224401 - Was Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa Built on the Temple’s Ruins?

the question

I was speaking to an Israeli woman recently, and she told me that Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa was built on the ruins of a Jewish temple that was built by the Prophet Sulayman (peace be upon him). I said to her: Rather it was a Masjid (mosque) from the first day. She laughed and said: There was no Islam at that time, so how could there be a Masjid! Sulayman was a Jewish king, and his kingdom was a Jewish kingdom called Judah, and everyone who lived at that time was Jewish. Is what she said true? How did the Children of Israel go astray and change the Torah that Musa brought to them, and they persisted in their misguidance even after many prophets came to them, such as Sulayman (peace be upon him) and others? What is the true history of Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa? What is meant by the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel?

Summary of answer

Al-Masjid al-Aqsa was built as a place of monotheistic worship, predating Jewish claims about Solomon’s Temple. Islamic sources affirm that Prophet Sulayman (Solomon, peace be upon him) rebuilt Al-Aqsa, not as a Jewish temple but as a house of worship for believers. Historical evidence and Quranic references confirm that Al-Masjid al-Aqsa was always a Masjid and not an exclusive Jewish site.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Was the Temple of Sulayman Real or a Myth?

Previously, in the answer to question no. 230200 , we noted that the Temple was a place of worship, and that what the Jews call the Temple of Solomon is not real; rather it is a myth and one

of the lies of the Jews.

The temple which it is proven that Sulayman (peace be upon him) built is in fact Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa , and he actually rebuilt it; he did not build it for the first time.

Historical Context of Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Aqsa

The first mosque to be built on the face of the earth for the worship of Allah, may He be Exalted, alone, is Al-Masjid Al-Haram, as Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Indeed, the first House [of worship] established for mankind was that at Makkah - blessed and a guidance for the worlds} [Al `Imran 3:96]

`Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “There were houses before it, but it was the first house that was built for the worship of Allah, may He be Exalted.” (End quote from Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2/77)

Then forty years after that, Ibrahim or his grandson Ya`qub (peace be upon them both) built Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa.

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) told us about that, in the report narrated by Al-Bukhari (3366) and Muslim (520) from Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: I said: O Messenger of Allah, which mosque on earth was built first? He said: “Al-Masjid Al-Haram (in Makkah).” I said: Then which? He said: “Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem).” I said: How long was there between the two? He said: “Forty years.”

The Role of Prophet Ibrahim in Establishing Al-Aqsa

Al-`Allamah At-Tahir ibn `Ashur (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What appears to be the case is that when Ibrahim passed through the land of Ash-Sham (Greater Syria, including Palestine) and Allah promised him that his progeny would inherit this land, Allah showed him the place where the biggest Masjid that his progeny would build would be. So he built a small Masjid there, in gratitude to Allah, may He be Exalted, and he built it on the rock that was

allocated for the purpose of offering sacrifices. This is the rock on which Sulayman built the Masjid. But as the people of that time were polytheists, that structure was neglected and disappeared, until Allah guided Sulayman to build Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa on it . This is knowledge that the Jewish books ignore and do not mention." (End quote from At-Tahrir wat-Tanwir, 4/15)

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

According to the People of the Book, Jacob (Ya`qub – peace be upon him) was the one who laid the foundations of Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa , which is the Masjid of Aelia, the Masjid of Bayt Al-Maqdis, may Allah honour it.

This is valid, and is supported by the Hadith that we have quoted above." (End quote from Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah 1/375)

Universal Significance of Al-Masjid al-Aqsa

It is very clear that this mosque (Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa) was not built as a place of worship exclusively for the Jews; rather it was built as a Masjid for the believers who affirm the oneness of Allah to worship Allah, may He be Exalted, in it.

The believers are the followers of the prophets in all eras, and it is they who are most deserving of this Masjid, until the divine message ended with our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), the last of the prophets and messengers. So he is the most deserving of this Masjid, because no person's faith is valid or has any value, after he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was sent, unless he believes in Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) as a prophet and messenger, and follows him.

Our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) led all the Prophets in prayer in this Masjid, on the night of the Isra' and Mi`raj (night journey and ascent to heaven).

This indicates that the role of leading mankind in the path of monotheism and the true religion was passed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and that what is required of all

people – including the followers of the earlier prophets – is to be among his followers, for he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is the most deserving of this mosque, and his followers inherited that right and it will be theirs until the onset of the Hour.

Was there a mosque before Islam?

The view that there was no mosque before Islam is undoubtedly false, because Islam (in the sense of affirming Allah's oneness and obeying Him) is the religion of all the prophets, and the structure that is built for the purpose of prostrating to Allah, may He be Exalted, in it and worshipping Him in it is a Masjid. This word was known before the sending of our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

This blessed mosque [Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa] was not intended, when it was first built, to be only for the followers of the Jewish religion, and in all the texts of the Quran and Sunnah, it was not referred to by the word which refers to Jewish houses of worship. This word is "Salawat", which appears in the verse in which Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{[They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, "Our Lord is Allah." And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues [salawat], and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned.} [Al-Hajj 22:40]

Ibn `Abbas, `Ikrimah, Ad-Dahhak and Qatadah said regarding the meaning of the word "Salawat" here: It refers to the synagogues of the Jews.

Al-`Allamah At-Tahir ibn `Ashur (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Salawat is the plural of Salah; here it refers to the synagogues of the Jews. It is arabized from the word Salutha; when it was arabized the 'th' was replaced with 't', and it was made plural."(End quote from At-Tahrir wat-Tanwir 17/278)

The Islamic Definition of a Masjid

What the Holy Quran calls a Masjid cannot be a Christian church or Jewish synagogue; rather it is a Masjid in Islamic terminology from the earliest time, going back to the religion of Ibrahim Al-Khalil (peace be upon him). When the Jews and Christians inherited it from their monotheist ancestors, it was still called a Masjid, and was never regarded as a place of worship that was specifically for the worship of these two religions.

