



Jerusalem & al-Aqsa

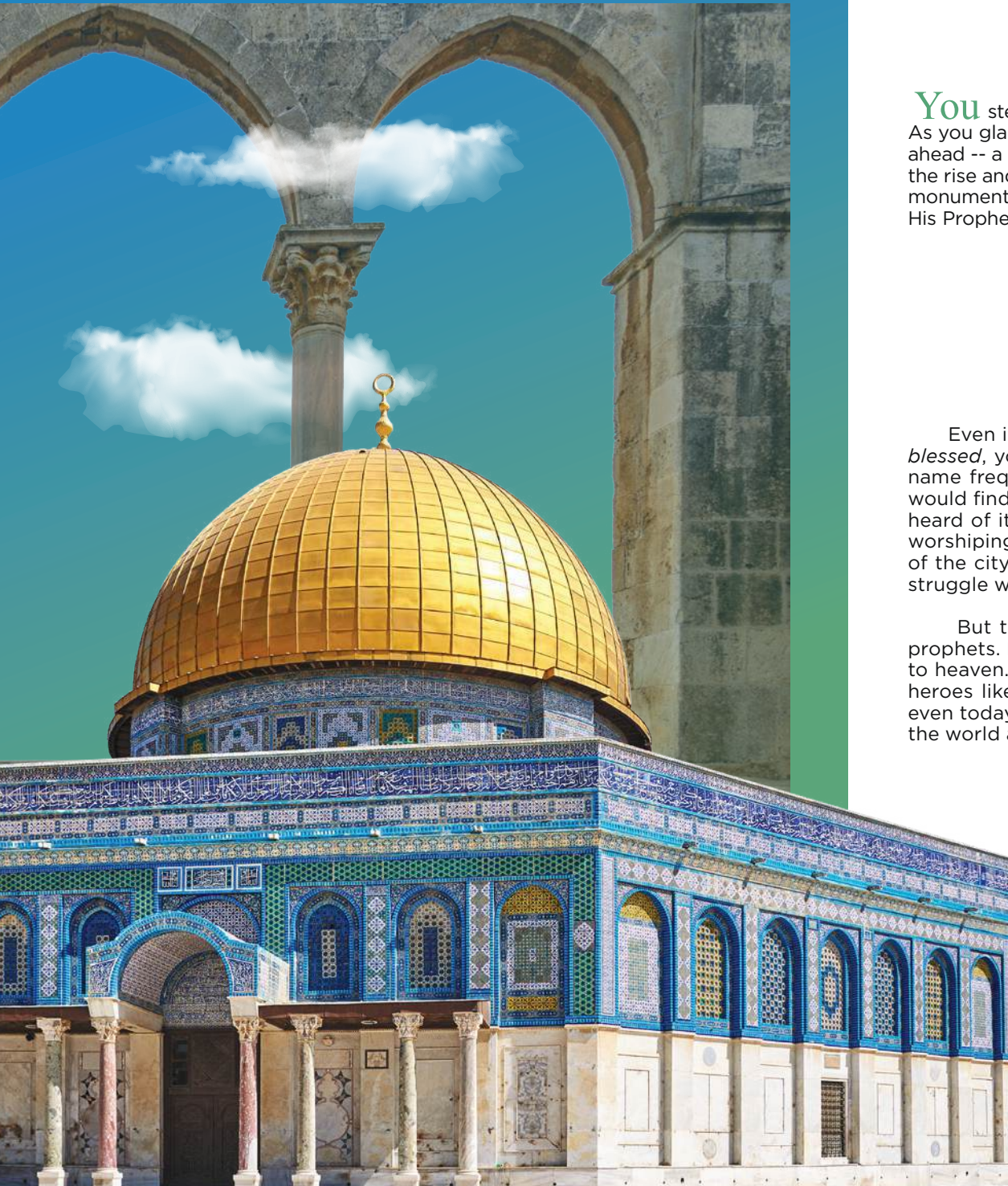
MIRROR TO THE WORLD



A Curriculum By



CISE | Consultants for
Islamic School
Excellence
Academic Excellence In An Islamic Environment



You step through the marble arches, and a cool breeze brushes your face. As you glance up, your gaze falls upon the majestic golden dome that looms ahead -- a golden dome that has stood for hundreds of years, a testament to the rise and fall of civilization. This is the Dome of the Rock, the proud Muslim monument that braves occupation and fills your heart with the love of God, His Prophet, and His Ummah.

This is Jerusalem

Even if you have never stepped foot on the land that Allah (swt) calls *blessed*, you have most likely heard of the great city of Jerusalem. It is a name frequently mentioned in history and in modern times, a name you would find in old manuscripts and on the nightly news. You have probably heard of its current occupation, of how Muslims are often attacked while worshiping there, of how the Zionist nation of Israel claims more and more of the city as its own. Perhaps you think of war or controversy or human struggle when you think of Jerusalem.

But the city is much more than that. It is a Blessed Land, a land of prophets. It is the place from where Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) ascended to heaven. It is a place of conquest and of civilization, giving rise to great heroes like Salahuddin Ayyubi. It is a land millions of Muslims call home even today. And like a mirror, Jerusalem shines on the hill -- a reflection of the world around it.



UNIT 01

Introduction to JERUSALEM & AL-AQSA

LESSON 1

Exploring Jerusalem
(al-Quds)

Page 5

LESSON 3

Masjid al-Aqsa:
A Sacred Place
in Jerusalem

Page 19

LESSON 2

Masjid al-Aqsa:
Exploring the Iconic
Structure & Its History

Page 11

LESSON 4

Defining the City of
al-Quds (Jerusalem)

Page 25



LEARNING OBJECTIVES



Define Masjid al-Aqsa and its significance through exploration of its architectural, spiritual, and historical elements.



Understand the historical, geographical, and cultural significance of Jerusalem as a city and spiritual locus for Muslims and other People of the Book (or Jews and Christians).



Analyze Islamic concepts and architectural aspects of Masjid al-Aqsa, including historical and modern-day examination of its structure.



Examine the historical and contemporary significance of Masjid al-Aqsa in relation to the students' personal experiences and spiritual impact.



Recognize the changing status and cultural implications of the city's administrative boundaries.

LESSON

01

In This Lesson

Exploring JERUSALEM (al-Quds)

You will learn about significant features of Jerusalem by identifying its mountainous landscape and symbolic city gates.

Jerusalem is a city where ancient echoes blend with modern life, and faith and heritage intersect. Nestled in the mountainous region of historic Palestine, it sits at an elevation of nearly 2,900 feet (875 meters), approximately 19 miles (29 kilometers) west of the Dead Sea and 32 miles (51.5 kilometers) east of the Mediterranean Sea.

The Many Names of JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is known by many names over the centuries. Each name carries a unique meaning, often reflecting the city's sacred and peaceful nature.

Jerusalem

The oldest name for the city is "Jerusalem." This name comes from an ancient word meaning "The City of Peace," showing its importance as a place of harmony.

Masjid Iliya'

Long ago, Jerusalem was also called "Iliya'." When the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) spoke about the city, he used this name. At that time, the main mosque in the city was referred to as "Masjid Iliya'," meaning "the mosque in Iliya'."

Al-Quds

Later on, in 831 CE, an Abbasid khalifah (caliph) named al-Ma'mun visited Jerusalem and gave it a new name, "al-Quds," which means "The Holy." This name has been used by Muslims ever since.

Bayt Al-Maqdis

In many older Islamic texts, Jerusalem is called "Bayt al-Maqdis," meaning "The Holy House." This name became especially popular during the Crusades and is still used today. However, this is an incorrect use, as the term "Bayt al-Maqdis" refers specifically to Masjid al-Aqsa.



Topographical map of historical Palestine and the Jerusalem region -- Cr.: Jerusalem Cultural Forum



Topographical map of historical Palestine and the Jerusalem region -- Cr.: Jerusalem Cultural Forum

The terrain around Jerusalem is captivating. Imagine a city perched on the slopes, surrounded by the natural beauty of a string of mountains embracing the city:

A Mount Ebal stands to the north of Jerusalem.

B Mount Moriah, also known as Temple Mount, lies in the heart of Jerusalem. This iconic hill is primarily composed of limestone. Its eastern side is rugged and steep, while the western side provides a more hospitable environment of green and fertile land.

