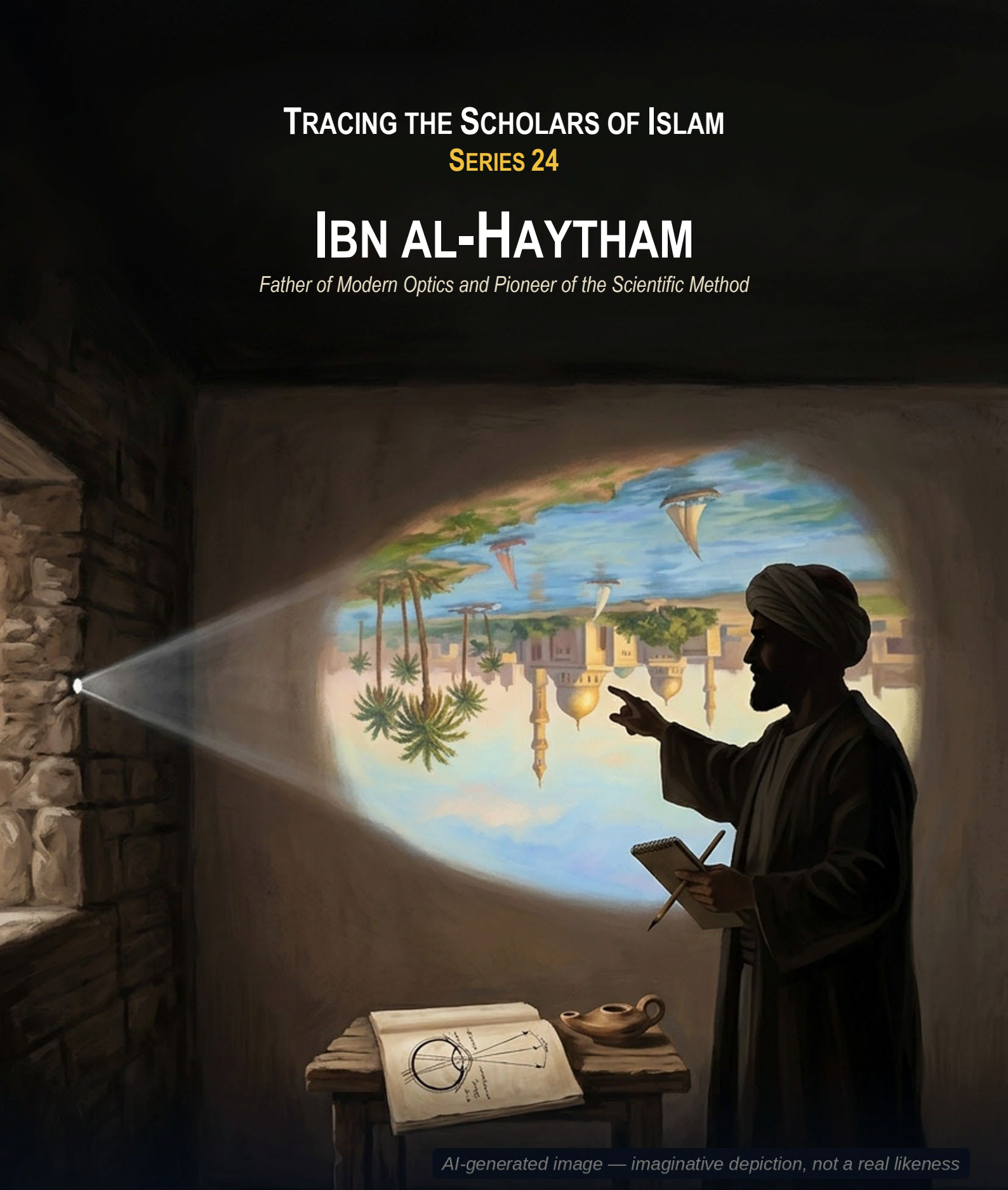
Tracing the Scholars of Islam

Series 24

Ibn al-Haytham

Father of Modern Optics and Pioneer of the Scientific Method



AI-generated image — imaginative depiction, not a real likeness

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

SERIES 24

IBN AL-HAYTHAM

Father of Modern Optics and Pioneer of the Scientific Method

وَٱللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُم مِّنۢ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَٰتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْـًٔا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْأَبْصَٰرَ وَٱلْأَفْـِٔدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

"And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful."

SURAH AN-NAHL 16:78

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who gave us hearing, sight and hearts. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

This twenty-fourth book of Tracing the Scholars of Islam tells the story of a scholar who changed how humanity understands vision, and who taught us to test before we believe. May his story sharpen our minds and deepen our gratitude.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook is an **image generated by artificial intelligence (AI)** — an ***imaginative depiction, not a real likeness*** of Ibn al-Haytham. This label is also printed on the cover. This time we are **inside a dark camera obscura**, and he appears as a **side silhouette**.

Daylight enters through **a single small hole** in the left wall and projects an **inverted image** of the Nile, palm trees and the domes of Cairo onto the wall — proof that ***light travels in straight lines***. He points at the image while holding a notebook.

On the table is **a manuscript with a diagram of the eye** and rays of light — a symbol of ***Kitab al-Manazir***.

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Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = history note (reports from the books of history and biography); blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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IBN AL-HAYTHAM

The twenty-fourth book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam** tells the story of ***Abu 'Ali al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham***, known in the West as ***Alhazen***. His ***Kitab al-Manazir*** (Book of Optics) explained that we see because ***light enters the eye***, and changed the science of optics forever.

