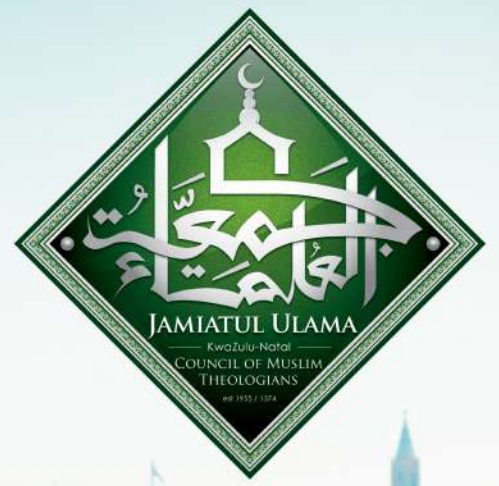


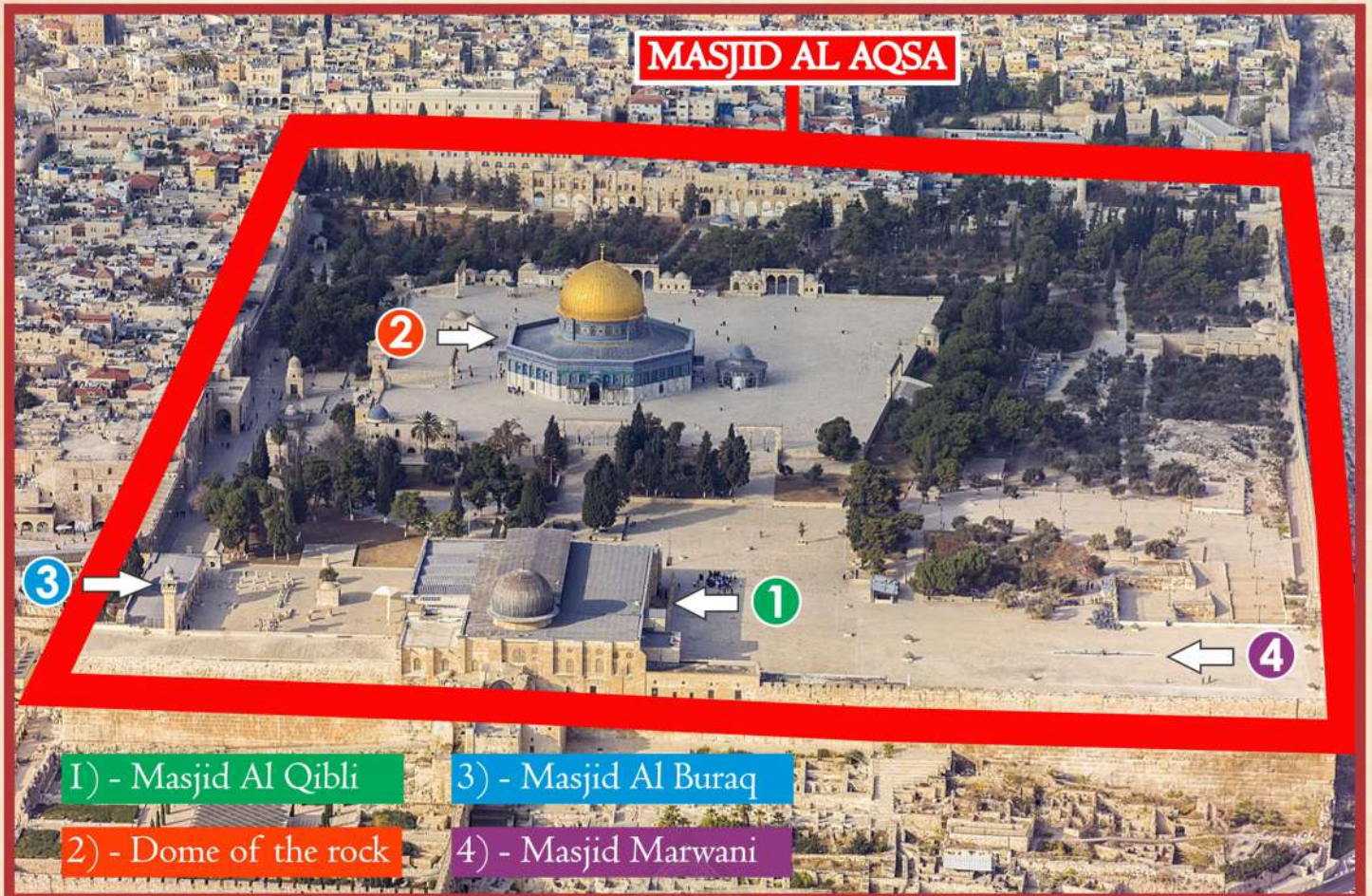


Historical Sites & Landmarks of

AL-AQSA

Prepared by the Jamiatul Ulama KZN

Masjid Al-Aqsa (Bayt Al-Maqdis)



Masjid Al-Aqsa is not only the Qibly Masjid (with the silver/black dome) or the Dome of the Rock (with the gold dome) as commonly seen. According to majority of the scholars, it is in fact the entire area highlighted within the walls of the sanctuary.