Even during the eras of the noble prophets, Musa, Sulayman, `Isa and others, it was called a Masjid, so the followers of these prophets have no right to change the name by which it was originally called, which is a Masjid.

Hence it says in the Hadith of Al-Harith Al-Ash`ari (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “Yahya gathered the Children of Israel in Bayt Al-Maqdis, until the Masjid was full and people sat in the balconies.” (Narrated by Imam Ahmad in Al-Musnad, 28/404; classed as authentic by the commentators)

There is also the hadith of `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn Al-`As, according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Sulayman ibn Dawud (peace be upon him) asked Allah for three things. He was granted two, and we hope that he will be granted the third. He asked Him for judgement that was in accordance with His judgement, and Allah granted him that; he asked Him for a kingdom such as would not belong to anyone after him, and He granted him that; and he asked Him that if any man went out of his house only wanting to pray in this Masjid [Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa], that he would emerge free of sin as on the day his mother bore him. We hope that Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, has granted that to him.” (Narrated by Imam Ahmad in Al-Musnad (11/220); classed as authentic by the commentators)

Allah, may He be Exalted, tells us about the People of the Cave (interpretation of the meaning):

{Those who prevailed in the matter said: We will surely build a Masjid over them.} [Al-Kahf 18:21]

Al-Alusi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “What appears to be the case, based on the above, is

that the Masjid is a structure that is usually built for anyone who wants to worship Allah, may He be Exalted, in it." (End quote from Ruh Al-Ma‘ani 8/225)

The People of the Cave – according to what was mentioned by some commentators – were Christians.

It says in Al-Mufassal fi Tarikh Al-`Arab qabl Al-Islam (11/177): “Masjid” is a word that was well known among the pre-Islamic Arabs. It refers to a house in which people prostrate, and any place of worship is a Masjid. (End quote)

This means that there is no error in calling Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa a Masjid before the sending of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), because this is the name by which Allah calls it in the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

{Glory be to Him Who took His slave for a journey by night from Al-Masjid Al-Haram to Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, the environs of which We have blessed, so that We might show him some of Our signs. Verily, He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.} [Al-Isra’ 17:1]

When this verse was revealed, the polytheists did not find this name strange and they did not say, “We do not know what Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa is.” They did not reject this name, which indicates that this name was known to them.

Thus we know that Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa is the name which will endure until the Day of Resurrection, by Allah’s leave. At the same time, it is the historical name by which the prophets called it.

Was Everyone in Sulayman’s Time Jewish?

As for saying that everyone who existed at the time of Sulayman (peace be upon him) was Jewish, this statement is no less flawed than the previous one.

The Jewish system of law and religion is not for all people; rather it is a system of law that is only for one group of humans, namely the descendants of Jacob (Ya`qub – peace be upon him).

Since the time of Ya`qub (peace be upon him) there have always been other groups of humans, Arabs and others, and the matter continued like that at all times, at the time of Yusuf, then Musa, then Dawud, then Sulayman… then `Isa.

But at all those times, there were monotheists other than the Jews.

All of these matters are obvious and basic principles of the Jewish religion and system of laws, which confirm that this religion is exclusive and is not universal. This means that many of the nations and peoples around the Jews were monotheists who followed the way of Ibrahim, and Musa (peace be upon him) was not sent to them with the Jewish religion.

But arrogance makes people deny obvious facts and be unfair in ruling, so as to provide a cover for occupation, murder and confiscation of land, and to promote Zionist terrorist ideology in the name of religion or history.

The Kingdom of Israel: Its Formation and Rulers

As for the Kingdom of Judah and Kingdom of Israel, after the death of Sulayman (peace be upon him), his children disputed and his kingdom was divided into two kingdoms, each of which was ruled by one of the sons of Sulayman.

The first kingdom was in the north, and it was called the Kingdom of Israel or the Kingdom of Samaria; its capital was Shechem (Nablus) and its king was Jeroboam. The Israelite tribes swore allegiance to him, except for Judah and Benjamin.

The second kingdom was in the south, and it was called the Kingdom of Judah; its capital was Jerusalem (Al-Quds) and its king was Rehoboam. Two of the Israelite tribes swore allegiance to him, namely Judah and Benjamin.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed in 721 BCE.

In 586 BCE, the Babylonian leader Nebuchadnezzar entered Al-Quds and destroyed it, and he destroyed and burned the temple, and took thousands of Jews with him as captives to Babylon, in

what is historically known as the first Babylonian captivity. Then he went back to the city and destroyed it again, in what is known as the second Babylonian captivity, which put an end to the Kingdom of Judah.

The Jews strove to regain their kingdom and rebuild the temple.

In the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1926 CE edn.) it says: “The Jews look forward to bringing the Jewish people together in Palestine, restoring the Jewish state, rebuilding the Temple and establishing the throne of David in Jerusalem once more, to be ruled by a descendant of David.” (End quote)

The Jews’ Straying and Distortion of the Torah

As for the going astray of the Jews and their distortion of the Torah, despite the coming of many prophets to them, this is something that indeed happened and cannot be hidden. They turned away from monotheism to polytheism several times after the death of Musa (peace be upon him). Allah, may He be Exalted, repeatedly sent prophets to them to revive the law of the Torah and guide them back to monotheism, but – in most cases – they rejected and fought these prophets and killed some of them. Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Is it that whenever there came to you a Messenger with something that was not in accordance with your desires, you became arrogant; some you disbelieved, and others you killed?} [Al-Baqarah 2:87]

And they distorted their Book, adding to it and taking away from it.

And Allah knows best.