He is also regarded as one of the ***pioneers of the scientific method***: observing, measuring, testing by experiment, and ***doubting*** claims that are not proven — even from great figures such as Ptolemy.

This eBook explains ***the two theories of vision***, ***the candle experiment***, ***the steps of the scientific method***, ***the moon illusion***, ***the science of perception***, ***Alhazen's problem*** in mathematics, and how his knowledge reached ***Europe***. It also links the blessing of sight with ***the sight of the heart*** according to the Qur'an and Hadith.

Note: The translation of Qur'anic verses in this eBook is that of Sahih International. The grading of each Hadith is stated in the Hadith box. Information from books of history and modern research is **biographical narration (not Hadith)** *and is placed in the brown "History Note" boxes. A cover image that shows the scholar is an AI-generated image and is marked as such. His years of birth and death are estimates.*

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HEARING, SIGHT AND HEARTS

SURAH AN-NAHL 16:78

وَٱللَّهُ أَخۡرَجَكُم مِّنۢ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَٰتِكُمۡ لَا تَعۡلَمُونَ شَيۡـٔٗا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلسَّمۡعَ وَٱلۡأَبۡصَٰرَ وَٱلۡأَفۡـِٔدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَشۡكُرُونَ ٧٨

And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/16:78

Allah brought us out of our mothers' wombs ***"not knowing a thing"***, then gave us ***hearing, sight and intellect***. All three are tools of knowledge — and ***sight*** was Ibn al-Haytham's main field of study. The verse ends with the call ***that perhaps you would be grateful***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 16:78.

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LITTLE ARE YOU GRATEFUL

SURAH AL-MULK 67:23

قُلۡ هُوَ ٱلَّذِيٓ أَنشَأَكُمۡ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلسَّمۡعَ وَٱلۡأَبۡصَٰرَ وَٱلۡأَفۡـِٔدَةَۚ قَلِيلٗا مَّا تَشۡكُرُونَ ٢٣

Say, "It is He who has produced you and made for you hearing and vision and hearts; little are you grateful."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/67:23

This verse mentions the same blessings — ***"hearing and vision and hearts"*** — but ends with a rebuke: ***"little are you grateful"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 67:23.

One way to be grateful is to ***use these blessings for knowledge***. Ibn al-Haytham spent his life studying how the eye sees — a form of ***tadabbur*** on the blessings of Allah.

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REFLECT ON THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH

SURAH AL 'IMRAN 3:190–191

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱخْتِلَٰفِ ٱلَّيْلِ وَٱلنَّهَارِ لَءَايَٰتٍ لِّأُو۟لِى ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ ﴿١٩٠﴾

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.

ٱلَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ ٱللَّهَ قِيَٰمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَٰذَا بَٰطِلًا سُبْحَٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ ٱلنَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾

Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:190-191

People of understanding (***ulul albab***) are those who ***"give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth"***, and say: ***"Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 3:190.

This verse combines ***remembrance*** and ***reflection***. Observing nature is not merely science, but a path to ***knowing the Creator***.

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DO THEY NOT LOOK?

SURAH AL-GHASHIYAH 88:17–20

أَفَلَا يَنظُرُونَ إِلَى ٱلْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ ﴿١٧﴾

Then do they not look at the camels - how they are created?

وَإِلَى ٱلسَّمَآءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ ﴿١٨﴾

And at the sky - how it is raised.

وَإِلَى ٱلْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ ﴿١٩﴾

And at the mountains - how they are erected.

وَإِلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ ﴿٢٠﴾

And at the earth - how it is spread out.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/88:17-20

Allah invites people: ***"do they not look at the camels - how they are created"***, and at the sky, the mountains and the earth. The word ***yanzurun*** (look) in this verse is a call to ***careful observation*** — the basis of all scientific study. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 88:17.

Ibn al-Haytham made observation a ***method***: observe carefully, record, then test.

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BACKGROUND: BASRA AND CAIRO

Ibn al-Haytham was born in ***Basra***, Iraq — a port city famous for its scholars of Arabic grammar, theologians and merchants. He later moved to ***Cairo***, the capital of the ***Fatimid*** state in Egypt.

> **HISTORY NOTE: CAIRO AND DAR AL-'ILM**
>
> Cairo was founded by the Fatimids in ***969 CE***. The ***al-Azhar*** mosque was built soon after and became a centre of learning.
>
> In ***1005 CE***, Caliph ***al-Hakim*** opened ***Dar al-'Ilm*** (the House of Knowledge), a library and centre of learning open to the public, with thousands of books in many fields.

LESSON

Knowledge flourishes where ***books and places to study*** are provided. Public libraries in that age were society's ***investment*** in knowledge.

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WHO WAS IBN AL-HAYTHAM?

Ibn al-Haytham was ***born around 965 CE in Basra***, Iraq. He later moved to ***Cairo***, Egypt, and spent the rest of his life there until he ***died around 1040 CE***.

HISTORY NOTE: TO CAIRO AND THE NILE

Ibn al-Qifti reports that Ibn al-Haytham once said he could ***regulate the flooding of the Nile***. The Fatimid Caliph ***al-Hakim*** invited him to Egypt. After surveying the river in the south, he realised his plan ***could not be carried out***.