C The Hebron Hills stand south of Jerusalem, completing the mountainous embrace.



How JABAL MUKABER Got Its Name

During the rule of Omar al-Khattab, Muslim armies spread across the Middle East and eventually reached Jerusalem. Khalid ibn al-Walid and Amr ibn al-As surrounded the city in 637 CE. At that time, Jerusalem was under the control of the Byzantines and ruled by Patriarch Sophronius. Knowing he would have to give up control, Sophronius refused to surrender unless khalifah Omar al-Khattab himself came to the city.

Omar left Madinah with one servant and one camel. He wore a simple garment and shared riding the camel with his servant, so much so that by the time they arrived at Jerusalem, his servant was the one on the camel. When Omar climbed a mountain about half a mile away, he was so overwhelmed at the sight of the holy city that he cried out, "Allahu Akbar!" That is how the mountain came to be known as Jabal Mukaber.

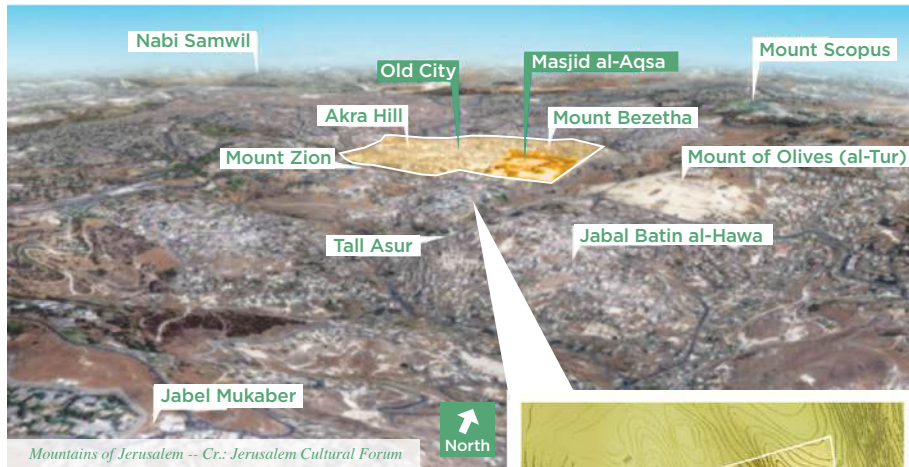


Jerusalem and Masjid al-Aqsa in 1905, paintings by Tristram Ellis -- Source: goo.gl/vq3U94

Notable Peaks

Within the modern boundaries of Jerusalem itself, there are also some notable peaks:

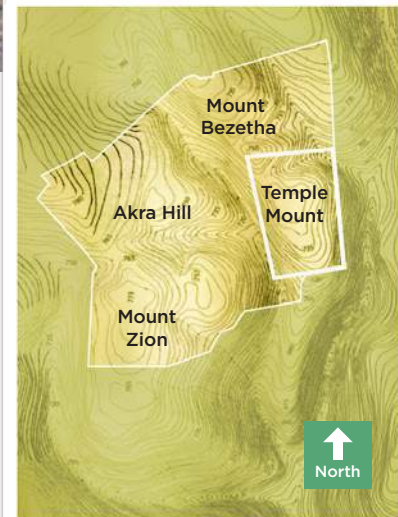
-  **Tall Asur**, one of the tallest peaks, graces the northern landscape.
-  **Jabel Mukaber** stands in southern East Jerusalem.
-  **Jabal al-Masharif (Mount Scopus)**, as well as **Jabal al-Zaytun or al-Tur (Mount of Olives)** lie in East Jerusalem, each with its own historical significance.
-  **Nabi Samwil** stands to the west, adding to Jerusalem's rich tapestry.



The Old City

In the eastern part of modern Jerusalem lies the Old City, a captivating maze of history and culture. It rests atop **four small mountains**:

-  **Temple Mount / Mount Moriah** (east), home to the revered Masjid al-Aqsa.
-  **Akra Hill** (west) location of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.
-  **The Mount of Olives** (north) site of breathtaking views.
-  And **Mount Zion** (southwest), steeped in spiritual significance.



MOUNTAINS OF JERUSALEM

These mountains hold unique stories, history, and significance—each one adding to the rich tapestry of Jerusalem!

Jabel Mukaber

Elevation 2936 feet

South of the Old City

Its name comes from the Arabic word "takbeer" because it is where Khalifah 'Umar (ra) (who ruled from 634-644 CE) first beheld the city of Jerusalem and was so overwhelmed, he cried "Allahu Akbar."

Mount of Nabi Samwil

Elevation 2740 feet

About 5 miles northwest of Jerusalem

Its name is linked to Nabi Samwil (Prophet Samuel) who ruled the Children of Israel for 12 years in the 11th century BCE.

Mount Scopus

Elevation 2710 feet

North of the Old City

Its name comes from its high elevation that allowed it to serve as a "look-out" post in ancient times. (Scopus means "the watcher" in Latin.)

Mount of Olives

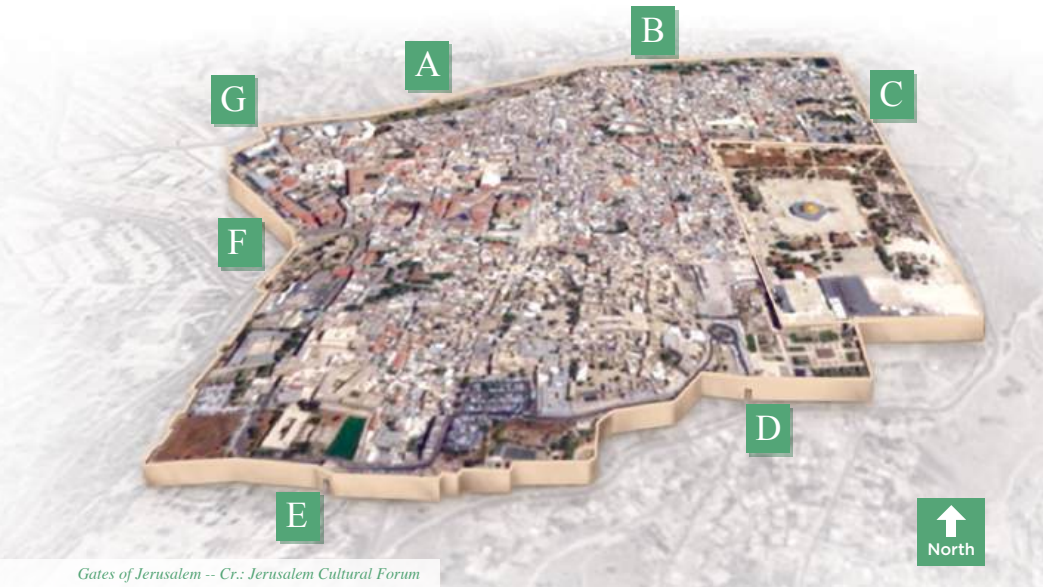
Elevation 2684 feet

East Jerusalem

Its name comes from the olive trees covering its slopes. The oldest olive tree is 800-2,000 years old. Other trees also dot its slopes, such as fig and oak trees.

The Gates of the Old City

Besides its hilly topography, Jerusalem is home to historical gates which are symbols of the city's rich and tumultuous past, reflecting its significance as a religious and cultural epicenter.



Bab al-Amoud (Damascus Gate)



Largest gate in the city, originally built by the Romans in 129 CE

Called al-Amoud (the column) because of a large column at its center, honoring King Herod's (36-1 BCE) entrance

Renovated under Sulayman al-Qanuni, aka Suleiman the Magnificent, (1494-1566 CE)



Bab al-Zahra (Herod's Gate)



Also known as the Gate of Flowers and the Gate of Sheep

Named after the weekly sheep market that used to be held nearby

Also renovated during the rule of Sulayman al-Qanuni



Bab al-Asbat (Lions' Gate)



Lions engraved in its stone represent Sultan Baybars, the 4th Mamluk ruler of Egypt and Syria

Also known as St. Mary's Gate and Jordan Gate

Renovated during the rule of Sulayman al-Qanuni



Bab al-Maghariba (Prophet's Gate or Buraq Gate)



Near the Buraq Wall

Zionist occupation demolished the nearby neighborhood in 1967 CE

The Mamluks repaired it in 1313 CE



Bab Nabi Daoud (Zion Gate)



Likely named after Prophet Dawud (pbuh) who lived in the 10-9th century BCE

Close to Mount Zion, where Prophet Dawud (pbuh) stood

Also renovated during the rule of Sulayman al-Qanuni



Bab al-Khalil (Jaffa Gate & Hebron Gate)



Named after the neighborhood of Hebron

The second most important gate after Bab al-Amoud

Also renovated during the rule of Sulayman al-Qanuni



Bab al-Jadid (New Gate)



Also known as the New Gate

Sultan Abdel Hamid II built it in 1898 CE when the German emperor Wilhelm II visited



LESSON 1 TAKEAWAY

The Old City of Jerusalem was enclosed by stone walls and accessed through seven gates.

