

Al-Aqsa Mosque

The beating heart of East Jerusalem

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God said: "Glory to (Allah) who did take his servant for a journey by night from the sacred mosque to the farthest mosque, whose precincts we did bless" (Al-Isra, 1).



Al-Aqsa mosque is situated inside the defensive wall of Al-Quds (Jerusalem), at the south easterly zone. It is surrounded by walls: the eastern wall is coupled to the defensive wall of the city. The mosque, with an area of 142 acres, has the shape of an irregular quadrilateral and is built on one of Jerusalem's four hills. It is unique because of its numerous supplementary buildings: domes, water taps, pavilions, schools, water basins, trees, mihrabs, minbars, minarets, doors, wells and libraries. Al-Aqsa mosque is not the yellow colored Dome of the Rock, it is the mosque with seven arcades and seven main doors that God endowed with various features. The old mosque is under this mosque, and to the south east is Al-Marwani mosque.

Features of Al-Aqsa

The mosque has many famous features:

- 1 - it is the first of the two qiblas: the Moslems first prayed in its direction for about 17 months;
- 2 - it is the second mosque, because it was constructed forty years after the sacred Mosque in Mecca;
- 3 - it is the third holy place of pilgrimage. The

Prophet said: Only visit three mosques, the sacred mosque (al-Kaaba), Al-Aqsa mosque and my mosque (al-Madina)";

4 - it is the site of the night journey of Prophet Mohammad (Peace be Upon Him) to Jerusalem;

5 - its location on earth is blessed by God where all Prophets, together with Prophet Mohammed, prayed on the night of his journey.

The doors that lead to Al-Aqsa mosque are: Al-Asbatt door through which one sees the religious high school of Al-Aqsa, the minaret of Al-Asbatt, Al-Ghadiriya school and the path towards Hatta door; Hatta door, where one sees Al-Aqsa's Islamic schools and the Basitiya school; the door of King Faisal, which leads to the Latin, Persian and Royal schools; Al-Ghawanma door; Al-Nadher door; the Iron door; al-Qatanen door; Al-Mathara door; As-Sakina door; As-Silsila door and Maghreba door.

History of Al-Aqsa mosque

Its construction goes back to the Umayyad era. The Abbasids preserved it; Abu Jaafar

Al-Mansour restored it. It was later destroyed by an earthquake. The caliph Al-Mahdi rebuilt it in 380 A. H. (C.1002 A.D.). The Fatimide caliph Ad-Daher restored it in 425 A. H. (C.1047).

During the time of the crusades (493 A. H. /1115 A. D.), the mosque was damaged: part of it was transformed into dwellings for knights and another section was made into a church; it stayed like this until it was recaptured by Salah-eddine Al-Ayyoubi (Saladin) in 583 A. H. (C.1204 A. D.). Saladin ordered the installation of the minbar of Nour-eddine Zanki. The Ayyoubides, Mamlouks, and Ottomans also restored the mosque.

In 1389 A. H (21/8 / 1969), the mosque was burnt: the minbar and the wooded ceiling on the south-eastern side was destroyed.

The Dome of the Rock, constructed during the Umayyad era, always stands authoritatively as the crown gilt of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) city. The blessed Al-Aqsa mosque, an integral part of the Muslim faith, is the beating heart of Jerusalem. ■