According to the same report, fearing the caliph's anger, he ***feigned madness*** and was confined to his house until al-Hakim died in ***1021 CE***. It was during this time that he is said to have written Kitab al-Manazir. This story is ***famous but comes from later reports***.

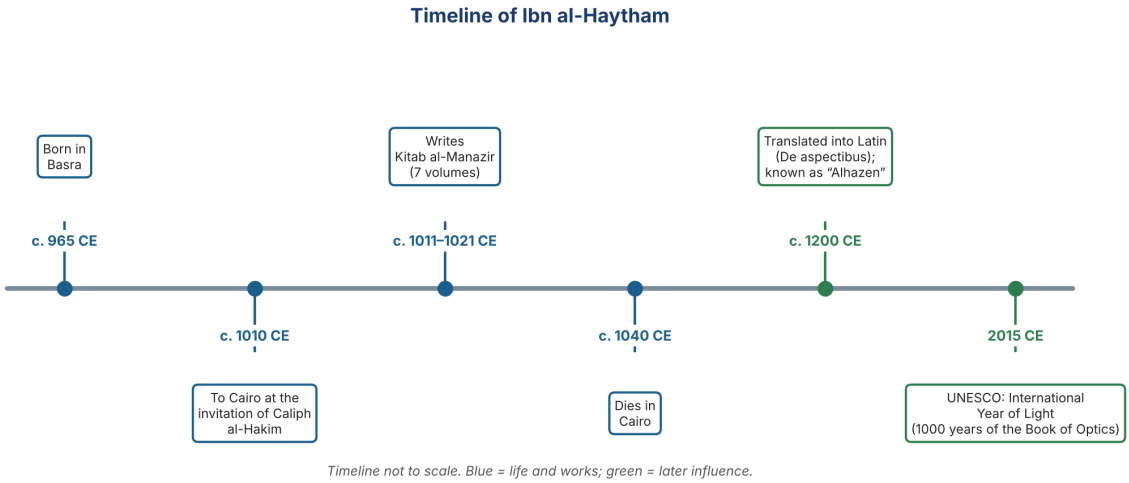


Figure 1: Timeline of Ibn al-Haytham.

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MAJOR WORKS

WORK	DESCRIPTION
Kitab al-Manazir	A seven-volume book of optics; vision, reflection and refraction.
al-Shukuk ‘ala Batlamyus	Doubts About Ptolemy; a critique of astronomical theory.
Maqala fi Daw’ al-Qamar	A treatise on the light of the Moon.
Treatise on the moon illusion	Why the moon looks large near the horizon.
Mathematical works	Geometry, number theory and the circular mirror problem (Alhazen’s problem).

Ibn Abi Usaybi‘a lists ***more than 90 works*** attributed to him, and about ***half*** survive today.

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THE JOURNEY TO SEEK KNOWLEDGE

Ibn al-Haytham left Basra and moved to Cairo — a ***journey*** that brought him to new books and opportunities. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ promised a great reward for those who seek knowledge:

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HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2699

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ يَحْيَى التَّمِيمِيُّ، وَأَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْعَلاَءِ الْهَمْدَانِيُّ - وَاللَّفْظُ لِيَحْيَى - قَالَ يَحْيَى أَخْبَرَنَا وَقَالَ الآخَرَانِ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «مَنْ نَفَّسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ الدُّنْيَا نَفَّسَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمَنْ يَسَّرَ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ يَسَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ وَمَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَمَا اجْتَمَعَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتٍ مِنْ بُيُوتِ اللَّهِ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَيَتَدَارَسُونَهُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِلاَّ نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّكِينَةُ وَغَشِيَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ وَحَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ وَذَكَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِيمَنْ عِنْدَهُ وَمَنْ بَطَّأَ بِهِ عَمَلُهُ لَمْ يُسْرِعْ بِهِ نَسَبُهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever relieves a believer of one of the hardships of this world, Allah will relieve him of one of the hardships of the Day of Resurrection. Whoever makes things easy for one in difficulty, Allah will make things easy for him in this world and the Hereafter. Whoever covers the faults of a Muslim, Allah will cover his faults in this world and the Hereafter. Allah helps His servant as long as the servant helps his brother. **Whoever follows a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise.** No people gather in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, except that tranquillity descends upon them, mercy covers them, the angels surround them, and Allah mentions them among those who are with Him. And whoever is held back by his deeds will not be hastened forward by his lineage."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya ibn Yahya at-Tamimi, Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah and Muhammad ibn al-'Ala' al-Hamdani, from Abu Mu'awiyah, from al-A'mash, from Abu Salih, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness, chapter on the virtue of gathering to recite the Qur'an and remember Allah, Hadith No. 2699a.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2699a

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The journey to seek knowledge — far or near — is ***worship*** when intended for Allah.

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TWO THEORIES OF VISION

Before Ibn al-Haytham, there were two major views of how we see. ***Euclid and Ptolemy*** held that ***the eye emits rays*** toward the object. ***Aristotle*** held that something from the object reaches the eye, but without a complete mathematical explanation.

