

HISTORY OF

MASJID

AL-AQSA

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Section : B

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. **Introduction**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3

1.1 Definition\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3

1.2 Etymology\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3

1.3 A Brief History\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3

**2.0 Pre-Construction**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 4

2.1 Era of Hazrat Ibrahim and his grandson\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 4

2.2 Era of Hazrat Dawood\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 4

2.3 Under Romans\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 5

**3.0 During and After Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H)’s Time**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 6

3.1 Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H)’s\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 6

3.2 Hazrat Umer’s Khilafat\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 6

3.3 Abd’ al Malik Marwan \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 7

3.4 From 1917 To Present Day\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 7

**4.0 Architecture**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 10

4.1 Dome\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 10

4.2 Façade and Porch\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 11

4.3 Interior \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 11

4.4 Ablution Fountain\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 12

**5.0 Conclusion**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 13

5.1 Current Status\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 13

5.2 Citations\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 13

**INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Definition

to to to 1917) the wider compound began to also be referred to as *al-Haram ash-Sharif* (the Noble Sanctuary). Al-Aqsa Mosque is also referred to as Al-Qibli Mosque on account of a particular building within it, the Al-Qibli Chapel (*al-Jami' al-Aqsa* or *al-Qibli*, or *Masjid al-Jumah* or *al-Mughata*).

Although in its narrowest sense, the Al-Aqsa indicates the silver-domed [mosque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosque) on the southern side of the Temple Mount plaza, the term "Al-Aqsa" has often been used to refer to the entire area, including the [mosque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosque), along with the [Dome of the Rock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dome_of_the_Rock), the [Gates of the Temple Mount](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gates_of_the_Temple_Mount), and the [four minarets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minarets_of_the_Temple_Mount). *al-Masjid al-Aqsa* referred not only to the mosque, but to the entire sacred sanctuary, while *Al-Jâmi‘ al-Aqsa* referred to the specific site of the mosque. During the period of Ottoman rule (early 16th century

1.2 Etymology

*Al-Masjid al-Aqsa* translates from [Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language) into English as "the farthest mosque". The name refers to a chapter of the [Quran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) called *Al-Isrā(’*’The Night Journey"), in which it is said that Holy Prophet(P.B.U.H) travelled from Mecca to "the farthest mosque", and then up to [Heaven](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven) on a heavenly creature called [*al-Burāq ash-Sharif*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buraq).

1.3 Brief History

**Al-Aqsa Mosque** ("the Farthest Mosque"), located in the [Old City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_City_(Jerusalem)) of [Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem), is the [third holiest site](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holiest_sites_in_Islam) in [Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam). Al Masjid Al Aqsa has a very special place in the hearts of the entire Muslim community due to its unique and rich history as a place of worship that is so closely intertwined with the lives of many of the Prophets of Islam, as well as for its special status as a Masjid to which travel is recommended and in which reward is increased. Al Masjid Al Aqsa was the first qibla in Islam and it has been a significant and important place of worship for the Prophets of Islam. It was built 40 years after Al Masjid Al Haram in Makkah.

**PRE-CONSTRUCTION**

Masjid al-Aqsa has a rich history. It is intimately linked with Prophetic history, not of one but numerous prophets.

2.1 Era Of Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S) And His Grandsons

It was a well-known place of worship at the time of Prophet Ibrahim (as) and for his son Prophet Ishaq (as) and grandson Prophet Yaqub (as). When Prophet Yaqub’s son Prophet Yusuf (as) attained a position of power in Egypt, he asked his family to join him and escape the poverty that engulfed Palestine. Then came a time when there was no one left amongst Prophet Yaqub’s progeny to look after Al Masjid Al Aqsa (which at the time had the name of “Beteyel” or “House of God”), care for this blessed place was entrusted to the native population of the land (who were also followers of Prophet Ibrahim (as)), the Palestinians.