LESSON

02

In This Lesson

Masjid al-Aqsa

EXPLORING THE ICONIC STRUCTURE & ITS HISTORY

You will explore the importance of Masjid al-Aqsa and learn its identifying architectural features, such as its many prayer halls. You will also understand how confusion has arisen over what exactly is considered Masjid al-Aqsa, exacerbating today's conflicts.

The Masjid al-Aqsa compound in historic Palestine is considered a cornerstone of Islam, as it blends the historical, geographical, and cultural aspects of Jerusalem.

As we look into its historical aspects, architectural details, and Islamic connections, we shall discover a fusion of historical heritage with contemporary relevance. Let's explore its profound impact through spiritual journeys and personal experiences, bridging the past with the present. Finally, we shall enrich our understanding of this Holy Land by examining the cultural boundaries of Jerusalem and its complex mixture of identity and heritage.



Mountains surrounding al-Aqsa compound

What is a MASJID?

The word "masjid" literally means a place of prostration. However, in its specific sense, "masjid" also refers to a physical structure built for the five daily prayers and is made up of three main components: the land it occupies, clearly defined parameters, and orientation towards the qiblah.

Masajid often have a variety of programs and events, including youth activities, educational classes, community service

initiatives, and da'wah efforts. They may also provide space for schools, libraries, and other facilities that benefit the community. In the USA and Canada, many masajid serve as community centers for the congregation providing a myriad of services including gyms, social services, language classes, and even coffee shops. In this same way, Masjid al-Aqsa has served as a space of learning through the schools and educational institutions within the compound.

Where Is Masjid al-Aqsa & How Large is it Really?



Compass directions of Masjid al-Aqsa -- Cr.: Jerusalem Cultural Forum



Size

The compound covers about 35.6 acres, which is equivalent to 19 average-sized soccer fields!



Adjacent to Old City Walls

The eastern and southern walls of Masjid al-Aqsa are next to the walls of Jerusalem's Old City.



Location

Masjid al-Aqsa sits on a hill or plateau known as Mount Moriah (or Temple Mount) in the south-eastern corner of the Old City in Jerusalem. The entire hill is considered part of this holy site. The heart of Masjid al-Aqsa is the Foundation Rock (also called the Noble Rock).



Inside Mount Moriah (Temple Mount)

Mount Moriah has various boulders and rock structures. The part under the Dome of the Rock is its distinct structure.

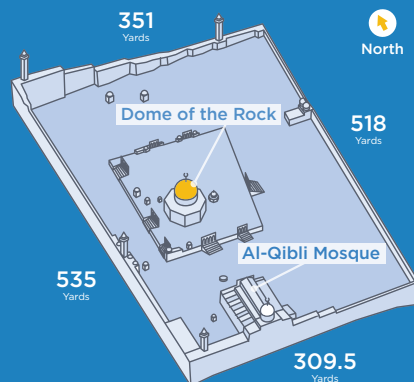


WHAT IS MASJID AL-AQSA?

Masjid al-Aqsa holds immense religious significance for Muslims worldwide. It stands within the Old City of Jerusalem, and is often mistakenly referred to as al-Haram al-Sharif (meaning “the Noble Sanctuary”). But here’s the intriguing part: Masjid al-Aqsa is not just a single building; **it’s an entire complex.**

Masjid al-Aqsa Complex

This complex is made up of prayer areas, nature spots, and small enclosures. There are over 200 individual markers, or structures both natural or man-made, within this 35.6-acre compound.



4x		Minarets
8x		Prayer Areas
8x		Archways
10x		Fountains
16x		Gates
19x		Schools
25x		Wells
36x		Terraces

Most of this huge area isn't filled with buildings but with trees, gardens, and open spaces instead.

Masjid al-Aqsa in numbers -- Cr.: Jerusalem Cultural Forum



Prayer Halls

The most important features of the Masjid al-Aqsa compound are undoubtedly its prayer halls.



Masjid al-Qibli

This masjid has a distinctive silver dome. Many mistakenly think this is the entirety of Masjid al-Aqsa. Instead, it is the main prayer area for men, where the imam leads congregational prayers. The name comes from its southern direction (toward the qiblah).



Dome of the Rock

This is the stunning structure at the heart of the compound, the iconic masjid with a golden dome and beautiful architecture, considered the centerpiece of Masjid al-Aqsa. Built in 687 CE (68 Hijri), it currently serves as the women's prayer area.



The Old al-Aqsa Prayer Hall

It is located directly below Masjid al-Qibli, and was built as a grand entrance to Masjid al-Aqsa by the Umayyads. It used to connect the compound to palaces that once stood outside.



Al-Marwani Masjid

This is the largest structure in the compound, with room for over 6,000 worshippers. It is located in the southeast, and is actually beneath the ground! Originally intended as a foundation, it ended up being used for storage.

Interesting fact: During the Crusader era (1099-1184 CE), it even served as a stable for horses!



Al-Buraq Masjid

This prayer hall, also located underground, is adjacent to the Buraq Wall (also known as the Western Wall). It is named after Buraq, the winged horse that carried Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) during the Night Journey. A ring nailed to the wall is believed to be where Buraq was tied.

Landmarks

Beside these prayer halls, there are quite a number of other beautiful landmarks.



The Foundation Rock

Sometimes called, inaccurately, the Noble Rock. The Foundation Rock is the boulder under the Dome of the Rock. This unique, irregularly shaped natural rock structure is located at the highest point within Masjid al-Aqsa, right in the center (a bit to the upper left) and measures about 49 to 59 feet long and 6.5 feet high. It holds historical significance as the qiblah (direction of prayer) for previous prophets. It is also associated with the Ascension of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) during the Night Journey. Scholars have clarified that the Foundation Rock has no supernatural qualities. Therefore, it should not be called the Noble Rock (al-Sakhrah al-Musharrafah).



Fountain of Qayt Bay

This beautiful white domed public fountain is widely considered to be the 2nd most beautiful structure within the compound. It was built in the 15th century CE by the Mamluks of Egypt. Today, it still provides fresh water to visitors.



Al-Ashrafiyah School

Built around the same time as the Fountain of Qayt Bay by the Mamluks, this structure is one of the many schools still located in the compound. It originally had two floors, but its upper floor was destroyed by an earthquake in 1496 CE. It continues to be an important destination, serving as the official al-Aqsa Library between 1977-2000. Since 2008, it houses the al-Aqsa Center for the Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts.

Masjid al-Aqsa is truly a place where faith, history, and stories converge.