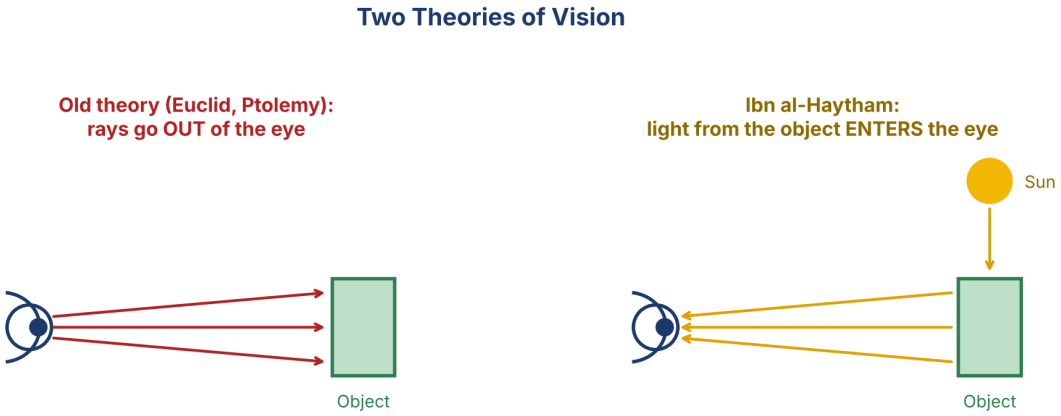


Figure 2: The old theory compared with Ibn al-Haytham's theory.

Ibn al-Haytham combined ***mathematics, physics and experiment***: light from every point of an object travels in ***straight lines*** to the eye. If the eye emitted rays, why would ***bright light*** such as the sun hurt the eye? This argument shows that light ***enters*** the eye (Britannica: Ibn al-Haytham).

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THE STRUCTURE OF THE EYE ACCORDING TO IBN AL-HAYTHAM

Ibn al-Haytham described ***the layers of the eye*** based on earlier medical works, including those of ***Galen***, and arranged them by their ***optical function*** — how light passes through each layer.

ARABIC TERM	MODERN TERM
al-Qarniyya	Cornea — the transparent layer at the front of the eye.
al-'Inabiyya	Uvea and iris — the coloured layer with the pupil.
al-Jalidiyya	Lens — the part that, in his view, received the image.
al-Zujajiyya	Vitreous humour — the clear substance behind the lens.
al-'Asab al-Basari	Optic nerve — carries signals to the brain.

Today we know the image forms on the ***retina***, not the lens — a discovery by ***Kepler*** in ***1604*** that built on Ibn al-Haytham's work. Knowledge is always ***improved*** by the next generation.

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KITAB AL-MANAZIR

Kitab al-Manazir was written around ***1011–1021 CE*** in ***seven volumes***. He studied reflection, refraction, the structure of the eye and the ***camera obscura***.

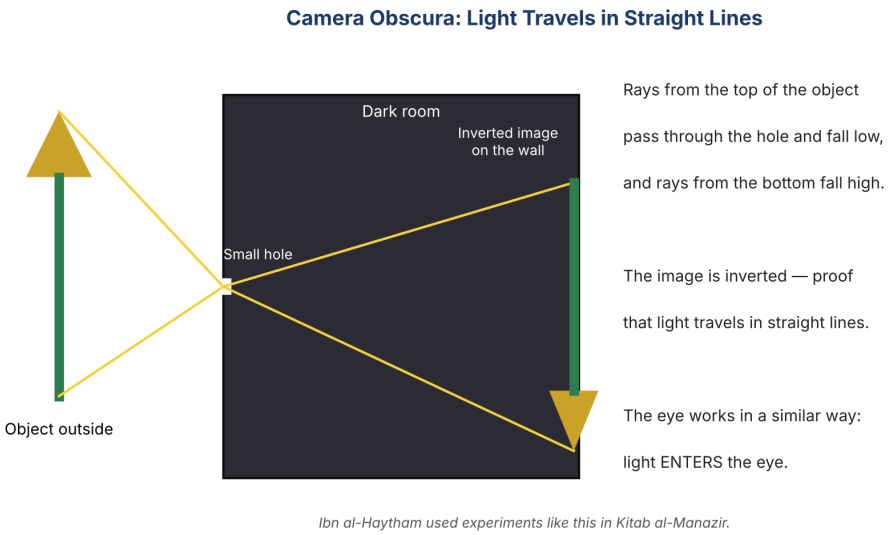


Figure 3: Camera obscura — light travels in straight lines.

The book was translated into Latin around 1200 CE and influenced ***Roger Bacon***, ***Kepler*** and many others.

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THE CONTENTS OF THE SEVEN VOLUMES

VOLUME	CONTENTS
1	The theory of vision and light.
2	Perception: how the mind recognises shape, colour and distance.
3	Common errors of vision.
4–6	Reflection of light in flat, convex and concave mirrors.
7	Refraction of light in water, glass and air.

This arrangement shows ***an orderly method***: beginning with foundations, then special cases, and ending with more complex phenomena.

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THE CANDLE EXPERIMENT

To prove that light travels in ***straight lines***, Ibn al-Haytham placed ***several candles*** in front of a dark room with ***a single small hole***.

> **HISTORY NOTE: WHAT WAS OBSERVED**
>
> Each candle produced ***its own image*** on the wall inside the dark room. When one candle was ***covered***, only its image ***disappeared***.
>
> This proved that light from each candle travels in ***straight lines*** through the hole, and ***does not mix*** in the air.

WHY WAS THIS EXPERIMENT IMPORTANT?

This experiment ***can be repeated*** by anyone. That is the key feature of science: the result does not depend on who says it, but on ***evidence that can be checked***.

LESSON

Truth does not fear being tested. An honest experiment ***strengthens conviction***, it does not weaken it.

