

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Aqsa Week Prepared Lecture – The rightful guardians of Masjid al-Aqsa

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

أما بعد

قال الله -جل وعلا

قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَصْبِرُوا إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

Mūsā said to his people, "Seek help from Allah and be patient. Surely, the land belongs to Allah. He lets whomsoever He wills inherit it from among His servants; and the end-result is in favour of those who have Taqwa."

(Qur'an: Surah A'raf 128)

Al-Aqsa in the crosshairs

"We need to know, we are the owners of this place, and we need to have full control over it."

These are the words of Itamar Ben-Gvir, Minister of 'National Security' in the State of Israel, and leader of the Otzma Yehudit or 'Jewish Power' party. He made these comments whilst invading Masjid al-Aqsa last October.

In another provocative encounter, this time in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Al-Quds during the same period, Ben-Gvir, who was brandishing a gun, had shouted at Palestinians saying: *"We are the landlords here, remember that, I am your landlord."*

Ben-Gvir has his roots in the Kach Party which was once considered a terrorist organisation even in Israel and the United States. As a lawyer, he defended numerous Jewish-Israelis involved in conducting violent attacks against Palestinians.

At his home in the West Bank illegal settlement of Kiryat Arba he would, until recently, proudly have a picture hanging of Baruch Goldstein, the Jewish settler terrorist who massacred 29 Musallees whilst they were performing Fajr Salaah on the last Friday of Ramadan in 1994 at the Ibrahimi Masjid in Al-Khalil (Hebron).

His actions over the years have shown that Ben-Gvir clearly holds an admiration for the likes of Goldstein who have been involved in heinous crimes against the Palestinians. By such admiration and his frequent incursions into Masjid al-Aqsa, he also indicates his wish that Masjid al-Aqsa be divided between Muslims and Jews, and be taken over fully by Israel just as has happened at the Ibrahimi Masjid. Evidently, he has no qualms about using violence to achieve these ends.

As the new Israeli Minister of 'National Security,' Ben-Gvir is now in charge of Israeli policy at Masjid al-Aqsa, and from his first day in office he has been hard at work to change what is remaining of the historic 'status-quo' recognised all over the world, that Masjid al-Aqsa is a Muslim-only place of worship.

This marks a critical new chapter in the struggle to defend the Masjid.

Settlers from the Temple Movement are now emboldened by the actions of the likes of Ben-Gvir and his presence in the Israeli government, and are keen to accelerate their plans to establish a Temple and conduct animal sacrifice rituals inside Masjid al-Aqsa, with arrangements afoot to press ahead with some of these actions as soon as this upcoming Ramadan!

A lesson from the Isra and Mi'raj

As we remember the sacred journey of Al-Isra wal-Mi'raj, we today reflect on Masjid al-Aqsa, and its special link with the Ambiyaa ﷺ. Masjid al-Aqsa, as a station for this journey, is the only spot on earth where all the Prophets of Allah ﷺ are known to have gathered at a single place, at a single time.

In a Hadith recorded in Sunan an-Nasa'i reported by Sayyiduna Anas ibn Malik رضي الله عنه, the Prophet ﷺ said:

ثُمَّ دَخَلْتُ بَيْتَ الْمَقْدِسِ فَجُمِعَ لِي الْأَنْبِيَاءُ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ فَقَدَّمَنِي جِبْرِيلُ حَتَّى أَمَّنْتُهُمْ

Then I entered Bait Al-Maqdis where the Prophets, peace be upon them, were assembled for me, and Jibril brought me forward to lead them in prayer.

On this night of Mi'raj, the Ambiya ﷺ were already assembled at Masjid al-Aqsa in anticipation of the arrival of Sayyiduna Muhammad ﷺ صلى الله عليه وسلم. Athaan and Iqamah were called out, and rows for salah were formed in anticipation of an Imam stepping forward. Sayyiduna Jibra'il ﷺ brought Sayyiduna Muhammad ﷺ صلى الله عليه وسلم forward to be the Imam. Upon the completion of congregational Salah, Sayyiduna Muhammad ﷺ صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked if he was aware of who were in the congregation. When he replied in the negative, Sayyiduna Jibra'il ﷺ informed him that **he had led a congregation that comprised every single prophet that Allah ﷻ had ever sent to the earth.**

Sayyiduna Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه said:

البيت المقدس بنته الأنبياء وسكنته الأنبياء، ما فيه موضع شبر إلا وقد صلى فيه نبي أو أقام فيه ملك

Bayt al-Maqdis was built by, and inhabited by the Ambiyaa. There is not a single handspan in Bayt al-Maqdis where a Prophet has not prayed or an angel not stood.

