

THE SACRED MOSQUE IN MAKKAH

There are three Holy sites of Islam that a Muslim is recommended to journey to, the 'Haramain'; the Sacred Mosque in Makkah and The Prophet's Mosque in Al-Madinah and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The virtues of these mosques are stated in the following sayings of the Prophet Mohammad:

"Set out deliberately on a journey only to three mosques: this mosque of mine [in Al-Madinah], the Sacred Mosque [in Makkah], and al-Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem]." (Reported by Bukhari and Muslim)

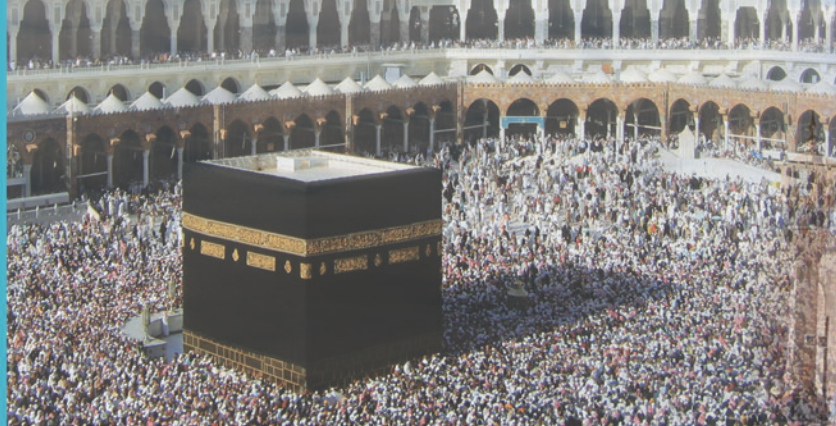
"A prayer in the Sacred Mosque [in Makkah] is worth 100,000 prayers more than in any other mosque, a prayer in my mosque [in Madinah] is worth 1,000, and a prayer in Jerusalem [al-Aqsa Mosque] is worth 500." (Reported by Bukhari)

"The first house [of worship] appointed for mankind was that at Bakka [Makkah]; full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings." (Qur'an 3, 96)

The Holy Mosque in Makkah is built around the Ka'ba, the first house consecrated to the worship of the One True God. The Ka'ba is the simple cube structure which is completely empty, raised by Prophet Abraham and his son Prophet Ishmael on the original foundations laid down by Adam. At the eastern corner of the Ka'ba there is a black stone known as 'al-Hajar al-Aswad' which is the only remnant of the original building that was built by Prophet Abraham and his son.

The Ka'ba is the direction to which Muslims turn in prayer. Neither the Ka'ba nor the Black Stone are objects of worship but serve as a focal point that unifies Muslims in worship.

Prophet Mohammad narrated about the Ka'ba: "You are sacred, but the blood of a believer is more sacred to Allah than you." (Shahih)



THE PROPHET'S MOSQUE IN AL-MADINAH

One of the first mosques built in Islam was the one built in Al-Madinah by the Prophet Mohammad in the year 622CE. It was a very simple structure made from adobe bricks and stone. Adjacent to the mosque was the modest house of Prophet Mohammad in which he was later buried along with two of his companions; Abu Bakr As-Saddiq and Omar Ibn Al-Khattab. The mosque acted as a centre for the community; not only allowing facilities for learning and celebrations, but distributing charity, writing to other heads of state and meeting delegations. After the establishment of the mosque, the Muslim community spread around it so that it became the very heart of the state.

Successive expansions throughout history have made the Prophet's Mosque the magnificent architectural masterpiece it is today. Adjacent to the mosque is the beautiful green dome under which the grave of Prophet Mohammad can be found.

There is an area within the Mosque, between the pulpit (minber) and the grave of Prophet Mohammad called "Ar-Rawda As-Shareefa" where Muslims prefer to pray as they consider the area a place from paradise.



AL-AQSA MOSQUE IN AL-QUDS

"Exalted is He who took His Servant [Prophet Mohammad] by night from Al-Masjid Al-Haram to Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing." (Qur'an 17, 1)

Al-Aqsa Mosque in the city of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) is the third holiest site in Islam. It is dear to the hearts of Muslims as it was the first mosque that they turned to in prayer before the Ka'ba. It is also the mosque that the Prophet Mohammad was taken to on the night journey (Isra' and Miraaaj) and the place where he led all the prophets in prayer.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the entire noble sanctuary, which includes not only Omar's Mosque but also the Dome of the Rock and other land marks inside the stone fence totalling more than 200 places. The area of this is over 144,000 square metres and therefore encompasses over one sixth of Jerusalem's old city. Prayer anywhere within the enclosed sanctuary will be weighed 500 times more than prayer in a regular mosque.