2.2 Era Of Hazrat Dawood (A.S)

The Israelites who voluntarily immigrated to Egypt seeking a better material life remained there for approximately four centuries and became slaves to the Egyptians. This slavery only ended when Prophet Musa (as) freed them from Firaoun under the command of Allah. However, the Israelites rejected the orders of Allah to return to Palestine and were thus commanded to live in and wander through the desert of Sinai for 40 years. This ended when a new generation was born, containing within it Prophet Dawood (as), who led his generation of believers to Palestine.

Prophet Dawood (as) established his kingdom in part of Palestine, and controlled Jerusalem. His son Prophet Suleiman (as) rebuilt Al Masjid Al Aqsa with the help of the local indigenous population and next to it he built the ruler’s palace. After Prophet Suleiman’s death, his two sons divided his kingdom amongst themselves with each having its own capital. These kingdoms existed for a very short period of time – approximately two hundred years, with the last king of Jerusalem in this dynasty being dethroned in 586/587BC as he tried to resist the Babylonians (led by King Nebuchadnezzar) but failed due to a crippling siege that the Babylonians had placed on the city.

2.3 Under Romans

Shortly after the Babylonians took control of Jerusalem, Al Masjid Al Aqsa was destroyed again.

The Persians overthrew the Babylonians (during which time efforts to rebuild Al Masjid Al Aqsa as a place of worship were renewed), but in the period thereafter ownership changed hands numerous times, and Al Masjid Al Aqsa was destroyed, rebuilt and then destroyed again within a century by the Romans in 70AD after a revolt in the city.

By 315-325AD, when the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, the Romans and the people residing in their land (including the Jews) no longer had any regard for Al Masjid Al Aqsa and no longer treated it as a place of sanctity and worship, with the site of Al Masjid Al Aqsa actually being used as a  place of waste disposal for the citizens of the city. This is how Al Masjid Al Aqsa remained before the arrival of Holy Propeht Muhammad(P.B.U.H)

**During and After Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H)’s Time**

3.1 Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H)

Al Masjid Al Aqsa had a very unique place in the life of Prophet Muhammad (saw) for many reasons. In his lifetime though, the most memorable reason why Al Masjid Al Aqsa has such significance is because it was the place to which he travelled on the night of Israa, and it was the location from which he made his Miraaj to the Heavens.

In the books of Hadith, we learn that the Prophet (saw) went to visit the Ka’bah at night, and fell asleep. The Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) then awoke him and led him to a winged white beast named Buraq. It was on Buraq that the Prophet (saw) then made the journey to Jerusalem (a journey that would typically take 40 days) in just one momentous night.  On reaching Jerusalem, the Prophet (saw) met and led all the previous Prophets in prayer at the site of Al Masjid Al Aqsa, and then embarked on the Miraaj to the Heavens.

The journey of Israa was such a momentous occasion that Allah revealed verses relating to this journey in the Holy Quran –

***“Glorified be He [Allah] Who did take His servant for a journey by night from Al Masjid Al Haram to Al Masjid Al Aqsa, whose precincts We did bless, in order that We might show him some of Our Signs. Verily He is the All Hearing, All Seeing” [17:1].***

In Makkah before the immigration to Madinah, Muslims were commanded to face Jerusalem in their prayer. This was the first qiblah that Muslims faced during the salah. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) and the Companions submitted to the command of Allah.

Since Jerusalem is north of Makkah, the Prophet (P.B.U.H) used to stand south of the Ka`bah in his prayers so that he could face both the Ka`bah and Al‐Aqsa Mosque. That was impossible, however, in Madinah because Madinah is located north of Makkah and south of Jerusalem. After immigrating to Madinah, the Muslims continued to face Jerusalem for more 16 or 17 months. The Jews of Madinah rejoiced the fact that the Prophet had to take their sacred city as a qiblah. They used this to spread doubts about the validity of Islam. In the meantime, the Prophet P.B.U.H) used to look up to heaven waiting eagerly for a command to face the Ka`bah. Finally after 18 months of the establishment of the Islamic state in Madinah, new Qur'anic revelations instructed the Prophet and the Muslims to turn towards the Ka`bah in Makkah when they prayed.

