

The history of al-Masjid al-Nabawī & the virtue of visiting it.

The aim of this paper is two-fold. Firstly, a brief outline of the development of the Prophet's mosque in al-Madīna will be offered. Secondly, just a handful of ahādīth will be mentioned citing the virtues of visiting the final resting place of the

Messenger (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

There is no strength or power except with Allāh – upon Him I trust and to Him I repent.

1.0. The history of the Prophet's mosque.

1.1. The foundation.

When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) migrated to al-Madīna, one of the first things he did was to build a mosque. This would not only be the place of prostration, which is the literal meaning of Masjid, but the centre of the Madani community. The construction started in Rabī al-Awwal and took about eight months. Our Messenger personally took part in its construction. Remember that the Muslims read towards Jerusalem for approximately the first eighteen months, and so the mosque reflected that. In terms of size, it is said the mosque was about 30m by 35m.

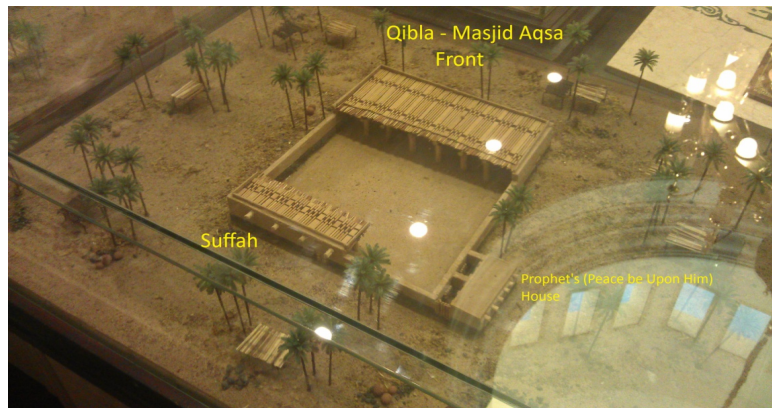


Figure 1 The direction of the Mosque was in the opposite direction as we know it today. Suffah was the place where the poor Muslims resided. Our Prophet wanted to live as close as possible to them.

1.2. The seventh year of Hijra.

It was after the battle of Khaybar that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) extended the mosque, to about 50m by 50m. The height of the ceiling was 3.5m. The direction had now changed and the Suffah side had been moved to the back. Not just in words but in actions too, the Prophet (peace and

blessings of Allāh be upon him) loved the poor and so he lived as close as possible to him.

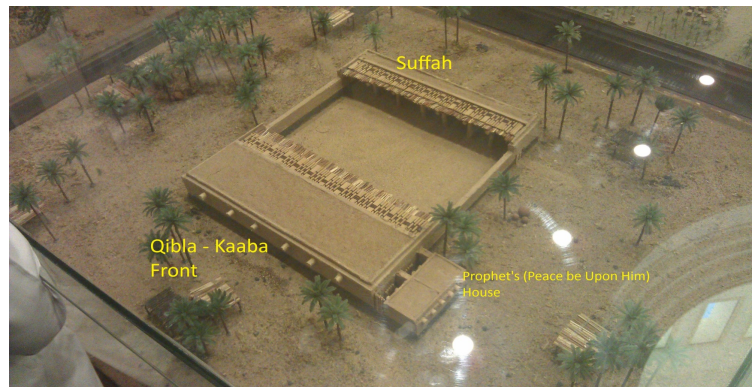


Figure 2 The direction of prayer was now towards Makka and Suffa was moved to the back.

1.3. The time of Sayyiduna Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him): 17 AH. As the Muslims increased, Sayyiduna Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) felt the need to extend the mosque. This resulted in 5m to the south (front), 10m to the west and 15m to the north (back). Bāb al-Salām and Bāb al-Nisā doors were added.



1.4. The time of Sayyiduna Uthman (may Allāh be pleased with him): 29 AH. Twelve years later, Sayyiduna Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him) too extended the mosque. This resulted in the last extension to be made south (the front side) of the Mosque – no extension beyond this has taken place to this day. Sayyiduna Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him) personally took part in the work. Now the area of the mosque was 5061 squared metres.



Figure 3 This was the last time the mosque was extended from the south side.

