



Medina Architecture of Al-Masjid an-Nabawī – The Mosque of the Prophet

بَنَى مَنْ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ رَسُولُ قَالَ قَالَ عَفَّانُ بْنُ عُمَانَ عَنْ
مِنْهُ الْجَنَّةِ فِي لَهُ اللَّهُ بَنَى لِلَّهِ مَسْجِدًا

“Whoever builds a mosque for God, even the size of a sand-grouse nest, based on piety, [God will build for him a palace in Paradise].”
The Prophet(blessings and peace be upon him)

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A B S T R A C T

The Prophet's Mosque is one of the largest mosques in the world and the second holiest site in Islam after the Grand Mosque in Makkah. Located in Madinah, it was built by Prophet Muhammad in the year 1 AH (622 AD) near his home after building the Quba Mosque, the first mosque in Islam at Mecca. The mosque was expanded many times over the years, in the reign of the Caliphs and the Umayyad, Abbasid and Ottoman states, and then finally in the span of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1994 when the largest expansion operation took place. The Prophet's Mosque is considered to be the first place in the Arabian Peninsula to be lit electrically using light-bulbs in 1327 AH (1909). The original mosque was an open-air building, and served as a community center, a Court and a religious school. The mosque is also home to the tomb of Prophet Muhammad and it is a significant Islamic site to pilgrims for its strong affiliation and connection to the life of the Prophet.

Many pilgrims who perform Hajj also travel to Al-Madinah to visit the Prophet's mosque to performed the ritual of "Itikaaf" (Seclusion and staying in the mosque with the intention of worshipping). Many hotels and local/traditional markets can be found near the mosque. One of the mosque's most prominent features is the Green Dome; it is built above the prophet's tomb and the tombs of early Muslim caliphs Abu Bakr As-Siddiq and Omar bin Al-Khattab. The Green Dome is in the south east corner of the Prophet's Mosque, and was first painted green in 1837, becoming known thereafter as "The Green Dome."

المنورة المدينة

al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah
Medina-The Enlightened City

The Life of the Prophet: The life of the prophet Muhammad has a direct bearing on the mosque at Medina. The evolution of the concept of mosques as propounded by the Prophet took place with the first and second mosques. His life was full of challenges and it is believed that the God was testing him for an onerous task that would be bestowed upon him later on. His father, Abdullah, died almost six months before Muhammad was born. According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad was sent to live with a Bedouin family in the desert, as desert life was considered healthier for infants. Muhammad stayed with his foster mother, Halimah bint Abi Dhuayb, and her husband until he was two years old. At the age of six, Muhammad lost his biological mother, Amina, to illness and was raised by his paternal grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, until

he died when Muhammad was eight. He then came under the care of his uncle Abu Talib, the new leader of Banu Hashim.

Adolescence and Early Adulthood

While still in his teens, Muhammad accompanied his uncle on trading journeys to Syria, gaining experience in commercial trade, which was the only career open to him as an orphan. Islamic tradition states that when Muhammad was either nine or twelve, while accompanying a caravan to Syria he met a Christian monk or hermit named Bahira, who is said to have foreseen Muhammad's career as a prophet of God. As available information is fragmented, it is difficult to separate history from legend and so little is known of Muhammad during his later youth; but it is said that he became a merchant and "was involved in trade between the Indian ocean and the Mediterranean Sea." Due to his upright character during this time, he acquired the nickname "al-Amin," meaning "faithful, trustworthy," and "al-Sadiq," meaning "truthful."

Muhammad worked as a trader for Khadija, a widow, until he married her in 595 CE at the age of 25. The marriage lasted for 25 years and was reported to be a happy one. Muhammad relied upon Khadija and did not enter into a marriage with another woman during his first marriage. After Khadija's death, Khawla bint Hakim suggested that Muhammad should marry Sawda bint Zama, a Muslim widow, or Aisha, daughter of Um Ruman and Abu Bakr of Mecca. Muhammad is said to have asked for arrangements to marry both. He unified Arabia into a single religious polity under Islam. Muslims and Bahá'ís believe he is a messenger and prophet of God. The Hegira or Hijrah, is the migration or journey of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina, in the year 622. The Quran, the central religious text in Islam, alludes to Muhammad's life which is traditionally defined into two periods: pre-hijra (emigration) in Mecca (from 570 to 622 CE) and post-hijra in Medina (from 622 until 632 CE). While non-Muslims regard Muhammad as the founder of Islam, Muslims consider him to have restored the unaltered original monotheistic faith of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets.

