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**THE THREE
SACRED MOSQUES**

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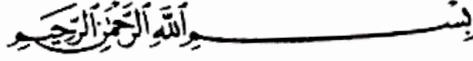
THE THREE SACRED MOSQUES

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FOREWORD

It is a distressing fact that most of the Muslims lack proper understanding about the universal relevance of the Qur'anic Message, which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) for the guidance of all mankind. There is considerable misapprehension too about Islam and the Message of the Qur'an in the minds of Non-Muslims. The **Indian School of Excellence Trust (INDSET)** is making an humble endeavour through a series of monographs on Islam and Qur'an to project the image of Islam in its proper perspective and to explain the significance of the Qur'anic Message in a scientific and systematic way.

Pilgrimage of Hajj is now too well known to the world to need any elaboration. But not many know about the very shrine – Masjid-al-Haraam, which is the focus of all-important rituals connected with the oldest uninterrupted pilgrimage in the history of mankind, is also the first proper house of worship dedicated to the Creator of all that exists in heavens and the earth – Allah the One and Only One.

It is the same with Masjid-un-Nabi. It is merely known as a green tomb under which the Prophet of Islam lies buried. Whereas the Mosque of the Prophet (SAWS) is the icon of the seat of governance which excelled in application of divinely guided laws. Unlike other seats of the governments, which are found in the form of grand palaces comprising lavish living quarters and imposing courts and impregnable forts with

cannons mounted on parapets with ever alert armed soldiers in perpetual vigil, the seat of government of Islamic State was a modest Mosque open to one and all. Even in the present era of enlightenment the seats of power in all the states are unapproachable by common man – the so-called ‘ruler’ of the state.

Finally the Bait-al-Maqdas or Masjid-al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, which is famous more as a disputes site than as shrine rich in Divine history and a symbol of unity of all divinely revealed religions.

The unique link between these unique shrines and the history of the progress of Divine Guidance is almost totally missed out in most of the literature available to us. How many of us know that it was the same Prophet Ibrahim (AS) (Abraham), the builder of the Ka’bah in Makkah with elder son Isma’il (AS) (Ishmael), who also established the Baitel (Bait-al-Maqdas) with his younger son Is’haq (AS) (Isac) in Jerusalem, and that Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), the Prophet of Islam asserted repeatedly that he is just following the core philosophy of his patriarch Prophet Ibrahim (AS), i.e., worship of One and the Only True God – Allah (SWT)? Far from creating divisions, these shrines are a symbol of unity of the Creator and the created.

I hope the readers will find this Monograph a source of authentic information and their interesting relationship. It should also shed some light on the fallacy of the Jewish claims to the shrine at Jerusalem and their allegations against Muslims.

We concluded with a prayer to Allah (SWT) to graciously bless our efforts with success (*Aameen*).

وَأَخِيرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

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THE THREE SACRED MOSQUES

INTRODUCTION

Every religion has special attachment to the place where it originated and flourished. For example, Bodh Gaya in the Indian State of Bihar is sacred to the Buddhists, Jerusalem in Palestine to the Jews, and Bethlehem, again in Palestine, to the Christians. For Muslims, **Majid al-Haraam (Ka'bah)** in Makkah Al-Mukarramah (Mecca) is the most sacred place, followed by **Masjid al-Nabi** in Madinah Al-Munawwarah (Madinah) and **Masjid al-Aqsa** in Jerusalem. However, many people, including some Muslims, do not know sufficiently about these places. Their geographical details, historical facts, religious background, and legends associated with them are mostly obscure except to the researchers and scholars of Islam. The main reason for this was the political decline of Islam in the wake of the Industrial Revolution of 18th Century AD in Europe that eventually dismantled the Islamic State in early 20th Century AD. It resulted in exclusion of Islamic studies from the curricula of schools and colleges in those parts of the world that were colonised by European except the heartland of Arabia. Muslims in all other parts of the world saw their education system being replaced by those that were customised to serve the purpose of colonial masters. English and other European languages were introduced as media of instruction in schools and colleges replacing the mother tongues. All that is now history. At present, with rapid globalisation, national and religious identities have taken a

back seat. Commercial and economic considerations have overtaken other considerations in selection of educational and professional pursuits. As a result almost the entire population of young men is devoid of religious knowledge with religion being treated a dispensable dogma.

The aim of this monograph is to present interesting and relevant details of the three most Holy places of Islam for those who are interested to know. Efforts have been made to keep them as brief as possible but without sacrificing their principal characteristics, which make them so uniquely significant amongst Muslims of the world.

Of these three Holy places, Jerusalem was known to the world from ancient times due its close links with many prophets, and two of the three well-known monotheistic religions were Judaism and Christianity. Makkah and Madinah gained prominence with the rise of Islam. They were hardly known till the epoch-making events of 6th and 7th Century AD. The birth of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS)¹ in 570 AD, his prophetic mission and the descent of the Qur'anic revelations upon him for nearly 23 years from 610 to 632 AD brought the eminence of these places. These events of cosmic proportions established Islam, which is the last and the ultimate monotheistic religion for the mankind. These events transformed not only the history of Arabia and its adjacent countries (Persian and Byzantine Empires – super powers of the time), but also the distant lands as Spain in the west

1. 'SAWS' stands for *Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wo Sallam*, meaning 'Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon him'.

and the Philippines in the east, and ultimately the whole world.

The revelation of the Noble Qur'an (the verbatim record of the 'Word of Allah' for the Muslims) began in Makkah, where the Blessed Prophet (SAWS) was born, and continued in Madinah, where he died and lies buried. The very environs of these two cities radiate the grace of the revelation and echo the presence of that most perfect human being in history, who was chosen by Allah (SWT)² to receive His final message (Al Qur'an), and thereby to bring to climax the cycle of prophet-hood, which had begun with the very first human, Adam (AS)³.

Makkat-al-Mukarramah (the Majestic) and Madinat-al-Munawwarah (the Radiant), as Muslims respectfully call them, are separated by 200 miles with distinctly different topography and climate. While Makkah has rough and rocky terrain with dry desert like climate, Madinah is located in a fertile valley with humid climate. It was the humidity of Madinah, which made the Quraysh *Mahajirin* (migrants) sick after their migration from Makkah to Madinah. However, these two cities got knotted together by the epoch-making events during the lifetime of the Prophet (SAWS). The Prophet (SAWS) was born and brought up in Makkah, where the historic Ka'bah, the House of Allah is located. While Madinah, originally Yethrib, became the city of the Prophet (SAWS) (Madinat-un-Nabi) by virtue of his migration to it in the

2. 'SWT' stands for *Sub'hanuhu Wo Ta'la'*; meaning the 'Pure and Exalted'.

3. 'AS' stands for *Alaihis/Alaihumus Salaam*; meaning 'Peace be upon him//them'.

year 622 AD, which, incidentally, marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar - *Hijrah* (H). It was here that the Muslims found a geographical identity and political base. Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) set up the first Islamic State in the world and also built the mosque - the Masjid al-Nabi [the 'Mosque of the Prophet (SAWS)], from where he conducted the political as well as religious affairs of the infant Islamic state. Since the inception of Islam the destinies of Makkah and Madinah were so closely inter-linked that it is impossible to conceive of the one without the other. Likewise Masjid al-Aqsa constitutes a most significant component of the three sacred Mosques of Islam. It is here that a large number of prophets preached in the past and lie buried. It was here that Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) led all the earlier prophets in *Salaat* and it was from here that he ascended the seven Heavens. The Prophet (SAWS) himself has stressed the sacredness of the Masjid al-Aqsa in one of his traditions (*Ahadith*). Because of the importance of this Mosque, 'Umar (RA)⁴, the second *Khalifah* of Islam, when he visited Jerusalem to sign a treaty of surrender, specially looked for its site, discovered it and identified it definitively. These three sacred mosques of Islam are discussed in their historical background in the following pages.

4. 'RA' stands for *Raziallahu Ta'la Anhu/Anha/Anhum/Anhuma*, meaning "may Allah be pleased with him/her/them/twain."

CHAPTER 1

MAJID AL-HARAAM

The modest building, covered with black cloth with Qur'anic verses, embroidered in gold, standing in the middle of a magnificent complex spread over a large area in the heart of the city of Makkah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is the Majid al-Haraam - the Inviolable Mosque. The sprawling complex houses many important places and relics intimately connected with the history of mankind in general and Islam in particular. But the most significant and important of them all is this most sacred yet modest cubical building - Ka'bah, which is called by many names in the Holy Qur'an. The most common name, with which people are familiar, is '*Ka'bat-ullah*', or simply the '*Ka'bah*'. Ka'bah is a symbol of supreme reverence in Islam as the house of worship for Allah (SWT) on earth: *"The first House (of worship) appointed for men were that at Bakkah; full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings ('Alameen)."* (Al-e-Imran; 3:96)

It is also referred to as the *Qiblah* (Direction during Worship) (Al-Baqarah; 2:143), Majid al-Haraam (Inviolable Mosque) (Al-Baqarah; 2:144), *Baiti* (My House) (Al-Hajj; 22:26) and *Bait Al-'Ateeq* (The Ancient House) (Al-Hajj; 22:33). People also refer to it as *Al-Haram Al-Shareef* (The Holy and Dignified).

Majid al-Haraam enjoys the highest level of status in piety, honour and greatness due to its unique bond with none other than Allah (SWT), the Supreme Being, who

revealed the Divine Guidance from the very beginning of human life on earth till its culmination with the Prophethood of Muhammad (SAWS). It is appointed as a place of assembly for people (Al-Baqarah; 2:125), sanctified for those who visit it (Al-Baqarah; 2:125) for 'Umrah and Hajj, mandatory duty of Islam enjoined upon all Muslims, at least once in lifetime if they can afford it.

Early History of Makkah

Though the city of Makkah owes its origin and existence to Ka'bah, it has now become a Holy city attracting millions of pilgrims from all over the world day after day throughout the year. The Holy Qur'an also refers to it with various names, i.e., *Balad* (City), (Al-Balad; 90:1-2), *Balad Al-Ameen* (City of Security) (At-Teen; 95:3), *Baladah Aaminan* (City of Peace)(Ibrahim; 14:35), *Umm Al-Qura* – mother of the dwellings which is the most appropriate title to this ancient city.

Makkah is also called Bakkah (Ale Imran; 3:96). The first letter of the word Bakkah changed over a period of time to Makkah, as *lazib* became *lazim* (Tafseer-e-Kabeer, vol. 3, p: 8). *Imam Zehri* makes a distinction between the words Bakkah and Makkah. According to him Bakkah represents Ka'bah and its immediate surroundings (now comprising the huge complex of Majid al-Haraam) but excludes other parts of the sprawling city. Bakkah is also said to be the *Mutaaf*, the particular place, which is used for *Tawaaf*, as it can only be done in the immediate vicinity without any intervening object. Thus the remaining part of the city of Makkah is excluded. Several learned authorities

agree with this statement. 'Ali bin Abu Talib (RA) also holds the same opinion. (Ibn Jareer, vol. 4, p: 6). However, some of the learned people are of the opinion that entire city of Makkah falls within the limits of *Haram* (sacred area).

The word Makkah is derived from *Makk*, which means jostling and also imbibing or absorbing as this city is populated very densely. Added to it is a continuous flow of pilgrims. This results in people getting jostled and pushed while walking in bazaar or streets and at the time of *Tawaaf* (circumambulation of Ka'bah). Millions of people visit Makkah during the Hajj season, and amazingly get absorbed in the city without much difficulty.

The Researchers explain that Makkah is a Chaldean (Kaldani) or a Babylonian (Babuli) word. In Babylonian language 'Makkah' means 'a house'. In Arabic the translation of the word 'a house' is *bait*. According to Encyclopaedia Britannia (1970 edition) Makkah is called Makuraba in Greek which itself is derived from the word Makurabee of Sabaeen language meaning a temple.

As Makkah came into existence primarily due to religious reasons (presence of Ka'bah) offering peace and security, it attracted people from neighbouring areas and became a religious centre much earlier to the birth of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). (Millat-al-Arabi, page: 159) Tribe of Banu Jurhum, who migrated from Yemen, were the first to settle down here during the period of Prophet Isma'il (AS). Later even Jews and Christians found it safe

and migrated here to escape the oppression of Romans. (Jargi Zaidan's, Tareek-ul Tamuddan-al-Islami; vol.1, page: 15)

Geography of Makkah

Location: Makkah is located at latitude 21° 25' 24" N and longitude 39° 49' 24" E. It is about 70 Km east of the port city of Jeddah on the Red Sea. It will be of interest to know some details of the ancient land of Arabs.

The peninsula of Arabia is located at the crossroad of the three continents, Asia, Africa and Europe. To its north lies the Mediterranean world, to its east is Persia, and to its southern shores Africa, with which it has always enjoyed close links in trade, migration of ideas and people, as it has with its other neighbours. The southern region of the peninsula is greener than the north and was the home of the many ancient civilisations. The north-eastern part of the peninsula was adjacent to the great Sumerian civilisation of Mesopotamia. To the west and north-west was the Roman (Byzantine) Empire, another major centre of civilisation. Being located at the crossroad of these two major civilisations it had also close commercial and cultural interaction with them. To its south-east lies the Arabian Ocean.

The heartland of Arabia consists of Najd and Hejaz. Hejaz, meaning barrier because its backbone, the Sarat Mountains, running parallel to the Red Sea, separates the flat coastal area about 1400 Km long, from the highlands of Najd. The Sarat Mountains consist of volcanic peaks and natural depressions creating a stark and rugged environment dominated by intense sunlight and with little

rain. It is in one of the natural depressions of this mountain range that the sacred city of Makkah is located. Arab nomads mostly inhabited this area. They had remained quite unaffected by the major historical developments to their north. They were also not much influenced by Judaism and Christianity, despite their presence in the cities of Arabia for centuries.

The Historical or the Qur'anic Ka'bah

The Holy Qur'an categorically states that the foundation of the first house of worship for Allah (SWT) was laid by Prophet Ibrahim (AS) with the help of his elder son Isma'il [Prophet Isma'il (AS)]. Together they constructed Ka'bah and dedicated it to Allah (SWT). He was ordered by Allah (SWT) to move his wife Hajirah (Hagar) and baby son Isma'il (AS) to dwell in the vicinity where Ka'bah was eventually constructed. He found the place desolate and without any human habitation. The land was barren with no sign of water and plantation. Yet Prophet Ibrahim (AS) did not hesitate to make the place home for his wife and infant son as commanded by Allah (SWT). Thus an eternal relation was established between this Holy of the holiest places in the world and Prophet Ibrahim (AS) - the Patriarch and founder of all modern monotheistic religions.

It is narrated that when Prophet Ibrahim (AS) prepared to leave Hajirah with her baby under a tree she wanted to know of their fate in that barren and lonely place with no sign of any source of food or water. He could not reply her. When she said whether it was in

compliance of the desire of Allah (SWT) he replied in affirmation. Whereupon she felt satisfied with the reply, having full reliance on boundless and eternal mercy of Allah (SWT). According to a tradition of the Prophet (SAWS), Prophet Ibrahim (AS) knew that he was leaving his wife and son at a place, which was divinely sacred and a sanctuary for Mankind from the beginning of the earth. (Tafseer Ibn Kathir Vol. 1, p: 380; Muslim: 2 & 986 and Fath Al-Bari 4:156)

According to an authentic tradition, after the discovery of spring of Zam-Zam, with the help of Angel Jibriel (AS) (Gabriel), Hajirah started drinking water and her milk increased for her child. The Angel Jibriel (AS) said to her: "Do not fear abandonment. There shall be a house of Allah (SWT) built here by this boy and his father. Allah does not abandon his people." (Bukhari - quoted in Tafseer Ibn Kathir, Vol. 1 p: 369 English Translation).

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) used to visit his wife and son on and off fetching water and food.

Sacrifice of Isma'il (AS)

When Isma'il (AS) grew up, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was ordered by Allah (SWT) in dream to offer him in sacrifice to test his devotion and strength of his faith. When he displayed his steadfastness and devotion by actually going ahead with the sacrifice, Allah (SWT) miraculously substituted his son with a lamb. The Grace and Mercy of their Lord overwhelmed Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and his son. The Holy Qur'an vividly records this extraordinary event thus: "*Then, when (the son) reached*

(the age of serious) work with him, he (Ibrahim) said: 'O my son! I see in vision that I offer you in sacrifice; now say what your view is.' (The son) said; 'O my father! Do as you are commanded, you will find me, if Allah so wills, one practising patience and constancy.' So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), We called out to him, 'O Ibrahim! You have already fulfilled your vision!' Thus indeed do We reward those who do right, for it was obviously a trial and We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice, and We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times. 'Peace and salutation to Ibrahim.' Thus indeed do We reward those who do right for he (Ibrahim) was one of Our believing servants." (As-Saffaat; 37:102~111)

Allah (SWT) commanded Prophet Ibrahim (AS) to build a house dedicated to the worship of Allah (SWT) (*Bait-Allah*), the Ka'bah on earth at the site declared sacred from the time of the formation of the earth itself as stated earlier. The site was indicated divinely through Archangel Jibriel (AS). Whereupon father and son started construction of the house dedicated to Allah (SWT): *"And remember Ibrahim and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (with this prayer): 'Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us, for You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing."* (Al-Baqarah; 2:127)

Having successfully accomplished the task of construction, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) prayed for peace and spiritual welfare of its people: *"... 'O My Lord, make this a city one of Peace...'"* (Al-Baqarah; 2:126)

He further prayed: *"...O my Lord! Make this city one of peace and security; and preserve me and my sons from worshipping idols. O my Lord! They have indeed led astray many among mankind; He then who follows my (ways) is of me, and he that disobeys me, - but You are indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."* (Ibrahim; 14:35-36)

Islamic creed of strict and absolute monotheism is well recorded in the supplication made by Prophet Ibrahim (AS): *"...My Lord, make this a City of Peace, and feed its people with fruits... Our Lord! Accept (this service) from usOur Lord! Make of us Muslims, bowing to Your (Will), and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Your (Will); and show us our places for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for You are the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful."* (Al-Baqarah; 2:126~128)

Prayer for a Prophet

Quite significantly Prophet Ibrahim (AS) also prayed for a messenger of Allah (SWT) for the guidance of the future generations from amongst them: *"Our Lord! Send amongst them an Apostle of their own, who shall rehearse Your Signs to them and instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, and sanctify them ..."* (Al-Baqarah; 2:129)

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) is quoted to have said that his prophet-hood was in response to this prayer of Prophets Ibrahim (AS) and Isma'il (AS). It was with him that the divine guidance was not only perfected but was also made universal and eternal. This is vouchsafed at several places in the Holy Qur'an: *"...This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favours*

upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion..." (Al-Ma'edah; 5:3)

With the efforts of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and his son Prophet Isma'il (AS), Islam spread out from Makkah to neighbouring areas. People from far off places started coming for the pilgrimage called Hajj and 'Umrah. Makkah also emerged as a big business centre because of its central location and a hub centre for trade routes. This business activity also helped in propagation of Islam.