1.5. The Umayyads (91 AH.)

At the end of the first Islamic century, the Umayyads gave due consideration to the Prophet's mosque, most notably Walīd and Umar ibn Abd al-Azīz. For the first time, four minarets were added to the corners, each 27.5m high. The mosque now had twenty doors. Umar ibn Abd al-Azīz also built five cornered walls around the four inner walls of the sacred chamber (this will be shown later). It was done as such so it did not resemble the Ka'ba.



Figure 4 At the end of the first Islamic Century, Minarets were added for the first time.

1.6. The Abbasids (168 AH.)

In 168 AH, the Abbasid ruler Mahdī extended the mosque from the north side (back), and they added a shaded area for the first row.



Figure 5 A water fountain for ablution was added in the courtyard too.

1.7. The Islamic Middle Ages.

We move forward almost seven hundred years to the time of Sultān Qalāwun. He was the one who first put a dome over the sacred chamber, which was first made of wood. This was damaged due to bad weather. Then Sultān Qaytbai made improved on the dome in 881/1476. Further extension work was carried out by Qaytbai in 888/1483. He extended 1.21m east of the sacred chamber, raised the height to 11m and constructed two domes over the sacred chamber, placing wire mesh around it. He also built a fifth minaret at Bāb al-Rahmat (which is next to Bāb al-Siddiq).

Sultān Abd al-Hamīd performed perhaps the most detailed and expensive renovation of the mosque. He added the beautiful calligraphy found in the old mosque. This was completed in 1277/1861. He made an extension 2.62m to the east of the sacred chamber and added lead coated domes made of stone on the ceiling of the mosque.



1.8. The twentieth century.

A vast extension was carried out by King Abd al-Azīz. He extended to the east, west and north, so the area was now 6042 squared metres. This cost 70m Saudi Riyals. This was followed by King Fahd's efforts. He extended it to 82,000 squared metres and increased the capacity by nine fold. This cost 72 billion

Riyals. Today, it can accommodate 535,000 worships. Then there is the white marble courtyard that is 190,000 squared metres at this moment in time.

2.0. The Sacred Chamber & the Green Dome.

2.1. The Origins.

Currently, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is buried in the Sacred Chamber along with Sayyiduna Abū Bakr and Umar (may Allāh be pleased with them). A place has been reserved for Prophet Īsā (peace be upon him) when he returns closer to the Day of Judgement.

Each wife of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had her own Hujra, or chamber, which measured about 5m by 5m. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was buried in Ā'isha's room (may Allāh be pleased with her). The reason for this was because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) himself had stipulated during his lifetime that every prophet is always buried exactly where they pass away. Since he passed away in her chamber, he was buried there too.

Sayyida Ā'isha (may Allāh be pleased with her) herself reports that 'I saw a dream that three moons fell in my lap. I described this dream to my father.' When the Prophet passed away and was buried there, Abū Bakr (may Allāh be pleased with him) reminded her that this was the interpretation of the dream she had.

When Sayyiduna Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) was on his death bed, he sent his son Abd Allāh to Ā'isha, asking her permission to be buried there. She said she had wanted the place for herself, but happily gave it up for him. When Umar heard this, he said, 'Nothing is more important to me than to be buried in that sacred place.' This proves that burial near the pious is the Sunna of the Companions.

The three moons falling into the laps of Ā'isha (may Allāh be pleased with her) were referring to the three great individuals who would be buried in her room.

It is worthy of mention that when Ā'isha used to do Ziyāra when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and Abū Bakr were buried in her room, she sometimes did not cover her head. But when Umar was added (a non-Mahram), she would always cover her head.



Figure 6 The Chamber of Ā'isha

2.2. Umar ibn Abd al-Azīz.

In 91 AH, Umar bin Abdul Azīz built these five cornered walls (see below) around the inner four walls of the Sacred Chamber. He made a pointed at the back so it didn't look like the Ka'ba and to stop people praying to the chamber.

There were no doors so the chamber was completely sealed.



Figure 7 Umar ibn Abd al-Azīz added these five walls around the Secret Chamber.

2.3. Securing the Sacred Chamber.

Later, inner walls were built around the Sacred Chamber. This can still be seen today through the golden gates. The outer walls, side door and doors at the front are in the same position today.

Directly above the Prophet's final resting place, a silver dome was built called Qubbat al-Nūr. The dome has a small window with a grill. Except for this, the chamber is completely sealed.



Figure 8 A silver dome was placed above the Prophet's final resting place.

2.4. The Dome.

Sultān Qalāwun al-Sālihī was the first to build a dome over the sacred chamber.