Historical Markers Around the Blessed al-Aqsa Masjid



Masjid al-Aqsa: historical markers -- Cr.: Jerusalem Cultural Forum

Gateways



1. Al-Asbat
2. Hatta
3. Al-'Atam
4. Al-Ghanawimah
5. Al-Nathir
6. Al-Hadid
7. Al-Qattanin
8. Al-Muttahirah
9. Al-Sakinah
10. Al-Silsilah
11. Al-Mugharibah

Gates



1. Al-Rahmah
2. Al-Janaiz
3. Al-Mufrad
4. Al-Thulathi
5. Al-Mazduj

Minarets



1. Al-Asbat
2. Al-Ghawanimah
3. Al-Silsilah
4. Al-Mugharibah

Domes



1. Al-Silsilah
2. Al-Ma'arij
3. Al-Khalili
4. Al-Nabi
5. Al-Arwah
6. Al-Khidr
7. Al-Nahawiyah
8. Yusuf
9. Musa
10. Yusuf Agha
11. 'Ushaq Al-Nabi
12. Sulayman

Masjid & Prayer Halls



- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Al-Qibli Masjid 2. Dome of the Rock 3. The Old al-Aqsa Hall 4. Al-Marwani Masjid | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Mahd `Esa 6. The Women's Prayer Hall 7. Al-Mugharibah 8. Al-Buraq |
|--|---|

Current Schools



1. Al-Aqsa Shari'ah High School for Boys
2. Al-Aqsa Shari'ah High School for Girls
3. Riyadh al-Aqsa
4. Al-Omariyyah School

Historical Schools



- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Al-Khatniyah 2. Al-Fakhriyah 3. Al-Duwaydariyah 4. Al-Tankiziyah 5. Al-Farisiyah | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Al-Ashrafiyah 7. Al-Malakiyah 8. Al-Omariyah 9. Al-Khatuniyah 10. Al-As'ardiyyah | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Al-Arghuniyah 12. Al-Aminyah 13. Al-Basitiyah 14. Al-Manjikiyah 15. Al-Uthmaniyah |
|---|---|---|

Archways



1. The East Archway
2. The West Archway
3. The Western North Archway
4. The Western South Archway
5. The Northeastern Archway
6. The Northwestern Archway
7. The Southwestern Archway
8. The Southeastern Archway

Corridors



1. The North Corridor
2. The West Corridor
3. The East Corridor
(originally built by the Umayyads but completely collapsed as a result of an earthquake)

Pulpits



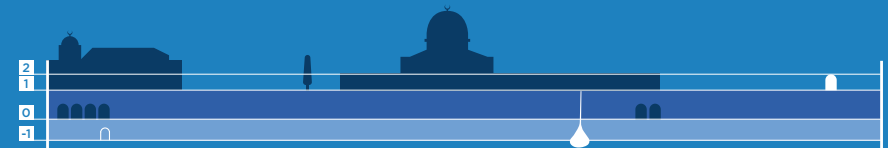
1. The Hijri Pulpit (also called Minbar of Burhan al-Din)
2. The Minbar of Salah al-Din (Pulpit of Saladin)

al-Aqsa Masjid also consists of

- 36x Terraces
- 25x Wells
- 10x Fountains

Levels of al-Aqsa

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>[-1] Underground level – consists of many buried buildings and historical markers.</p> <p>[0] Ground level – the Marwani Masjid, the Old al-Aqsa hall, the Buraq Wall, and the gates of Al-Rahmah, Jana'iz, Thulathy, Mazduj, Mufrad, and Silsilah.</p> | <p>[1] First level – Masjid Al-Qibli, open courtyards, and gates.</p> <p>[2] Second level – Dome of the Rock and the surrounding markers.</p> |
|--|---|



Levels of al-Aqsa -- Cr.: Jerusalem Cultural Forum

Masjid al-Aqsa

CLARIFYING THE SACRED BOUNDARIES



Masjid al-Aqsa is a sacred place that deserves respect. Prophet Adam (pbuh) was the first to set foot in the holy land of Jerusalem. It is important to understand that, as a significant religious site for Muslims, Masjid al-Aqsa refers to everything within the walls of the compound. The entire area within the rectangular gated compound is considered part of the masjid complex, both above and below ground.

Muslim scholars consider any aggression toward any part of this area as an assault on the entire Masjid al-Aqsa and a violation of its sanctity.

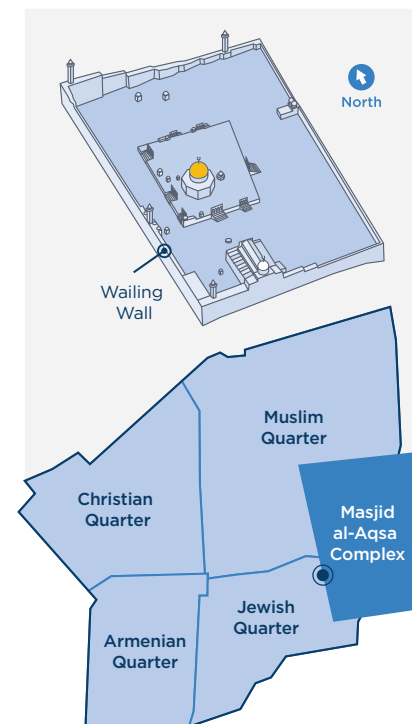
Historically, Jews used to gather near the Buraq Wall, though they didn't claim ownership over this space. In fact, there is no authentic Jewish claim to this wall. However, in modern times, the area around the Buraq Wall has become a point of contention between Muslims and Jews.

The Zionist nation of Israel frequently pushes misconceptions over what exactly is considered Masjid al-Aqsa. They refer to the western Buraq Wall of the compound as the Wailing Wall, and under their occupation, they have demolished historic Islamic structures as they continue to claim the area as a strictly Jewish religious site.

Israeli law unjustly treats the courtyards of Masjid al-Aqsa as public spaces. It identifies only the Dome of the Rock and Masjid al-Qibli as Islamic holy sites.

This has led to confusion over what exact areas in the compound are significant to Muslims. Israelis have taken advantage of this confusion by trespassing on Masjid al-Aqsa. For example, in 2000 the then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon blatantly stormed the grounds but many weren't sure whether that meant he had entered Masjid al-Aqsa or not.

Again, something similar occurred in 2007. This time, it was Israeli forces that entered the Masjid al-Aqsa compound. They claimed they only stepped in the courtyard, claiming they had not entered the Masjid itself. Interestingly, the news channel Al-Jazeera aired footage of the Israeli occupation forces in the al-Aqsa courtyard while at the same time showing the spokesperson for the Israeli Police stating, "The Israeli police force has not entered al-Aqsa! We only entered the courtyards of the Temple Mount, and not a single officer entered Masjid al-Aqsa."



In 2016, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a statement to representatives and ambassadors to clarify their view that Masjid al-Aqsa is confined to Masjid al-Qibli only and that the Dome of the Rock is another separate masjid in the area called "The Noble Haram," which is separate from the Masjid al-Aqsa mentioned in the Quran.

Furthermore, Israeli authorities claim that these courtyards are not exclusively for Muslims and that they have no exclusive claim to them. This stance contributes to the ongoing tensions around Masjid al-Aqsa.

DID YOU KNOW?

Masjid Al Aqsa is one of the two ancient places of worship established by none other than Prophet Adam (peace and blessings be upon him). First he built Masjid al-Haram in Makkah, and then forty years later, he traveled to Jerusalem and established Masjid al-Aqsa.

According to a hadith in Sahih Bukhari: Narrated Abu Dhar: I said, "O Allah's Messenger (pbuh)! Which mosque was first built on the surface of the earth?" He said, "Al-Masjid al-Haram (in Mecca)." I said, "Which was built next?" He replied "The mosque of al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem)." I said, "What was the period of construction between the two?" He said, "Forty years." He added, "Wherever (you may be, and) the prayer time becomes due, perform the prayer there, for the best thing is to do so (i.e. to offer the prayers in time).



LESSON 2 TAKEAWAY

Masjid Al Aqsa refers to the entire 35.6-acre compound with over 200 significant markers.

LESSON

03

Masjid al-Aqsa A SACRED PLACE IN JERUSALEM

In This Lesson

You will learn of the significance Masjid al-Aqsa has in Islam and consider its spiritual impact.

Why do Muslims consider Masjid al-Aqsa **the third holiest masjid in Islam?** There are several reasons.

**ISRA & MI'RAJ**

Prophet's (pbuh) journey to heavens

Around the year 621 CE, when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) still lived in Makkah, a wonderful event occurred: al-Isra' wal-Mi'raj (the Night Journey and the Ascension). One night, Prophet Muhammad was carried on a heavenly mount named al-Buraq, described as a winged horse, to Masjid al-Aqsa. Once there, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) led all the prophets in prayer. Then, Angel Jibra'il accompanied him on an upward journey through the seven heavens, where the Prophet met various earlier prophets. It was there beyond the seven heavens that the Prophet also came into the Divine Presence of Allah (swt).

The Night Journey and Ascension of the Prophet (pbuh) is a major miracle in Islam. Beyond that, it also provided our religion with the second pillar: Prayer. It also clarified the leadership status of the Prophet (pbuh) over all previous prophets. His incredible journey affirmed our religion as perfecting the belief in One God.