'Abdul Malik bin Husain records in his book Samat-ul-Nujoom that the tribe of Banu Jurhum was first to come to Makkah with a view to settling down because of the water source of Zam-Zam. They presented ten goats to Hajirah while seeking her permission. That heralded goat farming in Makkah.

After the death of Prophet Isma'il (AS) his son Nabit became the administrator of Ka'bah. In his time Makkah gained fame as a business and religious centre.

Idol-worship

One of the influential leaders of Banu Jurhum, 'Umru bin Lhee, visited Syria where he saw its people, the tribe of 'Amaaliq, performing idol worship. Impressed and out of temptation, he purchased an idol by the name of 'Hubal' and brought it to Makkah and installed it near the well of Zam-Zam and started worshipping it with his supporters. Thus he became the founder of idol-worship in Arabs. (Roz-e-Alaef, vol. 1 from Taareekh-e-Makkat-al-Mukarramah)

When Banu Jurhum overstepped the bounds and broke the penal laws and became oppressors, one of their good leaders, Ma'az bin 'Umru, warned them of consequences but they ignored the warning as they were proud of their arms and bravery. When Ma'az bin 'Umru got dejected, he put the precious treasure of Ka'bah in the well of Zam-Zam and sealed it with mud.

After a period of time the polytheist tribes of Khaza'ah of Yemen attacked and conquered Makkah and installed several idols in Ka'bah spreading idol-worship in Arabia. The most famous of them all was the idol of Lätt. It was installed near Taif. People from Makkah and other cities used to go there for its pilgrimage and offer sacrifices. (Millat-e-Arabi p: 152). Of the other idols Wadd, Hubal, Naeela and Usaff were placed in Makkah. Soon the idol-worship spread to all the major towns. As a result idols started to be seen not only in Ka'bah but also in its neighbouring places of Muzdalifah 'Arafat and Mina.

Pitrus Bartani writes an interesting story about the idols of Usaff and Naeela. Usaff Bin Umru and Naeela Bint Zabhab, who belonged to Banu Jurhum, tried to indulge in sex inside the Ka'bah. They were divinely punished and converted to stone statues. These were thrown away near the hillocks of Safa and Marwah for the people to take a lesson from their fate. With the passage of time, people forgot about their evil deed. When idol-worship spread in Makkah, people started worshipping these statues also. They also started sacrificing animals in their name! (Dairatal-Ma'arif Bastani vol.3, p: 316).

Attacks on Makkah

Makkah was attacked a number of times by rival tribes because of its popularity as a religious centre. Subsequently Ka'bah emerged as a major trading centre. Jealousy was the cause behind those attacks to destroy and take away relics like *Hajr-e-Aswad*, *Muqaam-e-Ibrahim* or even the treasure that had slowly accumulated.

Around six hundred and fifty years before the birth of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) the king of Yemen, Asad Hameer Tabba, decided to attack Makkah. When he reached near Makkah some people of the tribe of Huzail Bin Madrka's met him and informed that they knew about a treasure hidden under the floor of Ka'bah. They offered to part with the information if rewarded. However, some of his people were not in favour of attacking Makkah. They feared that the misadventure would bring destruction on them. The king consulted two learned Jews about his plan to attack Makkah. They advised him to respect the Ka'bah like people of Makkah do. He should go there respectfully and make circuits around the Ka'bah and shave his head thereafter. The king asked: "Why don't you to respect that house yourself?" They replied: "Undoubtedly our forefather Ibrahim (AS) constructed that house but now it is under the possession of polytheists. Several idols are kept there and worshipped; offerings are given to those statues and animals are sacrificed. In this polytheistic atmosphere we cannot join them in the worship."

The king accepted the sincere and wise advice of the Jews and punished the people who had instigated him to destroy the Ka'bah. Then humbly and respectfully he entered Makkah, made circuits around the Ka'bah, shaved his head and offered sacrifice. He stayed there for six days and treated the people with a feast. Meanwhile, in a dream, he was commanded to cover the Ka'bah with cloth, which he did promptly. He was the first person to cover the Ka'bah with cloth after hundreds of years.

The last attack on Makkah was in the year of birth of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). The neighbouring country of Yemen was then under the rule of the Abyssinian Christians, who had driven the Jewish Himyar rulers. Abraha Ashram was the Abyssinian governor. Intoxicated with power and fired by religious fanaticism, he led a big army, which included an elephant (or elephants), against Makkah. The custodians of Ka'bah did not offer any resistance and fled to nearby hills. However he was defeated miraculously. Abraha's elephant refused to move. According to Ibn Is'haq, the earliest biographer of the Prophet (SAWS); "When they made the elephant (its name was Mahmud) face Makkah, Naufayl bin Habib whispered in its ear; 'kneel Mahmud, or go straight back whence you came from, for you are in God's Holy Land.' The elephant knelt, was beaten to get up but would not budge. When they made it face Yemen it immediately got up. It would move in any direction but Makkah to which it knelt down." (Ibn Is'haq - Seerah, p: 26 - English translation). It was a sudden attack by flocks small birds and shower of stones from the locals who had taken shelter on the surrounding hills that caused disarray and destruction of

the attacking army almost to the last man. The Holy Qur'an records this in a short *Surah* (chapter) named *Feil* (Elephant) (Al-Feil; 105).

Original Construction of Ka'bah and Subsequent Changes

Scholars point out that Ka'bah has been reconstructed between five and 12 times since its original construction by Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Isma'il (AS). According to Mazen Motabbagani (Makkah Al-Mukarramah Dar Al-Reesha, Jeddah) the dimensions of Ka'bah built by Prophet Ibrahim (AS) were:

- The Eastern wall which has the door : 26 Cubits⁵
- The Western wall facing Bal Al 'Umrah : 31 -do-
- The wall surrounding Hija Isma'il : 22 -do-
- The wall between the two corners : 30 -do-

Note: The walls are not facing cardinal directions. The building appears diamond shape with the corners pointing in cardinal directions. The corner having *Hajr-e-Aswad* is in the direction of east.

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) participated in one of its reconstruction before he became a Prophet. Ka'bah suffered extensive damage during a flood necessitating its reconstruction. This responsibility was divided among the four tribes of Quraysh

5. Cubit is approximately 18 inches.

An interesting incident that is worthy of mention here is the settling of a dispute by the Prophet (SAWS). Once the walls were erected up-to a height where the *Hajr-e-Aswad* (Black Stone) was to be placed on the eastern corner of Ka'bah, arguments erupted about which tribe would have the honour of putting it in its place. A fight was about to break out over the issue, when Abu Umayyah, the oldest man of Makkah, proposed that the first man to enter the gate of the mosque the following morning would decide the matter. That man was the Prophet (SAWS). The Makkans were ecstatic. "This is the trustworthy one (*Al-Ameen*)," they shouted in a chorus. "This is Muhammad." He came to them and they asked him to decide on the matter. He agreed and proposed a solution that was agreed by all thus averting an ugly situation. He proposed that the *Hajr-e-Aswad* be put on a sheet of cloth and the elders of each of the clans collectively held its edges and carried it near the spot where it was to be fixed. The Prophet (SAWS) then picked up the *Hajr-e-Aswad* and placed it at the precise spot on the eastern corner of Ka'bah.

Since the tribe of Quraysh did not have sufficient funds, this reconstruction did not include the entire foundation of Ka'bah as built by Prophet Ibrahim (AS). This is the first time Ka'bah acquired the cubical shape it has now unlike its original rectangular shape. The portion of Ka'bah left out is called Hateem now. The structure now seen is identical to that built by Quraysh. The dimensions are as under:

- North-eastern side: 40 feet

- North-western side: 33 feet
- South-western side: 40 feet
- South-eastern side: 33 feet

Construction of Ka'bah after the Death of the Prophet (SAWS)

After the conquest of Makkah the stature of Islam and its Prophet increased manifold attracting ever increasing number of people to join the *Ummah*. (An-Nasr; 110: 1&2) With the rapid spread of Islam, the number of people settling down in Makkah also increased rapidly as also the visitors to Majid al-Haraam, particularly during the season of Hajj. Hence, in 17 AH (638 AD) *Khalifah* 'Umar (RA) planned for its extension. He purchased the houses located in the close vicinity of Ka'bah to extend the area surrounding it and constructed a compound wall to enclose Ka'bah with gates for entry. Thus the areas enclosed together with Ka'bah came to be known as '*Haram Shareef*'.

As a result of the fast growth of Islam the number of pilgrims (*Hajees*) increased to such an extent that in 26H *Khalifah* 'Usman (RA) further expanded the *Haram* by dismantling more houses around the compound wall built by his predecessor *Khalifah* 'Umar (RA).

'Abdullah Ibn Zubayr reconstructed Ka'bah from the foundation in 64H before the next Hajj, after the Syrian army had destroyed Ka'bah. He wanted to make Ka'bah the way Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) wanted it to be constructed, on the foundation originally laid by Prophet

Ibrahim (AS). He said, "I heard 'Ayesah (RA) say, 'The Prophet said: "If your people had not quite recently abandoned the Ignorance (Unbelief), and if I had sufficient provisions to rebuild it [Ka'bah], I would have added five cubits to it from the *Hijr*. Also, I would have made two doors; one for people to enter therein and the other to exit." (Bukhari) Ibn Al-Zubayr said, "Today, I can afford to do it and I do not fear the people. He built Ka'bah on Prophet Ibrahim's (RA) foundation, put the roof on three pillars with the wood of *Oud* (a fragrant wood with aroma, which is traditionally burned to get aroma). He fixed two doors, one facing the east the other to the west, as the Prophet (SAWS) wanted but could not do it in his lifetime. He also included the area (Hateem) excluded by the Quraysh due to paucity of funds. Hateem is the area adjacent to Ka'bah enclosed by a low semi-circular wall, contains the grave of Prophet Isma'il (AS) and his mother Hajirah. He also made the following additions and modifications:

- Put a small window close to the roof of Ka'bah to allow for light.
- Moved the door of Ka'bah to ground level and added a second door to it.
- Added nine cubits to the height of Ka'bah, making it twenty cubits high.
- Its walls were two cubits wide.
- Reduced the pillars inside the House to three instead of six as were earlier built by Quraysh.

During reconstruction, Ibn Al-Zubayr put up four pillars around Ka'bah and hung cloth over them until the building was completed. People began to do *Tawaaf* around these pillars at all times, so *Tawaaf* of Ka'bah was never abandoned, even during the reconstruction.

In 74H (693 AD), Al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi, the known tyrant of that time, demolished what Ibn Al-Zubayr had built to restore its structure built by the Quraysh, with the approval of 'Abdul Malik bin Marwan Umayyad *Khalifah*. Some of the changes he made are as follows:

- Total height was brought up to 15 m.
- The floor of Ka'bah was raised to 2.2 m from ground level.
- The ceiling and roof were made of teak.
- Western door (whose signs are still visible today) and left the rest as it was.
- Removed the wooden ladder Ibn-az-Zubayr had put inside Ka'bah.
- Reduced the height of the door.

When 'Abdul Malik bin Marwan came for '*Umrah* he regretted his action when he was told about the *Hadith* that it was the wish of Prophet (SAWS) to construct Ka'bah, the way 'Abdullah Ibn Al-Zubayr had built it after taking over the *Khilafat*.

Abbasi *Khalifah* Haroon Rasheed wanted to rebuild Ka'bah the way it was constructed by Ibn Al-Zubayr who had built it on the lines desired by the Prophet (SAWS). However he dropped the idea when advised against it by *Imam* Malik. The *Imam* opined demolition and rebuilding of Ka'bah would tantamount to showing disrespect to the House of Allah (SWT) and would become a pastime for the later rulers. Each one would want to demolish and rebuild Ka'bah. The structure remained the same for 966 years, with occasional minor repairs.

Reconstruction during Sultan Murad Khan's (the Ottoman *Khalifah*) time

On the 19th of *Sha'ybah*, 1039 AH, the city of Makkah had unprecedented rains and hailstorm. Consequently the city was severely flooded. The floodwaters gushed into the *Haram* area and the shrine of Ka'bah itself. The intensity of the flood can be assessed by the fact that the water level inside the shrine rose to almost half the height of walls and the next day the eastern and western walls of the Ka'bah collapsed. The floodwaters started receding from the third day i.e., 21st *Sha'baan*, 1039H and clean-up operations commenced immediately. Again, a curtain was put up, as 'Abdullah Ibn Al-Zubayr had done, and the reconstruction started on the 26th of *Ramadan*, 1039 AH. The remaining walls, except for the portion near the *Hajr-e-Aswad* (Black Stone), were demolished. By the 2nd of *Zil-Hajj* 1040 H the reconstruction was completed, under the control of Sultan Murad Khan.

On the 28 of Rajab 1377 AH, a historian counted the total number of stones used in the walls of Ka'bah to be 1,614. These were of different sizes and shapes. But the number of stones inside Ka'bah could not be counted, as those are not visible due to plastering.

Reconstruction of Ka'bah in 1996

After a period of about 400 years (since Sultan Murad Khan's time), a major reconstruction of Ka'bah was taken up in May 1996 AD and was completed in October 1996 AD. During this reconstruction except the stones used in Ka'bah, all other materials were replaced, including the ceiling and the roof and its wood.

Now Ka'bah is 10.5 X 12 meters at its base and is 15 meters high. It is standing on marble base, which is 25 cm high. Three wooden poles support its roof. The floor is of marble and it has no items of furniture inside except lamps made of gold and silver.

Ka'bah is always covered by a black covering called Kiswah, except for a few days when it is changed ceremonially every year during Hajj. It was used to be produced in Egypt, but now it is made in Saudi Arabia in a dedicated workshop by special artisans who are pious and remain in state of cleanliness while working on it. It takes almost a year to make it.

Meezab Ar-Rahmah

It literally means channel of mercy. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) neither constructed the roof of Ka'bah nor the

outlet for draining the water. Quraysh made the roof as well as the outlet in the centre of north, north-western side. In earlier days the drain channel (Shute) was made of stone or wood. In 1021 AH Sultan Abdul Majeed Khan used gold out of reverence.

Hajr-e-Aswad

According to legend it is believed to have descended from Heaven when Prophet Adam (AS) and Hawwa were sent down to earth. It was embedded in the south-eastern corner of Ka'bah during its construction as a mark of starting point for *Tawaaf* (Circumambulation).

At the time of construction of Ka'bah by Prophet Ibrahim (AS) it was presumably presented to him by Archangel Jibriel (AS) and was fixed in Ka'bah at the place where it is fixed now.

Umm Al-Mo'mineen Ayesah (RA) said: "The Prophet (SAWS) always kissed (*Istelaam*) Hajr-al-Aswad and Rukn Al-Yemeni." (Bukhari) 'Abdulla bin 'Umar (RA) narrates: "The Prophet (SAWS) said that Allah (SWT) erases the sins of those who perform *Istelaam* of Hajr Al-Aswad and Rukn Al-Yemeni." 'Abdulla bin 'Umar (RA) states: "The Prophet (SAWS) said that by touching *Hajr-e-Aswad* and Rukn Al-Yemeni sins are shed." Jabir (RA) states: "One day when the sun had come up quite high he entered in Masjid al-Haraam. After a while Prophet (SAWS) came. He left his she camel outside the Masjid and came inside. He came near *Hajr-e-Aswad*, kissed it and started circumambulation of Ka'bah from there. After kissing the *Hajr-e-Aswad* tears rolled down from his eyes. The Prophet

(SAWS) completed the first three rounds a bit faster and four rounds at normal speed. Then he again kissed *Hajr-e-Aswad*. He also touched his hand on it and wiped his face with the same hand.”

One day *Khalifah* ‘Umar (RA) came near Hajr All-Aswad kissed it and said: “You are but a stone, you can neither benefit nor harm anyone. Had I not seen my master Prophet (SAWS) kissing you I would have never kissed you.” He said it loudly and clearly within the hearing of other companions of the Prophet (SAWS), the newly converted ones or Muslims with poor knowledge in order to make them understand that it has no divine attributes or miraculous qualities because of which it was being kissed. It is evident that if anything is accorded respect by the order of Allah (SWT) or His Prophet (SAWS) then its respect is right. On the other hand if any object is respected believing in its ability to benefit or harm then it is polytheism, Islam does not accept it.

Hajr Al-Aswad suffered damages twice due to fire, once accidentally during the period of Quraysh. The second time it happened during the war between ‘Abdullah Bin Zubayr and Yazeed’s army. It got split due to these fires. It was assembled and bound in silver band and fixed at the same spot.

***Kiswah* (The Cover of Ka’bah)**

All revered and respected things are kept under different types of covers to prevent decay due to exposure to sun, rain and dust etc. Ka’bah, which is highly respected and the most sacred building on earth for the Muslims

who adore it more than anything else, is also covered with a black coloured robe, embroidered with Qur'anic *Ayaat* in gold. This cover is called Kiswah.