**“*The foolish among the people will say, "What has turned them away from their qiblah, which they used to face?" Say, "To Allah belongs the east and the west. He guides whom He wills to a straight path.* *And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. And We did not make the qiblah which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger from who would turn back on his heels. And indeed, it is difficult except for those whom Allah has guided. And never would Allah have caused you to lose your faith. Indeed Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful."[2: 141-142]***

The Prophet himself was very pleased with this change, which he keenly desired but dared not request

3.2 Hazrat Umar’s Khilafat

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), the second khalifa of Islam (who was also a close companion of the Prophet Muhammad (saw)), Umar Ibn Al Khattab, entered and mercifully liberated Jerusalem (accompanied by 40,000 sahaba) on the invitation of the Christian leader at the time, without shedding blood and with the guarantee of protection for the lives, property and places of worship of others within the city who wished to remain there. As Umar’s personality and characteristics closely resembled and matched those of the liberator of Jerusalem foretold within scriptures, the people of the city were quick to embrace and accept his rule.

As mentioned earlier, when he arrived at the site of Al Masjid Al Aqsa in 637/638AD, he didn’t find a place of prayer but rather a plot of land that had been left barren and had been used as a rubbish tip by the Romans. Upon seeing this he took the responsibility to remove the waste with his own hands and to rebuild Al Masjid Al Aqsa. Both the Christians and the Jews were pleased with the arrival of Umar and the Muslims, and with their just rule.

3.3 Abd’ al Malik bin Marwan

In 691/692AD, Abd’ al Malik bin Marwan began constructing what is nowadays known as the Dome of the Rock on top of the rock which some believe was the place where Prophet Muhammad (saw) embarked on his Miraaj to the Heavens. However, it must be noted that regardless of whether the rock has importance for this reason, its main significance derives from it being within the boundaries of Al Masjid Al Aqsa and therefore part of Al Masjid Al Aqsa.

The Muslims lost Al Masjid Al Aqsa to the Crusaders in 1099AD and were the victims of one of the darkest and most bloody days in its history. On arrival into Jerusalem. the Crusaders announced that they would not take any prisoners, resulting in a large proportion of the Muslims fleeing to Al Masjid Al Aqsa in order to seek refuge. The Crusaders later entered the blessed Masjid and massacred thousands of Muslims inside. Al Masjid Al Aqsa was then converted into a palace, and it took 88 years before the Muslims reclaimed it in 1187 under the leadership of the great leader Salahuddin Ayyubi. His reclamation of Jerusalem and Al Masjid Al Aqsa was reminiscent of Umar Ibn Al Khattab’s liberation five centuries earlier, and was a stark contrast to the actions of the Crusaders just a generation prior. Like Umar Ibn Al Khattab, Salahuddin Ayyubi did not allow a massacre of civilians or soldiers, and after reclaiming Al Masjid Al Aqsa he also used his own hands to clean the blessed land, and famously sprinkled rosewater through the Masjid.

 The Muslims once again had unhindered control of Jerusalem and Al Masjid Al Aqsa for a significant period of time – approximately eight centuries – and their rule was characterized by peace, justice and prosperity, with Al Masjid Al Aqsa becoming a great center of learning with scholars from all over the world travelling to study and teach within its blessed precincts. Throughout almost this entire period, the Christians and Jews were provided safety and protection, and their rights were respected as People of the Book.

3.4 From 1917 to Present Day

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jerusalem-2013(2)-Aerial-Temple_Mount-(south_exposure).jpg)

For numerous centuries during the Ottoman caliphate, the city of Jerusalem and Al Masjid Al Aqsa were preserved with honor and dignity, with Muslims being in charge of the administration of the city, but in line with Islamic law and the Ottoman millet system, they provided religious freedom and security for the Jewish and Christian minorities. However all this changed when the Zionist movement in Europe emerged with the aim of creating a Jewish state on Muslim Palestinian land.