We find that the land of Bayt al-Maqdis is endowed with a unique character as *Al-Ard al-Ambiyaa* or the Land of the Prophets. The Prophets lived here, and they, and those who follow correctly in their footsteps are the only worthy custodians of this land.

Bayt al-Maqdis was the home, place of birth, or place of migration for several prominent Ambiya ﷺ and the centre for their Da'wah. Among them are Sayyiduna Ibrahim, Lut, Ishaq, Ya'qub, Yusuf, Yusha, Dawud, Sulaymaan, Zakariyya, Yahya and Isa ﷺ.

Part of the barakah of this land is the abundance of Wahi from Allah ﷻ that descended upon it.

From this background we witness a Wisdom of Allah ﷻ in choosing Bayt al-Maqdis – the home of the Ambiyaa ﷺ - as the place of congregation for the Ambiyaa ﷺ on the night of Mi'raj.

Also extremely significant to consider was the selection of Sayyiduna Muhammad ﷺ to lead this illustrious congregation:

Bayt al-Maqdis was the important spiritual centre for many of the Ambiyaa ﷺ who preceded Rasulullah ﷺ. By Rasulullah ﷺ being appointed Imam at Masjid al-Aqsa on the night of Mi'raj to the preference of all these Ambiyaa ﷺ who actually lived in this land, this was a clear signal of spiritual leadership of both Masjid al-Haram and Masjid al-Aqsa now passing over to Rasulullah ﷺ and his followers.

Zionists, who today claim to be the rightful landlords of Bayt al-Maqdis based on an alleged allegiance to certain Ambiyaa ﷺ, always attempt to argue that the Muslim claim to Masjid al-Aqsa is a shallow one. They do this by portraying Islam as a new religion founded only at the time of the Prophet ﷺ, and claim that Muslims developed their beliefs by adapting the existing practices of Judaism and Christianity. They say that Muslims did not have any deep-rooted connection with Masjid al-Aqsa, and only began attaching significance to Jerusalem because of what these other faiths believed about it.

The great jama-ah of the Ambiyaa ﷺ on the night of Mi'raj at Masjid al-Aqsa tells us otherwise. It shows us clearly that the Prophethood of Sayyiduna Rasulullah ﷺ is not disconnected from that of the previous Ambiyaa ﷺ as is claimed, and that Muslims are in no way detached from the rich heritage of Bayt al-Maqdis.

To understand this, we emphasise that there has only been one way accepted by Allah ﷻ since the beginning of time, and that is the way of Islam.

As Allah ﷻ says:

إن الدين عند الله الإسلام

Truly, the (recognized) religion in the sight of Allah is Islam

(Qur'an - Surah Ale-Imran: 3)

and

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي آخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَسِرِينَ

Whoever seeks a faith other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.

(Qur'an - Surah Ale-Imran: 85)

Islam is total obedience and willing submission of oneself to Allah ﷻ. Since all the Ambiyaa ﷺ were sent by Allah ﷻ, they all called only to Islam. Yes, the shariah or code of laws they followed did differ from time to time, but the essence of the message was always Islam - total submission to Allah ﷻ.

What Islam entails is that Allah ﷻ should be obeyed at any given time by doing what He commanded **at that time**. For example, in the era of the previous Ambiyaa ﷺ, as well as until sixteen to seventeen months after Hijrah during the lifetime of Rasulullah ﷺ, the command was to face towards Bayt al-Maqdis as the direction for Salaah. Thereafter, the command of Allah ﷻ was for Muslims to face towards the Ka'bah. Both actions involved submission to Allah ﷻ at a particular time, but one injunction had ultimately come to supersede the other.