**FIRST**

Qibla in Islam
(direction of prayer)

After the Hijrah (or Migration to Medinah), the Prophet was ordered by Allah (swt) to turn to Masjid al-Aqsa during prayer, thus establishing it as Islam's first qiblah (direction of prayer). It was not until after the Battle of Badr that Allah (swt) ordered through the Prophet to change the qiblah to Masjid al-Haram in Makkah instead, as Makkah is humanity's first place of worship.



One of the two masajid mentioned in the
QURAN

Masjid al-Aqsa also has a special status due to its mention in the Qur'an. Only two masajid on earth have been given their names by Allah (swt): Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem and Masjid al-Haram in Makkah.

The Most Prominent Names of Masjid al-Aqsa

Glory to Him who made His servant travel by night from Masjid al-Haram to Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him some of Our signs: He alone is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.

(Qur'an 17:1)

MASJID AL-AQSA

- Allah chose the name "Masjid al-Aqsa" in the Holy Quran.
- The word "al-Aqsa" means "the farthest." It is called this because it was the farthest masjid from Masjid al-Haram (in Mecca) when the verse was revealed. Scholars thought it might mean "the furthest from impurity and sin," but the literal meaning seems more likely.

MASJID ILIYA'

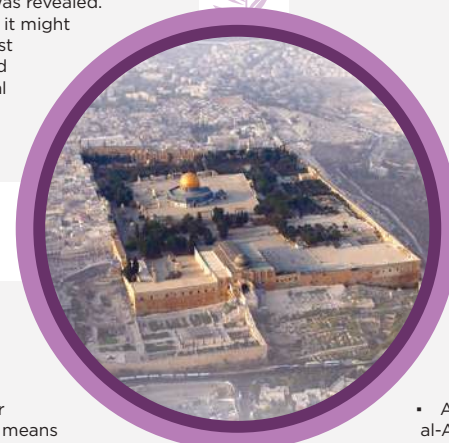
- Another name for Masjid al-Aqsa, as mentioned in some hadith narrations.
- Iliya' is an ancient name for Jerusalem. It is not used today anymore.

AL-BAYT AL-MUQADAS

- Another name for Masjid al-Aqsa. It means "the Sanctified House."
- While "Masjid al-Haram" suggests "hurma" (sanctity), "al-Bayt al-Muqadas" emphasizes purity and high status. A poet described it as an eternal garden where bliss awaits those who love it.

BAYT AL-MAQDIS

- Another name for Masjid al-Aqsa, as stated in several ahadith (see next page)
- Name often mentioned in old texts, mistakenly meaning the entire city of Jerusalem.



Masjid al-Aqsa --
Source: goo.gl/WTW2tZ

What exactly is “Bayt al-Maqdis”?

Throughout the ages, Masjid al-Aqsa has been called by several other names: al-Bayt al-Muqaddas, Masjid Iliya', and Bayt al-Maqdis. Indeed, it is this name that is mentioned in many of the stories and teachings about al-Isra wal-Mi'raj (the Night Journey and Ascension) and about the first qiblah when referring to Masjid al-Aqsa.

The term Bayt al-Maqdis has sometimes been understood to mean Jerusalem. However, as we shall see from the ahadith below, it is really just another name for Masjid al-Aqsa.

DID YOU KNOW?

Masjid al-Aqsa inspired many great scholars and poets of the past to write lines trying to capture their emotions while visiting the beautiful masjid. Imam Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani was a famous scholar of hadith from the 14th century. When he visited al-Aqsa, he wrote:

*To the Sanctified House we have come:
Eternal gardens that the Most Gracious
has made home,
For its love we have traversed many leagues,
What is there after torment besides bliss?*

During the 12th century CE, Jerusalem was conquered by the Crusaders. A poet from Damascus was captured by them and put in prison. Staring out through the bars of his cell, he wrote these lines to Salahuddin Ayyubi, who would later free Jerusalem from occupation:

*O King who turned the Crusader's
landmarks upside down,
A grievance comes your way,
traveling from the Sanctified House:
All the mosques have been purified,
while my honor is desecrated!*

AHADITH ABOUT MASJID AL-AQSA



Bayt al-Maqdis has often been considered to mean the city and region around Jerusalem. However, there are several narrations from the Prophet (pbuh) that show this is a misunderstanding.

Firstly, In the collection of Imam Ahmad, we have the hadith of al-Isra' (the Night Journey) as narrated by Anas bin Malik (ra):

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said,

“The Buraq was presented to me; it was a white creature, larger than a donkey but smaller than a mule. Each stride it took was as far as the eye can see. I mounted it and it took me to Bayt al-Maqdis where I tethered it to a ring used by all prophets. Then I entered it and prayed two rak'at¹ and exited...”²

¹ Units of prayer
² Musnad of Ahmad

Since the Prophet (pbuh) mentioned entering it and praying in it after arriving in Jerusalem, Bayt al-Maqdis cannot be a city or a region. The Arabic pronouns also make it clear that the name refers to the masjid, not the city of Jerusalem.

In addition, from Ibn Majah's collection, we have a narration from the Prophet (pbuh) saying:

“Upon completing the structure of Bayt al-Maqdis, Sulayman bin Dawud asked Allah for three requests: for his judgments to coincide with wisdom, for a kingdom like no other, and that none come to this masjid solely intending prayer except that they leave sinless like the day they were born. As for the first two, they were granted, and I hope the third request be granted as well.”³

³ Ibn Majah Pg 206

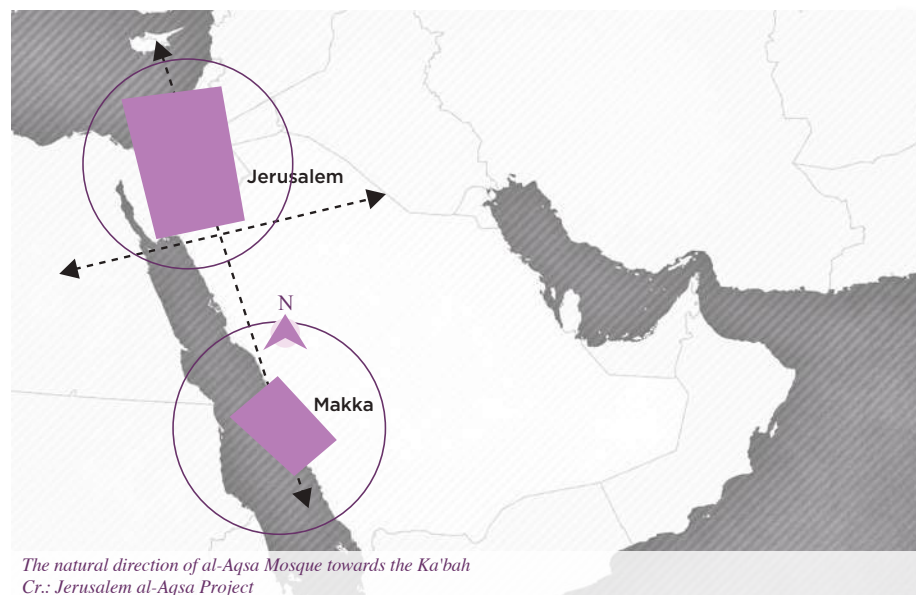
In a narration collected by Ahmad, Thil Asabi' narrates:

“I asked the Prophet (pbuh), ‘If we are tested with remaining after your death, where do you command us to go?’ He replied, ‘Go to Bayt al-Maqdis, for perhaps you will have progeny that will have regular access to that masjid.’”⁴

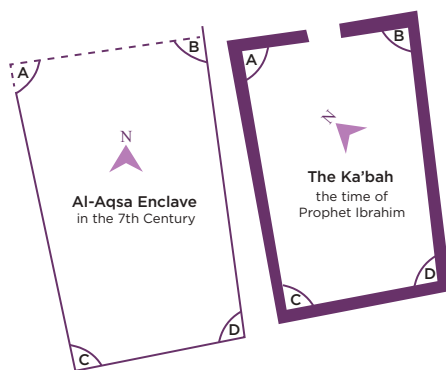
⁴ Ahmad. Vol 13. Pg 99

These narrations indicate that the name refers specifically to the masjid and not the entire city of Jerusalem including the greater region around it.