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TEST BEFORE YOU BELIEVE

In his book ***al-Shukuk 'ala Batlamyus*** (Doubts About Ptolemy), Ibn al-Haytham wrote that the seeker of truth ***does not simply trust the writings of predecessors***, but ***tests and checks them*** by argument and evidence. This attitude is in harmony with the command of the Qur'an:

SURAH AL-ISRA' 17:36

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْبَصَرَ وَٱلْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْـُٔولًا ﴿٣٦﴾

And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/17:36

Do not pursue ***"that of which you have no knowledge"*** — for ***the hearing, the sight and the heart*** will be questioned. This is the foundation of ***the scientific method***: check, test, and only then believe.

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INVESTIGATE THE NEWS

SURAH AL-HUJURAT 49:6

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِن جَآءَكُمۡ فَاسِقُۢ بِنَبَإٖ فَتَبَيَّنُوٓاْ أَن تُصِيبُواْ قَوۡمَۢا بِجَهَٰلَةٖ فَتُصۡبِحُواْ عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلۡتُمۡ نَٰدِمِينَ ٦

O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/49:6

Allah commands: ***"investigate"***. This verse teaches ***tabayyun*** — verifying before accepting and spreading. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 49:6.

In the age of social media, this principle is vital. The scientific method and tabayyun share the same spirit: ***do not accept without evidence***.

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THE STEPS OF THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

Ibn al-Haytham used the word ***i'tibar*** for experimental testing. The steps he practised resemble the modern scientific method:

STEP	EXAMPLE FROM IBN AL-HAYTHAM'S WORK
1. Observe	An image forms on the wall of a dark room.
2. Ask a question	How does light travel?
3. Form a hypothesis	Light travels in straight lines.
4. Test (i'tibar)	The candle and small-hole experiment.
5. Analyse	Each image matches one candle.
6. Conclude	The hypothesis is confirmed; others can repeat it.

LESSON

The scientific method is ***a discipline of thinking***. It trains us to be ***patient, careful and honest*** — values that Islam also demands.

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DOUBTING PTOLEMY WITH COURTESY

Ptolemy was a highly respected Greek astronomer. Yet Ibn al-Haytham wrote ***al-Shukuk 'ala Batlamyus*** to show the ***contradictions*** in his astronomical model.

> **HISTORY NOTE: THE WORDS OF IBN AL-HAYTHAM**
>
> He wrote that truth is sought ***for its own sake***, and the seeker of truth should make himself ***an adversary*** of everything he reads — examining it from every side.
>
> He also advised ***doubting oneself***, so as not to be swayed by prejudice or leniency.

CRITICISING WITH COURTESY

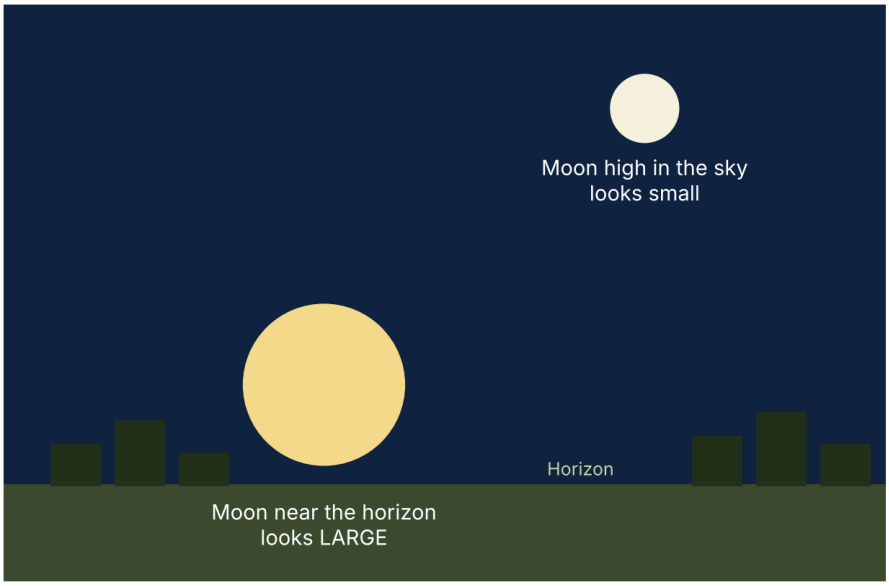
Ibn al-Haytham ***did not insult*** Ptolemy. He criticised ***the opinion***, not ***the person***. This is the etiquette of knowledge: respect great figures, yet remain ***honest*** to the truth.

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THE MOON ILLUSION

Why does the moon look ***larger*** near the horizon than when it is high in the sky? Ptolemy thought the air magnified it. Ibn al-Haytham gave a deeper explanation.

The Moon Illusion: Same Size, Looks Different



The angle the moon makes at the eye is the same (c. 0.5°). Ibn al-Haytham explained that the brain judges the moon at the horizon to be farther away because of the many objects in between — and so "enlarges" it.

Figure 4: The moon illusion — the same size, but it looks different.

According to Ibn al-Haytham, ***the mind judges*** the moon at the horizon to be farther away because of the many objects in between — and so "enlarges" it. This is ***a perceptual illusion***, not a real change in size. Modern scientists still study this illusion (NASA: The Moon Illusion).

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ILLUSIONS IN DAILY LIFE

The moon illusion teaches that ***what appears is not always the reality***. A mirage on the road, a stick that looks bent in water, and shadows that lengthen in the afternoon — all remind us that ***the eye must be helped by the mind***.