Muhammad's First Revelations

According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad's wife Khadija was the first to believe he was a prophet. She was followed by Muhammad's ten-year-old cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib, close friend Abu Bakr, and adopted son Zaid. Around 613, Muhammad began to preach to the public. Most Meccans ignored and mocked him, but he did begin to gain followers. As Islam spread in Mecca, the ruling tribes began to oppose Muhammad's preaching and his condemnation of idolatry. In 622 CE, Muhammad and his followers migrated to Medina in the Hijra to escape persecution, renaming the city Medina in honour of the prophet. Among the first things Muhammad did to ease the longstanding grievances among the tribes of Medina was draft a document known as the Constitution of Medina.

Opposition in Mecca

According to Ibn Sad, one of Muhammad's companions, the opposition in Mecca started when Muhammad delivered verses that condemned idol worship and polytheism. The ruling tribes of Mecca perceived Muhammad as a danger that might cause tensions similar to the rivalry of Judaism and Bedouin Polytheism

in Yathrib (later to be named Medina). The powerful merchants in Mecca attempted to convince Muhammad to abandon his preaching by offering him admission into the inner circle of merchants and an advantageous marriage. However, Muhammad turned down both offers.

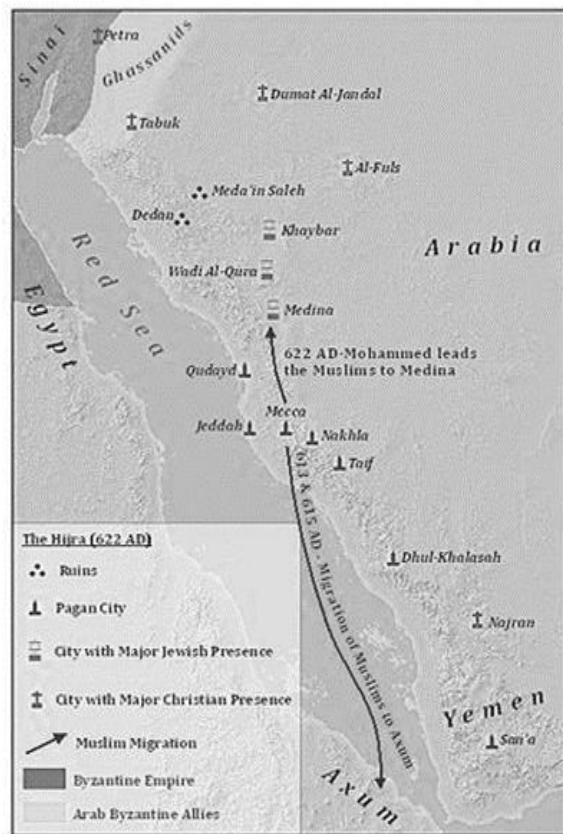
At first, the opposition was confined to ridicule and sarcasm, but later morphed into active persecution. The clan's protection from Muhammad was withdrawn in Mecca, endangering him and his followers. Muhammad took this opportunity to look for a new home for himself and his followers. After several unsuccessful negotiations, he found hope with some men from Yathrib (later called Medina). The Arab population of Yathrib were familiar with monotheism and were prepared for the appearance of a prophet because a Jewish community existed there as well. They also hoped, by the means of Muhammad and the new faith, to gain supremacy over Mecca; the Yathrib were jealous of its importance as the place of pilgrimage. Converts to Islam came from nearly all Arab tribes in Medina; by June of the subsequent year, seventy-five Muslims came to Mecca for pilgrimage and to meet Muhammad. A delegation from Medina, consisting of the representatives of the twelve important clans of Medina, invited Muhammad as a neutral outsider to serve as the chief arbitrator for the entire community. They pledged themselves and their fellow citizens to accept Muhammad into their community and physically protect him as one of their own.

The Hijra in 622 CE

The Hijra is the migration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina, 320 kilometers (200 miles) north, in 622 CE. This marks an important point in the history of Islam. Muhammad had earlier on, instructed his followers to emigrate to Medina until nearly all of them left Mecca. According to tradition, the Meccans, alarmed at the departure, plotted to assassinate Muhammad. In June 622, when he was warned of the plot, Muhammad slipped out of Mecca with his friend Abu Bakr. He stopped at a place called Quba, some miles from the main city, and established a mosque there. After a fourteen-days stay at Quba, Muhammad started for Medina, participating in his first Friday prayer on the way, and upon reaching the city was greeted cordially.



