

HOW THE JEWS STOLE MASJID IBRAHIM IN AL KHALEEL AR-RAHMAN (HEBRON)

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Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Raheem. All praise is due to Almighty Allah, the Sustainer, Nourisher and Cherisher of the universe. Peace, Blessings and Salutations be upon our beloved Master and Leader, Nabi Muhammed Mustapha ﷺ.

Brief description and history:

The Ibrahimi Masjid is the second most prominent Islamic landmark in Palestine after Masjid Al-Aqsa and is located in the Old City of Khalil Ar-Rahman (Hebron) in the southern West Bank. Nabi Ibrahim AS is known as Khalil Ar-Rahman and the city is named after him.

The construction of the Ibrahimi Masjid resembles that of Masjid Al-Aqsa, as one can see from the huge stone walls surrounding it. It is believed to have been built above the Cave of the Patriarchs that contains the burial chambers of Nabi Ibrahim and his wife Sarah, their son Ishaq (Isaac) and his wife Rifqah (Rebekah), Ismail (Ishmael), Ya'qub (Jacob) and his wife Layyah (Leah), and his son, Yusuf (Joseph) AS. Rooms over their graves were built, in their names, inside the mosque.

The Jews call the burial chamber the "Cave of Machpelah", meaning "double", probably referring to a double cave or place of double burials. It is also referred to as the "Cave of the Patriarchs (and Matriarchs)".

The masjid contains an open courtyard, a number of arcades, rooms, corridors, domes, two minarets as well as the lower cave which is said to house some prophets' tombs. It is surrounded by a huge wall called al-Hayr dating back to Herod's rule (37 BCE to 4 CE). There are three gates and two water sources near the masjid: Ain al-Tawashi and Ain al-Hamra.

Under the Romans, the site was converted into a church. That was demolished when the Persians invaded Palestine in 614 CE. Muslims subsequently developed the site into a masjid during the Islamic conquests in 15 AH (636 CE).

The Umayyads (±661-750 CE) further expanded and developed the masjid and its surroundings by including roofing, domes and new buildings.

During the Abbasid era (750 CE), a 3.5-meter-high door was opened in the northeastern wall, an iron door was added and the masjid was decorated and carpeted, and when the Fatimid dynasty followed in 972 CE, the architecture was expanded and domes were attached to the building.

The Crusaders occupied Palestine in 1100 CE. They looted the Ibrahimi Masjid and then fortified it. They also built a fortified castle next to it, called St. Abraham's Castle, and converted the masjid into a church of the same name. It lasted for 90 years.

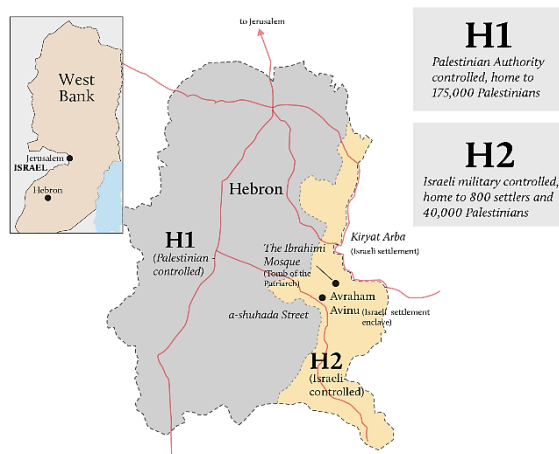
Then, in 1187 CE, after the Battle of Hattin, the commander Salahuddin al-Ayyubi recaptured Khalil Ar-Rahman and turned the church back into a masjid, removing all trace of the Crusaders. He brought a wooden pulpit from Askalan (Ashkelon), and added four minarets to the masjid, of which two remained. *The mimbar today (right).*



The Mamluk period (1250 – 1517 CE) saw the city flourishing as a centre for pilgrimage, scholarship and trade. Masjid Ibrahimi was the centre of attraction for Muslim, Christian and Jewish visitors. However, non-Muslims were not allowed into the masjid itself. They could pray on the staircase steps outside.

Subsequently, the Ottoman era (14th – early 20th century) ensued and the Supreme Islamic Council took charge of the masjid, implementing numerous architectural improvements and several restorations, while preserving much of the Mamluk architecture and urban developments.

With the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I (1917 – 19), British troops under General Allenby's command occupied Palestine and entered Hebron. The masjid was neglected during this time but Britain eventually withdrew in 1948, leaving Hebron under Jordanian rule. The Jordanians undertook major restoration projects and repaired the Ibrahimi Masjid, preserving its historical structure and enhancing its status as an Islamic religious site.