Zionists who claim to be the rightful 'landlords' of Masjid al-Aqsa today are still stuck in a temple cult, with a focus on sacrifice rituals they say should be carried out, just as, they claim, had occurred in ancient times in the so-called Temple. Here we see a failure, or unwillingness on their part to recognise the distortions that have been introduced into the teachings of the previous Ambiyaa ﷺ, as well as the abrogation that had occurred of previous practices by the coming of the final Nabi ﷺ.

In contrast, the Muslim reverence to Masjid al-Aqsa is deeply rooted in the holistic understanding of Islam as taught by all the Ambiyaa ﷺ. Muslims did not establish something altogether new at the site of Masjid al-Aqsa, as it is claimed. Rather Muslims simply renewed and purified the Masjid, which existed from the beginning of time, 40 years after the establishment of the Ka'bah. Muslims acknowledged the contributions and rebuilding of the Masjid on the same site by various Ambiyaa ﷺ over time, and saw their presence now in Bayt al-Maqdis as the continuation and culmination of the timeless message of Islam.

The guardians of Al-Aqsa

Sayyiduna Muhammad ﷺ is the seal of Prophets and the last brick in the glorious house of Prophethood. This status of his was symbolically illustrated on the night of Mi'raj when Rasulullah ﷺ led all the previous Ambiyaa ﷺ who were assembled and awaiting an Imam at Masjid al-Aqsa in Salaah. This also showed that the way of Nabi ﷺ was the perfection and pinnacle of the teachings of all the previous Ambiyaa ﷺ.

Part of the timeless teachings of the final Nabi was to show to the Ummah the close bonds that existed between Prophets, and the love that he had for all Ambiyaa ﷺ.

In a hadith narrated by Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah ﷺ recorded in Sahih Muslim, the Prophet ﷺ says:

الأنبياء إخوة من علاتٍ وأمهاتهم شتى ودينهم واحدٌ

The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one.

Likewise, the Qur'an emphasizes how essential it is for a Muslim to acknowledge the Prophethood of all previous Messengers of Allah:

قُولُوا ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

Say (O, Muslims): "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us, and in what has been revealed to Ibrahim, Isma'il, Ishaq, Ya'qub and his children, and in what has been given to Musa and 'Isa and what has been given to the prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between any of them, and to Him we submit ourselves."

(Qur'an – Surah Baqarah – 136)

Furthermore the Qur'an is replete with the stories, filled with lessons, of the Ambiyaa ﷺ - a great number of whom lived in Bayt al-Maqdis.

In this vein, there is a noteworthy Hadith that mentions certain special duas Sayyiduna Sulaymaan ﷺ made whilst reconstructing Masjid al-Aqsa:

The Nabi of Allah ﷺ said:

When Sulayman, son of Dawud built Bayt al-Maqdis, he asked Allah ﷻ for three things. He asked Allah ﷻ for judgement that was in harmony with His Judgement, and he was given that. And he asked Allah ﷻ for a Kingdom no one would have after him, and he was given that. And he asked Allah ﷻ when he completed the building of the Masjid that whoever comes to it solely for the purpose of praying in it, to be forgiven of all sin like the day his mother gave birth to him.

(Sunan al-Nasā'ī)

Another version of this hadith includes this following: “The Prophet ﷺ said, “The [first] two prayers were granted, and I hope the third was granted as well”

(Sunan Ibn Mājah)

Again, we see how Islam acknowledges the previous Ambiyaa ﷺ and their role in Bayt al-Maqdis without any sense of antagonism or competition. The Prophet ﷺ did not conceal from this Ummah the glorious achievements of Sayyiduna Sulaymaan ﷺ in Bayt al-Maqdis, and even showed us how to benefit from Sayyiduna Sulaymaan’s ﷺ legacy and his duas. This emphasizes again how the Nubuwah of Sayyiduna Rasulullah ﷺ represents a continuity of the way of all the Ambiyaa ﷺ, and likewise how this Ummah has inherited the attachment to Masjid al-Aqsa that was the way of the previous Prophets.

A worldview that incorporates these inclusive features demonstrates just how deep the Muslim connection is to Bayt al-Maqdis, and that it is not something invented nor separable from the contributions of previous Ambiyaa ﷺ.