The 1st Mosque built by the Prophet at Quba



Madinah is also known as *Madinah An-Nabi* (The City of the Prophet) or *Madinah Al-Munawwarah* (The Enlightened City), or **Medina**. In ancient times, the city was known as Yathrib. Located 450 kilometers (200+ miles) north of Makkah, Yathrib was an agricultural center in the harsh desert landscape of the Arabian Peninsula. Blessed with an abundant water supply, the city of Yathrib became a stopping point for caravans passing through, and its citizens were heavily involved in trade. So significant was this migration that the Islamic calendar begins counting time from the year of the Hijrah.

Upon arrival in Madinah, one of the first things the Prophet Muhammad wished to do was build a mosque. The story is told that the Prophet Muhammad let his camel loose, and waited to see where it would wander and then stop to rest. The place where the camel stopped was selected as the location of the mosque, which is known as the "Prophet's Mosque" (*Masjed An-Nawabi*). The entire Muslim community (original residents of Madinah, as well as the migrants who had moved from Makkah) came together to help build the mosque out of mud bricks and tree trunks. The Prophet Muhammad's apartment was constructed on the eastern side, adjacent to the mosque.

The new mosque soon became the center of the city's religious, political, and economic life. Throughout Islamic history, the mosque has been expanded and improved upon, until it is now 100 times larger than its original size and can accommodate more than half a million worshippers at a time. A large green dome now covers the Prophet Muhammad's residential quarters, where he is buried along with the first two Caliphs, Abu Bakr and Omar. Over two million Muslim pilgrims visit the Prophet's Mosque each year.

Al-Masjid an-Nabawī : الْمَسْجِدُ النَّبَوِيُّ is a mosque established and built by the Islamic prophet Muhammad, situated in the city of Medina in the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia. It is one of the first mosques built by

Muhammad, and is now one of the largest mosques in the world. It is the second-holiest site in Islam, after the Great Mosque in Mecca. It is always open, regardless of date or time.

The site was originally adjacent to Muhammad's house; he settled there after his migration from Mecca to Medina in 622. He shared in the heavy work of construction. The original mosque was an open-air building. The mosque served as a community center, a court, and a religious school. There was a raised platform for the people who taught the Quran. Subsequent Islamic rulers greatly expanded and decorated it. In 1909, it became the first place in the Arabian Peninsula to be provided with electrical lights.^[4] The mosque is under the control of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The mosque is located in what was traditionally the center of Medina, with many hotels and old markets nearby. It is a major pilgrimage site. Many pilgrims who perform the Hajj go on to Medina to visit the mosque, due to its connection to Muhammad.

After an expansion during the reign of the Umayyad caliph Al-Walid I, it now incorporates the final resting place of Muhammad and the first two Rashidun caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar. One of the most notable features of the site is the Green Dome in the south-east corner of the mosque, originally Aisha's house, where the tomb of Muhammad is located. In 1279, a wooden cupola was built over the tomb which was later rebuilt and renovated multiple times in late 15th century and once in 1817. The current dome was added in 1818 by the Ottoman sultan Mahmud II, and it was first painted green in 1837, hence becoming known as the "Green Dome". It is made with limestone.

The mosque was built by Muhammad in the first year of the Hijrah (c. 622 CE), after his arrival in Medina. Riding on a camel called Qaswa he arrived at the place where this mosque was built. The land was owned by Sahal and Suhayl, partly as a place for drying dates, and at one end had been previously used as a burial ground. Refusing to "accept the land as a gift", he bought the land and it took seven months to complete the construction of the mosque. It measured 30.5 m × 35.62 m (100.1 ft × 116.9 ft).^[8] The roof which was supported by palm trunks was made of beaten clay and palm leaves. It was at a height of 3.60 m (11.8 ft). The three doors of the mosque were Bab-al-Rahmah to the south, Bab-al-Jibril to the west and Babal-Nisa to the east.

After the Battle of Khaybar, the mosque was "enlarged". The mosque extended for 47.32 m (155.2 ft) on each side and three rows of columns were built beside the west wall, which became the place of praying.