This was in 678/1279. It was renovated in 881 AH by Sultān Qaytbai.

In 886/1481, a fire swept the mosque and as a result, the dome was damaged too. Between 887-892 Sultān Qaytbai rebuilt and refurbished it.

In 1253/1837, Sultān Abd al-Hamīd ordered for the dome to be painted green.

Beneath the green dome there is a smaller dome, which has the names of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) written on it, along with Abū Bakr and Umar (may Allāh be pleased with them).

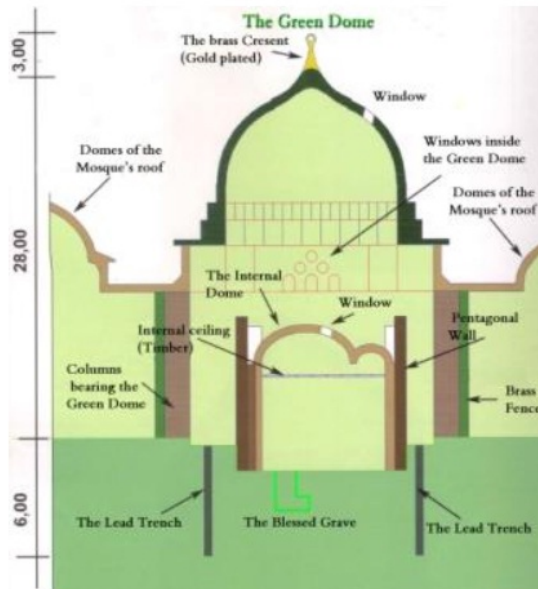


Figure 9 A diagram to show what the Dome looks like as a cross section.

2.5. The Pillars inside the old Mosque.

There are many ancient pillars in the Prophet's mosque which hold historical significance. Here are a few of them.

2.5.1. Al-Ustuwāna al-Mukhallakha (Hunāna).

This is behind the Mihrāb of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). It was built at the place of the weeping tree stump, which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) used to use as a Minbar before one was formally built for him.



Figure 10 Ustuwana Hunana

2.5.2. Ustuwāna Ā'isha.

It was named after Ā'isha as she informed the Companions of its location. It is also called the pillar of Qur'a (which means 'lot'). The Prophet (peace and

blessings of Allāh be upon him) identified this particular spot as a place of great virtue, adding that if people knew its true value, they would throw lots to read there.



Figure 11 Ustuwana Ā'isha

2.5.3. Ustuwāna Abū Lubāba.

This is the place where Abū Lubāba tied himself to after accidentally spilling a secret to Banū Quraydha.



Figure 12 Ustuwana Abū Lubaba

2.5.4. Ustuwāna Sarīr.

It is reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) used to sit I'tikāf here and would sleep there too during it.

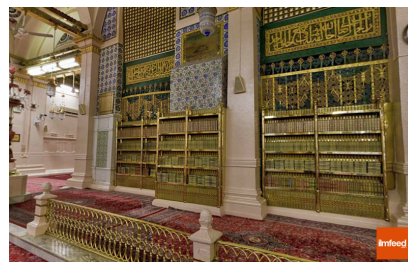


Figure 13 Ustuwana Sarir.

2.5.5. Ustuwāna Harth/Alī.

This is the pillar from which the Companions (mostly Alī) would watch and act as gatekeepers. When Allāh revealed the verse 'And Allāh will protect you from the people' (Mā'ida: 67), they stopped.

2.5.6. Ustuwāna Wufūd.

This is the place where delegations would meet and converse with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).



Figure 14 Left pillar: Wufud, middle pillar, Ali and right pillar, sarir.

2.5.7. Ustuwāna Tahajjud.

This is where the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) used to perform optional night prayers. It is now covered with the Qur'ān bookcases in Rawda al-Janna.

There are some writings on top of the old pillars that indicate the boundaries of the old mosque.

3.0. Ahādīth on the virtues of visiting the Prophet's Mosque in al-Madīna.

There are countless ahādīth extolling the virtue of al-Madīna, the Prophet's mosque and other places in and around the blessed city. Here are just a few:

a. In an authentic saying narrated by Abū Hurayra (may Allāh be pleased with him) and recorded by Imām Muslim in his *Sahīh*, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said,

One Prayer in this mosque [i.e. the Prophet's Mosque in Madīna] is better than a thousand Prayers in any other mosque, except for al-Masjid al-Harām.¹

Imām al-Nawawī reminds us that the hadith states that one Salāh is *better* than a thousand prayers elsewhere, not equal to.²

b. Abū Hurayra (may Allāh be pleased with him) reports from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) that he said,

¹ Book of Hajj, Hadith no. 2469, Chapter 'The Superiority of Prayer in Makka and Madīna'.