Importance of Masjid Al-Aqsa

The name 'Masjid Al-Aqsa' translates as 'the farthest Masjid' and is the third most holy place in Islam. It was here that Rasulullah ﷺ came on the night journey (Al-Isra) from Makkah riding on the Buraq, and ascended to the Heavens (Al-Mi'raj).

Masjid Al-Aqsa is no ordinary Masjid. From amongst its many extraordinary attributes, it is:

- ﷲ The first Qiblah for Muslims
- ﷲ The station of Al-Isra and Al-Mi'raj
- ﷲ The second house of Allah Ta'ala built on earth
- ﷲ A place which Allah Himself calls a 'blessed place'
- ﷲ The only place on earth where all the Messengers of Allah prayed together led by Rasulullah ﷺ
- ﷲ The only Masjid mentioned by name in the Quran apart from the Ka'bah

Virtues of Masjid Al-Aqsa

Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه reported that he asked Rasulullah ﷺ, “O Prophet of Allah, which Masjid was built first on earth?” Rasulullah ﷺ replied, “The Sacred Masjid of Makkah.” Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه asked, “Which was next?” Rasulullah ﷺ said, “Masjid Al-Aqsa.” Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه asked, “How long was the period between the building of the two Masajid?” Rasulullah ﷺ said, “Forty years.”
[Sahih Bukhari]

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه relates that the Rasulullah ﷺ said, "Do not undertake a special journey to visit any Masaajid (anticipating greater reward) except three: The Sacred Masjid of Makkah, this Masjid of mine (in Madinah), and Masjid Al-Aqsa." [Sahih Bukhari]

Maymunah رضي الله عنها narrates that she said: “O Messenger of Allah, inform us about visiting Bayt Al-Maqdis.” Rasulullah ﷺ said: ‘Go and perform Salaah there. (All the cities at that time were affected by war). But if you cannot visit there and pray, then send some oil to be used in the lamps.’” [Abu Dawood]

The different parts that make up Masjid Al-Aqsa

Masjid al-Aqsa

Masjid al-Aqsa, in Jerusalem, is not only the Qibly mosque (with the silver/black dome) or the Dome of the Rock but the whole region shown here. The name 'Masjid al-Aqsa' translates as 'the farthest mosque' and is the third most holy place in Islam. It was here that in around 621 CE the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came on the night journey (Isra') from Makkah riding on the Buraq. He led all of the Prophets here in salah and then ascended to the heavens (Mi'raj) where he was taken in the presence of Allah and given the command of five times daily salah.

The Buraq Wall

Also known as the 'Wailing Wall' or the 'Western Wall', it is the most sacred place for Jews. For Muslims it is known as the Buraq Wall as it is on this wall the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) tied the Buraq, the riding animal which he rode on when he came from Makkah to Jerusalem.

Masjid al-Buraq

This small structure, in the south-west corner, is believed to be the actual place where the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) tied the Buraq.

The Moroccan Gate

This is the area from where it is said the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) entered from during the night of Isra'. The second Caliph Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) is also said to have entered from here when he came to Masjid al-Aqsa. Today, the Moroccan Gate is the only access point for non-Muslims to enter the sanctuary.

Masjid al-Qibly

This structure is known as Masjid al-Qibly as it is located nearest to the 'Qiblah', the direction of prayer. The masjid was originally a prayer room built by Caliph Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and was situated in the south-east corner. Masjid al-Qibly was modified several times with the present structure built in 1034 CE. The front is aligned directly towards the Ka'bah in Makkah.

Musallah Marwani

This vast underground area, below the paved courtyard, was constructed by the Umayyads in the 8th century and has recently been renovated. The Prophet (sa) (upon him be peace) is said to have been brought up here in his infancy by his mother Maryam (upon her be peace).