Scholars have different opinions as to who put the Kiswah on Ka'bah for the first time. They name Prophet Isma'il (AS), Adnan and King Asad-ul-Humari Tabba. If we take all the names as correct then it is noticed that the practice of covering Ka'bah was discontinued after Prophet Isma'il (AS) and Adnan for centuries. After Tabba, this practice has never been discontinued till today (Fateh-ul-Bari, vol.3, p: 360).

Imam Azraqi writes that once king of Yemen dreamt that he is putting a cover on Ka'bah. He prepared a cover and started for Makkah. When he reached Makkah he covered Ka'bah with a thick cloth. Same night he dreamt that a better cloth should be used. Second day he covered Ka'bah with a better cloth. He dreamt again the second night that still better cloth must be used. Hence he covered Ka'bah on the third day with the best cloth of Yemen i.e. Al-Vasail which was having stripes on it. In olden days, covers of different materials used to be put on Ka'bah like skin, wool, silk and *deebaj* etc. From Qessa Bin Kulab's time people started putting different types of perfumes on the cloth.

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), after conquering Makkah, put a black coloured Kiswah on Ka'bah, which was made of Yemen's cloth in 10 H. Abu Bakr Siddiq (RA) put a white coloured cloth on Ka'bah. Few other *khalifahhs* and kings put green and red coloured covers also. As the

time passed these were made more and more beautiful. Qur'anic *Ayat* were also embroidered on it in gold. These days black coloured Kiswah with Qur'anic *Ayat* in golden embroidery is put on Ka'bah.

Egypt offered the *Kiswah* till 1345 H. During the period of 'Usmani *Khilafat* (Ottoman Empire), the inner cover used to come from Istanbul. The House of Sa'ud who came to power in 1343 H decided to manufacture the *Kiswah* in their kingdom (Sa'udi Arabia) itself. They took the help of Muhammad Isma'il Ghaznavi, an Indian, who exported all the necessary material and machinery from India to Sa'udi Arabia. He accompanied the skilled workers from Banaras to Makkah along with his family members. The skilled workers were from the family of *Hafiz* Rahmatullah Khan of Awadh (India), who had fought against the British, made the *Kiswah* so well that a contract was given to them for its supply for 30 years.

In 1963 Pakistan got a chance for offering the *Kiswah*. The task was entrusted to Jama'at-e Islami. They exhibited the nicely made *Kiswah* to the general public by running a special train from Karachi to Peshawar. However the people indulged in numerous acts of innovations while seeing it. The Government of Sa'udi Arabia came to know about these un-Islamic acts and stopped such innovative acts to be put on Ka'bah.

The *Kiswah* is changed every year. There was no fixed date/day/month for its changing. It was done on different dates and months in different periods as given below:

Periods	Dates
Tabbaa Al Hameri and after-words.	220 BH (before Hijrah).
In Earlier period of Islam.	10 th Muharram every year.
The period of Quraysh.	10 th Zil-Hajj every year.
Ameer M'awiya's period.	10 th Muharram and in the fourth week of Muharram every year
Mamoon Rasheed's period.	1 st <i>Rajab</i> , 27 th Ramadhan and 8 th Zil-Hajj every year.
After 6 th Century till 1387 AH.	8 th Zil-Hajj every year.
From 1388 AH.	10 th Zil-Hajj every year.

The Cover inside Ka'bah

Unlike the Kiswah the cover inside Ka'bah remains unchanged as it is not exposed to sunlight, rain, dust etc. No one knows that when the first cover inside Ka'bah was put. Malik Muzaffar of Yemen, according to books of history, was the first to put it in 659 AH. Mostly it was of red colour.

There is neither a window nor a ventilator in Ka'bah. Even electricity connection is not there. Since the Ka'bah is located in an open whenever the door is opened sufficient light comes in. The red colour of the inside cover becomes clearly visible, hence red colour was chosen for the cover inside Ka'bah.

On this cover are written Allah's names such as *Ya Mannan*; '*Ya Sub'han*', the *Kalimah* and a Qur'anic *Ayah*. Lastly *Sub'han Allahi wo Be'hamdehi* and *Sub'han-allah-il 'Azeem* is written. In earlier days there was no curtain on the door of Ka'bah. But from 9th century Hijrah onwards a curtain has also been put on the door and is called *Sitr-e-Ka'bah*.

The Door of Ka'bah

Ka'bah has a door which is fixed at a height of about 2.2 m from ground level and nearer to the corner where *Hajr-e-Aswad* is embedded. The door is normally kept closed and locked with a beautifully embroidered curtain. It is opened for maintenance and ceremonial washing once a year on 1st of *Zil-Hajj*, when a new *Kiswah* is also put.

Multazim: This is the base of the door of Ka'bah which is considered to be the ideal place for supplications. Muslims are seen holding on to this place and supplicating with exemplary devotion.

Arkaan (Corners)

The Four Corners of Ka'bah are called as *Arkaan* and given different names. Eastern corner in which *Hajr-e-Aswad* is embedded is called *Rukn-e-Hajr-al-Aswad*. Southern corner pointing towards Yemen is called *Rukn-e-Yemeni*. Western corner facing Syria is called is *Rukn-e-Shami* or *Garbi*. And the northern facing Iraq is called *Rukn-e-Iraqi*.

Hateem

This is a semi-circular enclosure abutting the north-western wall of Ka'bah, which is also called *Hijr-e-Ka'bah*. *Imam Azraqi* writes in *Tareekh-e-Ka'bah* that at the time of construction of Ka'bah, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) had made a hut at this place for residence of Prophet Isma'il (AS) and his goats. It had two doors. At present it is open to sky with a shoulder high wall with two openings on either end. The distance from the wall of Ka'bah to the wall of Hateem is 26'-4" and its width is 33 feet. Rain water of Ka'bah is drained out through the *Meezab Al-Rahmah* in this area.

Umm-ul-Mo'mineen Ayeshah (RA) narrates: "I asked the Messenger of Allah (SWT); 'whether the Hateem is included in the *Bait-Allah*.' He replied; 'it is within the *Bait-ullah*.' Then I asked; 'then why it is not included in the *Bait-ullah*?' He replied; 'Ayeshah (RA), when your nation (Quraysh) reconstructed the *Bait-ullah* then they put the restriction to spending only the lawful money on its construction. The money collected was not enough to construct the whole structure. Therefore, they left a little

area in the north-western side and completed the construction. 'Ayesah, if your nation's days of ignorance would not have been nearer and I would not have doubted of their refusal or internal clashes; I would have certainly included the area of *Hateem* in the *Bait-ullah* and would have constructed Ka'bah on the basement of Ibrahim. I would have made two doors, one facing the east and the other facing the west." (Bukhari, vol.1, p: 215)

Once 'Ayesah (RA) told the Prophet (SAWS) that she wanted to perform *Salaat* inside the *Bait-Allah*. Then the Prophet (SAWS) caught her hand and took her to the area of *Hateem* and said: "perform the *Salaat* here. Whenever you feel like performing the *Salaat* inside Ka'bah then enter the *Hateem* and do so as it is a part of Ka'bah. Because of paucity of funds your nation left it out from Ka'bah." (Tirmidhi, vol.1, p: 220).

Together with *Hateem* Ka'bah appears like a human heart from top. Significantly the heart of those who are circumambulating it in anti-clockwise direction is also towards Ka'bah.

There are other important things in the close vicinity of the building of Ka'bah which have been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Some of them have ritualistic relevance during 'Umrah and Hajj.

Mutaaf

Mutaaf, as the name suggests, is the open space surrounding Ka'bah for circumambulation by the pilgrims. It is also used for offering the *Salaat*. The

circumambulation is halted only during mandatory *Salaat* but resumed thereafter.

It starts from the base of Ka'bah and Hateem. Initially there were private dwellings and other buildings constructed in the close vicinity of Ka'bah. When the number of worshippers increased, necessity was felt to increase the area of *Mutaaf* for their convenience. Private dwellings were acquired and demolished to create larger area. In order to demarcate the area of Ka'bah so that no one encroaches upon it, a compound wall with entrances was constructed during the period of the second *Khalifah* 'Umar (RA). However, with ever-increasing number of worshippers, *Mutaaf* was extended many a time till covered permanent structure came up around it.

Muqaam-e-Ibrahim

This refers to the stone with the human foot-mark - said to be that of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) - preserved in a glass and metal casement placed on a low pedestal, which is called *Muqaam Al-Ibrahim*. It is described as 'Sign Manifest' in the Holy Qur'an. It is at a short distance facing the north-eastern wall. The stone is believed to have been used as an elevated platform during construction of Ka'bah as the height of walls grew. *Salaat* are offered in its vicinity after the completion of *Tawaaf*. The Holy Qur'an mentions about it in connection with the rituals during 'Umrah and the Hajj (Al-Baqarah; 2:125). Thus it is a very important Islamic relic.

It is said that the present place of *Muqaam-e-Ibrahim* was used to be the temporary hut of Prophet Ibrahim (AS)

during the time of construction. He used to keep this stone in the hut during the night. After him, it is said that the stone was kept near the door of Ka'bah. Later on, during the time of *Khalifah 'Umar (RA)* it was shifted to its present location, which is about 11 m from the door of Ka'bah. (Ibn-e-Katheer, *Rooh-ul Ma'ani*, vol.1, p: 379)

The Spring of Zam-Zam

The Spring of Zam-Zam is located, almost adjacent to Ka'bah towards the hillock called Safa. At present it is underground and not accessible to the general public.

Its emergence is linked to the prayer of the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) when she and the infant son were put great ordeal because the provision was getting exhausted. In desperation she is said to have run several times from the hillock of Safa to another one called Marwah located some distance away to look if per chance someone was coming with water, while keeping an eye on the child and fervently praying to Allah (SWT) for help. It was at such an anxious moment that she observed water gushing forth near the baby lying near Ka'bah. Seeing it flowing profusely she called out 'stop stop' (Zam-Zam).

The spring gave immediate relief to her and the baby. Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said that if Hajirah had not checked the flow of water the spring would have flown as a perennial river. Allah (SWT) honoured this motherly concern by including brisk walking between these two hillocks by the pilgrims among the rituals of 'Umrah and the Hajj thus commemorating it forever. The water of this spring is very clean, sweet and nutritious.

Disappearance and Re-emergence of Spring of Zam-Zam

Banu Jurhum settled down in Makkah because of this fountain. After ruling for around five hundred years, they had to vacate Makkah because of their oppression, tyranny, immorality, wickedness and violation of Allah's laws. While leaving Makkah the ruler of Jurhum dumped

the treasures of Ka'bah in the well of Zam-Zam and filled it with mud. Floods and sandstorms made its location untraceable.

Five hundred years passed by and no one knew about Zam-Zam. Then Allah (SWT) decided to reopen the well. 'Abdul Muttalib the grandfather of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) saw a dream that someone told him to dig the *Tayyabah*. 'Abdul Muttalib asked what *Tayyabah* was? The man went away without answering it. Second night he saw a person who told him to dig the *Magnoona*. 'Abdul Muttalib asked what *Magnoona* was? The man disappeared without answering. Third night again in the dream someone told him to dig the Zam-Zam and clean it. 'Abdul Muttalib asked him what Zam-Zam was. Then the person told him that it was a perennial spring whose water would never cease, and he would not face hardship. He further said that the well was a hereditary property for him and he would have to provide its water to the pilgrims who came for the Hajj. 'Abdul Muttalib requested him to inform about the location. He was informed that there were a lot of ant-holes where the spring was, and in the morning he would find a crow trying to dig the earth by its beak, at that spot.

Next day early morning 'Abdul Muttalib, along with his eldest son Harith, went to near Ka'bah with digging tools. They saw the crow as well as the ant-holes. That place was near the idols of *Assaf* and *Naeela*. In obedience to the command of Allah (SWT) they started digging. After few hours Quraysh started objecting and asked them to stop the digging. Quraysh said that it was

their sacred place where they sacrificed the animals. 'Abdul Muttalib ignored their objections, as he was their chief. After a short while the spring was re-discovered. He also got the treasure of Ka'bah, which Banu Jurhum had buried there before leaving Makkah.

When Quraysh saw 'Abdul Muttalib successfully discovering the well and also a treasure, they demanded a share in it claiming it to be the property of their forefather Prophet Isma'il (AS). They also demanded to be made partners in the management of Zam-Zam and distribution of its water. 'Abdul Muttalib rejected their proposal. When the issue became serious, they decided collectively that the matter should be referred for arbitration to the omen teller of the tribe of Sa'd Bin Huzail, who used to practice Augury. She was a woman who lived on the border of Syria. It was agreed that her judgement should be accepted by all.

'Abdul Muttalib accompanied with representatives from different clans of Quraysh started the journey which was going to be a long and dangerous one. During this long and arduous journey all but few exhausted their water. Those who had some water left, refused to share it with 'Abdul Muttalib and his companions who were very thirsty. Instead they taunted: "In Makkah you are the possessor of Zam-Zam and here you ask us water," and moved on.

Suddenly sweet water started gushing from the spot where the camel of 'Abdul Muttalib was sitting. Joyously 'Abdul Muttalib shouted *Allahu Akbar*. There was

enough water for all to drink and filled their water bags. Even those who had refused to give water to 'Abdul Muttalib filled their water bags.

After filling water bags the Quraysh said: "Now our dispute is settled. We take the oath of the *RUBB* that now we will not have any enmity, grudge or repugnance with you about Zam-Zam. The God who gave you a fountain at this desolate place is the One, Who gave you Zam-Zam in Makkah. Instead of going further all of them returned to Makkah. This incident took place forty years before the birth of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). (Seerat Ibn Hisham, *Albadeya Wal Nihaya*, vol. 1, p: 245).

The water of the blessed spring of Zam-Zam is commonly called by after its name which has many extraordinary attributes. 'Abdulla bin Abbas (RA) narrates that Prophet (SAWS) said: "The best water on the face of earth is Zam-Zam. Prophet (SAWS) is reported to have also said: "With whatever intention Zam-Zam is taken that objective will be achieved. If someone drinks it to overcome thirst he will not feel thirsty. If someone takes it belly-full he will not feel hungry and if it is drunk with the intention of recovering from a disease that disease will be cured."

It is situated near the most sacred spot on earth Ka'bah. The source of water is said to be lying under hillocks of Safa and Marwah and *Rukn-e-Hajr-e-Aswad* of Ka'bah. According to a tradition Archangel Jibriel (AS) washed the pious heart of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) with it before his ascent to Heaven on the occasion of

Me'raj. 'Ayesah (RA) used to carry it with her while returning to Madinah whenever came to Makkah for the Hajj.

Safa and Marwah

As mentioned earlier, these are the two hillocks near Ka'bah. Safa is closer to Ka'bah and Marwah is a little away towards north. These blessed hillocks get an honourable mention in the Holy Qur'an: *"Behold! Safa and Marwah are among the Symbols of Allah. So if those who visit the House in the Season (Hajj) or at other time (the 'Umrah) should compass them around..."* (Al-Baqarah; 2:158)

The ritual of brisk walk between these hillocks is called the *Sa'ee* (Exertion) which commemorates the exertion of the mother of Prophet Isma'il (AS) for the sake of water for her thirsty infant son. Millions and millions of pilgrims have been performing this ritual and remembering her over the centuries.

Initially these hillocks and Ka'bah were separated with private buildings. However with the expansion of *Mutaaf* and construction of permanent structure these got included in the Masjid complex and now form the part of it.

Additions of Permanent Structures around Ka'bah

There was no population except his family when Prophet Ibrahim (AS) constructed Ka'bah. But after his *Salaat* to Allah (SWT) people started moving in gradually.

The people used to reside in huts or tents in the foot of the mountains and near the streams and did not construct houses around Ka'bah because of its respect, honour and reverence. They used to come in the day for pilgrimage and go back at night. Banu Jurhum and 'Amaleqah did likewise.

When Qussay bin Kukab became the ruler of Makkah he allowed construction of house in view of increasing population. People did not come forward because of the dignity and awe of Ka'bah. Then Qussay himself started building a house. He laid the foundation of *Dar-un-Nadwah* (House of Consultations). That set the trend and thereafter construction of houses started in a systematic manner.

After the death of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) the population of Makkah started increasing rapidly because of the spread of Islam. Increasing number of people also started coming for Hajj and 'Umrah. The place around Ka'bah became insufficient. Hence, in 17 AH (638 AD) *Khalifah 'Umar (RA)* planned for its extension. He purchased the houses in its close vicinity, dismantled them and extended the area around Ka'bah and enclosed it with a compound wall. The place inside the enclosure came to be known as *Haram* (inviolable). In 26 AH (647AD), *Khalifah 'Usman (RA)* further extended the *Haram* due to pressing demands of public.

As mentioned earlier, at present the Majid al-Haraam is now a massive complex that has gradually absorbed all the above mentioned places including the

hillocks of Safa and Marwah. It is now a two-storied building covering a very large area accommodating over a million worshippers at a time. It contains bathrooms, toilets, elaborate arrangements for arrival and departure of vehicles and other amenities like air conditioning, sound systems etc.

The Majid al-Haraam complex has undergone a number of renovations, modifications and extensions to suit the needs of the ever-increasing pilgrims and worshippers. Shah Fahd, the present ruler of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, carried out the latest and largest extension. This is also the area that is centrally air-conditioned. Considering the ever-increasing number of pilgrims throughout the year many more extensions, renovations, modifications etc. should be expected for the comfort and convenience of the pilgrims in future. At present, together with surrounding areas, it can accommodate more than three million worshippers at a time.

Treasure of Ka'bah

When Prophet Ibrahim (AS) constructed Ka'bah he dug a pit inside it that was approximately four feet six inches deep so that the offerings and gifts made by devotees could be gathered and kept in it. On few occasions thefts also took place. When Banu Jurhum were defeated by Banu Khaza they threw the treasure in the well of Zam-Zam and covered it before running away from Makkah. The well remained closed for hundreds of years till 'Abdul Muttalib saw the dream inviting him to

dig for the well of Zam-Zam. When the well was found and dug out he got two deer made of gold and many swords. He used the swords in the door of Ka'bah and embellished it with gold place by melting the golden deer. He also used the gold for the lock and key of the door.