DIRECTION & STRUCTURE OF MASJID AL-AQSA

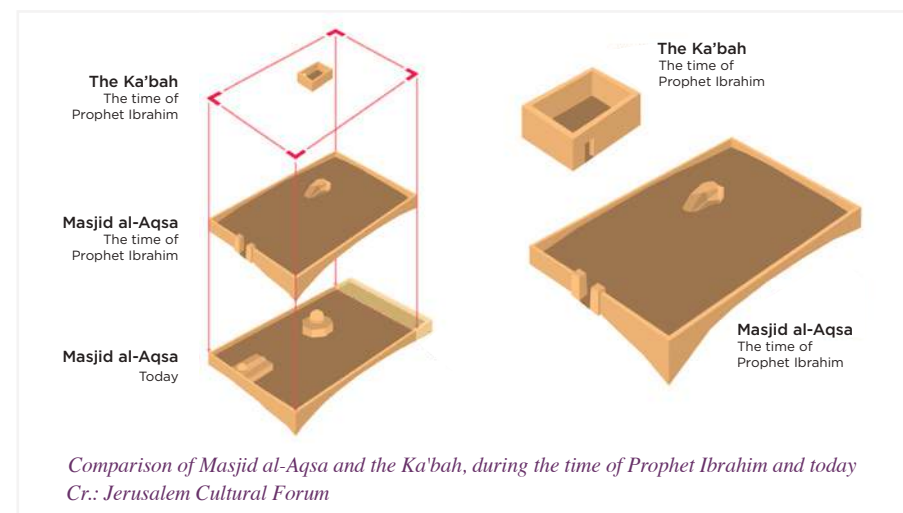


There is a fascinating fact about the actual structure of Masjid al-Aqsa. Even though it was built by Prophet Adam (pbuh) and later by Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) long before the coming of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), it naturally faces Makkah, as if Allah had prepared it to point toward the qibla for the entire Muslim community. This was discovered by Dr. Haytham al-Ratut, a renowned scholar. Not only so, he also found that the original structure of Masjid al-Aqsa and the Holy Ka'ba in Mecca are geometrically similar.



Geometrical similarity of Masjid al-Aqsa & the Ka'bah
Cr.: Jerusalem al-Aqsa Project

Have you wondered why Masjid al-Aqsa is called the “furthest” masjid? Imagine connecting the three important masjids on a map: Masjid al-Haram, Masjid Nabawi, and Masjid al-Aqsa. You would get a triangle, each side having a different length. The line to Masjid al-Aqsa would be the longest!



Understanding MASJID AL-AQSA: NOT A “HARAM”

There is one more name that many people use when referring to Masjid al-Aqsa: al-Haram al-Qudsi al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary of Jerusalem. This is an inaccurate term, even though Muslims love and honor this beautiful place. The word “haram” is a specific one in Islam, meaning sanctuary. It implies that certain rules must be followed in a “haram”, such as no hunting, and no cutting down of trees. Neither the Qur'an nor any hadith mentioned Masjid al-Aqsa as a haram.

Only two masjids are designated as “haram”: Masjid al-Haram in Makkah and Masjid al-Nabawi in Madinah.



LESSON 3 TAKEAWAYS

- Bayt al-Muqadis, another name for Masjid al-Aqsa, was the original qiblah before it was moved to the Ka'bah.
- Masjid al-Aqsa is the only other masjid beside Masjid al-Haram that is mentioned in the Quran.

LESSON

04

Defining The CITY OF AL-QUDS (Jerusalem)

In This
Lesson

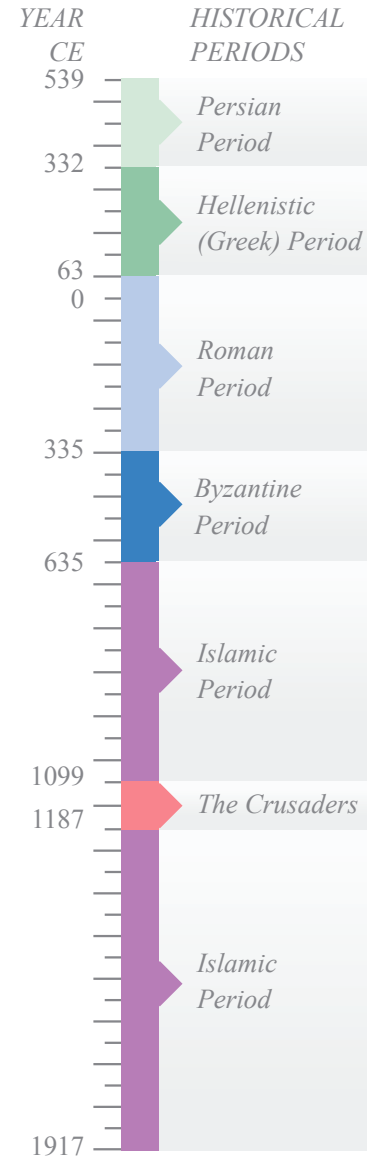
You will learn how the city of Jerusalem changed from a walled city with gates to a sprawling metropolis that was divided and reconnected due to armed conflicts.



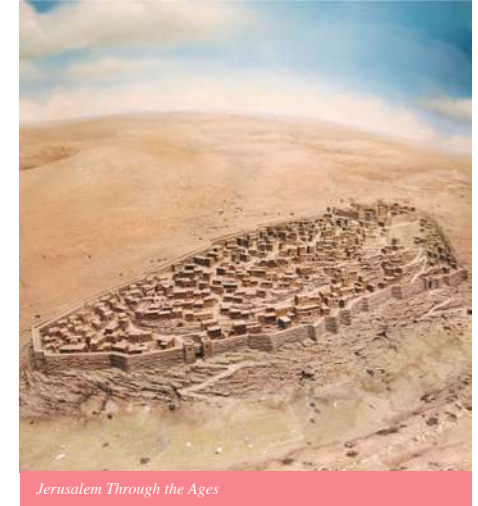
Citadel of Jerusalem, By David Roberts
Source: clevelandart.org/art/1927.96

For most of its history, up to the late 19th century, Jerusalem's boundaries were within what we now call the Old City, enclosed by square-like walls with seven gates. These walls served not only to defend the city but also to control who could enter and exit through gates and doors.

Towards the end of the 19th century, a movement called Zionism grew in Europe, with the aim of establishing a homeland for Jews. Eventually, after considering several locations, the Zionists decided on Palestine. They called on persecuted Jews all over the world to emigrate to Palestine. Many answered the call and soon, a trickle of immigrants quickly grew into a flood.



Timeline: History of Jerusalem, showing major historical periods and relevant events
Cr.: Jerusalem al-Aqsa Project



Jerusalem Through the Ages

Thus, as these immigrants moved in, Jerusalem expanded beyond its ancient walls and became a larger metropolis. Multiple neighborhoods began to spread outside the Old City, absorbing villages and their people who had once lived on the outskirts or far from the city itself. These new areas included Sheikh Jarrah in the north and Talbiya and Baka in the west. This expansion and the creation of new neighborhoods changed the city's social fabric.