Dome of the Rock

Also known as 'Dubbatus Saqiya'. This structure was built by Caliph Abd al-Malik from 688 to 691 CE and houses the sacred rock from which it is said the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ascended to heaven with the angel Jibrail (upon him be peace).

Dome of the Chain

This miniature version of the Dome of the Rock was also built by Caliph Abd al-Malik. It marks the exact centre point of Masjid al-Aqsa.

Throne of Sulaiman (upon him be peace)

This building is located where it is believed Prophet Sulaiman (upon him be peace) passed away. It currently functions as a girls school.

The Golden Gate

This is where Christians believe Isha (upon him be peace) will enter from in his second coming. Imam Ghazali is said to have written part of 'Ihya Uloom ad-Din' while residing above this gate. The gate was sealed in the 7th century.

Bab-ur-Rahmah cemetery

This is a Muslim cemetery outside the eastern wall. It contains the graves of two sahabah, Ubaydah bin Sarret and Shaddad bin Aus (may Allah be pleased with them).



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Masjid Al-Qibly



The structure with the silver/grey dome at the front of Masjid Al-Aqsa is known as Masjid Al-Qibly as it is located nearest to the Qiblah. The front of Masjid Al-Aqsa is aligned directly towards the Ka'bah

Sayyiduna Umar رضي الله عنه commissioned the construction of a wooden Masjid on the southern end of the compound where the present Qibly Masjid stands. Several earthquakes through the centuries severely damaged the mosque, necessitating complete renovations. The construction of the current building was done by the Umayyad Khalifs Malik bin Marwan and his son, Walid bin Abdul Malik. When the Crusaders occupied Masjid Al-Aqsa, they converted this building as their headquarters. It was renovated again by Salahuddin Ayyubi after he conquered Jerusalem and returned it to its former state.

Dome of the Rock



The Dome of the Rock is often mistakenly referred to as the Al-Aqsa mosque but is actually part of Masjid Al-Aqsa. This structure houses the sacred rock from which it is said Rasulullah ﷺ ascended to heaven (Mi'raj) after the night journey to Jerusalem (Isra').

In 685 AD the Umayyad Khalif Abdul Malik ibn Marwan had suggested to roof the whole 35 acres the total land of the Masjid, but due to budget deficit they couldn't implement this major project and alternatively have chosen to roof the southern prayer hall and to make a main dome for the Masjid dubbed later as the Dome of the Rock.

In 685 AD, the Umayyad Khalif, Abdul Malik ibn Marwan, commenced work on the Dome of the Rock.

The first six verses from Surah Yaseen are inscribed across the top in the dazzling tile work commissioned in the 16th century by Sulayman the Magnificent.

Dome of the Chain



The Dome of the Chain is located to the east of the Dome of the Rock and marks the exact centre of Masjid Al-Aqsa.

The Dome of the Chain was built by the Umayyad Khalif Abdul Malik bin Marwan in 691 CE. It is also known as Qubbat al-Silsillah. It is one of the oldest structures in the Masjid al-Aqsa compound. Its exact purpose isn't clear, some have suggested it was used as a treasury or as prototype for the Dome of the Rock.

The Dome of the Chain was renovated by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars. In 1561 CE, under the Ottoman Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent, the tiles of the mihrab were glazed and later in 1760 CE, more tile work was done.

Dome of the Prophet



The Dome of the Prophet is an octagonal dome structure located northwest of the Dome of the Rock. It is commonly believed to mark the spot from where the Prophet ﷺ led all the Prophets in prayer during the night of Isra' and Me'raj.

In 1538 AD (945AH), Mohammad Bek, the governor of Gaza and Jerusalem during the Ottoman Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent's reign, had a prayer niche built in this location.

The Ottoman Sultan Abdul Al-Majid later ordered the building of an octagonal dome that is based on eight marble columns over the niche.

It should be noted that despite this structure, there are no authentic sources which point to the accurate location of where Rasulullah ﷺ led the Salaah of all the previous Ambiya عليه السلام.

Dome of the Ascension



The Dome of the Ascension (Mi'raj) is behind the Dome of the Prophet and was built to commemorate the ascension to heaven of the Prophet ﷺ.

The structure is a small octagonal dome based on 30 marble columns. The dome has a niche pointing towards the Qiblah, and its main entrance is located on its northern side. What makes the dome stand out is the smaller dome on top of it that looks like a crown.

It is often claimed that this structure represents the true place from where Rasulullah ﷺ ascended to the heavens. However, there is no authentic source to back this claim.