The treasure kept building up till Ka'bah came under the control of the Prophet (SAWS) who initially thought of spending the treasure of Ka'bah in the propagation of Islam but did not do so. None of the *Khalifahs* also spent out of it. In fact it remained untouched till 199 H when Husain Bin Al Hassan Al Alvi, the ruler of Makkah spent it for purchasing arms. Since there is no tradition of any material offerings and gifts for Ka'bah, the question of treasure did not arise. Hajjaj Bin Yusuf closed the pit and levelled the floor of Ka'bah and transferred the remains to the house of Sheeba Bin Usman Bin Talha.

As for the details inside Ka'bah, Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, the president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) who had the opportunity to go inside Ka'bah in October 1998, had to say this in an interview:

- There are two pillars inside (others report 3 pillars)
- There is a table on the side to put items like perfume.
- There are two lantern-type lamps hanging from the ceiling.
- The space can accommodate about 50 people.

- There are no electric lights inside.
- The walls and the floors are of the marble.
- There are no windows inside.
- There is only one door.
- The upper inside walls of Ka'bah were covered with some kind of curtain with the *Kalimah* written on it.

There were a number of buildings within the enclosure of Majid al-Haraam, the most prominent of them being the *Muqaams* (pavilions) of the four *Masalik* (ways), namely *Muqaam Hanafi*, *Muqaam Maliki*, *Muqaam Hanbali* and *Muqaam Shafa'ee*. The Hanafi *Muqaam* was the first to be built in 923 H. It was the largest in size facing Hateem. It was a two storied structure open on all sides. The top floor of this *Muqaam* was used by the *Muezzin* for *Adhaan* (prayer call). *Muqaam Malik* was in the south, *Muqaam Hanbali* opposite to the *Hajr-e-Aswad* and *Muqaam Shafa'ee* was built covering the well of Zam-Zam 'to which it serves as an upper chamber.' (Hughes, T.P.1944: Dictionary of Islam, p 338) All the four *Maqaams* were rebuilt in 1074 H during 'Usmani *Khilafat*. The adherents of the four different *Masalik* assembled in and around the *Muqaams* of their respective *Masalik*, particularly at the time of *Farz Salaat*, to be led by their respective *Imams*. However, all the Muslims irrespective of their *Masalik* offered their *Maghrib Salaat* together. The Sultan, the Shareef of Makkah and the senior officers of the kingdom would invariably be seated in the Hanbali *Muqaam* (Hughes, op. cit. p: 33). These *Maqaams* no

longer exist. Presumably they were dismantled when the Saudis took control of the holy mosques.

The First *Adhaan*

The building of Ka'bah has no minarets. Therefore *Adhaan* (Prayer Call) was given from the rooftop of Ka'bah. The honour of giving the first *Adhaan* on the day Makkah fell to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), was given to Bilal (RA), the *Muezzin* of the Masjid al-Nabi in Madinah, who represented the lowest class of people in the society during the pre-Islamic days of ignorance - black African slaves. In fact some of the so-called upper class people did not like the very sight of a black slave, though freed then, climbing atop the revered Ka'bah. This demonstrated to the world, the two important facets Islam had. Firstly, the lineage of a person has nothing to do with nobility and piety for which only righteousness is the criterion. Secondly, Ka'bah as a building is neither an object of worship nor divinity, lest people misunderstand that Muslims too worship images and objects like any polytheist group.

When proper covered built-up space was added all around Ka'bah, domes and minarets were also added. The number of the minarets as also of the doors kept increasing with the Additions and extensions to the building in subsequent years. At present there are a number of doors, domes and escalators for easy movement of millions of worshipers both inside and outside the Masjid.

CHAPTER 2

MASJID AL-NABI

Introduction

Masjid al-Nabi is situated in the city of Madinah Al-Munawwarah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The city of Madinah, also known as Yethrib, lies in a lavish and fertile oasis at 39^o longitude and 24^o latitude and height of 597 meters above mean sea level. The climate is characterised by extreme hot summers, moderate autumns and springs and cold winters. At present its population is over 700,000. It is 275 kilometres from Red Sea (Yanbu), 425 kilometres from Jeddah and 497 kilometres from Makkah. Damascus, capital of Syria is 1033 kilometres and Amman, capital of Jordan is 844 kilometres.

Madinah Al-Munawwara was connected to these cities till recently. Ottoman Turks (*Usmani Khilafat*) built it towards the end of their rule only to be destroyed by Arabs during their uprising.

Madinah in pre-Islamic Era

Madinah is also known by many other names. Among them are Taiba, *Madinat-ar-Rasul*, *Dar-ul-Imaan*, *Dar-ul-Abrar*, *That-al-Nakheel*, and *Sayidat-ul-Buldan* etc.

It is reported that the first inhabitant who dwelt in Madinah following the Great Flood was Gayna Ibn Mahla Beil Ibn Obail whose forebears go back to Prophet Nuh (AS) (Noah). It is also reported that the first who built

permanent settlements and planted crops and trees were the 'Amaliq, Banu Imalk, descendants of Sam. Among them who settled in Madinah were the sons of Banu Haf and Banu Matraweel.

Ibn Al-Munzir said he heard the story of how Madinah came into existence as told by Sulaiman Ibn Abdullah Ibn Hanzala Al-Ghaseel and some Qurayshite men. They quoted Abu Ubaidah Ibn Abdullah Ibn Ammar ibn Yasser as saying when Prophet Musa (AS) (Moses) went to perform the pilgrimage; he was accompanied by a number of the children of Israel. On their way home they passed through Madinah and found in it a resemblance to a city where a prophet would emerge, as described in the Taurat (Torah), as the Seal of the Prophets. A group of them settled in an area of the city known as *Souq Kamakaa*.

The leading *Hadith* narrator, Abu Huraira (RA) said when the children of Israel could no longer endure the suffering inflicted on them by Nebuchadnezzar, they fled and dispersed. In their Testament they read that Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) would appear in an Arab village famous for its palm trees. When they left Sham (Syria), they started checking at every village between Syria and Yemen looking for the place whose description was synonymous with the description made in the Testament. When they found Yethrib, a group of them from the ancestors of Prophet Haroon (AS) (Aron, brother of Moses) settled in Madinah and their elders died while still believing in Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), and before dying had called on their children to follow the Prophet (SAWS). Those who survived to witness the Prophet (SAWS) did not

believe in his message. Instead, committed every act of treason and conspiracy and did their utmost to undermine the new religion and kill him out of envy and fear of losing the authority and influence which had managed to build in Madinah. This they did despite the fact that the Prophet had signed with them a treaty guaranteeing freedom of their faith and protecting their property. Had they not breached the accord, they would have co-existed and lived in peace with the Muslims.

Ibn Sabala reported that those who were in Madinah in earlier days were Banu Haif and ancestors of the 'Amaliq. The Jewish tribes numbered more than 20 and those of the Arabs were more than 70.

In the wake of the collapse of Sail Al-Arim - the flood from the embankment, at the end of 2nd Century BC, nine centuries before the emergence of Islam, the Yemenite tribes migrated from the area and settled at various parts of the Arabian Peninsula. The Aus and Khazraj tribes chose to settle in Madinah [the Aus and Khazraj were the *Ansaar* or followers and helpers of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS)]. Following their arrival in Madinah, they dispersed to settle in various parts of the city. Some of them lived side by side with the Jews who were at that time in control of the economy and trade in Madinah.

Madinah in Islamic Era

The Messenger of Allah (SWT) Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) migrated to Madinah in 622 AD and signed a treaty with the *Ansaar* (tribes of Aus and Khazraj) to protect and assist him and his followers. This they did and made

sacrifices to defend them and their religion. Madinah became the magnet for Islam and its defending fortress, from where the light of Islam spread to the entire world. It became the capital of the incipient Islamic State founded by the Prophet (SAWS).

The build-up of civilisation that followed and the establishment of justice and enlightenment are the unique outcome of the model system of governance introduced by the Prophet (SAWS). It was in Madinah the capital city of the newly born Islamic state that *Khalifah 'Umar* (RA) laid down the policies and the administrative and financial rules which would govern the state. These were based on the Islamic principles and teachings. It was in this modest building of the Mosque that the Prophet (SAWS) and the first four *Khalifahs* received and welcomed foreign delegations and ambassadors.

Status of the Mosque

This is the second most sacred Mosque of Islam after the Grand Mosque of Makkah (Majid al-Haraam). Its origin, historical background and the role it played in the early history of Islam is unique. Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) and his companions (*Sahabah*) constructed this blessed Masjid by their own hands. He prayed for the welfare and divine rewards for those who participated in its construction.

It was not only simply a place of worship but also the first school of Islamic teachings that produced the finest role models for Muslims to follow till eternity. It also served as the first seat of governance for the first

Islamic Republic. The Prophet (SAWS) and the first three *Khulafa* ruled from here. Ambassadors of mighty states of the era visited this modest building for meetings and negotiations with the Head of the Islamic State. History does not offer any parallel to this simplicity of the institution of governments.

Here also lie the mortal remains of the Prophet (SAWS) and his senior companions and first two *Khalifah*, Abu Bakr (RA) and 'Umar (RA) side by side in simple open raw graves without pedestal, platform or any other embellishment.

Now it is a massive complex with ultramodern building depicting the finest sample of Islamic architecture representing the entire era from the period of *Khulafa-ur-Rashideen* (Rightly guided Caliphs) of 7th Century H to the present age of Saudi rule. Considering the ever-increasing number of visitors it is equipped with the best sound and air-conditioning system, furnished with rich carpets with a central courtyard, which can be left open to sky or covered with self-operating giant umbrellas. There are numerous doors for quick and easy exit/entry, escalators for moving from floor to floor. There are multiple-story baths and toilets reachable quickly with escalators. Cooled water of Zam-Zam is made available in abundance to quench the thirst of millions of visitors.

Unlike Majid al-Haraam, there is screened out section exclusively for the ladies with dedicated entry and exit.

The striking feature of Masjid al-Haram is its extremely high standard of cleanliness. Considering the large number of visitors almost round the year, the unrestricted funds made available by the present regime and the dedicated work of the staff is highly appreciable.

Though not a part of the Masjid, the hallowed graveyard, *Jannat-ul-Baqi*, is located almost adjacent to it. Most of the *Sahabah* including *Khalifah 'Usman* (RA) are buried here.

First Construction

When Allah (SWT) permitted the Prophet (SAWS) to migrate from Makkah to Madinah, he arrived at a place called Quba on the outskirts of Yethrib, the original name of Madinah. He stayed for ten days during which the first Masjid, Masjid Al-Quba was constructed for performing the five mandatory *Salaat* and to serve as a house of consultations. From there he moved to Yethrib and stayed in the house of Abu Ayyub Ansari till the blessed Masjid - Masjid al-Nabi, with modest living quarters, was built. He chose the plot that was owned by two orphans Sahel and Sohail, who were under the care of Asad bin Zarara (RA).

There is an interesting tradition concerning the selection of the place for the Masjid. It is narrated by Ibn-Sa'd (RA) that the she-camel of the Prophet (SAWS) sat down where the Masjid al-Nabi now stands. Despite the best efforts it did not move. It was an open plot owned by two orphan brothers. Muslims of Yethrib used to perform *Salaat* there. The Prophet (SAWS) decided to build the Masjid at that place. He called the boys with their

guardian Asad Bin Zarara (RA) and enquired about the cost of the open land. The boys desired to give it free of cost. But the Prophet (SAWS) did not agree to it. Finally they were paid ten *Dinars* towards the cost of the piece of land that was paid by Abu Bakr (RA).

The Prophet (SAWS) instructed preparation of the ground for construction. The grass and weeds were removed and the ground was levelled. Some old graves were found. He directed that the human remains be collected and buried in a deep pit some distance away. There was stagnated water which was also removed. When the land became dry, construction of the Masjid was taken up. Raw bricks and stones were collected and the foundation was laid. Foundation was approximately 4¹/₂ feet deep. Stones were used in the foundation. The walls were of made of raw bricks.

The Prophet (SAWS) and his blessed *Sahabah* participated in the construction of the mosque personally. The *Qiblah* (Direction of Prayer) was kept towards north facing *Bait Al-Muqdas* (Jerusalem). The Masjid had three doors; one towards the south and the other (*Bab Al-Rahmah* – Door of Mercy) towards the west which were meant for all. The third one on the eastern side, opening towards the residential quarters of the Prophet (SAWS) was named *Bab Al-Jibriel* (Door of Archangel Gabriel). It was meant for the exclusive use of the Prophet (SAWS).

The building itself was extremely modest. The roof of twigs and branches of date trees was supported by walls of raw bricks and date tree trunks serving as pillars.

Some *Sahabah* suggested for a better roof but the Prophet (SAWS) said: "No. A hut like that of Prophet Musa (AS) is good enough." Similarly, on the eastern side of the Masjid, two rooms one each for his pious wives 'Ayesah (RA) and Sawdah (RA) were made. The Masjid was 70 feet in length and 60 feet in width. Some narrate that it was 100' X 100'.

It remained as such till the change in *Qiblah* towards *Bait-Allah* when the *Qiblah* was changed. The door towards south, *Bab-ur-Rahmah* was closed and a new door towards north was opened. Rooms were added as and when the Prophet (SAWS) married. Altogether nine rooms were constructed, which were located in between the room of 'Ayesah (RA) and *Bab-ur-Jibriel*, the door used by the Prophet (SAWS).

Extensions, Rénovations and Modernisation

Compared to the other nations Muslims were always ahead in the field of architecture and building. When it came to mosques, they were not only the masters in the art of building and decorating them but also very generous with money and material. Muslim kings, governors and wealthy businessmen as well as people with modest means always spent money with pride. They naturally took special interest in the case of Masjid al-Nabi.

Khalifah 'Umar (RA): True to the forecast; "*And you will see the people enter Allah's religion in hordes.*" (An-Nasr; 110:2) the number of Muslims increased rapidly making the modest Masjid insufficient for the congregational *Salaat*. Thus the first expansion of Masjid al-Nabi took

place during the period of *Khalifah* 'Umar Farooq (RA) in 17 AH. He extended the boundaries of the Masjid towards south, west and north. The house of 'Abbas Bin 'Abdul Muttalib, which was located towards south, was included with his consent. The eastern side was not expanded, as the rooms of the pious wives of the Prophet (SAWS) were located there. Three more doors were added to facilitate easy entry and exit. Same material was used for extension that was used in the first construction of the Masjid.

Khalifah 'Usman (RA): In 29 AH *Khalifah* 'Usman (RA) undertook reconstruction of the Masjid using better building material like stones, iron and lead for foundations and walls and used teak wood for the roof. The Masjid was extended in south, west and north, leaving the eastern side where the living rooms of pious wives of the Prophet (SAWS) were located. During this construction height of the Masjid was also increased.

Khalifah Walid Bin 'Abdul Malik: *Khalifah* 'Walid Bin 'Abdul Malik of Umayyah took up major renovation and expansion in 88 AH under the able supervision of 'Umar Bin 'Abdul 'Aziz who was the *Ameer* of Madinah. As per the orders of the *Khalifah* the rooms which were once occupied and used by the pious wives of Prophet (SAWS) were dismantled and included in the Masjid. The length and width of the Masjid became 90 meters each and the total area became 8100 square meters. Four minarets were also raised on the corners of the Masjid. Islamic historian Ibn Qudhama records that help of the king of Rome was sought for the decoration of the Masjid. Forty well-trained artisans along with carved stones, gold and other precious

stones were sent from Rome. The inner sides of the Masjid were decorated with carved marble and other precious stones and gold. The teakwood roof remained but gold plating was done on it. Floral patterns were made on stone pillars. Four minarets on the corners of the Masjid were added.

Floor was laid with white marble and old pillars were replaced with those made by black marble. The roof was decorated with ornamental designs. Roof of the room of 'Ayesha (RA), in which the mortal remains of the Prophet (SAWS), Abu Bakr (RA) and 'Umar (RA) are buried, was reconstructed with teakwood. This work was completed in 91 AH. A Plaque containing the name of the Masjid was also put on the main door during this construction.

Khalifah 'Abbasi Mehdi: The fourth expansion was undertaken during the *Khilafat* of 'Abbasi Mehdi in 161 AH adding an area of 2450 sq. m. In this expansion the houses of 'Abdur Rahmaan Bin 'Aouf (RA), 'Abdulla Bin Mas'ud (RA), Shrajeel Bin Husna (RA), all companions of the Prophet (SAWS), who had expired by then, were included as they were in the close vicinity.

Khalifah Mamoon Rasheed: In 202 AH *Khalifah* Mamoon Rasheed changed the place for the *Imam* to stand and made the wooden stand for him.

Khalifah Naseruddinullah: In 576 AH *Khalifah* Naseruddinullah constructed a tomb in the courtyard for preserving the things which were used by the Prophet (SAWS). They are still available.

Khalifah Mo'tasimbillah: Masjid al-Nabi caught fire in 654 AH causing extensive damage because of wooden roof. When the news reached to *Khalifah* Mo'tasimbillah and other Muslim rulers, they came forward with the generous help for its reconstruction. Apart from *Khalifah* Mo'tasimbillah, Al Muzaffar Shamsuddin, Al Mansoor Nooruddin Ali, Ali Bin Almoez Aibak, Ruknuddin Baibrus and Mohammed Bin Qaladoon Al Salehi helped with men, material and money. The Masjid was completed in just one year. In 655 AH *Khalifah* Mo'tasimbillah, with the co-operation of Shah Muzaffar Yusuf of Yemen and Egyptian king Ali Bin Magraee Bak strengthened the basement of *HUJRA* [the last resting place of the Prophet (SAWS)]. And in 685 AH repairs were carried out.

