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**In Allah's Name, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful
Salutations, Peace and Blessings on his Messenger**

All praise be to Allah Almighty, the Most Gracious the Most Merciful; The Lord of the Universe. May Allah Almighty shower countless salutations, peace and blessings upon our Master Muhammad, his noble family and faithful companions.

The purpose of compiling this article, in this current climate, is to raise awareness of the weighty rank and status of Masjid Al-Aqsa, in our Islamic heritage. We will discuss the status and religious significance of Bait Al-Maqdis, from an Islamic perspective. The importance of Bait Al-Maqdis is emphasized in the Qur'an and in the traditions (ahadith) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him, his family and companions). In this article we will endeavor to explain the significance of Bait Al-Maqdis by addressing and highlighting the inalienably close bonds and firm ties that link Muslims all around the world to Bait Al-Maqdis and the land of Palestine. We will discuss what the Holy Qur'an says about the sanctity and virtue of this land, what our beloved Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him, his family and companions) taught us regarding the significance of Masjid Al-Aqsa, as a place of worship, and how our pious predecessors and forebears preserved it.

The sanctity of Masjid Al-Aqsa, in occupied East Jerusalem, was violated by the occupying police force, in the Holy month of Ramadhan, whilst worshippers were engaged in night time prayers. In light of these repeated violations of the sanctity of Masjid Al-Aqsa, it was considered pertinent and relevant to raise awareness of the religious significance of the third holiest site in Islam and to highlight the oppression of the Palestinians who were engaged in worship in it. This is not about nationalism or politics. This is about the religious significance of Masjid Al-Aqsa for us, as Muslims, and our religious duty to serve and protect the first Qiblah (direction of prayer) from desecration.

The literal meaning of the words Masjid Al-Aqsa is the "Farthest Precinct of Worship". In hadith literature, it is also known by a few other names. It is known as "Al-Quds" meaning "the place of



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purity". It is also known as "Bait Al-Maqdis" which means "The House of the Holy" and as "Bait Al-Muqaddas" which means "The Purified House". In the Holy Quran it is also known as "Al-Ardal Muqaddasah" meaning "The Holy Land". [Surah Al-Maeda (5), Ayah 21]

Besides the Kaa'ba/Masjid Al-Haraam in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, the Masjid Al-Aqsa is the only Masjid mentioned by name, in the Holy Quran. It is the first Qiblah (direction of prayer) for Muslims and it is the second oldest Masjid on the Earth, after the Kaa'bah. It is the location of a significant sojourn on the Holy Prophet's (peace be upon him, his family and companions) miraculous night journey (Al-Israa) from the Masjid Al-Haraam to the holy city of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) and the place of his heavenly ascent (Al-Mi'raaj).

Masjid Al-Aqsa is the only place on Earth where all the Messengers and Prophets (peace be upon them all) gathered and prayed behind the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions). It is situated in the heart of Al-Shaam: (Greater Syria) a land that Allah Almighty refers to as a place that "We have blessed". [Surah Bani Israel (17), Ayah 1]

Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

"Glorified is he who carried his bondsman in a small portion of the night from the Masjid Al-Haraam (the Sanctified Precinct in Makkah Al Mukarramah) to the Masjid Al-Aqsa (the Farthest Precinct in Jerusalem) surrounding which We have placed Our blessings so that We may show him (Prophet Muhammad pbuh) Our grand signs, no doubt He (Allah swt) is The All Hearing, the All-Seeing. [Surah Bani Israel (17), verse 1]

It is highly respected and revered by all three Abrahamic faiths as referred to by Allah Almighty, in the following ayah:

"Then We delivered him (Ibrahim peace be upon him) along with his nephew Lut (peace be upon him) to the land (Al-Quds) that We have blessed for the worlds." [Surah Al-Anbiya (21), Ayah 71]



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In a poem written by the Syrian Arab poet Nizar Qabbani entitled "Jerusalem", he says regarding the sacred town of Jerusalem;