Masjid Al-Buraq



This small structure, on the south-west corner of the Al-Aqsa compound is believed to be the place where the Rasulullah ﷺ tied the Buraq, the riding animal upon which he rode during the Night of Ascension.

Rasulullah ﷺ said, “I was near the Ka'bah in a state between sleep and wakefulness when I heard someone say: ‘He is the third among the two persons.’ Then he came to me and took me with him. Then a golden basin containing the water of Zamzam was brought to me and my heart was opened up to the lower part of my abdomen. My heart was extracted and it was washed with the water of Zamzam and then it was restored in its original position, after which it was filled with faith and wisdom. I was then brought a white beast which is called al-Buraq, bigger than a donkey and smaller than a mule. Its stride was as long as the eye could reach... [Sahih Muslim]

Buraq wall (Wailing wall)



This wall, referred to as the 'Wailing Wall' or the 'Western Wall' is the most sacred place for Jews who believe it to be the only surviving structure of the Herodian temple. For Muslims it is known as the Buraq Wall, for on the other side is where Rasulullah ﷺ tied the Buraq

It is along this Wall that Rasulullah ﷺ tied the Buraq on the night of Mi'raj and then entered Masjid Al-Aqsa. Jews throughout Islamic history have been permitted to pray along this wall. Jews claim that Al-Buraq Wall is all that remains of Herod's Temple. Today they are claiming an exclusive right over this area. However, after a two year study, in 1931 a League of Nations Commission confirmed the following: **“To the Muslims belong the sole ownership of, and the sole propriety right to, the Western Wall, seeing that it forms an integral part of Al-Aqsa Sanctuary, which is Waqf property...”**

Moroccan Gate (Bab Al-Magharib)



This gate, along the western wall of Masjid Al-Aqsa, is known as the Moroccan Gate. It was named after the residents in the adjacent neighbourhood, who after the conquest by Salahuddin Ayyubi had come to live in Jerusalem from Morocco.

The Moroccan Gate is actually built on top of another gate from the Herodian period known as Barclay's Gate. Over the years, the ground level outside this initial gate rose several meters until it was walled up in the 10th century.

It is likely that Rasulullah ﷺ entered Masjid Al-Aqsa via the Barclay's Gate when he visited Jerusalem during the night journey.

During the 12th century (or perhaps later), a new gate was created at the new ground level and named the Moroccan Gate. It led out to the area in front of the Western Wall which at the time was occupied by settlers from north Africa. This area was destroyed by the Israelis after the 1967 war and the inhabitants made into refugees.

The Golden Gate (Bab ad-Dhahabi)



The Golden Gate (also known as Bab ad-Dhahabi) is an ancient historical stone door carved inside Masjid Al-Aqsa's eastern wall. It has been walled up since medieval times.

The Golden Gate consists of two gates, (Ar-Rahma - "The Mercy") and (At-Tawbah - "The Repentance"). The Mercy Gate was named after the Mercy (ar-Rahmah) graveyard, located in front of it, which contains the graves of two companions of Rasulullah ﷺ, Ubadah bin Samit and Shaddad bin Aus ؓ.

Imam al-Ghazali is thought to have written part of his Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihya Uloomid-Din) while sitting and teaching above these gates.

The Ottoman sultan Sulayman the Magnificent rebuilt it together with the city walls, but walled it up in 1541 CE, and it has stayed that way till today.

Christians believe that Isa ؑ will enter through this gate on his second coming.

Bab-ur-Rahmah cemetery



The Bab-ur-Rahmah cemetery is a historical cemetery located outside the eastern wall of Masjid Al-Aqsa. It contains the graves of the two companions of Rasulullah ﷺ, Ubadah bin Samit and Shaddad bin Aus رضي الله عنه.



Qabr of Shaddad bin Aus رضي الله عنه



Qabr of Ubadah bin Samit رضي الله عنه

Marwani Masjid



This praying area, which is underground and on the southeast side of the Al-Aqsa compound is the Marwani Masjid and has recently been restored. When the Crusaders had control of the mosque they used to use this area as stables for their horses and it became known as Solomon's stables.

Although known traditionally as 'Solomon's stables', the original building is unlikely to date as far back as Nabi Sulaiman عليه السلام and can more plausibly be attributed to Herod the Great who substantially extended the Temple Mount platform during his reign. Holes can be seen on the base of many of the columns which were made by the Crusaders to thread rope to tie their horses. It is estimated that 400 horses were kept here at one time.

In 1996, the Palestinian Waqf converted the area (which had from crusader times been mostly empty) into a modern mosque, capable of housing 7,000 people.