Second Expansion by Umar

The second caliph Umar demolished all the houses around the mosque except that of Muhammad's wives to expand it. The new mosque's dimensions became 57.49 m × 66.14 m (188.6 ft × 217.0 ft). Sun-dried mud bricks were used to construct the walls of the enclosure. Besides strewing pebbles on the floor, the roof's height was increased to 5.6 m (18 ft). Umar moreover constructed three more gates for entrance. He also added the *Al-Butayha* for people to recite poetry.



Third Expansion by Uthman

The third caliph Uthman demolished the mosque in 649. Ten months were spent in building the new rectangular shaped mosque whose face was turned towards the Kaaba in Mecca. The new mosque measured 81.40 m × 62.58 m (267.1 ft × 205.3 ft). The number of gates as well as their names remained the same. The enclosure walls were made of stones laid in mortar. The palm trunk columns were replaced by stone columns which were joined by iron clamps. Teakwood was used in reconstructing the ceiling filza.



Al-Masjid an-Nabawi during

the Ottoman Era, 19th century

In 707, the Umayyad caliph al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik (r. 705–715) renovated the mosque. It took three years for the work to be completed. Raw materials were procured from the Byzantine Empire. The area of the mosque was increased from 5,094 square metres (54,830 sq ft) of Uthman's time to 8,672 square metres (93,340 sq ft). A wall was built to segregate the mosque and the houses of the wives of Prophet Muhammad. The mosque was reconstructed in a trapezoid shape with a length of 101.76 metres (333.9 ft). For the first time, porticoes were built in the mosque connecting the northern part of the structure to the sanctuary. For the first time, minarets were built in Medina as he constructed four minarets around it.

Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi (r. 775–785) extended the mosque to the north by 50 metres (160 ft). His name was also inscribed on the walls of the mosque. He also planned to remove six steps to the *minbar*, but abandoned this idea, owing to this causing damage of the woods on which they were built. According to an inscription of Ibn Qutaybah, the caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 813–833) did "unspecified work" on the mosque. Al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–861) lined the enclosure of Prophet Muhammad's tomb with marble. The Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Qansuh al-Ghawri (r. 1501–1516) built a dome of stone over his grave in 1476.



The Green Dome, in Richard Francis Burton's *Pilgrimage*, ca. 1850 CE

Mahmud II's successor, Abdul Majid I (r. 1839–1861), took thirteen years to rebuild the mosque, beginning in 1849. Red stone bricks were used as the main material in reconstruction of the mosque. The floor area of the mosque was increased by 1,293 square metres (13,920 sq ft). On the walls, verses from the Quran were inscribed in Islamic calligraphy. In the northern side of the mosque, a *madrasah* was built for "teaching Quranic lessons".



Saudi Era: View of Masjid-e-Nabawi Gate 21, 22 as seen from the north, the gate with two minarets is *Bāb Al-Malik Fahd* (Arabic: بَاب الْمَلِكِ فَهْد, lit. 'Gate of the King Fahd')

When Saud bin Abdul-Aziz took Medina in 1805, his followers, the Wahhabis, demolished nearly every tomb dome in Medina in order to prevent their veneration, and the Green Dome is said to have narrowly escaped the same fate. They considered the veneration of tombs and places thought to possess supernatural powers as an offence against *tawhid*. Prophet Muhammad's tomb was stripped of its gold and jewel ornaments, but the dome was preserved either because of an unsuccessful attempt to demolish its hardened structure, or because some time ago Ibn Abd al-Wahhab wrote that he did not wish to see the dome destroyed despite his aversion to people praying at the tomb. Similar events took place in 1925 when the Saudi ikhwans retook—and this time managed to keep—the city.

After the foundation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, the mosque underwent several major modifications. In 1951 King Ibn Saud (1932–1953) ordered demolitions around the mosque to make way for new wings to the east and west of the prayer hall, which consisted of concrete columns with pointed arches. Older columns were reinforced with concrete and braced with copper rings at the top. The Suleymaniyya and Majidiyya minarets were replaced by two minarets in Mamluk revival style. Two additional minarets were erected to the northeast and northwest of the mosque. A library was built along the western wall to house historic Qurans and other religious texts.

In 1974, King Faisal added 40,440 square metres to the mosque. The area of the mosque was also expanded during the reign of King Fahd in 1985. Bulldozers were used to demolish buildings around the mosque.^[32] In 1992, when it was completed, the area of the mosque became 1.7 million square feet. Escalators and 27 courtyards were among the additions to the mosque.