سَأَلْتُ عَنْ مُحَمَّدٍ فِيكَ ، وَعَنْ يَسُوعِ

In you, I asked about Muhammad and Jesus

يَا قُدْسُ ، يَا مَدِينَةَ تَفْوُحِ أَنْبِيَاءِ

Oh Jerusalem, the fragrance of prophets

يَا أَقْصَرَ الدُّرُوبِ بَيْنَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاءِ

The shortest path between earth and sky

What does he mean by the shortest path between the earth and heaven? What he is alluding to here is in reference to the fact that our beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him, his family and companions) was brought from Masjid Al-Haraam in Makkah Al-Mukarramah to Masjid Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem for the Mi'raaj (the miraculous night journey to the heavens, in the 11th year after he (pbuh) had announced his prophethood – it took place during the latter part of the night of 27th Rajab).

The 13th century chronicler Yaqut al Hamawi (who passed away in 626 AH (After Hijra) which correlates to 1229 CE) also wrote in his comprehensive encyclopaedia of all the known Islamic cities, of the time, entitled "Mujam Al-Buldan" that Jerusalem is the closest place to the heavens; this is where the door to the heavens is located. Allah Almighty knows best.

The Masjid Al-Aqsa which is the third holiest site in Islam after Masjid Al-Haraam in Makkah Al-Mukarramah and the Masjid Al-Nabawi in Madinah Al-Munawwarah. It was built 40 years after the Kaa'ba was built.

The companion Hadhrat Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari (Allah be pleased with him) says:



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“I asked the Holy Prophet (pbuh), “O Messenger of Allah, which masjid was built first?” He (The Holy Prophet (pbuh)) said, “The Sacred Masjid (Masjid Al-Haraam in Makkah).” I said, “And then which one?” He said, “And then the Farthest Masjid (Masjid Al-Aqsa in Al-Quds).” I said, “What was the period between them?” He (pbuh) said, “Forty (years).” [Bukhari]

The Quranic exegete commentator Imam Al-Baghawi (Allah have mercy on him) writes in his Qur’anic commentary “Ma’aalim Al-Tanzeel” that the Kaa’ba was first originally built by angels 2000 years before the first human and first Prophet Hadhrat Adam (peace be upon him) was despatched to the earth from Paradise. Subsequent to his arrival on earth, Hadhrat Adam (peace be upon him) was ordered to lay the foundations of the Kaa’ba once more and rebuild it.

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Quran, regarding the Kaa’ba:

“Indeed, the first house of worship established for mankind was at Makkah (the Kaa’ba); it is full of blessings and a centre of guidance for the whole world. [Surah Aale Imran (3), Ayah 96]

The reason for revelation (Shaan e Nazool) of this verse was that the Jews had claimed that Al-Quds was holier than the Kaa’ba, due to its alleged precedence over the Kaa’ba so Allah Almighty revealed this verse to show that the Kaa’ba was indeed the first place of worship. This verse was revealed after the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) had changed the Qibla (direction of prayer) from Masjid Al-Aqsa to the Kaa’ba in Makkah.

The reason Masjid Al Aqsa (the Farthest Mosque) is named as such is because it is far from Masjid Al-Haraam in Makkah (around a month’s journey) and at the time of early Islam, there was no other Masjid outside of Makkah, apart from Masjid Al-Aqsa.

Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran regarding Masjid Al-Aqsa;

“We have placed our blessings around it.” [Surah Bani Israel (17), Ayah 1]



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The surroundings of Masjid Al-Aqsa are sacred and have blessings (barakah) placed in them as they are places in which a number of Prophets (peace be upon them) resided, received revelation (wahi) from Allah Almighty and due to the resting places of numerous Prophets (peace be upon them) being situated there.

There are numerous reasons why this land is referred to as a land of blessings (barakah). One of the reasons is that this is the land of the father of monotheism, the patriarch of the Abrahamic faiths; the proclaimer of the belief in one Creator: Hadhrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him) who resided in this land and passed away in this land and is buried there in the town of Hebron in the southern West Bank along with his son the Prophet Hadhrat Is'haaq (peace be upon him) and their respective wives (peace be upon them both). There is a masjid attached to the gravesite of Hadhrat Ibrahim and Hadhrat Is'haaq (peace be upon them both) known as the Masjid Ibrahim. It was at this location that the Hebron Massacre took place in the Ramadhan of 1994 when an Israeli Jewish terrorist shot and killed 29 Palestinian Muslims; some of whom were as young as 12 years old. 125 worshippers were also wounded in this terrorist attack. We pray that Allah Almighty raises the ranks of those who were martyred and grants them a high status in Paradise and he blesses the survivors. Aameen.