Mohammed Bin Qaladoon Al Salehi: In 678 AH a tomb was added over the room belonging to Ayesah (RA) where the graves of the Prophet (SAWS), *Khalifah* Abu Bakr (RA) and *Khalifah* 'Umar (RA) exist. It was called '*Qabat-ul Baidha*' or '*Qabat-ul Zarqa*'. This is the only major tomb which is clearly visible and it remains as a prominent symbol of the Masjid.

Sultan Ashraf Qaitabai: In 886 AH (1483 AD) lightning caused major damage to the Masjid including the tomb. In 887 AH (1484 AD), Sultan Ashraf Qaitabai of Egypt deputed Sanqar Jamali with one hundred workers, materials, equipment and enough money for construction. It was a major repair and construction work. Sultan Qaitabai took personal interest in this work. The walls, roof, tomb and flooring were completed within two years. It took another two years for the ornamentation work to be

completed. The total cost came to 120,000 *Dinars*. Sultan Ashraf Qaitabai was a devoted king. Beside repairs and reconstruction of Masjid he constructed a large tavern for the pilgrims and a school. He granted scholarships for the students and established a trust for proper maintenance of the Masjid complex. In 892 AH (1490 AD) the tombs developed cracks needing repairs that were promptly carried out.

Sultan Salim Shah Thani: After Sultan Qaitabai, when Ottoman Dynasty of Turkey became the servants of *Hurm*, Sultan Salim *Thani* repaired and decorated the Masjid in 980 H. He constructed an additional tomb above the earlier one and decorated it with beautiful precious stones.

Sultan Mohammed Bin 'Abdul Hameed: Cracks developed again in 1223 AH (1817 AD). At this time the reconstructed tomb was painted in green colour by Sultan Mohammed Bin 'Abdul Hameed. From then onwards the tomb became famous by the name of *Gunbad-ul-Khidhrah* (Green Tomb). It became a tradition to paint this tomb in green.

Sultan Mahmood: In 1233 AH the tomb was renovated and redecorated by Sultan Mahmood after repairs and renewal

Sultan 'Abdul Majeed Khan: Masjid al-Nabi became old and weak after almost four centuries since it was reconstructed by Egyptian Sultan Ashraf Qaitabai in 887 AH. In 1263 AH (1847 AD) attention of Sultan 'Abdul Majeed Khan of Turkey was drawn towards it. He started the reconstruction in 1265 AH. The old Masjid was

demolished gradually and reconstructed in stages without causing many disturbances to the public. It took thirteen years for the work to be completed. The Masjid was constructed with red stone obtained from the mountain of Jamawat situated at Zul-Hateefa. This was the most beautiful and magnificent renewal of the Masjid. Qur'anic *Ayaat* and the name of the Prophet (SAWS) were written on the walls in beautiful calligraphy. He also extended the Masjid in the western side and constructed four beautiful doors. An area of 1293 square meters was added during this construction.

Malik 'Abdul 'Aziz: In 1368 AH (1949 AD) Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz of Saudi dynasty embarked upon an ambitious expansion, renovation and modernisation programme. The compound wall of the Masjid was dismantled and the foundation stone for expansion work was laid. The king entrusted the work to Muhammad Bin Laden with no restriction of expenditure. Widening of the roads on all the sides of the Masjid was also included in the plan.

The work started in 1370 AH (1950 AD) and took five years to complete. Extension of the Masjid was done mostly in the northern direction and partly in the eastern and western directions. All the buildings, which were Adjacent to the Masjid, were demolished and 35,000 square meters of land was included in the Masjid complex. The new building was made of concrete and decorated with carved stones making the structure very strong and beautiful.

The establishment of a modern infrastructure and improved accommodations for the visitors saw the number of pilgrims to Makkah and Madinah increase rapidly beginning in the 1960s. By 1970 AD, the number of pilgrims had reached one million. In 1973 AD, King Faisal Ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz, ordered that the western side of the Masjid be shaded from the sun. Although this project increased the area in which visitors to the Masjid could pray, it was only a temporary solution. A more permanent arrangement for the Masjid was needed. A panel of experts headed by King Fahd Ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz launched a three-year study to formulate plans for a major expansion of the Masjid. Once the plans were approved and preparations completed, construction began in earnest in 1985 AD.

A factory was set up outside Madinah to manufacture artificial stones, which were to be used in this building. High quality marble was used for flooring and covering the pillars. Unique sliding tombs were fixed on a part of the roof and elevators were provided. Two more 70 feet high minarets and five additional doors were also added. High quality carpets are used for covering the floor. Once completed in 1992 AD, it expanded the areas of the Masjid by approximately 15-fold to 1.78 million square feet with ten doors, allowing more than 700,000 visitors to pray simultaneously.

A similar expansion project for Masjid al-Haraam in Makkah, undertaken concurrently with that for the Prophet's Mosque, more than doubled its size allowing more than one million worshippers to pray at a time. The

implementation of these two projects would cost more than 70 billion Sa'udi *Riyals* (US \$18.66 billion).

The expansion project for the Masjid involved new buildings on three sides of the existing structure, and a vast courtyard surrounding it paved with marble and inlaid with geometric Islamic designs. The new buildings provide extensive roofed area for *Salaat*. Within the new structure there are also 27 courtyards open to the sky. In inclement weather, concrete domes slide into place to cover these courtyards. Two larger open courtyards, with six electro-mechanical retractable umbrellas, are covered and uncovered depending on the weather. The retractable domes and umbrellas, as well as the other electrical and mechanical systems in the Masjid complex are monitored and controlled from a computerised automation centre in the basement. This centre also controls the air conditioning system, one of the largest and most innovative of its kind. Located at a plant 4.3 miles away, the system pumps 17,000 gallons of chilled water per minute through pipes into the basement of the Masjid, where it is used to cool air circulating throughout the complex.

The expansion project added six new minarets to the four existing ones. Each minaret is 360 feet high topped by a 23 feet brass crescent weighing close to five tons. Several kinds of marble and granite were used to build the vast open courtyard plaza that surrounds the new structure. Lights mounted on marble and brass pillars illuminate the entire area at night.

As the Masjid has expanded in recent decades, so is the city that surrounds it. The city of the Prophet (SAWS) is no longer the small town enclosed by walls that it was at the turn of the century. Today, it is a vibrant city of half a million people where the old and new blend in harmony, complementing each other. The religious and historic sites in and around the city have been preserved and renovated to allow visitors to appreciate their role in the history of the Kingdom of Islam. At the same time, new amenities and services have been established to facilitate the city's social and physical growth.

THE LATEST DETAILS OF MASJID AL-NABI

S. No.	Details	Area Numbers /
1.	Total Covered Area	82,000M ²
2.	Open Surrounding Area	2,35,000M ²
3.	Extended Area of Roof	67,000M ²
4.	Combined Extended Area	3,84,000M ²
5.	Height of Walls	12.55M
6.	Height of Minarets	47.5M (1), 72 M (2), 60 M (1), 104 M (6)

7.	Number of Minarets	10
8.	Number of Doors	85
9.	Number of Movable Domes	27
10.	Total Number of Domes	167
11.	Number of Columns	6,000
12.	Number of Lighting Points	21,820
13.	Number of Chandeliers	305
14.	Open Courtyards Inside	2
15.	Umbrellas (Remote opening/ closing)	12
16.	Number of Loud Speakers (Large)	480
17.	Number of Loud Speakers (Small)	7,300
18.	Escalators for Roof	6
19.	Stair Cases	18
20.	Parking Capacity	4,500 Cars

Hurm Al-Madni (Sacred Boundary):

The limit of *Hurm-ul-Madni* is 12 miles in all the directions from Masjid al-Nabi as per the reliable *Ahadith* [Traditions of the Prophet (SAWS)].

Special Features of Masjid al-Nabi

Like *Ka'bat-ullah*, Masjid al-Nabi too has special status for its piety and exceptional rewards. The following are established exceptional rewards as per the reliable *Ahadith*:

- The Prophet (SAWS) said: "One *Salaat* offered in Masjid al-Nabi is superior to fifty thousand *Salaat* in other mosques." (Ibn Majah).
- The Prophet (SAWS) said: "In my Masjid (Masjid al-Nabi), when compared to other mosques the reward of one *Salaat* is one thousand times more except Majid al-Haraam." (Muslim and Bukhari).
- The Prophet (SAWS) said: "Do not travel any place with the intention of getting reward to any other place except Majid al-Haraam, Masjid al-Nabi and Masjid al-Aqsa." (*Bait-ul-Muqdas* in Jerusalem).
- Masjid al-Nabi is the first and the last Masjid of *Ummat-ul-Muslimeen* constructed by their Prophet (SAWS).

Attempt to Steal the Respectable Body of the Prophet (SAWS)

In 557 AH (1164 AD) Christians made an attempt to steal the respectable body of the Prophet (SAWS). They deputed two people who used to dress like Moroccans and tell others that they were from Andulus (Spain under Muslim rule). They took a house on rent near the burial place of the Prophet (SAWS). To deceive people they started praying in Masjid al-Nabi regularly. They started digging a secret tunnel from their house towards the grave of the Prophet (SAWS). They used to throw the dugout earth in the well of their house or throw it outside in the graveyard of *Jannat-ul-Baqi*. They continued their secret activity for a long time and were sure of success. They forgot that Allah knows everything and has the power to do anything directly or indirectly.

Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi's uncle Nooruddin Zangi was the ruler of Syria those days. He saw a dream that the Prophet (SAWS) pointing out at two persons telling him: "Save me from them". Nooruddin got up in bewilderment, offered *Salaat* and went back to sleep. Again he saw the same dream thrice in a single night. Then he called his minister Jamaluddin Mousli who was known for his piety and wisdom. The king told him about the dream and ordered him to arrange the Journey to Madinah. They started their journey on one thousand camels and reached Madinah in sixteen days. Nooruddin Zangi entered Masjid al-Nabi offered the *Salaat* and started thinking about the future course of action. His minister asked him whether he could recognise the faces of those

persons whom he saw in the dream. The king answered that he could. Then the minister called all the people of Madinah. They came but no one was like those whom Nooruddin Zangi saw in the dream. The king gave them presents and enquired whether any one is left. He was informed that only two persons who are from Muraqash (Morocco) did not turn up. The king called for them. When they came he immediately recognised them. When asked they informed the king that they came for Hajj and *Ziarat* (visit to pay respect) and would stay for one month more. The king handed them over to his people and went to their house. After searching he could find the way to the secret tunnel dug towards the grave of the Prophet (SAWS). This tunnel was dug below the basement of Masjid al-Nabi.

When Nooruddin Zangi disclosed this disgusting and loathsome act of those two pious looking wicked persons to the people of Madinah they were astonished. While interrogated they accepted that they were Christians and were paid heavily before being sent to Madinah to remove the body (remains of the body buried) of the Prophet (SAWS) and take it with them. After their crime was proved both of them were given death penalty and their bodies were burned.

After this Sultan Nooruddin Zangi dug a trench on all sides of graves of the Prophet (SAWS) and his two companions, and filled it with molten lead so that no other person should try to come inside by breaking the walls.

However attempts were made twice to transfer the bodies of the Prophet (SAWS) and the two *Khalifahs* from Madinah to Egypt. First attempt mentioned in *Tareekh-e-Baghdad* by Ibn Al-Najar was that of few followers of king of Egypt Al-'Ubaidi, attempted to transfer the bodies to Egypt so that the people will start coming to Egypt for the pilgrimage. When people of Madinah came to know about this conspiracy they wanted to kill them but they escaped.

Describing the other event Al-Mas'udi quotes the statement given by Shamsuddin Sawwab, a servant of Masjid al-Nabi that some people from Syria came to Madinah and gave lot of money to chief of Madinah for his permission to take the bodies to Egypt. The chief of Madinah agreed and instructed Shamsuddin Sawwab to open the door of the room where the graves are located. In the night some people came with digging tools. When they were about to enter the room a big heap of earth fell on their heads. They were buried under it and died.

Hujrat-ul-Mutahharah: This is a simple one-room habitat of Ayeshah (RA) that now forms part of the Masjid complex. The Muslims of the world accept the *Hujrah Al-Mutahharah* to be the same house in which the Prophet (SAWS) breathed his last.

The dimensions of the room as it exists today are 8 m X 7.5 m. The Prophet (SAWS) constructed this simple house from the same material by which the Masjid al-Nabi was constructed. It had two doors, one leading to the Masjid and the other opening towards north. The Prophet (SAWS) is buried in the same room. His face was turned

towards *Ka'batullah*. His body was at a distance of about 90 centimetres from southern wall. The length of the grave is 170 centimetres. When the first *Khalifah* and closest companion of the Prophet (SAWS) Abu Bakr (RA) died, as per his will, which was accepted by his daughter and wife of the Prophet (SAWS) Ayesah (RA), he was also buried in the same room. His head is near the shoulder of the Prophet (SAWS). His grave is at a distance of 90 centimetres from that of the Prophet (SAWS). When the second *Khalifah* 'Umar (RA) died, he too, as per his expressed desire and with permission of Ayesah (RA), was buried in the same room next to Abu Bakr (RA) at a distance of 90 centimetres.

Al Qasim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr (RA) narrates that he requested Ayesah (RA) to show him the grave of the Prophet (SAWS). When she opened the door of room he saw three graves. The graves were not in line. The grave of Abu Bakr Siddiq (RA) was in line with the shoulder of the Prophet (SAWS) and that of 'Umar Bin Khattab (RA) was further down. This is corroborated by the following traditions:

- There is a narration in *Sahi* Bukhari that during the period of *Khalifah* Al-Walid the eastern wall of *Hujrah Mutahharah* collapsed. During its reconstruction a foot was discovered. People got surprised and thought that it was the foot of the Prophet (SAWS). It was however clarified by Urwah that it was the foot of 'Umar (RA).

- Ayeshah (RA) had partitioned her room in two parts. She used to live in one and the other had the graves.
- There is another tradition that the legs of 'Umar (RA) were near the basement of the wall.
- These is one more supporting narration from 'Abdulla Bin 'Ubaidulla (RA) that when the legs of 'Umar (RA) could not be accommodated in the room the basement was dug to accommodate them because he was very tall person.

There is a place for the fourth grave in the room. Ayeshah (RA) was willing for the burial of Hassan Bin Ali (RA) there but *Bani Umayya* resisted it. Initially Ayeshah (RA) desired that she be buried there, but after the burial of 'Umar (RA) she changed her mind and told 'Abdulla Bin Zubayr (RA) that she be buried in the nearby graveyard, *Jannat-ul-Baqi*, instead.

Changes in *Hujrat-ul-Mutahharah*: 'Umar (RA) was first to make a few changes in *Hujrat-ul-Mutahharah*. He replaced the walls made of the trunks of date trees with a strong wall. 'Abdulla Bin Zubayr (RA) further strengthened it by increasing its thickness.

Reconstruction of *Hujrat-ul-Mutahharah*: Ummavi *Khalifah* Al-Walid Bin 'Abdul Malik purchased the surrounding houses belonging to the honourable wives of the Prophet (SAWS) for the purpose of expanding of the Masjid. He instructed chief of Madinah 'Umar Bin 'Abdul Aziz to dismantle the room and reconstruct it and also to

extend the Masjid. When the first house was dismantled three graves were found, which were covered by mud. Initially 'Umar Bin 'Abdul Aziz wanted to repair those graves himself. Later he deputed his subordinate for the purpose.

When the mason, whose name was Werdan, started digging the basement, to the surprise of all lower portions of two legs was found. 'Abdullah Bin 'Ubaidulla told them that the legs are of 'Umar Bin Al-Khattab (RA). Because of insufficient space in the room the legs were put in the basement.

'Umar Bin 'Abdul 'Aziz constructed the *Hujrah Al-Mutahharah* with black stones. The height of the walls became 6.75 meters. He constructed a stone fence to surround the *Hujrat-ul-Mutahharah*. The floor of the compound is slightly at a higher level from the rest of the area.

Suffah: There is a platform called *Suffah* just behind the *Hujrat-ul-Mutahharah*. Poor Muslims, who had no families and no homes, stayed there. They were called *Ashab-us-Suffah* (People of *Suffah*). The Prophet (SAWS) had special regards for these people and desired them to stay close to him.

Columns in the Masjid that had made history

The columns in the southern section of the Masjid were erected during the renovation done by Sultan 'Abdul 'Hameed of the Usmani *Khilafat*, in place of those built by the Prophet (SAWS) using palm tree trunks. There are eight

columns, which are of special significance and as such could be historic.

Column of Perfume (*'Amud-ul-'Itr*): Mussalama ibn Al-Akwa, a companion of the Prophet (SAWS), was often seen praying near this column. When asked about the reason he said the Prophet (SAWS) was always keen to say his *Salaat* at this place.

Imam Malik also said the best place for voluntary prayer is at the perfumed column.

This column was slightly moved in the *Qiblah* direction and part of it was taken into the niche.

Column of 'Ayesah (RA) (*'Amud-ul-'Ayesah*): It is the third from the pulpit, the third from the grave and the third from the position of the *Qiblah*. It was also known as the column of *Al-Mohajireen* (Emigrants) who used to gather at it.

A third name for it is the Lottery Column. Tabrani, in his book *Al-Awsat*, narrated from 'Ayesah (RA) who quoted the Prophet (SAWS) as saying; 'In my Masjid there is a place which if people were aware of its significance, would crowd at it to the extent that they would have to draw a lot to find room for prayer.'

'Ayesah (RA) declined to disclose this place but it was believed that she secretly told Abdullah Ibn Zubayr (RA) about it.

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was also believed to have led the mandatory (*Fardh*) *Salaat* from this place several times before moving to his pulpit after the change of *Qiblah* from Masjid al-Aqsa to Masjid al-Haram.

Abu Bakr (RA) 'Usman Ibn 'Affan 'Abdullah Ibn Al-Zubayr and 'Amir Ibn 'Abdullah had also prayed at this column.