This Zionist movement which was supported by the British, was further strengthened during World War 1 when the British captured Jerusalem and brought an end to eight centuries of Muslim rule. On arrival into Palestine in 1917 they found a land that was 90% populated by Arabs and with fewer than 56,000 Jews (of which only 5% were native Palestinian Jews, with the majority being those who had fled European persecution in recent decades). The British allowed the Muslims control of Al Masjid Al Haram during this period.

Five years after the British capture of Jerusalem, the first restoration works of the 20th century in Al Masjid Al Aqsa took place, and a couple of years later in 1924 Trans-Jordan took over custodianship of Al Masjid Al Aqsa.

 In 1947 prior to Britain passing over the issue of Palestine to the UN, the Jews owned less than 6% of the total land of Palestine. For this reason, when the UN General Assembly recommended (despite this being outside of their competence according to the UN Charter) having a “Jewish state” which would comprise 54% of the Palestinian land, the native Palestinians rejected the proposal.

In 1948 after a war and numerous massacres and atrocities committed by the Zionists, the Jews established “Israel” on 78% of Palestinian land, and captured approximately 85% of Jerusalem. The Jordanian Arab Legion took control of the West Bank – including 11% of the eastern parts of Jerusalem which encompassed the Old City and Al Masjid Al Aqsa.

In 1967 following a further war, Israel illegally occupied East Jerusalem and claimed to unify Jerusalem as part of Israel. This move was. and is still, opposed and unrecognised by the international community. Following its capture of Jerusalem and the protests that followed, the Jewish authorities swiftly handed Al Masjid Al Aqsa back to Muslim control.

Following attempts by prominent Israeli figures to establish Jewish prayers at Al Masjid Al Aqsa and subsequent protests, a law was passed prohibiting Jewish prayer on Al Masjid Al Aqsa. The decision also meant that Jews and foreign tourists could only enter Al Masjid Al Aqsa through the Maghrebi gate.

However since 1967 many Israeli authorities have passed rulings permitting Jews to offer worship on the site of Al Masjid Al Aqsa and many organisations have been lobbying Israeli officials to start the process of rebuilding a Jewish place of worship on the sacred land of Al Masjid Al Aqsa.

In 1969 a fire that was started by a Zionist extremist destroyed the mimbar that was installed by Salahuddin Ayyubi. The mimbar was considered one of the most beautiful in the world and was constructed with over 10,000 interlocking pieces of Cedar and other wood, Ivory and Mother of Pearl affixed without a drop of glue or a single nail. Most of the damage from the fire took over 20 years to repair, due to the Israelis not allowing suitable resources into Al Masjid Al Aqsa.

 In 1987 four Palestinian men were killed queuing at a checkpoint in Gaza, sparking the first intifada. Intifada literally means “shaking off” and is used to convey the meaning of setting Palestine and Al Masjid Al Aqsa free from Israeli oppression.

In 2000, Ariel Sharon marched on Al Masjid Al Aqsa surrounded by over 1000 security guards and police. This sparked the second Palestinian intifada. Following this visit, restrictions were placed on Palestinians wishing to pray at Al Masjid Al Aqsa, with Palestinian men (especially those between 18-50 years of age), facing bans from praying at certain times. These restrictions continue to this day.

In March 2013 Jordanian King Abdullah II signed an agreement with the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas which maintained and reiterated the status quo that the King of Jordan is the official custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem and that he has the right to exert all legal efforts to preserve them, especially Al Masjid Al Aqsa.

In November 2013 a draft Israeli law was proposed in the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) allowing Jews the right to pray on Al Masjid Al Aqsa. This development was the result of 40 years of intense lobbying by nationalists who wish to destroy Al Masjid Al Aqsa in its current form, and replace it with a Jewish place of worship.