Source: The New York Review of Books

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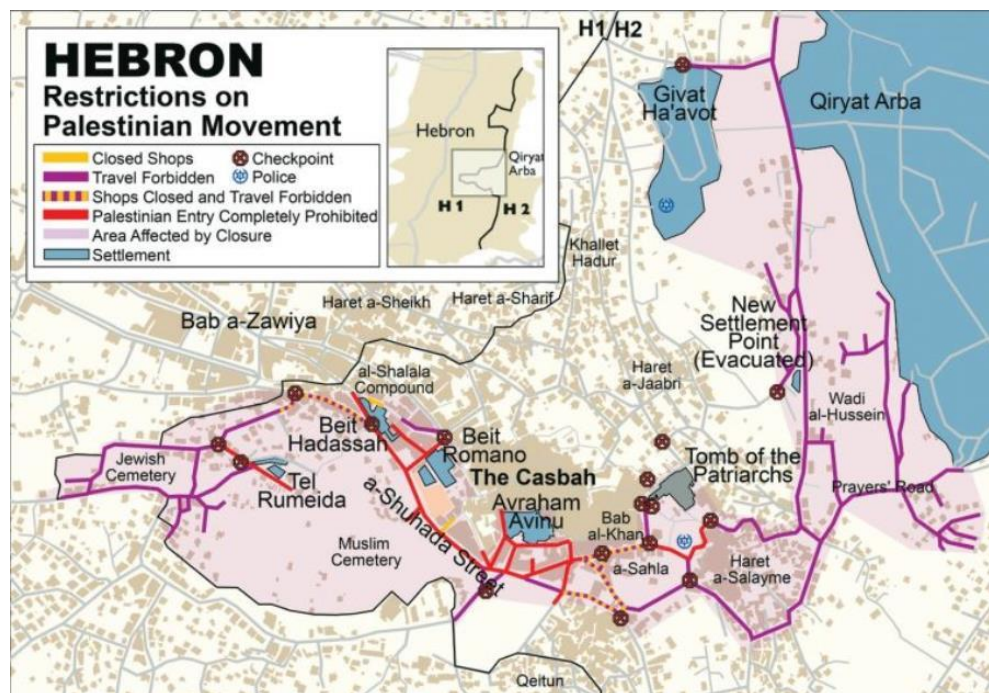
In 1967, the city fell to the Israeli usurpers. They divided the city into H1 and H2 zones, controlled by the PA and Israeli military, respectively. They created checkpoints around the Ibrahimi Masjid to control entry to it. Settlers then gradually began to extend their settlements from the perimeter of the city to its interior. This resulted in repeated attacks on the Ibrahimi Masjid and on Muslims visiting it. The settlers insisted on entering the masjid and praying there. Their aim was – and still is – to turn it into a synagogue, exclusively for their use. In this, they were, and currently are, aided and abetted by the Israeli occupation forces.

The Ibrahimi Masjid massacre:

Matters eventually reached a bloody peak on Friday, February 25, 1994 corresponding to 15 Ramadhan, 1415 AH, when the terrorist American-Israeli settler, Baruch Goldstein, stormed the masjid during the Fajr (pre-dawn) prayer, carrying an automatic rifle and extra ammunition. He opened fire on the musallis (worshippers), brutally mowing them down as they were prostrating, while Israeli soldiers and fellow settlers protected and assisted him. He killed at least 29 immediately and wounded another 125 Muslims, some of whom died later. He was subsequently killed by one of the musallis, believed to have been beaten to death with a metal rod or fire extinguisher.

During protests against the massacre, 60 more Palestinians were killed and the masjid was closed for six months for investigations by a “fact-finding committee”, the Shamgar Commission. Four months later, the Commission issued its report which contained a general condemnation of the massacre. Neither the government nor the army was called to account. Instead, the victims were punished while the perpetrators were rewarded: the Jews were officially granted 63% of the masjid for their synagogue with the remaining 37% for Muslims. These areas were separated from each other by barriers and iron gates. Military posts and cameras for observation in and around the mosque were installed, as well.

The road outside the masjid, Shuhada Street, was also closed for Palestinians. The Israeli occupiers established 22 checkpoints around the Ibrahimi Masjid to impede the access of Muslim worshippers and continuously harass them.



After the settlers repeatedly violated the masjid and attempted to change its Islamic character, the Palestinians succeeded in placing the Ibrahimi Masjid on the World Heritage List by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2017, making it a protected site.

However, on February 26, 2025, the Israeli authorities informed the Ibrahimi Masjid administration that work had been transferred from the Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf to the so-called Israeli Urban Planning Authority, effectively seizing control of the masjid.

In an article on the Judaization of the masjid, Fayha' Shalash, a Ramallah-based Palestinian journalist, explained that, since the 1994 massacre, the situation in the city has worsened.

Now the Israelis often close the masjid to Muslim worshippers for several days on the pretext of it being Jewish holidays. There are more than 120 barriers around the site, preventing Palestinians from accessing it, while Jewish settlers are free to come and go as they please.



Despite the masjid's protected status, the Israelis continue to violate it. The masjid director, Moataz Abu Sneina, said that an electric elevator had been installed recently, ostensibly for elderly settlers to enter. Israelis are also continuously attempting to Judaize the masjid by converting Arabic signs inside the masjid to Hebrew, raising Israeli flags over it during Jewish holidays and displaying plaques with their version of its history in prominent places inside the masjid (left).

In addition to that, audio and video cameras have been installed throughout the masjid so that there is constant surveillance of Muslim worshippers. These, and other measures like checkpoints and searches, have been adopted intentionally, to deter Muslims from coming to the masjid while settlers face no obstacles in reaching and entering it.

Residents complain that the city has become a military barracks as soldiers (snipers) are stationed on the roofs of buildings and settlers seize Palestinian homes with impunity, under the protection of the army. It is not unusual for worshippers to be subjected regularly to detention and arrest. They even risk being shot under any pretext.

Palestinians continue to be inconvenienced, harassed and intimidated by the settlers and soldiers who want to drive them out of the area but they are determined to remain there for the protection of the masjid.

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