Masjid Al-Aqsa is the place from where our beloved Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him, his family and companions) began the ascent to the heavens on the night of Mi'raaj. The Dome of the Rock (golden domed building situated in the middle of the Al-Aqsa complex) is known as the "Qubbat Al-Sakhra". This golden domed building was built on top of the blessed rock from which the Holy Prophet (pbuh) ascended to the heavens on the night journey of Al-Mi'raaj. The Rock mentioned here is referred to as the Al- Sakhrah Al-Musharrafah (the Noble Rock) which was most likely the original point of the Qiblah. It is approximately 18 metres long and 8 metres wide It was built to commemorate the place of ascension and to protect the blessed rock.



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People often mistake the Dome of the Rock building as Masjid ul Aqsa whereas, in reality, this building constitutes only one part of the Masjid Al-Aqsa complex. The Dome of the Rock Masjid was built by the Umayyad Abdul Malik in 72 AH which correlates to around 691 CE. It is believed to be the exact location from which the Holy Prophet (pbuh) ascended into the heavens on the Night Journey and Ascension (Al-Israa wal Mi'raaj). It is also believed that our deeds and souls ascend from here and according to some scholars the Angel Israfeel (Raphael) (peace be upon him) will blow his Trumpet (Sur) to commence the Day of Judgement from this Rock. *[Mujam Al-Buldan of Yaqut Al-Hamawi]*

The area of Masjid Al-Aqsa consists of the entire complex within the historic walls of the sanctuary which includes the Qibali Masjid with the silver-coloured dome at the southern end of the sanctuary and the Dome of the Rock which is in the middle of the sanctuary and everything else that is on that raised plateau. The whole complex on which both of these buildings and some other smaller buildings are situated are collectively known the Al Aqsa complex. The size of the sanctuary is 144,000 square metres.

The second caliph and leader of the believers Hadhrat Umar Al-Faruq (Allah be pleased with him) selected the site near the southern wall of the Al-Aqsa complex for the first physical Masjid structure upon entering Jerusalem in 15 AH (After Hijra). It was a simple building that sat on wooden trusses and could accommodate up to 3,000 worshippers. The silver domed Qibali Masjid currently sits on this site. The ancient historical Al Aqsa Masjid was much larger in size than the Qibali masjid which was built during the caliphate of Hadhrat Umar Al-Faruq (Allah be pleased with him) and it was later renovated by various rulers, throughout the centuries.

Masjid Al-Aqsa was the Qibla (direction of prayer) of the Muslims in the early days of Islam. The Muslims would pray in the direction of the Masjid Al-Aqsa in the same way that we now pray in the direction of the Kaa'ba. Whilst in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) and the early Muslims prayed facing towards the first Qibla: Masjid Al-Aqsa.



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When the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) was in Makkah before the migration to Madinah Al-Munawwarah, he (pbuh) would put the Kaa'bah in front of him when he prayed towards the Blessed Masjid Al-Aqsa, to the north. It is believed that he (pbuh) prayed behind the southern corner of the Kaa'bah, which is called Al-Rukn Al-Yamani (the Yemeni corner). This is alluded to in the following hadith on the authority of Hadhrat Abdullah ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with them both) who said:

“The Holy Prophet (pbuh) used to pray, whilst he (pbuh) was in Makkah, towards Bait Al-Maqdis, putting the Ka'bah in front of him. He continued praying towards Bait Al-Maqdis after his migration, for 16 months, then he was turned [by Allah] towards the Kaa'bah.”
[Ahmad]

After the migration (Hijra) to Madinah Al-Munawwarah the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) continued to pray towards the Masjid Al-Aqsa for a further 16 or 17 months before the Qibla was changed to the Kaa'ba. Hadhrat Al-Baraa ibn Aazib (Allah be pleased with him) narrates:

“We prayed along with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) facing towards Bait Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) for sixteen or seventeen months. Then, Allah Almighty ordered him (pbuh) to turn his face towards the Kaa'ba.”