Column of Repentance ('*Amud-ul-Tawbah*): This column is fourth from the *Mimber* (Pulpit). It is also known as column of Abi Libabah ('*Amud-ul-Abi Libabah*) because Abu Libabah had tied himself to it for many days as a penance for his unjust disclosure of a secret of the Prophet (SAWS) to his old allies, the Jewish tribe of Bani Qurayzah. He felt guilty because of his action so he tied himself up to the column and went without food or water for several days swearing that he would never leave the place until the Prophet (SAWS) himself had untied him. His daughter would untie him only for *Salaat* or when he wanted to attend to nature's call and would tie him up afterwards. Prophet (SAWS) finally untied him after Allah (SWT) approved his sincere repentance as stated in the Holy Qur'an.

Another story behind Abu Libabah's action says he had tied himself to the column because he failed to go with the Prophet (SAWS) on battle of Tabuk.

Prophet (SAWS) used to offer his *Nafl Salaat* (voluntary prayers) at his column. He also used to sit behind it after *Salaat Al-Fajr* (early morning prayers) talking to the poor, weak and new entrants to Islam

informing them about the revelations of the previous night.

Column of the Bed ('Amud-ul-Firash): It is the one adjoining the window of the *Hujrah Al-Mutahharah* and the one next to 'Amud-ul-Tawbah from the eastern side. Prophet (SAWS) had a bed made of palm leaves, which was put for him near this column to sleep on sometimes. This is how the column acquired its name.

Column of the Guard ('Amud-ul-Harith): It is one behind the 'Amud-ul-Tawbah from the north and also called 'Amud-ul-'Ali Ibn Abu Talib because he used to offer his *Salaat* near it. He also used to sit close to its part Adjacent to the door of the Prophet (SAWS) room in order to guard him. The succeeding rulers of Madinah also used to offer *Salaat* at this column.

Column of Delegations ('Amud-ul-Wafad): It is behind the Column of Guard from the north. The Prophet (SAWS) used to sit at this column to receive tribal delegations. Many of the companions of Prophet (SAWS) would often sit there.

Column of Tahajjud ('Amud-ut-Tahajjud): It is behind the house of Fatimah (RA) from the north. It has a niche where if one stands on it, the Bab-ul-Jibriel will be to his left side. The Prophet (SAWS) had a praying rug made of straw, which he used to take out late at night, put behind the house of Fatimah (RA) and start praying. This *Salaat* is known as *Tahajjud*. When his companions joined him he told them that it was a voluntary prayer, which he did not

want to tell them about lest it would be made mandatory for them.

Pulpit of the Prophet (SAWS) (*Mimber*): Once, the Prophet (SAWS) brought a trunk of a palm-tree to take rest while he was delivering the sermons. One of the companions from *Ansaar* saw him doing this and offered to make a better pulpit to sit on. The Prophet (SAWS) agreed whereupon the companion made the pulpit from wood with three or four steps. The Prophet (SAWS) found it comfortable to sit on between sermons. He used to stand on the third step while delivering his sermons.

When Abu Bakr (RA) became *Khalifah*, he stood on the second step. *Khalifah* 'Umar (RA) stand on first step and *Khalifah* 'Usman (RA) did the same but returned to the third step after six years.

Khalifah Mu'awiya redesigned the pulpit which had six steps.

The pulpit was burnt down during the conflagration of 654 AH (1258 AD). Al-Muzaffar, ruler of Yemen, sent a new one made of sandalwood. It was in use for ten years when it was replaced with the one sent by Al-Zahir Baibars Al-Bandaqari of Egypt in 664 AH (1268 AD). This pulpit remained in use till 797 AH (1397 AD) when Al-Zahir Barquq sent a replacement. Yet another pulpit replaced this one in 880 AH (1486 AD) sent by A-Mu'ayid Sheikh Manbra. Six years later Masjid al-Nabi suffered extensive damage due to fire in 888 AH (1484 AD). The citizens of Madinah constructed a new pulpit with brick and mortar. Two years later, in 888 AH (1486 AD), Al-

Ashraf Qaitabai sent a pulpit made of marble to replace it. Again in 998 AH (1593 AD), Sultan Murad of Ottoman Empire sent a new pulpit made of marble, which was considered one of the wonders of the world at that time. It was aesthetic looking and ornamented with gold. The marble pulpit of Al-Ashraf Qaitabai was removed to Masjid-ul-Quba and re-erected there. Thus, both these pulpits of marble still exist in the two mosques.

Sacred Rawdhah (Garden): Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) has said that one of the gardens of Heaven lies between his house and the pulpit. It is referred to as *Riyadh-ul-Jannah*. Most of the Islamic scholars agree that this garden is the stretch between the pulpit and the house of 'Ayesah (RA) (*Hujrat-ul-Mutahharah*).

Other Historical Mosques

Masjid al-Quba: While coming to Madinah the Prophet (SAWS) halted in village Quba, which is three km from Madinah. He stayed there for few days with 'Umru Bin 'Aouf (RA). During that period he constructed this Masjid. The Prophet (SAWS) took part personally in the construction of this Masjid by fetching stones. According to a tradition in *Tirmidhi* the Prophet (SAWS) said: "performing one *Salaat* in Masjid al-Quba is equal to one *'Umrah*. This Masjid covers an area of 6,100 sq. metres which was expanded many times.

Masjid al-Qiblatayn: The name of this Masjid, which stands for Masjid with two directions of *Salaat*, i.e. *Qiblah*. During a *Salaat* in this Masjid the Prophet (SAWS) received a divine command to change the direction from Masjid al-

Aqsa in the city of Jerusalem that was adopted for *Salaat*, to *Ka'bah* (*Bait-ullah*) in city of Makkah, which happen to be diametrically opposite to each other. Accordingly the Prophet (SAWS) changed the direction while still in *Salaat*. Thus the title of *Qiblatayn* got attached to the Masjid since then.

This Masjid is located in the north-west of Madinah. It was reconstructed by *Khalifah* Malik 'Abdul 'Aziz. At present it covers an area of 9X4.5 metres.

Graveyard '*Jannat al-Baqi*'

Jannat Al-Baqi is located a short distance away on the south-eastern side of Masjid al-Nabi. Approximately ten thousand companions of the Prophet (SAWS) and his family members lie buried here. Besides these *Sahabah*, the graves of several eminent personalities of Islam born in different periods are also here. The area of *Jannat Al-Baqi* has been extended many times to accommodate the dead in the city of Madinah. It is surrounded by wall that has four doors.

Graves of Martyrs of Uhad: Battle of Uhad was fought in 3rd H in which Muslims suffered heavy casualties. All martyrs lie buried here. The most prominent among them is the beloved uncle of the Prophet (SAWS) Hamza bin Muttalib (RA) who got martyrdom in this battle. His body was brutally mutilated by Hinda, wife of Abu Sufiyan (RA), who had not yet embraced Islam and commanding the enemy forces. The sight of the mutilated body of his beloved uncle made the Prophet (SAWS) very sad. His grave is well preserved till today. Saudi government

constructed a fence around the graves of the martyrs of Uhud.

CHAPETER 3

MASJID AL-AQSA

"Glory be to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (Majid al-Haraam) to the Farthest Mosque (Masjid al-Aqsa), whose precincts We did bless...." (Al-Isra; 17:1).

"Then Solomon began to build the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah. It was on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David, his father." (2 Chronicles 3:1)

Masjid al-Aqsa referred to in the Qur'anic *Ayah* and the Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem referred to in Jewish holy book cited above are both located in a vast compound on a dominating hill called Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem. Masjid al-Aqsa thus became a sacred place for Muslims though it ranks third after Ka'bah in the city of Makkah and Masjid al-Nabi in the city of Madinah, both in the Kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia. Similarly, the Dome of Rock, built during Ummavi period enclosing the rock on Mt. Moriah, claimed to be the 'Temple Mount' by Jews, is the most sacred place for Jews. Unfortunately this holy site has become bone of contention between the two great religious communities, Jews and Muslims, with far reaching consequences to the world political history. Ironically both claim the legacy of the great patriarch Prophet Ibrahim (AS) but have fought bitterly for its possession and control.

In view of the above it will be of interest to ascertain the views of the two main claimants – Jews and Muslims from the available material to get some insight of the issues involved.

What is The Temple Mount?

According to Jewish sources the Temple Mount is identified as the rock on Mt. Moriah where Prophet Ibrahim (AS), in pursuance of Divine command, offered his son Isaac [Prophet Is'haq (AS)] in sacrifice after travelling 8 miles from Hebron, where he had settled down after his migration from Ur in Chaldea, modern Iraq (Genesis 22:1-18). However, according to Islamic tradition it was not Isaac but Isma'il, the elder son of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) who was ordered to be offered in sacrifice by Allah (SWT), not at Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem but in the valley of Mina about 8 miles from Makkah (As-Saffat; 37:102-111). This extra-ordinary event of son and father bowing to the divine command without hesitation is perpetuated for ever in the ritual of sacrifice at the same place in Mina during the Hajj on the 10th of the last month (*Zil-Hajj*) of Islamic calendar, every year, by millions of pilgrims. However, no such ritual was ever conducted by Jews at any time in recorded history.

An article by Randall Price under the title 'A Brief History of the Jewish Temple' hosted on web site 'Jewish Virtual Library' is given below to appreciate the Jewish point of view.

“The history of the Jewish Temple begins and ends in prophecy. The Sanctuary (a term inclusive of God's

dwelling in all its forms) was revealed to Abraham in its sacrificial service and permanent location on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:2, 14). Enlarging the Abrahamic revelation in similar terms, Moses receives prophetic instructions at the time of the Exodus for Israel's relationship to the Sanctuary (Ex. 15:17). Later on Mount Sinai, he receives the heavenly blueprint for the Sanctuary and its vessels (Ex. 25:8-9, 40). This verse is important in that it shows that the divine ideal for the Sanctuary is God's manifest Presence on earth among His people (vs. 8; cf. its Millennial expression - Zech. 2:10-12), and that the same celestial pattern (vss. 9, 40) was used for both the Tabernacle and the Temple (cf. 1 Chron. 28:11-19; cf. Rev. 15:5). The Tabernacle is distinguished from the Temple in that it was a portable and temporary dwelling place for God's Presence (Ex. 40:36-38; cf. 2 Sam. 7:6) whereas the Temple was to be a permanent and eternal habitation (2 Chron. 7:16; Ezek. 37:26-28). In token of their mutually prophetic purpose, when the First Temple was built, the Tabernacle/Tent of Meeting was apparently included within it (1 Kings. 8:4; 2 Chron. 5:5).

“It is King David who, meditating on the divine ideal (cf. Psa. 132) is moved to begin the process of building the First Temple (2 Sam. 7:2; 1 Chron. 17:1). However, since the Temple was designed to regulate the universal peace brought by God's Presence on earth during the Millennium (David only understands the restricted concept, cf. 2 Sam. 7:1), it could only be completed by one who was a fitting representative of God's peaceful program (1 Kings. 3:3-14; 5:3). Yet David was in prophetic succession to those to whom God had previously revealed the Temple's

program. This is seen in God's reminding David of the Abrahamic promise (2 Sam. 7:10), and repeating to him the Mosaic revelation (1 Chron. 28:11, 19). On this basis (as a founder, not a builder), David was qualified to make financial and material preparations for the Temple (1 Chron. 29). Solomon ("His peace") however, was to construct the Temple based on the terms of his father's covenant (2 Sam. 7:12-13; 1 Kings. 5:5; 6:12-13). In his prayer of dedication (1 Kings. 8) is revealed both the Temple's divine ideal as the place of God's Presence (vss. 27-34) and its universal (Millennial) function (vss. 41-43, 56-60).

"The Davidic Covenant which provided for a permanent Temple in Jerusalem was nonetheless conditioned upon the Nation's obedience. This meant that throughout Israel's future history the Temple could be removed and returned as often as Israel was fickle or faithful to the covenant. As history unfolded, the First Temple was destroyed in 586 BC as a direct result of covenantal violations. The downward slide began already in the time of Solomon (1 Kings. 11:1-13) and culminated with King Manasseh (2 Kings. 21:7-14), and were especially prolonged with respect to violations of the Sabbath (2 Chron. 36:21).

"Restoration began with the return and rebuilding of the Second Temple under Zerubbabel in 515 BC (Ezra 1-6), but because of continued covenant violations (cf. Ezra 9; Neh. 13; Mal. 1-4) the millennial restoration envisioned by the Prophets (cf. Ezek. 40-48) was postponed (cf. Hag. 2:1-9). Half a millennium later, perhaps a decade before Jesus

was born in Judea; the Second Temple was in such severe need of repairs that the reigning king Herod the Great refurbished it completely, even expanding its size. Although newly restored, it was still subject to the old terms of the covenantal contract, and with the Nation's rejection of Jesus as Messiah the Temple was again doomed to desolation. All of Jesus' pronouncements of the Temple's destruction (Matt. 24:2/Mk. 13:2; Luke. 21:6, 20-24) must be viewed in this light, and not as a rejection or replacement of the Temple as a legitimate institution. In fact joined immediately to Jesus' own pronouncement of the Temple's desolation (Matt. 21:38) is His promise (in the word "until") of Israel (and the Temple's) restoration (Matt. 23:39). This and Jesus' positive statements concerning the Temple elsewhere (Matt. 12: 4; 17:24-27; 23:16-21; Jn. 2:16-17) and especially in His Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14) hold out the prophetic promise that the history of the Temple would be continued in the future."⁶

6. **Bibliography:** Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews; Jewish Wars*; Mina C. Klein & H. Arthur Klein, *Temple Beyond Time: The Story of the Site of Solomon's Temple* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1970 [general Jewish perspective], Joan Comay, *The Temple of Jerusalem* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975) [general Jewish perspective], Benjamin Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1975) [Conservative Jewish perspective], Rabbi Shaul Schaffer & Asher Joseph. Engl. Ed. Rabbi Asher Feuchtwanger, *Israel's Temple Mount: The Jews' Magnificent Sanctuary* (Jerusalem: Achva Press, 1975) [Orthodox Jewish perspective], Meir Ben-Dov. *In the Shadow of the Temple: The Discovery of Ancient Jerusalem*. Trans. Ina Friedman (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982) [secular Jewish perspective], Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1985) [Jewish, higher critical, perspective], Rabbi Leibel Reznick, *The Holy Temple Revisited* (New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993) [Orthodox Jewish perspective], Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple:*

With this interesting account of the reality and significance of the Temple, it will be of further interest to know its brief history in chronological order. According to Jewish tradition King Solomon [Prophet Sulaiman (AS)] built the First Temple on the rock on Mt. Moriah in 950 BC. *“Solomon, with help of Hiram of Tyre and 183,600 workers, builds the First Temple and Royal Palace using local limestone, cedar from Lebanon and great amounts of gold and silver. Temple built in seven years.”* (1 Kings 5-9, 2 Chronicles 2). In fact it was King David [Prophet Dawood (AS)] who wished to build a befitting temple in 1000 BC: *“David conquers Jebusite stronghold of Zion, builds city of David south of Temple Mount, reigns 33 years in Jerusalem after 7-year reign at Hebron.”* (2 Samuel 5:1-15). He is supposed to have returned the Ark containing the relics of Moses and Aaron (Prophets Musa and Haroon): *“David returns Ark to Jerusalem and places it in Tabernacle of Moses erected there.”* (2 Samuel 6:1-18, 1 Chronicles 15:1-16:43). *“David plans First Temple, but not permitted to build it.”* (2 Samuel 7:1-17) *“David purchases Threshing Floor of Araunah, site of First Temple and erects altar of sacrifice on Mt. Moriah.”* (2 Samuel 24:1-25 1 Chronicles 21:1-22:5). David had purchased the site from a Jebusite named Ornan late in his reign (website ‘templemount.org’ p: 2 of 16). The same rabbinical sources provide a more vivid and dramatic account of the construction of the First Temple built by Solomon: “both the First and Second Temples were built on the same foundations, at the same location somewhere on the Temple Mount. The site had to be a consecrated ground

Its Ministry and Services [updated edition] (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994) [Evangelical, Jewish-Christian perspective].

that had not been previously used for tombs and that was not a previous pagan worship site ('high place'). The innermost sanctuary of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, or Kodesh Hakodeshim, where the Ark of the Covenant was placed, marked the exact centre of the world, and was the innermost zone in holiness or sanctity in Jewish thought. The manifest presence of God, the *Shekinah*, was centred between the cherubim of the Ark and especially noted at the dedication of the First Temple:-

When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house. When all the children of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the earth on the pavement, and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever." (2 Chronicles; 7:1~3)

Moving outwards from the Holy of Holies one came to the Holy Place, and then to the Courts of the Priests, and of the women and the Jewish people, then the Court of Gentiles, and so on, out into the world in decreasing degrees of holiness. The Gentiles were the non-Jews and treated as outcasts. **(DIAGRAM)**

Tuvia Sagiv in his paper also suggests that: "The Roman architectural practices of the time featured a rectangular basilica, and a polygon structure opposite a

courtyard. When this architecture is overlaid on the Temple Mount, it matches the Masjid al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock exactly. This unique architectural similarity suggests that the Roman Temple to Jupiter may have been on this very site, converted for Christian purposes in the 4th Century AD, and then served as the foundation for the present Muslim structures, Masjid al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock, which were built in the 7th Century AD." (Website 'templemount.org p: 12 of 16).

It may be observed that when *Khalifah 'Umar (RA)* visited the site of Masjid al-Aqsa there was no trace of Roman Temple or Christian church. It was in total ruins. Had there been a church he would have never ever touched it in the light of his decision to offer *Salaat* outside the Church of Sophorinous in order to protect from destruction in future. The Jews resent that, "the Temple presently remains under the supervision of the *Waqf*, the Supreme Muslim Council, and they have prevented any systematic archaeological studies. In fact, the *Waqf* has got increasingly restive to investigations of any kind on the Platform - which they consider to be a huge outdoor mosque sacred to Islam." (Website 'templemount.org' p: 14 of 16). If the area covered by the Dome of the Rock and Masjid al-Aqsa was under Jewish control they might have destroyed both the Holy relics of Islam in their hunt for the site of the First and the Second Temples.