Modern Times:

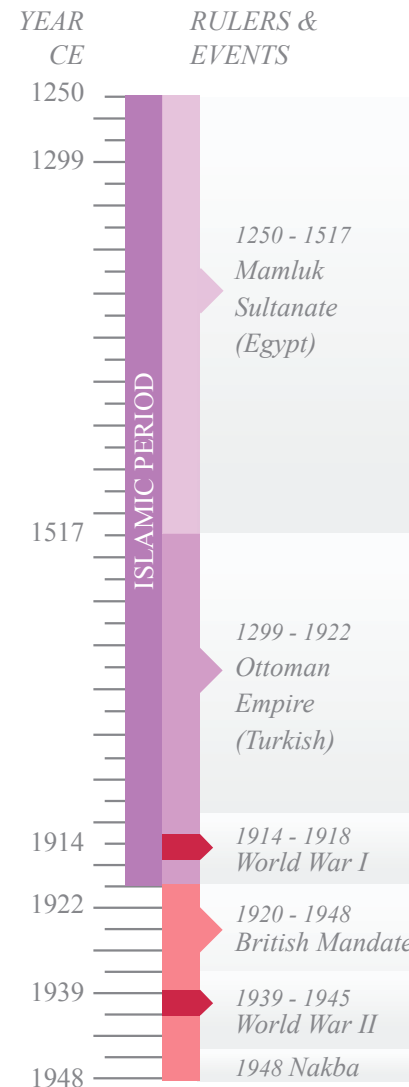
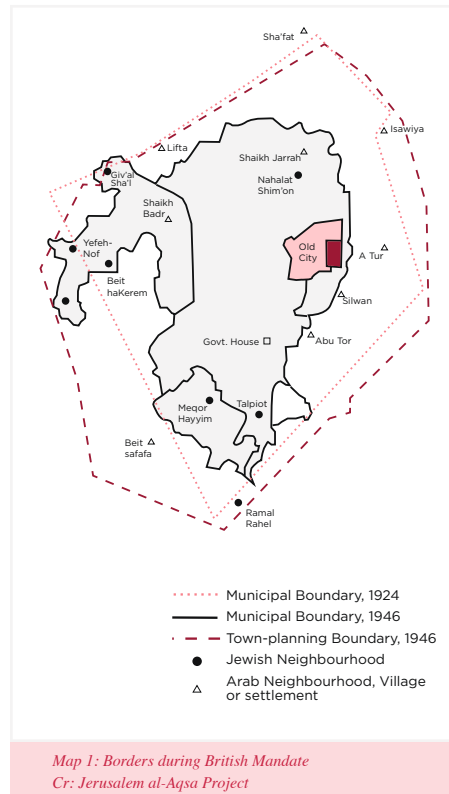
HOW HISTORICAL EVENTS SHAPED JERUSALEM



1917 was a significant year for Jerusalem. World War I was in full swing, and Britain (on the Allies side) invaded Palestine which was then still under the rule of the Ottomans (on the Central Powers side). By November of the same year, Britain issued the “Balfour Declaration”, supporting the establishment of a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine.

By then, Jerusalem was the largest city in Palestine. It consisted not only of the eight square miles of the Old City, but also of around 102 neighborhoods outside it. As a result of the wave of Jewish immigration, only 24 of them were Palestinian or mixed neighborhoods, while the large majority were Jewish ones.

The British army stayed in charge of the area until 1920 when Britain was granted a “mandate” by the League of Nations (earlier version of the United Nations) to formally rule Palestine. When the British Mandate began, Jerusalem started to expand even more dramatically, so much so that the city’s area covered around 25 square miles by the end of the British Mandate period.



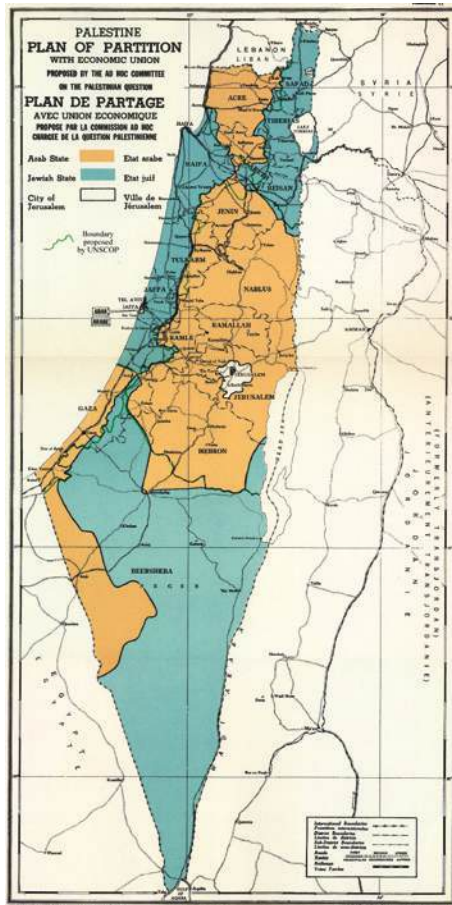
Timeline: Modern History of Jerusalem
Cr: Jerusalem al-Aqsa Project

This expansion occurred more towards the west than the east. This was partly because the western areas were more attractive due to their cooler climate and greener landscape compared to the arid eastern regions near the desert on the east. This westward expansion also swallowed up and incorporated many Palestinian villages, contributing to the Palestinian majority in the city despite the British focus on developing Jewish neighborhoods.

Consequently, during the British Mandate, 63 new neighborhoods were added to Jerusalem bringing the number of new neighborhoods outside the Old City to 165, with 44 Palestinian and 121 Jewish neighborhoods, the latter mostly on the western side of the city.

In 1939, World War II broke out. In an effort to bring to fruition the idea of a Jewish homeland, Britain declared towards the end of the war that they would now end the Mandate. They asked the United Nations to officially create a homeland for Jews by partitioning – or dividing– Palestine into two sections. Although Arabs made up over two thirds of the population and owned 90% of the land, the UN partition plan gave the new nation of Israel 55% of the land, while Jordan would govern the remaining 45% of Palestine.

What about Jerusalem?



The UN Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947
Source: Wikipedia

The UN plan called for two cities with religious history to be governed by an international body: Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

The Zionists welcomed the plan, considering it a stepping stone toward future expansion. On the other hand, the Palestinians and leaders of other Arab nations refused to accept it. They further announced that they would take steps to stop the plan's implementation.

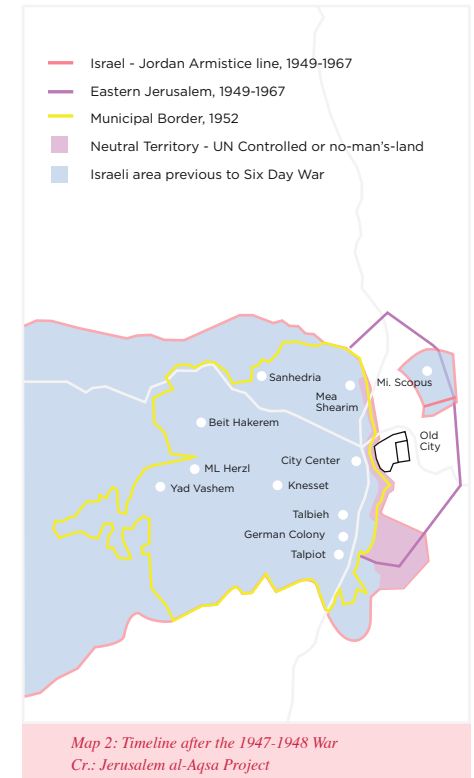
What followed is now called the Nakba. In 1948, regular and irregular Israeli military forces went on a campaign to force Arab residents out of the land which the Israelis now considered theirs. These forces then went on to do the same thing on the land which the UN had allocated to the Arabs: numerous massacres (such as that of Deir Yassin), expulsions, and even biological warfare, whereby they poisoned the water supply of some villages and towns, causing a typhoid epidemic.

May 14, 1948: Official Establishment of The State of Israel

On May 14, 1948, the state of Israel was officially established, and over 300,000 Palestinians had fled or been expelled.

The next day, on May 15, the forces of the Arab League (an organization of seven Arab countries formed in 1945) marched into Palestine, in what is now called the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, or the First Arab-Israeli War. It ended in March 1949 with an Israeli victory, a partial Jordanian victory, and a Palestinian defeat.

Jerusalem underwent major changes throughout this time of upheaval. During the Nakba, the Haganah (Zionist paramilitary forces during the British Mandate) took over the western part of the city, thus dividing Jerusalem into eastern and western parts. West Jerusalem consisted of 84% of the area and was controlled by the Israelis while the remaining 16% formed East Jerusalem and was controlled by the Jordanians.



Map 2: Timeline after the 1947-1948 War
Cr.: Jerusalem al-Aqsa Project

As per the ceasefire agreement, the Jordanians relocated the Jews in East Jerusalem to the western side. On the other hand, the Israelis again used massacre, looting, terror, and expulsion to depopulate the Arab neighborhoods in West Jerusalem.

This separation continued until the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, or Third Arab-Israeli War, when Israel took control of the entire city, including the eastern/Arab area where Masjid al-Aqsa is located. West and East Jerusalem were now reunited, though under Israeli rule.