Hadhrat Al-Baraa ibn Aazib (Allah be pleased with him) further narrates:

“When the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) prayed towards Bait Al-Maqdis, he would often lift his face towards the sky and Allah Almighty knew what was in the heart of the Prophet (pbuh) and that he longed to face the Kaa'ba (during prayer). Jibril (peace be upon him) appeared (in the sky) and the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) started watching him as he was descending between the sky and the earth, waiting to see what he would bring.” *[Ibn Majah]*



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This reference to the changing of the Qibla is documented in an ayah of the Holy Quran, in which Allah Almighty says:

“We have repeatedly observed you turning your face, (O Muhammad) towards the sky and We will surely turn you towards a Qibla that will please you.” So, turn your face towards the Masjid Al-Haraam (Kaa’ba) at once.” [Surah Al-Baqarah (2), Ayah 144]

A point to note here is that if we were to glance towards the sky, whilst standing in prayer, it is considered disliked (makruh) and it has a negative effect on the integrity of our salah but the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) is the lawgiver to the Ummah and the beloved of Allah Almighty that when he repeatedly turns his blessed face towards the sky, in return Allah Almighty reveals an ayah to him, mid prayer. What a lofty and high status he (pbuh) possesses. All praise is for Allah Almighty.

When the command to change the direction of prayer was revealed (according to the yearning and wish of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions)), whilst in the midst of performing the prayer, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) turned his blessed face and body from facing the first Qiblah and turned towards the new Qibla: the Kaa’ba. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) was leading the companions (Allah be pleased with them all) in congregational prayer (jamaa’ah) and they had already performed half of the salah prayer: they had prayed the first two cycles (rak’aat) when the revelation (wahi) of the ayah to change the direction of prayer came from Allah Almighty, so the Holy Prophet (pbuh) prayed the second two cycles (rak’aat) whilst facing the new Qibla.

This event took place at Masjid Qiblatain (the Mosque of the two Qiblas) which is situated just outside Madinah Al-Munawwarah. Masjid Al-Aqsa is situated to the north of Madinah Al-Munawwarah and the Kaa’ba/Masjid Al-Haraam in Makkah Al-Mukarramah is situated to the south of Madinah Al-Munawwarah. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) did not wait until the next prayer to change the Qibla and he (pbuh) immediately performed a 180-degree turn, mid prayer, to face the opposite direction. This action demonstrates the



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legislative authority of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) that according to his wish Allah Almighty changes the direction of the Qibla, mid-prayer. All praise is for Allah Almighty who is the Greatest.

There is such an ancient and everlasting connection between the Kaa'ba and Bait Al-Maqdis that reference is made to both sanctified precincts, by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions), when describing the Pool (Hawdh) of Al-Kawthar. Hadhrat Abu Saeed Al-Khudri (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) said:

“Indeed, I have a Basin (Hawdh), (as large as the distance) between the Kaa’bah and Bait Al-Maqdis. It is white like milk, and its vessels are the number of the stars. Indeed, I will surely be the Prophet with the most followers on the Day of Resurrection.” [Ibn Majah]

As previously mentioned, the travelling time between the Kaa'bah and Bait Al-Maqdis, at the time of the Holy Prophet, (peace be upon him, his family and companions) was a month. Following on from the above-mentioned hadith, reference to the distance of a month is also directly alluded to in the following hadith narrated by Hadhrat Abdullah ibn Amr (Allah be pleased with him) in which he reports that the Holy Prophet (pbuh) said:

“My Basin (Hawdh) is (so large that it takes) a month’s journey to cross it. Its water is whiter than milk, and its scent is nicer than musk, and its drinking cups are (as numerous) as the (number of) stars of the sky; and whoever drinks from it, will never be thirsty.” [Bukhari]

Another virtue of Masjid Al-Aqsa is that this is the place where the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) led all 124,000 (more or less) Prophets (peace be upon them all) in congregational prayer on the night of Al-Mi'raaj (ascension). They did not only pray on the spot where the current day Masjid Qibali is situated on the south side of the Al-Aqsa complex but they prayed in the grounds of the entire Al-Aqsa complex, as the whole area within the historical boundary walls is a Masjid (place of prayer).