A \$6 billion project for increasing the area of the mosque was announced in September 2012. After completion, it could accommodate between 1.6 million^[34] to 2 million worshippers. In March of the following year, *Saudi Gazette* reported that demolition work had been mostly complete, including the demolition of ten hotels on the eastern side, in addition to houses and other utilities.

Architecture

The mosque, masjid in Arabic, is the Muslim gathering place for prayer. Masjid simply means “place of prostration.” Though most of the five daily prayers prescribed in Islam can take place anywhere, all men are required to gather together at the mosque for the Friday noon prayer.

Mosques are also used throughout the week for prayer, study, or simply as a place for rest and reflection. The main mosque of a city, used for the Friday communal prayer, is called a jami masjid, literally meaning “Friday mosque,” but it is also sometimes called a congregational mosque in English. The style, layout, and decoration of a mosque can tell us a lot about Islam in general, but also about the period and region in which the mosque was constructed.

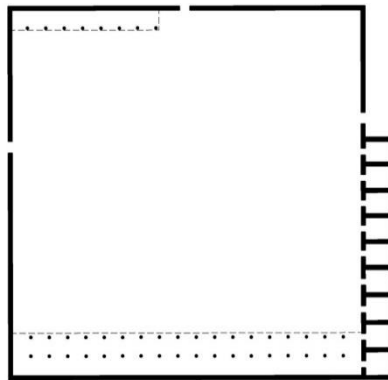


Diagram reconstruction of the Prophet's House, Medina, Saudi Arabia

The home of the Prophet Muhammad is considered the first mosque. His house, in Medina in modern-day Saudi Arabia, was a typical 7th-century Arabian style house, with a large courtyard surrounded by long rooms supported by columns. This style of mosque came to be known as a hypostyle mosque, meaning “many columns.” Most mosques built in Arab lands utilized this style for centuries.

Common features

The architecture of a mosque is shaped most strongly by the regional traditions of the time and place where it was built. As a result, style, layout, and decoration can vary greatly. Nevertheless, because of the common function of the mosque as a place of congregational prayer, certain architectural features appear in mosques all over the world.

Sahn (courtyard)

The most fundamental necessity of congregational mosque architecture is that it be able to hold the entire male population of a city or town (women are welcome to attend Friday prayers, but not required to do so).

To that end congregational mosques must have a large prayer hall. In many mosques this is adjoined to an open courtyard, called a sahn. Within the courtyard one often finds a fountain, its waters both a welcome respite in hot lands, and important for the ablutions (ritual cleansing) done before prayer.

Another essential element of a mosque's architecture is a mihrab—a niche in the wall that indicates the direction of Mecca, towards which all Muslims pray. Mecca is the city in which the Prophet Muhammad was born, and the home of the most important Islamic site, the Kaaba. The direction of Mecca is called the qibla, and so the wall in which the mihrab is set is called the qibla wall. No matter where a mosque is, its mihrab indicates the direction of Mecca (or as near that direction as science and geography were able to place it). Therefore, a mihrab in India will be to the west, while a one in Egypt will be to the east. A mihrab is usually a relatively shallow niche, as in the example from Egypt, above. In the example from Spain, shown left, the mihrab's niche takes the form of a small room, this is more rare.

Minaret (tower)

One of the most visible aspects of mosque architecture is the minaret, a tower adjacent or attached to a mosque, from which the call to prayer is announced.

Qubba (dome)

Most mosques also feature one or more domes, called qubba in Arabic. While not a ritual requirement like the mihrab, a dome does possess significance within the mosque—as a symbolic representation of the vault of heaven. The interior decoration of a dome often emphasizes this symbolism, using intricate geometric, stellate, or vegetal motifs to create breathtaking patterns meant to awe and inspire. Some mosque types incorporate multiple domes into their architecture, while others only feature one. In mosques with only a single dome, it is invariably found surmounting the qibla wall, the holiest section of the mosque. Because it is the directional focus of prayer, the qibla wall, with its mihrab and minbar, is often the most ornately decorated area of a mosque.

Furnishings

There are other decorative elements common to most mosques. For instance, a large calligraphic frieze or a cartouche with a prominent inscription often appears above the mihrab. In most cases the calligraphic inscriptions are quotations from the Qur'an, and often include the date of the building's dedication and the name of the patron. Light is an essential feature for mosques, since the first and last daily prayers occur before the sun rises and after the sun sets. Before electricity, mosques were illuminated with oil lamps. Hundreds of such lamps hung inside a mosque would create a glittering spectacle, with soft light emanating from each, highlighting the calligraphy and other decorations on the lamps' surfaces. Although not a permanent part of a mosque building, lamps, along with other furnishings like carpets, formed a significant—though ephemeral—aspect of mosque architecture.