In October 2014 Israeli authorities closed Al Masjid Al Aqsa for the first time since 1967. This resulted in mass protests across Palestine and the Muslim world, and was swiftly followed by Al Masjid Al Aqsa being reopened

**ARCHITECTURE**

The rectangular al-Aqsa Mosque and its precincts cover 14.4 hectares (36 acres), although the mosque itself is about 12 acres (5 ha) in area and can hold up to 5,000 worshippers. It is 83 m (272 feet) long, 56 m (184 feet) wide. Unlike the [Dome of the Rock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dome_of_the_Rock), which reflects classical [Byzantine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine) architecture, the Al-Aqsa Mosque is characteristic of early [Islamic architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_architecture).

4.1 Dome

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dome_of_the_Al-Aqsa_Mosque_(20160).jpg)the dome is the **Al-Qibli Chapel**  also known The the dome is the Al-Qibli Chapel also known as **al-Jami' al-Qibli** , a Muslim prayer hall, located in the southern part of the mosque. It was built by the Rashidun caliph [Umar ibn Al-Khattab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umar_ibn_Al-Khattab) in 637 CE.

Nothing remains of the original dome built by Abd al-Malik. The present-day dome was built by az-Zahir and consists of wood plated with lead [enamelwork](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enamelwork). In 1969, the dome was reconstructed in concrete and covered with [anodized aluminum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anodized_aluminium), instead of the original ribbed lead enamel work sheeting. In 1983, the aluminum outer covering was replaced with lead to match the original design by az-Zahir. Beneath

4.2 Façade And Porch

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Al-Aqsa_Mosque_(Temple_Mount,_Jerusalem,_2008).jpg)The facade of the mosque was built in 1065 CE a [Romanesque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture) style. The porch is located at the top of the facade. The central bays of the porch were built by the [Knights Templar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knights_Templar) during the [First Crusade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Crusade), but Saladin's nephew [al-Mu'azzam Isa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Mu%27azzam_Isa) ordered the construction of the porch itself in 1217.

The facade of the mosque was built in 1065 CE on the instructions of the Fatimid caliph [al-Mustansir Billah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma%27ad_al-Mustansir_Billah). It was crowned with a balustrade consisting of arcades and small columns. The Crusaders damaged the facade, but it was restored and renovated by the Ayyubids. One addition was the covering of the facade with tiles.  The facade consists of fourteen stone arches, most of which are of R[Romanesque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture)a [Romanesque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture) style. The porch is located at the top of the facade. The

Al-Aqsa's dome is one of the few domes to be built in front of the *mihrab* during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, the others being the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus (715) and the [Great Mosque of Sousse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Mosque_of_Sousse) (850). The interior of the dome is painted with 14th-century-era decorations.

4.3 Interior

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:El_Aksa_(i.e.,_al-Aqsa)_Mosque._Cedar_pulpit_&_mihrab_LOC_matpc.03246.jpg)The al-Aqsa Mosque has seven aisles near the main entrance near main dome area which date back to Fatimid period were revealed from behind plaster work of a later date that covered them. Name of Fatimid Imam is clearly visible in end part of the first line of inscription and continued in second line.

The al-Aqsa Mosque has seven aisles of [hypostyle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypostyle) [naves](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nave) with several additional small halls to the west and east of the southern section of the building. There are 121 [stained glass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stained_glass) windows in the mosque from the Abbasid and Fatimid eras. About a fourth of them were restored in 1924. The mosaic decoration and the inscription (two lines just above the decoration near the roof as visible in the photos placed in the gallery here) on the spandrels of arche facing main entrance near main dome area which date back to Fatimid period were revealed from behind plaster work of a later date that covered them. Name of Fatimid Imam is clearly visible in end part of the first line of inscription and continued in second line.