The Qur'an uses the parable of a ***mirage*** for the deeds of those who disbelieve (24:39): thought to be water, yet it is nothing. This world too can look ***large and attractive***, while its worth is small in the sight of Allah.

LESSON

A Muslim learns to judge things by ***knowledge and revelation***, not merely by what the eye sees.

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THE LIGHT OF THE MOON AND STARS

SURAH AL-FURQAN 25:61

تَبَارَكَ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلَ فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ بُرُوجًا وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَٰجًا وَقَمَرًا مُّنِيرًا ﴿٦١﴾

Blessed is He who has placed in the sky great stars and placed therein a [burning] lamp and luminous moon.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/25:61

Allah ***"placed therein a [burning] lamp and luminous moon"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 25:61.

In his treatise on ***the light of the Moon***, Ibn al-Haytham showed that the Moon ***does not reflect light like a mirror***. If the Moon were a smooth mirror, we would see only ***a single bright spot***. Instead, the whole surface of the Moon shines because sunlight is ***scattered*** from its rough surface.

LESSON

A question that looks simple — "why does the Moon shine?" — can lead to deep study. ***Curiosity*** is the beginning of knowledge.

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SIGHT AND THE MIND

Ibn al-Haytham realised that seeing is not just light entering the eye. ***The mind*** also works: recognising shapes, judging distance, comparing with ***past experience*** and drawing conclusions.

PROCESS	IBN AL-HAYTHAM'S EXPLANATION
Recognition	We recognise a friend's face because we have seen it before.
Judging distance	The mind judges distance from the objects around.
Errors of vision	Sight can err if the light, distance or state of the eye is unsuitable.

That is why Ibn al-Haytham is regarded as one of the pioneers of ***the psychology of perception***. Modern research on the brain and vision confirms that the brain ***interprets*** signals from the eye.

LESSON

The eye can be mistaken. So we must ***check*** and ***not rush*** to judge based on appearances.

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EYES, HEARTS AND DEEDS

The eye's sight is only part of the story. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ reminded us that Allah looks at something deeper:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2564

حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرٌو النَّاقِدُ، حَدَّثَنَا كَثِيرُ بْنُ هِشَامٍ، حَدَّثَنَا جَعْفَرُ بْنُ بُرْقَانَ، عَنْ يَزِيدَ بْنِ الأَصَمِّ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُوَرِكُمْ وَأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"Indeed, Allah does not look at your appearance or your wealth, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from 'Amr an-Naqid, from Kathir ibn Hisham, from Ja'far ibn Burqan, from Yazid ibn al-Asamm, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Righteousness, Joining Ties and Manners, Hadith No. 2564c.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2564c

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Ibn al-Haytham studied how ***the eye*** sees appearances. This Hadith reminds us that ***Allah*** looks at ***hearts and deeds***. The science of sight should lead us to the sight of the heart.

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BLIND EYES AND BLIND HEARTS

SURAH AL-HAJJ 22:46

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُواْ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَآ أَوْ ءَاذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۖ فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى ٱلْأَبْصَٰرُ وَلَٰكِن تَعْمَى ٱلْقُلُوبُ ٱلَّتِي فِي ٱلصُّدُورِ ﴿٤٦﴾

So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/22:46

Allah says: ***"it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 22:46.

A person may have perfect eyes yet ***not see the truth***. On the other hand, many blind people have ***hearts that see*** — like the Companion ***'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum*** رضى الله عنه, who was a muezzin of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

LESSON

Optics studies ***the eyes of the head***. Faith and revealed knowledge guard ***the eyes of the heart***. Both must be cared for, but ***the eyes of the heart*** come first.

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THE SIGHT OF A FRIEND OF ALLAH

In a Hadith Qudsi, Allah says that He guards the ***sight*** of the servant He loves:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6502 — HADITH QUDSI

حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عُثْمَانَ، حَدَّثَنَا خَالِدُ بْنُ مَخْلَدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ بْنُ بِلاَلٍ، حَدَّثَنِي شَرِيكُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي نَمِرٍ، عَنْ عَطَاءٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَالَ مَنْ عَادَى لِي وَلِيًّا فَقَدْ آذَنْتُهُ بِالْحَرْبِ، وَمَا تَقَرَّبَ إِلَىَّ عَبْدِي بِشَىْءٍ أَحَبَّ إِلَىَّ مِمَّا افْتَرَضْتُ عَلَيْهِ، وَمَا يَزَالُ عَبْدِي يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَىَّ بِالنَّوَافِلِ حَتَّى أُحِبَّهُ، فَإِذَا أَحْبَبْتُهُ كُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ الَّذِي يَسْمَعُ بِهِ، وَبَصَرَهُ الَّذِي يُبْصِرُ بِهِ، وَيَدَهُ الَّتِي يَبْطُشُ بِهَا وَرِجْلَهُ الَّتِي يَمْشِي بِهَا، وَإِنْ سَأَلَنِي لأُعْطِيَنَّهُ، وَلَئِنِ اسْتَعَاذَنِي لأُعِيذَنَّهُ، وَمَا تَرَدَّدْتُ عَنْ شَىْءٍ أَنَا فَاعِلُهُ تَرَدُّدِي عَنْ نَفْسِ الْمُؤْمِنِ، يَكْرَهُ الْمَوْتَ وَأَنَا أَكْرَهُ مَسَاءَتَهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah said: Whoever shows enmity to a friend (wali) of Mine, I declare war on him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him. My servant keeps drawing near to Me with voluntary deeds until I love him. **When I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees**, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will surely give him; if he seeks My refuge, I will surely protect him. I do not hesitate in anything I do as I hesitate over the soul of a believer: he dislikes death, and I dislike to hurt him."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, from Khalid ibn Makhlad, from Sulayman ibn Bilal, from Sharik ibn 'Abdullah ibn Abi Namir, from 'Ata' ibn Yasar, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Softening the Heart (Kitab ar-Riqaq), chapter on humility, Hadith No. 6502.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6502