The two tiered mosque has a rectangular plan. The Ottoman prayer hall lies towards the south. It has a flat paved roof topped with 27 sliding domes on square bases. Holes pierced into the base of each dome

illuminate the interior. The roof is also used for prayer during peak times, when the domes slide out on metal tracks to shade areas of the roof, creating light wells for the prayer hall. At these times, the courtyard of the Ottoman mosque is also shaded with umbrellas affixed to freestanding columns. The roof is accessed by stairs and escalators. The paved area around the mosque is also used for prayer, equipped with umbrella tents. Sliding domes and retractable umbrella-like canopies were designed by the German architect Mahmoud Bodo Rasch, his firm SL Rasch GmbH, and Buro Happold. (See later)

The Rawdah Today or the Garden

The boundaries of the Rawdah today are marked according to the first opinion i.e. the Rawdah is the area between the tomb of the Prophet of his pulpit inside Masjid Nabawi. The Rawdah is rectangular in shape and measures 26.5 metres in length from east to west, although part of it lies in the Sacred Chamber so the accessible area is 22 metres long. From north to south, it measures 15 metres. The total area of the Rawdah is approximately 397.5 square metres. This area was adorned significantly during the Ottoman era in an effort to sanctify and highlight its significance. Today, the colour of the carpet defining the area of the Rawdah is light green and has a floral design, in contrast to the rest of the masjid, which has red carpeting. Part of the Rawdah also lies inside the Sacred Chamber of the Prophet beyond the gold grill and is inaccessible to the public. There are also six pillars within the Rawdah which hold special significance. There are two entrances to the Rawdah which are normally guarded by police officers. The area is only able to hold several hundred at once. The Rawdah area is also accessible to women at certain points in the day.

Dimensions

The Rawdah is rectangular in shape and measures 26.5 metres in length from east to west, although part of it lies in the Sacred Chamber so the accessible area is 22 metres long. From north to south, it measures 15 metres. The total area of the Rawdah is approximately 397.5 square metres. As previously mentioned, there are six sacred pillars inside the Rawdah area. There are also another two pillars inside the Sacred Chamber which are inaccessible to the public. The six in the Rawdah are marked by large green circles with gold inscriptions. These are:

1. Perfumed Pillar (Ustuwanah al-Mukhallaqah; المخلقة اسطوانة) / Weeping Pillar (Ustuwanah al-Hannana; الحنانة اسطوانة)
2. Pillar of the Bed (Ustuwanah al-Sarir; السرير اسطوانة)
3. Pillar of the Guard (Ustuwanah al-Haras; الحرس اسطوانة) / Pillar of Ali ibn Abi Talib (Ustuwanah Ali ibn Ali Talib; طالب أبي بن علي اسطوانة)
4. Pillar of Delegations (Ustuwanah al-Wufud; الوفود اسطوانة)
5. Pillar of Repentance (Ustuwanah al-Tawbah; التوبة اسطوانة) / Pillar of Abu Lubabah (Ustuwana Abu Lubabah; لبابة ابو اسطوانة)

6. Pillar of Aisha (Ustuwanaṭ Aisha; عائشة السيدة اسطوانة) / Pillar of Casting Lots (Ustuwanaḥ al-Qur'ah; القُرعة اسطوانة) / Pillar of the Emigrants (Ustuwanaḥ al-Muhajireen; المهاجرين اسطوانة). Each of these pillars has special importance, explained above.

Boundaries of the Rawdah

Scholars have disagreed about the boundaries of the Rawdah. There are several hadiths that define the boundaries. During the life of Prophet his houses were situated from the south eastern corner of Masjid Nabawi, where visitors now stand facing the Muwajaha to greet him and his companions, up to the north eastern corner of the mosque. Therefore, they extended along the entire eastern wall of the mosque. From the north eastern corner, they further extended along the northern wall up to the north western corner. The Rawdah would then extend from the pulpit, positioned about midway along the Southern (Qibla) wall of the mosque, up to his houses, which were spread along the eastern and northern walls, until the old Bab al-Rahmah (Door of Mercy). Furthermore, some scholars opine that the narration which reads “Between my house and my pulpit is one of the gardens of Paradise”, the word “house” should be interpreted to mean all of the houses of the Prophet, rather than only Aisha’s house, which later came to contain his grave.

