

The el-Jazzar Mosque (Arabic: مسجد الجزار, Masjid al-Jazzar; Hebrew: מסגד אל-ג'זאר, Misgad al-G'zar), also known as the White Mosque, is located on el-Jazzar Street inside the walls of the old city of Acre, overlooking the eastern Mediterranean Sea, and is named after the Ottoman Bosnian governor Ahmad Pasha el-Jazzar ("the Butcher").

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History[edit]

The el-Jazzar Mosque was the project of its namesake, Ahmad Pasha el-Jazzar, the Acre-based governor of the Sidon and Damascus provinces, who was famous for his impressive public works, and defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte at the Siege of Acre in 1799. El-Jazzar ordered the mosque's construction in 1781 and had it completed within the year.[1] Despite lacking architectural training, el-Jazzar was the architect of the mosque,[2][3] drawing up its plans and design,[2] and supervising its entire construction.[3][2] In addition to the mosque itself, the complex included an Islamic theological academy with student lodging, an Islamic court and a public library.[3] The mosque was built for religious purposes, but its grandiose size and additional functions were also intended by el-Jazzar to serve as a means of consolidating his political legitimacy as ruler of Syria.[4] He modeled the mosque on the mosques of Istanbul, the Ottoman capital.[3]

The el-Jazzar Mosque was built over former Muslim and Christian prayer houses and other Crusader buildings.[1] Building materials for the mosque, particularly its marble and granite components, were taken from the ancient ruins of Caesarea, Atlit and medieval Acre. El-Jazzar commissioned several Greek masons as the mosque's builders.[5] There is a tughra or monogram on a marble disc inside the gate, naming the ruling Sultan, his father, and bearing the legend "ever-victorious".

Adjacent to the mosque is a mausoleum and small graveyard containing the tombs of Jazzar Pasha and his adoptive son and successor, Sulayman Pasha, and their relatives.[6]

Architecture[edit]

The mosque is an excellent example of Ottoman architecture, which incorporated both Byzantine and Persian styles. Some of its fine features include the green dome and minaret, a green-domed sabil next to its steps (a kiosk, built by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, for dispensing chilled drinking water and beverages) and a large courtyard.[6]

The mosque, that is dominating Acre's skyline, was originally named Masjid al-Anwar (the "Great Mosque of Lights") and is also known as the White Mosque because of its once silvery-white dome that glittered at a great distance. The dome is now painted green.[1] The minaret has a winding staircase of 124 steps.[7]

It is the largest mosque in Israel outside of Jerusalem.

Sha'r an-Nabi[edit]

The mosque houses the Sha'r an-Nabi, a hair (or lock of hair) from the beard of the Prophet Muhammad. The Sha'r an-Nabi used to be paraded through Acre on Eid al-Fitr, ending the

fast of Ramadan, but is now only shown to the congregation.[7] The relic is kept inside the mosque in a glass cabinet placed at the women's upper floor gallery.[8][9]

Gallery[edit]

Entrance to the mosque, with the sabil to the right of the steps.

Entrance to el-Jazzar Mosque

El-Jazzar Mosque Interior

Long distant view

El-Jazzar Mosque

El-Jazzar Mosque