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Hadhrat Abdullah ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with them both) said:

“The Prophets (peace be upon them) built Bait Al-Maqdis and the Prophets lived therein. There is not a single handspan of space in it except that a Prophet has prayed [or prostrated in another narration] there, or an angel has stood.” *[Encouraging the Elite to the Virtues of Masjid Al-Aqsa]*

In relation to which Masjid is considered more virtuous and superior between Masjid Al-Nabawi and Masjid Al-Aqsa it is recorded by Imam Hakim (Allah have mercy on him) in an authentic hadith that is narrated by the companion Hadhrat Abu Dhar Al-Ghifari (Allah be pleased with him) who says:

“We were in discussion in the presence of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) as to which Masjid was superior; which had more virtue? The Masjid of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) or the Masjid Al-Aqsa. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said “One salah prayed in my Masjid (Masjid Al-Nabawi) is four times more superior to the Salah prayed in it (Bait ul Maqdis) and what a beautiful place of prayer it is!”

Then the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) said something really interesting which is so perfectly fitting for the times that we are in today, at least. He (pbuh) said:

“What an amazing place of worship it is! Surely, there will soon come a time when, for a man to have land equivalent to his horse’s rope from which he can see Bait al-Maqdis will be better for him than the whole world!” or he (pbuh) said, **“Better for him than the world and everything in it!”** *[Mustadrak Al-Hakim]*

That means that if someone possessed even that much, meaning a few centimetres, that will be worth more to them than the value of the world and that is exactly the state of the Jerusalemites today – those who live there will not move even if they’re offered millions of pounds for their



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home – the sentimental value of that place is so amazing. That’s why the Palestinian Muslims stand up and protest so vociferously to protect their land, in East Jerusalem.

We have all seen the videos circulating of the attack on Masjid Al-Aqsa and its worshippers on the 25th night of Ramadhan by the occupying police force who threw stun grenades and smoke grenades in to the part of the Masjid where worshippers were actively engaged in taraweeh (night time) prayers. They even fired stun grenades and smoke grenades in to the part of the Masjid where the women were praying with the door closed – they opened the door and fired these grenades in. How can there be any justification under any law for firing these weapons in to a place of worship, especially a place where women and children are congregated and praying.

These actions of the occupying police force are disgraceful and abhorrent and go against all internationally recognised norms and ethics of policing. They even fired smoke and stun grenades in to a small medical facility, located on the side of the Masjid, which is a war crime under international conventions such as the Hague Regulations of 1899 and the Geneva convention of 1949 but there is no international condemnation for these inhumane practices by the occupying forces and nor are they brought to task by international law. May Allah help the persecuted and oppressed Muslims of Palestine and Jerusalem and grant them respite from this oppression. Aameen.

Now let’s consider the virtue of praying at Masjid ul Aqsa: the amount of reward that is obtained by praying there. It is narrated by the companion Hadhrat Abu Dardaa (Allah be pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and friends) said:

“The reward for praying at the Masjid Al-Haraam (in Makkah) is equal to the reward for *one hundred thousand regular prayers* and the reward for praying at the Masjid Al-Nabawi (in Madinah) is equal to the reward for *one thousand regular prayers* and the reward for praying at the Masjid Al-Aqsa (in Al-Quds/Jerusalem) is equal to the reward for *five hundred regular prayers*.” [Musnad Al-Bazzaar, Al-Tabarani]



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There are a number of prophetic traditions (ahadith) regarding the amount of reward for praying at Masjid Al-Aqsa which are too numerous to record in this article. There are reports ranging from 250 times the reward, to 500 to 1000 times the reward. 250 times the reward of a regular prayer is the lowest amount of reward for praying Salah at Masjid Al-Aqsa and 1000 times the reward of a regular prayer is the maximum amount of reward for praying there. And, if you pray there in congregation (jamaa'ah), the reward is then of course multiplied 25 times. Allah Almighty knows best.