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

When Allah loves a servant, ***his hearing and sight*** are guarded — he sees and hears only what pleases Allah. Guarded eyes are ***a blessing of knowledge and of faith***.

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PRECIOUS FREE TIME

According to the famous report, Ibn al-Haytham spent years ***at home*** during the reign of al-Hakim. That time was not wasted — he ***wrote and studied***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6412

حَدَّثَنَا الْمَكِّيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ ـ هُوَ ابْنُ أَبِي هِنْدٍ ـ عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم «نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُونٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ، الصِّحَّةُ وَالْفَرَاغُ». قَالَ عَبَّاسٌ الْعَنْبَرِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا صَفْوَانُ بْنُ عِيسَى، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَعِيدِ بْنِ أَبِي هِنْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، سَمِعْتُ ابْنَ عَبَّاسٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم مِثْلَهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Ibn ‘Abbas رضى الله عنهما said: The Prophet ﷺ said: **“There are two blessings in which many people are deceived: health and free time.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from al-Makki ibn Ibrahim, from ‘Abdullah ibn Sa‘id ibn Abi Hind, from his father Sa‘id ibn Abi Hind, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Softening of Hearts, Hadith No. 6412.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6412

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Health and free time are two blessings that are often wasted. Ibn al-Haytham showed that even limited time at home can become ***the most productive time*** of one’s life.

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HISTORY NOTE: COPYING BOOKS FOR A LIVING

Ibn Abi Usaybi'a reports that in Cairo, Ibn al-Haytham ***earned his living by copying books*** — among them the works of Euclid and Ptolemy — and selling them.

This copying also made him ***master*** those books deeply, since every line was read with care.

The lesson: ***lawful and modest*** work can go hand in hand with ***scholarly work***. Ibn al-Haytham did not wait for wealth before he began to learn.

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ALHAZEN'S PROBLEM

In the fifth volume of Kitab al-Manazir, Ibn al-Haytham solved a famous geometric problem: given ***a light source*** and ***an eye***, where is ***the point of reflection*** on ***a circular mirror***?

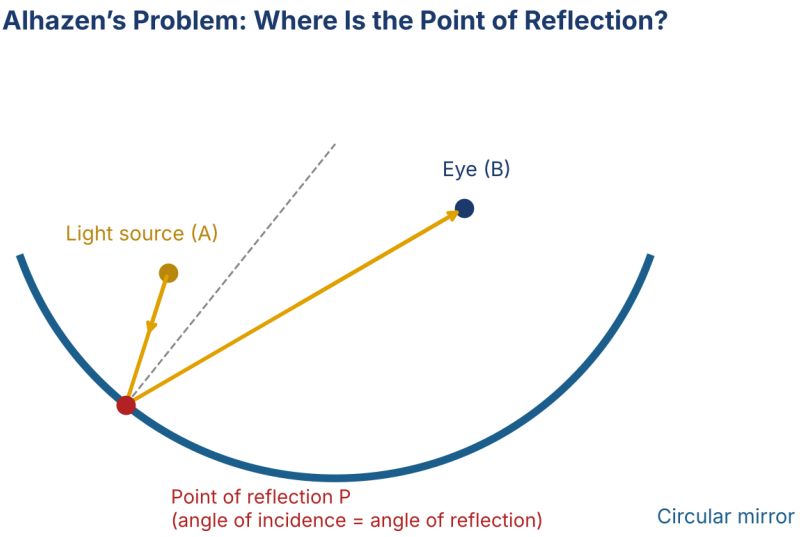


Figure 5: Alhazen's problem — finding the point of reflection on a circular mirror.

The problem looks simple, but in modern algebra it leads to ***an equation of the fourth degree***. Ibn al-Haytham solved it with ***the geometry of conic sections***. Modern mathematicians proved that it ***cannot be solved with ruler and compass alone*** (MacTutor: Ibn al-Haytham).

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THE SUM OF FOURTH POWERS

Ibn al-Haytham also found a formula for ***the sum of the fourth powers*** of the natural numbers ($1^4 + 2^4 + 3^4 + \ldots$), and used it to calculate ***the volume*** of a paraboloid — an early step toward ***integral calculus***.

LESSON

A problem left by one scholar can keep ***challenging the human mind*** for ***a thousand years***. Deep knowledge never grows old.

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FROM CAIRO TO EUROPE

Kitab al-Manazir was translated into Latin around ***1200 CE*** under the title ***De aspectibus***. In ***1572*** it was printed in Basel under the title ***Opticae thesaurus***.