It is because of all of this that Muslims can rightfully be called **the most deserving guardians of Masjid al-Aqsa**, and the wider Land of the Ambiyaa.

As *Muhammad Asad* has written, a Jew of moral integrity may be tolerant enough not to abuse the names of Sayyiduna Isa ﷺ and Muhammad ﷺ; but he will always regard them as “false prophets,” and therefore not worthy of reverence. A Christian reveres the holy persons mentioned in the Bible, but

does not have the same reverence for the Qur'an and Rasulallah ﷺ. A Muslim, on the other hand, **cannot and will not offend any of the prophets** revered by Jews and Christians, since **all of them are his own prophets** whom he is required to revere.

It is this character, borne from the Shariah, which makes Muslims the most eligible heirs for up-keeping the sanctity of Bayt al-Maqdis as a land which is "blessed for all people." History stands testimony to this reality, through the peace and justice brought to Palestine by the exemplary rule of Sayyiduna Umar رضي الله عنه, Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi and succeeding Muslim rulers, most notably in the tolerance towards, and rights they afforded to people of other faiths.

Conversely, despite believing themselves to be the rightful heirs of the land, the occupation of Jerusalem by other parties such as the Crusaders and the Zionist Movement had only seen a festering of massacres, intolerance and racism in the Holy Land. Coming from the same roots, Itamar Ben-Gvir and Benjamin Netanyahu's latest assertion of apartheid 'landlordship' is assuredly a recipe for yet more atrocities and intensified injustice.

Our obligation

As the storm clouds grow darker over Masjid al-Aqsa, it is imperative for us to live up to our responsibilities as the guardians of Masjid al-Aqsa and the inheritors of the Land of the Prophets.

It was narrated that Maimunah the freed (female) slave of the Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَفْتِنَا فِي بَيْتِ الْمَقْدِسِ . قَالَ " أَرْضُ الْمَحْشَرِ وَالْمَنْشَرِ ائْتُوهُ فَصَلُّوا فِيهِ فَإِنَّ صَلَاةً فِيهِ كَأَلْفِ صَلَاةٍ فِي غَيْرِهِ " . قُلْتُ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ لَمْ أَسْتَطِعْ أَنْ أَتَحَمَلَ إِلَيْهِ قَالَ " فَتُهْدِي لَهُ زَيْنًا يُسْرَجُ فِيهِ فَمَنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ فَهُوَ كَمَنْ أَتَاهُ

I said: "O Messenger of Allah, tell us about Baitul Maqdis." He said: "It is the land of the Resurrection and the Gathering. Go and pray there, for one prayer there is like one thousand prayers elsewhere." I said: "What if I cannot travel and go there?" He said: "Then send a gift of oil to light its lamps, for whoever does that is like one who goes there."

(Ibn Majah)

Of the important responsibilities we can fulfil towards Bayt al-Maqdis at present are:

- Visiting Masjid al-Aqsa, as encouraged in the Sunnah, to perform Salaah, and solicit the great rewards promised by Rasulullah ﷺ.
- Frequenting all areas of Masjid al-Aqsa, and ensuring a Muslim presence throughout all times of the day, and periods of the year.
- Donating towards Masjid al-Aqsa and the people of Bayt al-Maqdis.
- Making sincere dua for Masjid al-Aqsa after every Salaah.
- Increasing our knowledge of Bayt al-Maqdis, correcting misconceptions, and passing on authentic knowledge to our children, as well as through structured programs at our educational institutions.
- Following authentic news on Masjid al-Aqsa and sharing this with others.
- Always keeping a vigilant eye on Masjid al-Aqsa and its surroundings, and keeping it visible in the discourse. Raising the alarm at Zionist plans and crimes.
- Boycotting Zionist supporting products.
- Embarking on personal introspection and improvement to become a true servant of Allah ﷻ, and a source of benefit to the Ummah.

O Allah! Protect Masjid al-Aqsa and its people, and make us from amongst its true lovers and guardians.

O Allah! Grant us a salaah in Masjid al-Aqsa free from occupation!

وصلى الله وسلم وبارك على عبده ورسوله نبينا محمد وعلى آله وأصحابه أجمعين
والحمد لله رب العالمين

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