It is narrated by Hadhrat Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al Aas (Allah be pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) said:

“When (the Prophet) Sulaiman ibn Dawud (peace be upon them both) finished building Bait Al-Maqdis, he asked Allah for three things: judgement that was in harmony with His judgement, a dominion and kingdom that no one would have after him, and that no one should come to this masjid, intending only to pray in it, except that he would emerge free of sin, like the day his mother gave birth to him.”

Then the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) said: **“As for (the first) two (supplications), they were granted, and I hope that the third was also granted’.** [Sunan Al-Nisai, Sunan Ibn Majah]

Regarding traveling to a specific masjid with the intention of reward it is narrated in the hadith collections of Bukhari and Muslim by Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Allah be pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and friends) said:

“You should not saddle up the riding animals, (do not undertake a journey), to visit any Masjid other than these three (with the expectation of receiving greater reward); the Masjid Al-Haraam (Makkah), this Masjid of mine (the Prophet's Masjid in Madinah), and Masjid Al-Aqsa (Al-Quds/Jerusalem).” [Bukhari]



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We can see from this hadith that after the two noble sanctuaries (Haramain Shareefain) in Makkah Al-Mukarramah and Madinah Al-Munawwarah, the third noble sanctuary of significant Islamic importance is the Haram of Al-Quds Shareef in Jerusalem.

It is narrated by Hadhrat bint Sa'ad (Allah be pleased with her) that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) was asked

“O Prophet of Allah, inform us about Bait Al-Maqdis”. He (pbuh) said: “It is the land of Resurrection (Al-Manshar) and Congregation (Al-Mahshar). Visit it and pray in it. For indeed prayer in it is like a thousand prayers in other than it.” [Musnad Ahmad]

This is referred to as the place of resurrection and congregation: where the gathering on the day of judgement will take place.

Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

“But surely there will be single cry.” (the angel Israfeel will blow the trumpet) **“And behold they shall all come out in the open”** (meaning that all of humankind will rise from their graves or places of burial and gather at this location).

The word “Saahira” in the ayah lexically means flat and white soil. Scholars have interpreted the word “Saahira” in this ayah as meaning the land of Al-Shaam where everyone will be gathered on judgement day. Allah Almighty knows best.

Going back to the above-mentioned hadith of Musnad Ahmad in which the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) said **“visit it (Masjid Al-Aqsa) and pray in it.”** Hadhrat Maimunah bint Sa'ad (Allah be pleased with her) says she further asked:



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“If one of us cannot visit it, what should we do? He (pbuh) said, “Then he should make a gift of some oil to be lit therein (in its lamps). For indeed the one who gifts this to it (Masjid Al-Aqsa) will be like the one who has prayed therein.” [Musnad Ahmad]

This is definitely a prophetic instruction that we cannot neglect, in current times, as it shows the wisdom and foresight of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) who was aware that not all Muslims will be able to pray in Masjid Al-Aqsa, not just because of the difficulties and cost of travel, but also because of various conflicts that have occurred around it, throughout the centuries.

However, we have been granted a beautiful alternative way of gaining the same reward as praying there – which is sending some oil to light its lamps meaning to support it financially in its upkeep and preservation and to keep it populated with Muslims who can guard it against aggression and from falling into ruin.

So far, we’ve mentioned various prophetic traditions about the history and virtues of Masjid Al-Aqsa itself. But there also many traditions (hadith) about the people who reside in the land around Masjid Al-Aqsa in Al-Quds. They are the people of Al-Shaam, which encompasses present-day Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan, extending from the Euphrates River to the Sinai desert.