Conclusion

In the many Hadith’s not quoted here- the Prophet describes the garden of Paradise, which extends throughout all of the areas. But is the Rawdah “Gardens of Paradise”? Should the hadiths regarding this sacred area be taken literally or metaphorically? Some scholars are of the opinion that the Rawdah is like the Gardens of Paradise, in that the peace and tranquillity one feels when worshipping in the Rawdah resembles the peace and tranquillity of Paradise. Others have said that this area is a gateway to the gardens of Paradise and the Pool of al-Kawthar for those perform good deeds in the Rawdah. In other words, worshippers are urged to perform righteous acts within the Rawdah so they will be able to drink from al-Kawthar and attain Paradise on the Day of Judgement. Other scholars have interpreted the Rawdah as being parallel to a garden above it in Paradise. According to other scholars, this very tract of land was bought to the earth from Paradise and will be returned to Paradise after the Day of Judgement.

Green Dome

It was constructed in 1817 CE during the reign of the Ottoman sultan Mahmud II and painted green in 1837 CE. The chamber adjacent to the *Rawdah* holds the tombs of Prophet Muhammad and two of his companions, father-in-laws and caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar ibn al-Khattab. A fourth grave is reserved for ‘Īsā or Jesus, as it is believed that he will return and will be buried at the site. The site is covered by the Green Dome. The dome is located in the south-east corner of the mosque. The structure dates back to 1279 CE, when an unpainted wooden cupola was built over the tomb. It was later rebuilt and painted using different colours twice in the late 15th century and once in 1817.

Built in 1279 CE or 678 AH during the reign of Mamluk Sultan Al Mansur Qalawun, the original structure was made out of wood and was colourless, painted white and blue in later restorations. After a serious fire struck the Mosque in 1481, the mosque and dome had been burnt and a restoration project was initiated by Sultan Qaitbay who had most of the wooden base replaced by a brick structure in order to prevent the collapse of the dome in the future, and used plates of lead to cover the new wooden dome. The building, including the Tomb of the Prophet, was extensively renewed through Qaitbay's patronage. The current dome was added in 1818 by the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II. The dome was first painted green in 1837.

Tomb of The Prophet

The Prophet's grave lies within the confines of what used to be his and his wife Aisha's house, the Hujra. During his lifetime it adjoined the mosque. The mosque was expanded during the reign of Caliph al-Walid I to include his tomb. Muhammad's grave is an important reason for the particular high sanctity of the mosque, as the Dome of the Prophet marks the location of the tomb. Millions visit it every year, since it is a tradition to visit the mosque after the pilgrimage to Mecca. The first two Caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar are buried next to Muhammad. Umar was given a spot next to Muhammad by Aisha, which had originally been intended for her. Muhammad's grave itself cannot be seen as the area is cordoned off by a gold mesh and black curtain.





Mihrab is a semicircular niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the *qibla*; that is, the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca and hence the direction that Muslims should face when praying. The wall in which a *mihrab* appears is thus the "*qibla* wall". *Mihrab* should not be confused with the *minbar*, which is the raised platform from which an Imam (leader of prayer) addresses the congregation. The mihrab is located to the left of the minbar. The word *mihrab* originally had a non-religious meaning and simply denoted a special room in a house; a throne room in a palace, for example. The Fath al-Bari, on the authority of others, suggests the *mihrab* is "the most honorable location of kings" and "the master of locations, the front and the most honorable." The *Mosques in Islam*, in addition to Arabic sources, cites Theodor Nöldeke and others as having considered a *mihrab* to have originally signified a throne room. The term was however subsequently used by the prophet to denote his own private prayer room. The room additionally provided access to the adjacent mosque, and the Prophet would enter the mosque through this room. This original meaning of *mihrab* – i.e. as a special room in the house – continues to be preserved in some forms of Judaism where *mihrabs* are rooms used for private worship. In the Qur'an (xix.11), the word *mihrab* refers to a sanctuary/place of worship.

During the reign of Uthman ibn Affan (r. 644–656), the Caliph ordered a sign to be posted on the wall of the mosque at Medina so that pilgrims could easily identify the direction in which to address their prayers (i.e. that of Mecca). The sign was however just a sign on the wall, and the wall itself remained flat. Subsequently, during the reign of Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik (Al-Walid I, r. 705–715), when the mosque was renovated and the governor of Medina, ordered that a niche be made to designate the *qibla* wall (which identifies the direction of Mecca), and it was in this niche that Uthman's sign was placed. Eventually, the niche came to be universally understood to identify the *qibla* wall, and so came to be adopted as a feature in other mosques. A sign was no longer necessary. The Qur'anic passage (xix.11) that refers to a *mihrab* – "then he

[i.e. Zakariya] came forth to his people from the sanctuary/place of worship" – is inscribed on or over some *mihirabs*.