EUROPEAN FIGURE	INFLUENCE OF IBN AL-HAYTHAM
Roger Bacon (13th century)	Used Alhazen's optics in his work on experimental science.
Witelo (13th century)	Wrote a book of optics based on Kitab al-Manazir.
Johannes Kepler (1604)	Built the modern theory of vision on the work of Witelo and Alhazen.
Renaissance artists	The study of perspective in painting was influenced by optics.

This chain shows that ***modern science*** was built on the contributions of many civilisations, including ***Islamic civilisation***.

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THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LIGHT 2015

In ***2015***, UNESCO declared ***the International Year of Light***, and celebrated ***1000 years*** of Kitab al-Manazir. The exhibition ***"1001 Inventions and the World of Ibn al-Haytham"*** travelled to many countries (Muslim Heritage: International Year of Light).

A CRATER ON THE MOON

A ***crater on the Moon*** is named ***Alhazen***, and an asteroid is named ***59239 Alhazen*** in his honour. The scholar who studied the light of the Moon now has his name on the Moon itself.

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ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

The table below separates what is established from what needs checking about Ibn al-Haytham.

STORIES AND THEIR STATUS

POPULAR STATEMENT	STATUS
Ibn al-Haytham wrote Kitab al-Manazir (7 volumes).	Established. The book still exists and was translated into Latin.
He proved that light enters the eye, not that it leaves the eye.	Established in Kitab al-Manazir.
He feigned madness to escape the anger of Caliph al-Hakim.	Reported by Ibn al-Qifti (13th century CE); famous but not fully verifiable.
He invented the camera.	Incorrect. He studied the camera obscura scientifically; its principle had been observed earlier.
He was the first to use experiment in science.	Exaggerated. He was one of the leading pioneers of systematic experimental method.
He wrote a book on twilight (Liber de crepusculis).	Incorrect. Modern research attributes it to Ibn Mu'adh al-Jayyani of Andalusia.

REFLECTION — HONOURING WITHOUT EXAGGERATING

Ibn al-Haytham himself taught us to ***doubt and verify***. We honour him in the same way: holding to what is established, and marking what is still uncertain.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: Hearing, sight and hearts are blessings of knowledge that must be appreciated (16:78; 67:23).

Second: People of understanding reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (3:190–191).

Third: Look carefully at Allah's creation (88:17–20).

Fourth: Do not pursue what you have no knowledge of — check and test first (17:36).

Fifth: Investigate news before accepting it (49:6).

Sixth: The path of seeking knowledge is a path to Paradise (Sahih Muslim 2699).

Seventh: Allah looks at hearts and deeds, not appearances (Sahih Muslim 2564).

Eighth: True blindness is blindness of the heart (22:46).

Ninth: The servant Allah loves has his sight guarded (Sahih al-Bukhari 6502).

Tenth: Make use of health and free time (Sahih al-Bukhari 6412).

Eleventh: Criticise opinions with courtesy, never insulting the person.

CONCLUSION

Ibn al-Haytham died in Cairo around 1040 CE, but every camera and lens today carries the trace of his knowledge. The next book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam**, in sha Allah, will tell the story of ***al-Biruni***, the versatile scholar who measured the earth. Wallahu a'lam.

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GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING
Optics	The science of light and vision.
Camera obscura	A dark room or box with a small hole that forms an inverted image.
I'tibar	Ibn al-Haytham's term for experimental testing.
Hypothesis	An initial expectation that must be tested.
Perception	The process by which the brain interprets what is seen.
Illusion	A sight that differs from the real situation.
Tabayyun	Verifying the truth of news before accepting it.
Ulul albab	People of understanding who reflect on Allah's creation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between the old theory of vision and Ibn al-Haytham's theory?

2. How did the candle experiment prove that light travels in straight lines?

3. What do the scientific method and the command of tabayyun in verse 49:6 have in common?

4. What does "blindness of the heart" mean in verse 22:46?

5. How can we use our free time as Ibn al-Haytham did?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Watch the moon as it rises near the horizon, then a few hours later. Does it look a different size? Close one eye and measure it with your fingertip.

Activity 2: In a dark room, shine two torches in front of a box with a small hole. Cover one torch and see which image disappears.

Activity 3: Choose one viral news story. List the steps to check whether it is true before sharing it.

Activity 4: Make a camera obscura from a shoebox and tracing paper. Point it at a bright window and draw the inverted image that forms.

Activity 5: Write down an opinion you once believed without evidence. How could you test it with Ibn al-Haytham's method: observe, form a hypothesis, test and conclude?

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه .

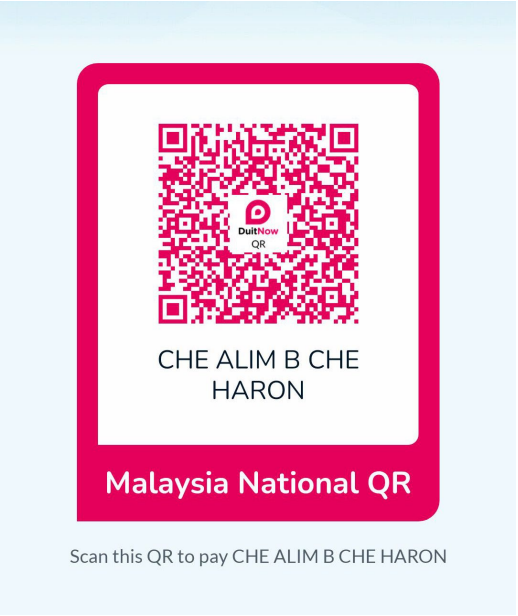
REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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