LESSON 4 TAKEAWAY

The boundaries and character of Jerusalem have shifted over the centuries.

UNIT 01

List of Key VOCABULARY



ENGLISH	ARABIC	NOTES
British Mandate	al-Antidab al-Britani	The British captured Jerusalem in 1917 CE as part of World War I, ending eight centuries of peaceful Muslim rule under the Ottoman Empire. The British rule over Palestine and Jerusalem had a significant impact on the area, leading to various developments and wars, including the establishment of the settler-colonial state of Israel in 1948.
Deir Yassin Massacre		Friday 4/9/1948 at 4:30am: Zionists surrounded Deir Yassin then butchered over 107 men, women and children along with raping women. News spread to other villages and was also exaggerated to frighten the Palestinians. The trick worked and thousands of Palestinians began to flee for their lives, never to return. Deir Yassin is now an Israeli village: cemetery and mosques were destroyed. The Deir Yassin Massacre was one of the 34 massacres which occurred during the Nakba.
Foundation Rock	al-Sakhra	It was the focal point of the first qiblah (direction of prayer) for Muslims. The Foundation Rock is at the center of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.
Masjid al-Aqsa	Bayt al-Maqdis	Masjid means a place of prostration to Allah. Bayt (which means home) al-Maqdis (The Holy) is another name for Masjid al-Aqsa (the furthest place of worship). It also means "the Sanctified House." It is the third holiest site in Islam, after Masjid al-Haram in Makkah and Masjid al-Nabawi in Medina.
Jerusalem	al-Quds	Jerusalem, the capital of historic Palestine. In Arabic, Jerusalem is called "al-Quds" which means "The Holy". It is a sacred and significant city in Islam.

ENGLISH	ARABIC	NOTES
Haganah Zionist		A Jewish paramilitary organization that played a key role in the establishment of the state of Israel, often associated with the displacement and suffering of Palestinians and the struggle over control of Palestine.
Haram	Haram	A haram is a sacred area where particular actions are strictly forbidden. These include hunting, cutting down trees, and other unique rules. However, these rules don't apply to the area around Masjid al-Aqsa. Islam recognizes only two harams: Masjid Al-Haram in Makkah and Masjid Al-Nabawi in Madinah. Some scholars consider Waj (a valley near Taif) a haram, but this view is debated.
Israeli Laws		While Israeli law is considered an official legal system in the West, there is legal pluralism in Israel, especially when it comes to Muslims and Palestinians in the region. It is seen by the world as a legal framework imposed by the state of Israel, which governs the Palestinian lands it has occupied, and it is often perceived as unjust and discriminatory towards the rights of Palestinians.
Israeli Occupation		The unlawful seizure and control of Palestinian territories, including sacred lands, infringes upon the rights and sovereignty of the Palestinian people.
Nakba (the Catastrophe)	al-Nakba	In 1948, Zionist paramilitary gangs uprooted 60% of the Palestinian people (800,000 out of 1.4 million). 530 out of 580 Palestinian villages were destroyed. 15,000 Palestinians were killed in 34 massacres. By the time a ceasefire was announced, Israelis had occupied 78% of Palestine.

List of Key VOCABULARY



ENGLISH	ARABIC	NOTES
Judaism	Yahodiyah	From an Islamic perspective, Judaism is recognized and respected as one of the earlier monotheistic religions. In Islam, Jews are considered "People of the Book" (Ahl al-Kitab). Islam acknowledges that Jews have received divine scriptures, particularly the Torah, which is believed to have been revealed by Allah to Prophet Musa. Muslims believe that the Torah's original message has been altered over time. Both Islam and Judaism are strictly monotheistic, worshipping one God.
Mamluks	Mamluk / Mamalik	The Mamluk Sultanate or Empire is a state that ruled Egypt, the Levant, and the Hejaz from 1250 to 1517 CE. It is called "Mamluk" because it was established with the help of "mamluk" (freed slaves) regiments from the Egyptian Ayyubi dynasty.
Temple Mount		It is the hill or plateau also known as Mount Moriah where Masjid al-Aqsa is located. It holds religious significance, historical importance, and cultural heritage to Muslims.
Ottoman Empire	al-Imbiraturiah al-'Uthmaniyah	The Ottoman Empire arose from today's Turkiye and ruled over southeastern Europe, West Asia, and northern Africa from 1299 to 1922 CE. With Muslims administering Jerusalem, Masjid al-Aqsa was preserved with honor and dignity, and Jewish and Christians minorities were provided with religious freedom and security.
Prophet David	Nabi Dawud	Prophet Dawud (as) was born in Bethlehem and began as a shepherd, which taught him leadership and compassion. Chosen by Allah (swt) as a prophet and king after King Talut (Saul), he defeated the giant Jalut (Goliath) in battle. Prophet Dawud (as) made Jerusalem the capital of Palestine and received the Zabur (Psalms), a divine scripture. He is part of the prophetic lineage leading to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and they both preached the oneness of Allah and righteousness, showing how all prophets' teachings are connected.

ENGLISH	ARABIC	NOTES
Prophet Solomon	Nabi Sulayman	Prophet Sulayman (as), known as Solomon in English, was chosen by Allah as both a king and a prophet after he inherited his father Prophet Dawud's kingdom. He lived a life of wisdom, justice, and righteousness. Under his reign, the Temple of Solomon on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem was built.
Saladin	Salahuddin Ayyubi	Salahuddin Ayyubi was a great Muslim leader who liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187 CE. He greatly valued and understood the city's importance because of its connection to earlier prophets like Prophet Dawud (as) and Sulayman (as), as well as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who journeyed to Masjid al-Aqsa during Isra and Mi'raj.
Suleiman the Magnificent or Suleiman the Lawgiver	Sulayman al-Qanuni	Longest reigning sultan of the Ottoman empire in the 16th century CE. He is known for expanding the empire and encouraging the growth of art, architecture, and literature, but mostly for reforming law by harmonizing sultan's and religious laws.
Wailing Wall	Buraq Wall	Known as the Western Wall, it is known as the Buraq Wall in Islam and the Wailing Wall in the West. It is a portion of an ancient limestone wall inside the Old City of Jerusalem. The Zionists have demolished the historical structures near the Buraq Wall as they falsely claimed the area as a strictly Jewish religious site.
Zionism / Zionist Occupation	Sahyuniyah	Zionism, a political movement which came about in the 19th Century (1800's), had the aim of establishing a Jewish state on Palestinian land with the support of the British. Zionism is a political ideology which is based on the premise of establishing a national homeland for Jews in Palestine. Its policies have tortured, massacred, displaced and ethnically cleansed millions of Palestinians over the last century.

May Allah (swt) bless and reward everyone who collaborated in the production of this work:

Sponsors & Directors

Consultants for Islamic School Excellence (CISE)

Educational Professional Team

Dr. Fawzia Mai Tung, Project Manager

Salma Wahdy, Lead Content Developer

Omaira Alam, Content Developer

Dr. Nada Wafa, Content Developer

Qadri Tung, Content Developer

Bethsaida Garrido Jimenez, Content Developer

Consultation & Review

Religious & Educational Review

Dr. Abdalla Idris

Educational & Content Review

Dr. Susan Douglass

Religious Review

Dr. Yasir Qadhi

Educational Review

Dr. Shaza Khan, Executive Director, ISLA (Islamic Schools League of America)

Sufia Azmat, Executive Director, CISNA (Council of Islamic Schools based in North America)

Dr. Souheil Zekri

Magda Elkadi

Public Relations Aspect

Hussam Ayloush, Executive Director, California and Greater Los Angeles,

CAIR (Council on American Islamic Relations)

Legal

Tawfiq J. Morrar, The Morrar Law Office

Arabic Content Translation

Mohammad Badawy

Graphic Design

Mais Quqa, Creative Director, Quqa LLC

For permission to use their material,

Many Thanks to

“Al-’Aalam fi Madinah” (The World in a City).

Multaqa AlQuds al-Thaqafi,
(Jerusalem Cultural Forum). 2018

“Al-Madkhal ila Dirasat Bayt al-Maqdis” (Introduction to Jerusalem Studies). Omar, Abdallah Marouf.
Amman: Mu’assasat al-Fursan. 2017

© 2024 CISE, All Rights Reserved