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) informed us of the special status of the people of the Levant. In a hadith narrated by Hadhrat Abu Umaamah (Allah be pleased with him) the Holy Prophet (pbuh) said:

‘The chosen land of Allah is Al-Shaam and in it are His chosen people and servants. A group from my nation will certainly enter Paradise without any reckoning or punishment.’
[Tabarani]



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The above prophetic tradition confirms the elite status of the people of Al-Shaam, which is further emphasised in the following hadith in which it is narrated by Hadhrat Abu Umaamah (Allah be pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) said:

“A group of my Nation (Ummah) will continue to manifestly remain on the truth and vanquish their enemy. The ones who oppose them will not harm them except what befalls them of hardship until the command of Allah comes to them and they are like that.” They said, “O Messenger of Allah! Where are they?” He (pbuh) said, “At Bait Al-Maqdis and the (surrounding) sides of Bait Al-Maqdis.” [Musnad Ahmad]

It is narrated by Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Allah be pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) said:

“A band from my Nation (Ummah) will continue fighting at the gates of Damascus and its surroundings and at the gates of Bait Al-Maqdis and its surroundings. The betrayal or desertion of whoever deserts them will not harm them in the least. They manifestly remain on the truth till the Hour is established.” [Musnad Abu Ya’laa]

It is narrated by Hadhrat Abdullah ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with them both) that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) said:

“O Allah *bless us in our Shaam!* O Allah *bless us in our Yemen!*” They said, ‘And in our Najd?’ He said, “O Allah *bless us in our Shaam!* O Allah *bless us in our Yemen!*” They said, ‘And in our Najd?’ He said, “Earthquakes are there (in Najd), and tribulations are there, with it” (in Najd) or he said, “From it (Najd), the horn of the Shaitaan comes out.” [Jaam’i Al-Tirmidhi]

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) informed the companions (Allah be pleased with them) that the Angels spread their wings over Al-Shaam. It is narrated by Hadhrat Zaid ibn Thabit (Allah be pleased with him) who said:



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“We were with the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) collecting the Qur’an on pieces of cloth then the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: “Toobaa (a good final joyous state) is for Al-Shaam!” So, we said, “Why is that, O Messenger of Allah?” He (pbuh) said, “Because the angels of Al-Rahman (The Most Compassionate) spread their wings over it.” [Jaam’i Al-Tirmidhi]

“Toobaa” is also believed to be the “tree of bliss” in Paradise or Paradise itself as mentioned in the Holy Qur’an:

“Those who believed and performed righteous deeds – a state of bliss (Toobaa) is theirs and a good return.” [Surah Al-Raad (13), Ayah 29]

The above-mentioned narrations clearly demonstrate the authenticity and steadfastness of the people of Al-Shaam, in the face of adversity, and how they will always cling to the truth and exert themselves in the defence of Masjid Al-Aqsa and its heritage.

The following tradition of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) illustrates to us that the people of Al-Shaam are the gauge by which to measure whether there is still true faith and piety in the world. Hadhrat Mu’awiyah ibn Qurrah (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) said:

“When the people of Al-Shaam become corrupt, then there is no good in you. There will never cease to be a group in my Nation (Ummah) who will be helped (by Allah). They will not be harmed by those who forsake them until the Hour is established.” [Jaam’i Al-Tirmidhi]

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him, his family and companions) said **“When the people of Al-Shaam become corrupt, then there is no good in you”** which means the people of that area are the last bastion of Islam and if they become corrupt and leave the path of Islam then there is no true and genuine practice of the Islam left in the world.



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In light of all that we have discussed above it is apparent that it is a religious obligation on us, as Muslims, to support the cause of Masjid Al-Aqsa.

We pray that Allah Almighty grants us the ability to truly appreciate this blessed land and its noble people in accordance with the following beautiful ayah:

“And whoever honours the symbols of Allah; indeed, it is from the piety of the hearts.”
[Surah Al-Hajj (22), Ayah 32]

We hope that Muslims become aware of their religious, legal, and historical rights in Al-Shaam and Bayt Al-Maqdis and disseminate this knowledge. Indeed, Allah Almighty honoured, sanctified and blessed the land of Palestine and raised its status and significance.

We should pray that Allah Almighty grants us all the ability to understand the status of Masjid Al-Aqsa, to understand and feel the plight of Masjid Al-Aqsa, to understand and feel the plight of the people who defend Masjid Al-Aqsa, to understand and feel the plight of those who inhabit that area and are the custodians of Masjid Al-Aqsa, on all of our behalf. This is the sacred Islamic duty that we should all act upon and express with our tongues and if we are not able to do so then, in the least, with our hearts and minds.

Compiled by Hafiz Ghulam Haider Ali Qadri

Waltham Forest Islamic Association

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