Mihirabs are a relevant part of Islamic culture and mosques. Since they are used to indicate the direction for prayer, they serve as an important focal point in the mosque. They are usually decorated with ornamental detail that can be geometric designs, linear patterns, or calligraphy. This ornamentation also serves a religious purpose. The calligraphy decoration on the mihirabs are usually from the Qur'an and are devotions to God so that God's word reaches the people. Common designs amongst mihirabs are geometric foliage that are close together so that there is no empty space in-between the art.

In Medina, there are two mihirabs in the mosque, one was built by Muhammad and another was built by the third Rashidun caliph Uthman. The one built by the latter was larger than that of Muhammad's and act as the functional mihrab, whereas Muhammad's mihrab is a "commemorative" mihrab. Besides the *mihrab*, the mosque also has other niches which act as indicators for praying. This includes the *mihrāb Fâtimah* or *mihrāb at-Ṭahajjud*, which was built by Muhammad for the *Ṭahajjud*.

Minbar

The original *minbar* (Arabic: *منبر*) used by Muhammad was a "wood block of date tree". This was replaced by him with a tamarisk one, which had dimensions of 50 cm × 125 cm (20 in × 49 in). Also in 629, a three staired ladder was added to it. The first two caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar, did not use the third step "due to respect for the Prophet", but the third caliph Uthman placed a fabric dome over it and the rest of the stairs were covered with ebony. The *minbar* was replaced by Baybars I in 1395, and later by Shaykh al-Mahmudi in 1417. This was also replaced by a marble one by Qaitbay in the late fifteenth century, which as of August 2013, is still used in the mosque.

Minarets

The first minarets (four in number) of 26 feet (7.9 m) high were constructed by Umar. In 1307, a minaret titled *Bab al-Salam* was added by Muhammad ibn Kalavun which was renovated by Mehmed IV. After the renovation project of 1994, there were ten minarets which were 104 metres (341 ft) high. The minarets' upper, bottom and middle portion are cylindrical, octagonal and square shaped respectively.

The Amazing Medina Haram Piazza



Overview and underside view of the shading umbrellas at Al-Masjid an-Nabawi

To protect worshipers from the heat of the sun during prayer, as well as from the risk of slipping and falling in the event of rain the Medina Haram Piazza - convertible Shading Umbrellas or Al-Masjid An-Nabawi Umbrellas were erected at the piazza of Al-Masjid an-Nabawi in Medina, by the King of -.King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, It is said that this was his own idea on seeing the plight of the devotees at the squares of the mosque. This project was overseen by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The shade of the umbrella is spread in the four corners, and the area covered by the shade extends to 143,000 square meters. These umbrellas are aimed Similar structures are built at the square of the mosques worldwide. At Al-Masjid An-Nabawi, there are total of 250 umbrellas.

The project of 4.7 billion riyals was completed in August 2010, and initially included the construction of 182 umbrellas aligning the pillars of the mosques at the square, and later 68 umbrellas were added in the eastern square, totaling 250 umbrellas. The Saudi Binladin Group has contracted the project's structural planning with the German architectural company SL Rasch GmbH Special and Lightweight Structures led by Mahmoud Bodo Rasch,. As any normal fabric does not provide full protection from ultraviolet rays of the Sun- PTFE fabric was chosen to meet the exceptional requirements. The fabric is characterized by high resistance to tensile strength, wind strength, and its elasticity, chromatic stability, fire resistance, effective shading and suitable light penetration. Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) is a synthetic fluoropolymer of tetrafluoroethylene. Being hydrophobic, non-wetting, high density and resistant to high temperatures, PTFE is an incredibly versatile material with a wide variety of applications, though it's perhaps best-known for its non-stick properties. This highly durable PTFE white fabric was developed by SEFAR Architecture specifically for the project. The shade is painted in white color due to the intensity of light, and a sandy texture was chosen instead of smooth because strong permeability could dazzle people under the umbrellas. In addition, the underside was decorated with oriental motifs made of blue PTFE stripes.