This first Temple conceived by King David but built by King Solomon was destroyed in 587 BC by Nebuchadnezzar, "who laid siege to Jerusalem, burning the city, murdering inhabitants, and carrying a remnant

into captivity.” (2 Kings 24-25, 2 Chronicles 36, Josephus). “Temple destroyed and sacred vessels carried off to Babylon. These vessels desecrated in Babylon by Belshazzar.” (Daniel 5)

In 541 BC Jews started returning in small numbers and rebuilding of Jerusalem is undertaken: “First Jews return from Babylon in small numbers to rebuild the city and its walls. 70 years of exile terminated.” (Daniel 9, Haggai 2:18-19)

In 515 BC construction of Temple for the second time is completed despite fierce opposition and delays.

Gradually the Temple got neglected as mentioned above till it was again destroyed in 70 AD by the Roman army headed by Titus who sacked Jerusalem. During the last rebellion of the Jews in 132 AD called the Bar Kochba Revolt the Romans completely levelled Jerusalem, leaving the bald platform behind (Times Weekly - April, 16, 2001, p: 56). Further, in order “to obliterate any Jewish presence on the temple Mount they built a temple of Jupiter on the site.” (Website ‘mount temple.org’ p: 12 of 16). This had happened precisely according to the prediction of Jesus [Prophet ‘Isa (AS)], who was disgusted with the corruption in the Temple when one of his un-named disciple pointed out the massive stones used in the construction of the temple Jesus said that “not one stone will be left on another, all will be thrown down.” (Time Weekly - April, 16, 2001, p: 56, New York). Since no trace of the Temple on the Mount was left and even the Roman Temple of Jupiter was completely destroyed there have been many

conjectures and theories regarding the actual site of the Temple on the Mount. Some of them conjectured its location on the site of the dome of the Rock. This is also the traditional view of the Jews.

The supply of fresh water was crucially important in Jewish rituals – the fresh water was supplied by an aqueduct from the Judean Hills. The water channels that supplied Jerusalem began in the area of the Hebron Mountains, passed through the Solomon's Pools near Bethlehem, and flowed to Jerusalem. The lowest canal reached the Temple Mount through the Jewish Quarter and Wilson Bridge. According to the ancient authorities, the water conduit supplied water to the High Priests' *mikveh* (ritual bath) located above the Water Gate, and it also supplied water for the rinsing of the blood off the Azarah. Portions of this aqueduct are plainly visible to this day.

“Living water”, that is, fresh, flowing water, not water from a cistern, was required for the ritual bath (*mikveh*) used by the temple priests, and for the washings of the temple in connection with the sacrifices.

A survey of the level of the aqueduct reveals that if the Temple had been located at the same elevation as the present dome of the Rock shrine, the aqueduct would be over 20 meters too low to serve either the Azarah or the Water Gate. From this survey, it appears that the Temple must have been 20 meters lower and, thus, to the south. “If Tuvia Sagiv is correct the Temple site lies due east of Western Wall under the clump of tress between the

Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque.” (Website ‘templemount.org op. cit. p: 14 of 16)

This desecration was not redressed by the Jews until the Muslim conquest of the city by the Islamic forces during the reign of Second *Khalifah* ‘Umar (RA) in 638 AD when the entire place received due attention and restored to its present glory. The Masjid al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock, apart from other notable shrines, lend the ‘Noble Sanctuary’ its real sacred status, adored and taken care off by Muslims despite many political upheavals and changes.

An interesting episode that took place may be mentioned here. Accompanied with Sophorinus, Archbishop of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, *Khalifah* ‘Umar (RA) was going round the church when the time for mid-afternoon *Salaat* (*Salaat al-‘Asr*). He was offered a place to pray in the church itself to which he politely declined fearing it might establish a precedent which would threaten the church's continued use as a Christian house of worship. He prayed instead to the south of the church, now the site of Masjid al-Umar (RA) in Jerusalem. A mosque by the name ‘Masjid al-‘Umar’ exists till date reminding all about the respect which Islam showed towards followers of other faiths. It was built after his name on the site near a church where he had offered mid-afternoon prayer (*Salaat al-‘Asr*). For the first time in its long history, Jerusalem had been spared a bloodbath.

Islam exhorts Muslims to invite followers of other faiths in appealing manner but leaves the decision entirely to them. Should they choose to follow their own faith, it

simply adopts the policy of *“To you be your Way, and to me mine.”* (Al-Kafiroon; 109:6) for it firmly teaches: *“Let there be no compulsion in religion; Truth stands out clear from Error; whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks, and Allah hears and knows all things.”* (Al-Baqarah; 2:256)

What is The Dome of the Rock?

Jews claim that ‘The Temple Mount’ is what The Dome of the Rock is for Muslims. This is the most visible shrine in the entire area with its beautiful gold plated dome. It stands on or near the approximate site of the Jewish Temple (though scholars disagree whether it was the Holy of Holies or the Altar that stood on the site of the rock). It has even been suggested that the Temple building stood 80 meters further north, on the site of the small 16th century Dome of the Winds or Spirits (*Qubbat Al-Arwah*) on an east-west axis with the present Golden Gate.

Some 50 years after the visit of second *Khalifah* ‘Umar (RA), the Ummavi *Khalifah* ‘Abd Al-Malik built a beautiful building with a tomb on top on the rock (*Qubbat Al-Sakhra* in Arabic), from where the steed (*Burraq*)⁷ carrying the Prophet (SAWS) took a leap heaven-wards. He (or his son, the *Khalifah* Al-Walid I) also re-built the mosque built by *Khalifah* ‘Umar (RA) at the southern end of the compound.

7. It is derived from *Barq* meaning electricity-connoting speed of light.

The Dome of the Rock is one of the architectural glories of the world, and the only early Islamic sanctuary to have survived intact. The design of the building is basically Byzantine - double octagonal ambulatory encircling the Holy Rock (*Qubbat Al-Sakhra*). However, it is not a mosque but merely a shrine.

The Dome of the Rock is also an architectural expression of the ascendancy of Islam. The interior glass mosaics in the drum and dome contain representations of Byzantine imperial jewellery, and one of the ornate inscriptions affirms that *Allah (SWT) is One and not three; and that Prophet 'Isa (AS) (Jesus) was an apostle of Allah (SWT) and His Word (Kalimah), and not His son.*

The exterior of the Dome of the Rock has undergone several restorations and renovations. The exterior tiles were last restored in 1963. The dome was embellished in 1994 with a sheath of gold over the anodised aluminium by the Sa'udi government.

What is Masjid al-Aqsa?

There was no mention of any mosque before the famous event of *Isra* (Night Journey) followed by *Me'raj* (Ascending to Heavens) by Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) before his migration to Madinah. The verse quoted from the Holy Qur'an makes the first mention of it. According to a *Hadith* of the Prophet (SAWS) Masjid al-Aqsa was built nearly 27 years after the construction of Masjid al-Haraam. However we have no idea if the Masjid was into existence when the Prophet (SAWS) was taken to Jerusalem. *Khalifah* Umar (RA) could identify the site of the Masjid based on

the description given by the Prophet (SAWS). That the Masjid was a physical entity in antiquity cannot be denied otherwise the Holy Qur'an would not have mentioned. The Masjid was rebuilt on the site by the orders of the second *Khalifah* of Islam almost 15 years after the event of *Isra*.

Khalifah 'Umar (RA), visited Jerusalem to personally accept the surrender of the city from local Christians after the defeat of European Christian forces in 638 AD. He asked Sophorinous, the Archbishop of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to show the site where the Prophet (SAWS) had offered *Salaat* before (some traditions say after) his famous heavenly journey (*Me'raj*) sometime in 618 AD. After being shown a number of possible sites by the accompanying priest he identified one site that lay at the southern end of the compound which met the description given by the Prophet (SAWS). He found the area covered in dust and debris. He ordered the site to be cleared, participated personally in clearing it, and a mosque to be built over there. A timber mosque was built and aptly named 'Masjid al-Aqsa' - The Farthest Mosque - in accordance with Qur'anic *Ayah*.

Masjid al-Aqsa suffered many damages due to earthquakes and fires and was built and rebuilt several times. It was last rebuilt in 1035 AD and has since undergone several restorations/renovations - most recently in 1938-42. It was repaired after an extensive damage due to a fire deliberately set by a deranged Christian tourist in 1969 AD. The beautiful cedar wood

Mimber (Pulpit), donated by Salahuddin Ayyubi was also burnt down.

The design of the building is that of a basilica with a narrow central nave flanked by six aisles (14 aisles in an earlier 8th century phase). The decoration of the *Mehraab* (Prayer Niche) in the south wall was a gift of the Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi.

A stairway in front of the north entrance to the Masjid al-Aqsa leads down to a vaulted passageway and the walled-up Hulda Gates, which had been an entrance to the Temple Mount Platform at the time of the Herodian Second Temple.

During the Mamluk and Ottoman periods and until the mid-19th century, non-Muslims were not permitted onto the area of *Haram* enclosed by compound wall. The first known exception was made by order of the Ottoman Sultan in 1862, during the visit of the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII.

Why the Masjid is Sacred?

Not only Masjid al-Aqsa built on the place described by the Prophet (SAWS) where he led the *Salaat* but also the entire area enclosed in compound on Mt. Moriah is sacred by Muslims because it is mentioned in the verse in the Holy Qur'an quoted at the beginning.

“Glory be to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (Masjid al-

Haraam) to the Farthest Mosque (Masjid al-Aqsa), whose precincts We did bless..." (Al-Isra; 17:1)

The event of *Me'raj* is a turning point in the history of Islamic movement in more ways than one. Firstly, it was a reiteration of the divine message promulgated by Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) that disappointed the enemies of Islam on one hand and boosted the morale of the beleaguered community of Muslims. It occurred in the history of Islam at a time when all roads to Islam seemed to meet a dead end. The small group of dedicated Muslims in Makkah was subjected to extreme hardships in day to day life by their own kith and kin. Because of this some had even migrated to the neighbouring Ethiopia to escape the torture. The situation was truly hopeless.

The most significant outcome of the event of *Me'raj*, was the establishment of the daily five congregational *Salaat*. Its unfailing observance had had the most profound impact on the psyche of Muslims, both as an individual and as a community. It bound them together in a strong bond of brotherhood and equity. It became the most visible and glorious icon of Islam throughout the world since then.

Secondly, the miraculous event of *Me'raj* established the exalted status of the Prophet (SAWS) vis-à-vis the preceding prophets of Allah (SWT). His appointment, by the command of Allah (SWT), as the *Imam* (Prayer Leader) of all the Prophet symbolised the unity of all religions and the identity of the Divine Messages that all the Prophets conveyed to their respective peoples. The

congregational *Salaat* itself was a clear demonstration of the unity of the worshippers and the Worshipped - *Al-Ilah* or Allah meaning THE WORSHIPPED.

Thirdly, the fact that the last station in the mystic journey from the House of Allah (Ka'bah) to Heavens was *Bait-ell* the farthest known place of worship of ONE TRUE GOD was a loud and clear announcement of the universality and unity of HIS MESSAGE. Islam does not believe in Jewish God or Christian God or Muslim God. Whatever the name, they are all beautiful; it is ultimately the SAME SUPERME AUTHORITY. *Al-Ilah* as mentioned above fits the best.

Many took the hint and accepted Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), and embraced Islam. But many fell at the altar of ego and schisms and further hardened in their unjust and irrational attitude of opposing for the sake opposing.

Finally, Jerusalem was appointed the first *Qiblah* of Muslims when proper congregational *Salaat* were established in Madinah. Thus it became the *Haram* (Sacred) for Muslims after *Haram Al-Ka'bah* in Makkah Al-Mukarramah. It remained *Qiblah* for 17 months when in accordance with the Divine Command *Qiblah* itself was changed to the most ancient Ka'bah - *Bait-Allah* (House of Allah) as already mentioned.

This event too had great significance in the propagation of Islam. While most of the Jews pointed out that Islam did not have anything new to offer except

copying what was already given in their scriptures, others appreciated but did not embrace Islam.

Construction/Renovations/Expansions

The mosque of Al-Aqsa was first built on the orders of *Khalifah 'Umar (RA)* when he first visited Jerusalem to take the surrender of the local rulers in 638 AD. To his dismay he found the site full of garbage and utterly neglected. It was a modest structure made of wood and local building materials. A dome was also constructed over the rock of Mt. Moriah that is now called the Dome of Rock.

It is usually agreed that 'Abd Al-Malik, the Ummavi *Khalifah*, who was the patron of the Dome of the Rock, started the construction of Masjid al-Aqsa at the end of the 7th century AD. A major building phase took place during the rule of his son, 'Abd Al-Malik (709-715 AD).

The building suffered great damage due to a major earthquake in 746 AD. It was restored immediately. The Masjid and the Dome underwent expansions and renovations from time to time during the Abbasi period by *Khalifah Al-Mehdi (775-785)* and possibly by *Khalifah Al-Mansoor (743-75)*. A further reconstruction was executed during the Fatimi period in the 11th century AD. Moreover, several major restorations are known to have taken place during the 14th and 20th century AD. The mosque suffered damages by many earthquakes in 1016, 1033, 1546 and 1927 AD entailing extensive restoration and renovation works by the rulers, irrespective of political developments in the Islamic world.

Now Masjid al-Aqsa consists of a seven-bay hypostyled main hall with several additional small halls to the west and east of the southern section of the building. Unlike most hypostyled mosques the building does not have a clearly delineated courtyard as the whole area is its court including the Dome of the Rock and many other shrines located in it. It is capped with a silver dome, made of lead sheets, which together with the golden dome of the Dome of the Rock, constitute the most visible icon of the *Al-Haram Al-Sharif* or *Bait Al-Muqdas* in Jerusalem.

Period under Islam

In 637 AD, the Christian Archbishop of Jerusalem, Sophorinous, realised through the holy Scriptures (Zechariah 9, Vss. 9 and 10), that the second leader of the Islamic State, *Khalifah 'Umar* (RA), fits the description of the one who would open Jerusalem and free it from the evil empires. Sophorinous surrendered peacefully. *Khalifah Umar* (RA) and the Muslims, after securing Jerusalem, again established Masjid al-Aqsa as a holy place of worship. Both the Christians and the Jews were pleased with the arrival of *Khalifah 'Umar* (RA) and also the Muslims, with the just rule within the Islamic State.

The conquering Muslims brought a different attitude with them. In contrast to the Byzantine and Roman conquerors, who let the Temple Mount remain in ruins as a proof of the destruction of Jewish nationalism, the Muslims restored worship to the Mount. Under the Islamic rule some matters became easier for the Jews. They were officially allowed to live in the city and there is

evidence that on certain holy days they were even permitted to visit the Mount. Reports say that the Jews would march in procession around the walls of the Mount on festival days and pray at the gates. A document written in the tenth century indicates that one of the conditions for allowing the Jews to pray at the gates was that the Jewish community would be responsible for keeping the Mount clean. The Jews, the document states, were responsible to sweep the Mount. Other accounts indicate that Jews were employed in the Masjid area and that Jewish craftsmen made lamps for the Masjid.

Crusades

During the last 1400 years, with only one exception, the Mount had been in the hands of Muslims. On July 15, 1099 the Crusaders from Europe took control of Jerusalem from the Muslims. The Crusaders slaughtered the inhabitants of Jerusalem in an unjustified carnage. They tortured the Jews and the Muslims of Jerusalem and vandalised the city. They even burned Jews in their Temples and Muslims in Masjid al-Aqsa. They did not spare even the Arab Christians. Jews were sold into slavery and banished from Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock was re-consecrated as '*Temple Domini*' and Masjid al-Aqsa as '*Temple Solomonis*'. The Jews fled to Andulus (Spain) to seek protection under Islamic rule as Muslim society was based on their experience in Jerusalem. They lived and prospered there during the Islamic rule.

The Crusaders then began to use the Al-Aqsa Masjid as headquarters for the Knights of the Templar

who administered the Temple Compound. The tombs of the assassins and of Thomas Beckett, the Archbishop of Canterbury (1118-1170 AD), a remnant of the crusader's occupation, still exists today. After murdering Beckett, the assassins travelled to Jerusalem and took up with the Templar Knights. Their tombs are situated near the main entrance. The Western world rejoiced that Jerusalem was in the hands of 'Christians'.

The victory however, caused Muslims to immediately launch campaigns to regain the city and *Bait Al-Muqdas* from the European Christian Crusaders. The Muslim leader Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi (Saladin) proclaimed a *Jihad* and *Qital*, or holy war, to retake the land of Palestine. After ninety years of control by the Crusaders, Jerusalem was surrendered to Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi's army on October 2, 1187 AD. In contrast to the brutality of the Crusaders, Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi treated the defeated Crusaders with kindness and mercy. Dome of the Rock and Masjid al-Aqsa were restored to Islam, and the Christian icons which were created under the European-Christian-rule were removed.

The golden cross which was placed on the Dome of the Rock by the Crusaders was torn down. Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi removed Templar's headquarters from the mosque and restored its original status as the Masjid. The dome was covered with beautiful mosaics and a prayer niche (*Mehraab*) facing Ka'bah in Makkah al-Mukarramah was added.

Jerusalem was back in the hands of the Muslims and Europe was ready to avenge the defeat. Consequently a Third Crusade was undertaken (1189-1192 AD) to free Jerusalem from the armies of Sultan Salahuddin. Richard the Lion-hearted led England and other Crusaders in a fruitless attempt to retake the city. Thereafter, the Christians, Jews, and Muslims lived in harmony under Islamic rule.

During the control of holy places by Muslims, the restoration work on Dome of the Rock was undertaken. In 1190 AD, walls were overlaid with marble inscriptions in Arabic and doors made of brass, added in 1467AD. Persian tiles were added and lead-sheathing was given to it in 1735 AD.