The mosque's interior is supported by 45 [columns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Column), 33 of which are [white marble](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_marble) and 12 of stone. The column rows of the central aisles are heavy and stunted. The remaining four rows are better proportioned. The capitals of the columns are of four different kinds: those in the central aisle are heavy and primitively designed, while those under the dome are of the [Corinthian order](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corinthian_order), and made from Italian white marble. The capitals in the eastern aisle are of a heavy basket-shaped design and those east and west of the dome are also basket-shaped, but smaller and better proportioned. The columns and piers are connected by an architectural rave, which consists of beams of roughly squared timber enclosed in a wooden casing.

A great portion of the mosque is covered with [whitewash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitewash), but the drum of the dome and the walls immediately beneath it are decorated with [mosaics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic) and marble. Some paintings by an Italian artist were introduced when repairs were undertaken at the mosque after an earthquake ravaged the mosque in 1927 The ceiling of the mosque was painted with funding by King [Farouk of Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farouk_of_Egypt).

The [*minbar*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minbar) of the mosque was built by a craftsman named Akhtarini from [Aleppo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleppo) on the orders of the Zengid sultan [Nur ad-Din](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nur_ad-Din_Zangi). It was intended to be a gift for the mosque when Nur ad-Din would capture Jerusalem from the Crusaders and took six years to build (1168–74). Nur ad-Din died and the Crusaders still controlled Jerusalem, but in 1187, Saladin captured the city and the *minbar* was installed. The structure was made of ivory and carefully crafted wood. [Arabic calligraphy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_calligraphy), geometrical and floral designs were inscribed in the woodwork. After its destruction by [Rohan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis_Michael_Rohan) in 1969, it was replaced by a much simpler *minbar*. In January 2007, [Adnan al-Husayni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adnan_al-Husayni)—head of the Islamic *waqf* in charge of al-Aqsa—stated that a new *minbar* would be installed; it was installed in February 2007. The design of the new *minbar* was drawn by Jamil Badran based on an exact replica of the Saladin Minbar and was finished by Badran within a period of five years The *minbar* itself was built in Jordan over a period of four years and the craftsmen used "ancient woodworking methods, joining the pieces with pegs instead of nails, but employed computer images to design the pulpit [*minbar*]."

4.4 Ablution Fountain

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Al-Kas_Fountain,_Al-Aqsa-Moschee_Fassade_07112018_(1).jpg)

The mosque's main [ablution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual_purification) fountain, known as *al-Kas* ("the Cup"), is located north of the mosque between it and the Dome of the Rock. It is used by worshipers to perform [*wudu*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wudu), a ritual washing of the hands, arms, legs, feet, and face before entry into the mosque. It was first built in 709 by the Umayyads, but in 1327–28 Governor Tankiz enlarged it to accommodate more worshipers. Although originally supplied with water from [Solomon's Pools](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon%27s_Pools) near [Bethlehem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bethlehem), it currently receives water from pipes connected to Jerusalem's water supply

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**CONCLUSION**

5.1 Current Situation

Masjid al-Aqsa, indeed the entire Haram al-Sharif is under Zionist occupation and threat of destruction. Even while Muslims throughout their history provided sanctuary to the Jewish people after they suffered persecution elsewhere, the Zionists have turned out to be the worst kinds of oppressors in history. They act with impunity and are extremely hostile toward the indigenous Palestinian people. Heavily armed, they shoot at the slightest pretext and have no regard for Palestinian life.

The corrupt Muslim rulers are totally subservient to the imperialists and zionists. Reposing hope in them to rescue the Muslims is a waste of time. It would require a figure like Salahuddin Ayyubi to rise among the Muslims to liberate Masjid al-Aqsa and Palestine from another group of Crusaders, this time of the Zionist variety.

Until then, Muslims can pray and prepare for that day. A good starting point would be to become better informed about their history that seems to have been largely forgotten.

5.2 References

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