Under Turkish Rule

The Ottoman Turks, non-Arab Muslims, became the dominant power in the 15th Century. In 1453 AD they captured the city of Constantinople and brought about the final funeral of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine). They renamed the city Istanbul and made it the centre of their empire. In 1517 AD, under Sultan Salim I, the Turks captured Jerusalem and the entire area of Palestine. The rule of the Turks over Jerusalem lasted exactly four hundred years. Sultan Sulaiman, son of Sultan Salim, built the walls, which today surround the Old City. Sultan Sulaiman restored the Masjid al-Aqsa and some of the present stained glass windows date to this period.

World Wars

The two great wars in Europe saw the fall of Ottoman Empire and fragmentation of the vast Muslim State as a result of the machination of the western powers led by United Kingdom with the connivance between Arab leaders. The most mischievous of all schemes was the carving out of a Zionist state of Israel in 1948 for non-Palestinian Jews who were already settled in Europe and other countries for centuries. The Jews got the wave of sympathy, because of the Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War (1939-45 AD).

Once the Jews gained control of Jerusalem, they terrorised and expelled the Arabs of Palestine from their native land, majority of whom are still refugees in neighbouring countries living at the mercy of UN. The land once again returned to a state of unrest and continues to agitate the Muslim world.

Ironically the Muslims, the protectors of Jews and Arab Christians who also believed and followed Prophet Ibrahim (AS), became the victims in their own land.

Birth of the State of Israel

The State of Israel was created by a UN mandate in 1948. Jerusalem was declared the capital of the new state. Political developments saw the division of Jerusalem between Israel and Jordan. The eastern part of the city came under the control of Jordan. In 1955-56 foundations of the Masjid al-Aqsa were strengthened and electric lighting system added.

In a six-day Arab-Israeli war of 1967 Israel captured the eastern part of Jerusalem. The Star of David, the Israeli flag flew over the Temple Mount swiftly. However, the control of the *Al-Haram AL-Sharif* was returned to Muslim soon. As an act of arson some extremist Jews set on fire the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1968 AD that destroyed the pulpit and *Mehraab*.

In the same year, the government of Israel started an archaeological project in the area of the Dome of the Rock causing great tension internationally. They began excavation in search of the Temple Of King Solomon. They were unable to locate the Temple Of King Solomon, but in the process they discovered the secret tunnel made by King Je-hoia-chin for getting provision for the beleaguered population of Jerusalem under siege in 586 BC.

The Israelis claimed that the search was a success because they discovered the collapsed tunnel of King Je-hoia-chin, which was in no way related to the Temple of King Solomon. This has no religious relevance, though it has historical significance. The sealed entrance was reopened without justification causing again the tension and apprehensions in the minds of Muslims. They seriously apprehend that these excavations would weaken the foundations of Masjid al-Aqsa and cause damage.

Milestones in the History of Temple Mount - Al-Aqsa Complex

Before conclusion it seems appropriate to recall the milestones in the history of the temple Mount and Masjid al-Aqsa in a chronological sequence:

Pre-Christian Era

2000 BC

- Abraham [Prophet Ibrahim (AS)] visits Melchizedek, King of Salem and Priest of El Elion ("God Most High") (Genesis 14:18-20, Hebrews 6:20-7:22).
- Abraham makes journey three days from Beershiva (or Garet) to Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice in obedience to God's command. God provides a substitute. (Genesis 22, Hebrews 11:8-19)

1400 BC

- After setting up the Ark at Shiloh near Shechem (Nablus), Joshua launches foray into Jerusalem. (Joshua 10:23, 15:63)

1000 BC

- King David [Prophet Dawood (AS)] conquers Jebosite stronghold of Zion, builds city of Jerusalem south of Temple Mount. He reigns 33 years in Jerusalem after 7-year reign at Hebron. (2 Samuel 5:1-15)
- King David returns Ark to Jerusalem and places it in Tabernacle of Moses erected there. (2 Samuel 6:1-18, 1 Chronicles 15:1-16:43).
- King David plans First Temple, but not permitted to build it. (2 Samuel 7:1-17)

- King David purchases Threshing Floor of Araunah, site of First Temple and erects altar of sacrifice on Mt. Moriah. (2 Samuel 24:1-25 1 Chronicles 21:1-22:5)

960 BC

- Solomon [Prophet Sulaiman (AS)] becomes king and enlarges Jerusalem. His reign lasts 13 years. (1 Kings 7:1-12)
- King Solomon, with help of Hiram of Tyre and 183,600 workers, builds the First Temple as well as Royal Palace using local limestone, cedar from Lebanon and great amounts of gold and silver. (Temple built in seven years.) (1 Kings 5-9, 2 Chronicles 2)

910 BC

- Ten northern and two southern tribes divided the Kingdom. Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt plunders temple carrying off much gold and silver. (1 Kings 14:25-28, 2 Chronicles 12:1-11)

835 BC

- Josh, King of Judah Josh repairs temple, establishes maintenance fund, and brings period of revival and reforms to southern kingdom. (2 Kings 12:5ff).

589-86 BC

- Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem. He razed the city murdering inhabitants and carrying a

remnant into captivity to Babylon. (2 Kings 24-25, 2 Chronicles 36, Josephus)

- Temple is destroyed and sacred vessels are carried off to Babylon. These vessels are desecrated in Babylon by Belshazzar. (Daniel 5)

573 BC

- Jeremiah prophesies a 70-year captivity in Babylon. (Jeremiah 29:1-14)
- Ezekiel receives a vision from God describing in detail the great Temple to be built during the reign of the Messiah in an age which is yet to come. (Ezekiel 40-48)

539 BC

- Persia conquers Babylon and the Holy Land. The ruler, Cyrus the Great permits the Jews in Babylon to return to Jerusalem.
- First Jews return from Babylon in small numbers to rebuild the city and its walls. 70 years of exile is terminated. (Daniel 9, Haggai 2:18-19)
- Second Temple is built despite fierce opposition and delays, beginning with erection of an altar of sacrifice on Mt. Moriah. Temple is completed after 15-year delay in 515 BCE.

332 BC

- King Alexander the Great defeats Persian Empire and assumes control of Holy Land.
- Priests from Jerusalem meet invading army of Alexander and dissuade him from destroying Jerusalem, by showing him Scriptures that predict his rise to power.
- After the death of Alexander, a series of wars between Syria and Egypt makes the Holy Land into multiple distresses. (Daniel; 9:24-27, 11:1-35; Zechariah; 9:1-10; Josephus)

175-163 BC

- The "little horn", a cruel Syrian (Seleucid) king, plunders Jerusalem, murdering many Jews. (Daniel; 11:21-35)
- Antiochus desecrates the temple, offers a sow upon the altar and carries off temple treasures. Worship and sacrifices halts in 15 December 167 BC.
- Jews, led by Judas Maccabaeus, revolt against the Greeks and recapture Jerusalem thus freeing the Temple from alien supervision.

63 BC

- Roman conquest of the Holy Land takes place (Daniel 2:40-43). Pompeii brazenly enters Holy of Holies, disappointed to find it empty.

- Judea, now renamed Syria Palestina, becomes Roman 'client state'.

37 BC

- Rome names Herod the Great King of Judea. Despite local resistance, he secures Jerusalem after five-month siege.

19 BC

- Herod begins rebuilding the temple on a huge platform.
- Building projects at Jericho, Hebron, and Caesarea to placate the Jews take place.

6 BC

- Jesus [Prophet 'Isa (AS)] is born in Bethlehem.

4 BC

- King Herod dies; his son Archelaus succeeds him in Judea.

After Christian era

6 AD

- Judea is placed under direct Roman rule.

30 AD

- Jesus enters Jerusalem, expels the moneychangers and merchants and confronts the Temple

leadership. He is arrested, found guilty of sedition and crucified at Golgotha.

70 AD

- Roman General Titus besieges Jerusalem destroying city and murdering inhabitants, causing terrible suffering and destruction. (Josephus).
- Temple set afire, soldiers tear every stone apart to get melted gold. Menorah and vessels are carried to Rome. Treasury is robbed.

136 AD

- Hadrian Undertakes rebuilding of Jerusalem as "Aelia Capitolina" provoking unsuccessful Bar Kochba revolts in 135 by devout Jews.
- Hadrian erects Temple of Jupiter on Temple Mount and statue of himself facing east. Jewish attempt to build Third Temple fails.

Byzantine Period (Constantine)

395-640 AD

- Roman Empire, by now Christian, splits permanently. The eastern half, known as the Byzantine Empire, is ruled from Constantinople.
- Church of the Holy Sepulchre is built.

614 AD

- Persian conquest takes place. 37,000 Christians are exiled to Persia. Jews are also banished from Jerusalem.

620 AD

- Mystical Night Journey (Isra) to Jerusalem by Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) happens.

629 AD

- Byzantine Emperor Herodius recaptures Jerusalem.
- Temple Mount neglected, becomes refuse heap.
- Herodius proposes building near temple.

Muslim Conquest**638 AD**

- Muslims overthrow Jerusalem's Byzantine rulers.
- According to Islamic tradition *Khalifah 'Umar (RA)* clears rubbish from the site of the present Al-Aqsa Mosque.

684-91 AD

- Abd Al-Malik executes the Extension of the city and rebuilding of walls and roads.
- Old wooden Al-Aqsa Mosque is constructed.

- Dome of the Rock is built by Abd Al-Malik (684-690 AD).

715 AD

- The original Masjid al-Aqsa, as it is today, is built.

746 AD

- Earthquake destroys Al-Aqsa Mosque.

868 AD

- Palestine is annexed by Egypt.

831 AD

- *Khalifah* Al-Mamoon orders restoration work on the Dome of the Rock.

940 AD

- Fatimi *Khalifahs* rule from Egypt.
- Al-Hakem orders destruction of churches and synagogues - 1010 AD.

1016 AD

- Earthquake causes structural damage on Temple Mount.

1099-1187 AD

- Crusaders' conquest the Holy Land in the name of Christianity.

- Many Jews and Moslems are murdered. Jews are sold into slavery and banished from Jerusalem.
- Dome of the Rock is re-consecrated as 'Temple Domini' and Al-Aqsa as 'Temple Salomonis'.

1033 AD

- Earthquake damages Al-Aqsa Mosque.

1187 AD

- Crusaders are defeated and Jerusalem is recaptured by Salahuddin Ayyubi.
- Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa is restored to Islam.
- Christian icons are removed.

1190AD

- Walls of Dome of Rock are overlaid with marble
- Inscriptions are added in Arabic.

1229 AD

- Al-Malik Al-Kamil of Egypt cedes Jerusalem to Frederick II.

1244-1517 AD

- Rule by Tartars, Mongols, Ayyubids and Mamluks.

1270-1290 AD

- Muslim control of the holy places regains.

- Restoration work on Dome.

1467 AD

- Brass doors are added to the Dome.
- Persian tiles are added by Sulaiman.

1735 AD

- Lead sheathing is added to the Dome.

1835-1874 AD

- Mosaic is removed.

1517 AD

- Ottoman Period - Turkish rule takes place.

1546 AD

- Earthquake causes serious damage in Jerusalem.

1832-1840 AD

- Turkish conquest by Sultan Salim I.
- Sulaiman the Magnificent builds walls and improves the city and its aqueducts.
- Jews were tolerated, but heavily taxed and property confiscated.

1831 AD

- Egyptian governor-ship under Mohammed Ali and Ibrahim Pasha.

1917 AD

- British capture of Jerusalem from the Turks.
- Temple Mount first is opened to Europeans.

1921-1947 AD

- Rule under British Mandate.
- UN participation in November 1947.
- Deterioration of British rule.
- Waves of immigration by Jews under very adverse conditions.

1927 AD

- Earthquake weakens Al-Aqsa Mosque foundations.

1948 AD

- Rebirth of the State of Israel.
- Jerusalem becomes Capital City in December 1949.
- Keneset is built.

1951 AD

- July 20, King Abdullah is assassinated at entrance to Al-Aqsa Mosque.

1955-1965 AD

- Jerusalem is divided.
- Jordanian rule over old city.
- Dome foundations are strengthened by Jordanians and electric lights are added.

1967 AD

- Jerusalem reunited in 6-day war.
- Israeli flag flies temporarily over Temple Mount.
- Control and stewardship of Temple Mount returns to Muslims.

1968 AD

- Fire destroys *Mimber* and *Mehraab* in Al-Aqsa Mosque.

CONCLUSION

The three sacred houses of worship in Islam: Masjid al-Haraam in Makkah, Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem and Masjid al-Nabi in Madinah are divine components of a continuum symbolising the unity in trinity of three monotheistic religions of the world.

Masjid al-Haraam (Ka'bah) was the first House of Allah (SWT) built on earth by the Patriarch of the Prophets, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) together with his elder son Prophet Isma'il (AS) dedicated to the worship of One and only One God - Allah (SWT). This marked the commencement of a formal ritual for the worship of Allah (SWT) on earth. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was also commanded by Allah (SWT) to proclaim the sanctity of this House as the sanctuary, for within its precincts acts of violence are completely forbidden. All the believers, since the origin of Ka'bah were exhorted to pay homage to this House of Allah (SWT), circumstances permitting, at least once in lifetime. It is believed that all the Prophets from Prophet Ibrahim (AS) onwards visited the Ka'bah for Hajj, a religious ritual continuing uninterruptedly for over four thousand years. Even the pagans continued it, though in a corrupted form. It was left to Muhammad (SAWS), the Prophet of Islam and the last (Seal) of the Prophets of Allah (SWT), to cleanse it completely of all its polytheistic profanity, restore its pristine purity and sanctity and rededicate it for the worship of Allah (SWT) alone. It was in Makkah, where the first House of worship of Allah (SWT) is located, that commenced the revelations of final divine guidance, Al-

Qur'an, to Muhammad (SAWS), the Seal of the Prophets for the guidance of all mankind for all time to come.

Masjid al-Aqsa, the second sacred mosque in historical sequence, is located in the same precinct where the Temple Mount was constructed by Prophet Sulaiman (AS) which contained the Ark of the Covenant with the relics of Prophets Musa (AS) and Haroon (AS). It is in this Temple area that Prophet 'Isa (AS) (Jesus) was named and circumcised, where he started the purification of the Temple by driving the moneylenders and fraudulent businessmen trading inside the Temple (Dolphin Lambert & Michael Collin - 2002 - On the Location of First and Second Temples in Jerusalem - website templemount.org/theories.html - p: 3 of 16). It was in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, located in the Temple Area that Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) led all the Prophets in *Salaat* (Prayer) symbolising distinctly the unity of all the monotheistic religions. It was from a site, within the same Temple Mount - Al-Aqsa Complex, identified as Sakhra (rock), now covered with a dome called 'the Dome of the Rock', that Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was privileged to commence his Ascent to Heaven (*Me'raj*), and brought back with him that supreme divine gift of *Salaat*, five times a day, for the Muslims in order to keep them united, and on the straight path and protect them from committing blasphemous acts. Thus the Temple Mount - Al-Aqsa Complex symbolises the confluence of the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam founded respectively by Prophets Musa (AS), 'Isa (AS) and Muhammad (SAWS), and speaks eloquently for the unity of these religions. Unfortunately due to selfish interests of self-seeking

politicians it has become a highly contentious and divisive issue. It is hoped that sanity and better sense will eventually prevail replacing madness, conflict and violent confrontation, which characterise the current situation among the major communities of the area representing the three monotheistic religions. It may however be mentioned that presently the surviving historical monuments: Masjid al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock are Islamic in origin and character. The Muslims, therefore, have legitimate claims over the Temple Mount – Al-Aqsa Complex. The location of Temple Mount is lost in antiquity and archaeologists have so far failed to pin its location despite extensive research.

Masjid al-Nabi in the city of Madinah, the third sacred Mosque of Islam in chronological order, was significantly built by the very Prophet, who had led all the Prophets in *Salaat* in Masjid al-Aqsa, and was destined to restore the purity and sanctity of Ka'bah, in its original form, as established on its completion by the Patriarch of the Prophets, Prophet Ibrahim (AS). Masjid al-Nabi is the first Mosque of Islam built by Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) and his Companions. Its foundation was laid on absolute piety, and lived in it the Prophet (SAWS) who was the most perfect human being ever born on earth. He perpetuated in this mosque and subsequently throughout the world of Islam a divinely gifted system of worship, five times a day that has remained the most prominent icon of Islam all over the world. It was here in Madinah that the divine guidance was completed laying down clearly, candidly and unambiguously the Islamic system of values, which are of universal relevance. It was from this Mosque and

by Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) that the divine laws for the conduct of human affairs, as outlined in the Holy Qur'an, were not only proclaimed loudly and clearly but were also implemented scrupulously. It was in this Mosque that the world was presented with a uniquely perfect system of governance based on absolute justice, total equality and divine compassion. The Mosque, which had a modest beginning, has now developed into a huge magnificent structure fitted with all amenities to allow the worshipper to worship with undivided attention and total devotion. Although Madinah had long ceased to be the capital of the Islamic *Khilafat*, the Mosque has nonetheless retained its sacredness for the followers of Islam. No one who goes to Makkah to perform the Hajj returns without worshipping in the Mosque of the Prophet (SAWS), and paying respect to his Tomb located within the Mosque.

The three sacred Mosques were thus so interlinked during the prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) through a divine network of centres of worship for the One and only God - Allah (SWT) that they will always remain a part of historical continuity in the evolution of religions. The formal ritual of worship for Allah (SWT) was commenced in Ka'bah, it was confirmed in Al-Aqsa with all the prophets joining Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) in prayer and reached its climax in Madinah with the system of prayer thoroughly structured, with five times daily prayer, in obedience to the command of Allah (SWT). These three sacred mosques will therefore ever remain a unique symbol of unity of monotheistic religions; and for the Muslims they will continue to remain the three most

sacred and dominant foci of worship for the One and only One God - Allah (SWT).

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