² 'Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and the authentic ahādīth' (Arabic); p. 18, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

Travel is not undertaken except for the sake of three mosques; al-Masjid al-Haram, the Mosque of the Messenger and al-Aqsā Mosque.³

c. In a famous saying recorded by both Imām Muslim and al-Bukhārī, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said,

What is between my house and my Minbar is a garden from the gardens of Paradise.⁴

'My house' refers to his grave now; at the time it was the room of Sayyida Ā'isha (may Allāh be pleased with her). Today the entire area is clearly marked with a different (lighter) carpet and pillars.

Imām al-Nawawī says there are two opinions regarding this hadith. One is that this place itself will be transferred to paradise. Though the entire world is nothing compared to the hereafter, Allāh deemed it valuable and worthwhile to transfer this place to the next life. The second opinion is that performing worship here leads to paradise.

Why is this place special? It is because of the prolonged period the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) spent in this particular area. On the same analogy, we respect and visit Cave Hira and the Mawlid in Makka.

d. Anas ibn Mālik (may Allāh be pleased with him) reports from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), who said,

Whosoever performs forty Salāhs in my mosque without missing any, then he will be decreed as free from the Fire, saved from the punishment and immune from hypocrisy.⁵

e. Abū Hurayra (may Allāh be pleased with him) reports that the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said,

When one of you leaves from his house for my Mosque, then each step equates one virtue (*hasana*) and each step removes one sin (*sayyi'a*).⁶

f. In fact, Allāh himself affirmed the superiority of the Prophet's (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) mosque. In the Qur'ān, it is stated,

³ Recorded by Imām al-Bukhārī. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and the authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 18, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

⁴ Recorded by Imām al-Bukhārī. '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and the authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 19, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

⁵ Recorded by Ahmad and al-Tabarani. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and the authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 19, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

⁶ Recorded by Imām Ahmad with a sound chain. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and the authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 19, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

A Mosque that was founded on *Taqwa* from the first day is better for you to stand in (Qur'ān; 9;108).

When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was once asked which mosque the Qur'ān was referring to in this verse, he replied 'My mosque'. (*Sahīh Muslim*).⁷ The scholars have suggested it could also be Quba Mosque, but like Ibn Hajar explains,

Both mosques are built on *Taqwa* from the very first day. Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr indicates this when he said, 'If Quba Mosque is built on *Taqwa* from the first day, then the mosque of Allāh's Messenger certainly will be too.'⁸

g. The city is often referred to as al-Madīna al-Munawwara, or the Enlightened City. The reason for this is the hadith of Anas ibn Mālik (may Allāh be pleased with him), who said,

The exact day the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) entered al-Madīna, every single thing there became enlightened.⁹

h. Abū Hurayra (may Allāh be pleased with him) reports that the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said,

This Minbar of mine is on a gate (*tur'a*) from the gates of Paradise.¹⁰

i. Abū Hurayra (may Allāh be pleased with him) reports that the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said,

Undoubtedly Faith returns to al-Madīna just like a snake returns to its hole.¹¹

j. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) used to supplicate,

O Allāh! Make al-Madīna beloved to us just like you made Makka beloved to us...¹²

⁷ Recorded by Imām al-Tirmidhi. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and the authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 15, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

⁸ *Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and the authentic ahādīth* (Arabic); p. 16, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

⁹ Recorded by Imām Ahmad and al-Tirmidhi. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 7, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

¹⁰ In one of the reports of Sahl ibn Sa'd from Imām Ahmad, a *tur'a* means a gate. Ibn al-Athir writes that originally, *tur'a* refers to a garden situated in a high place (*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and the authentic ahādīth* (Arabic); p. 21, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH)

¹¹ Recorded by Imām al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 25, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

k. Abū Bakra (may Allāh be pleased with him) reports from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), who said,

The Dajjāl will not enter al-Madīna. On that day, there will be two angels guarding the seven gates to the city.¹³

l. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) warned,

Whosoever intends evil with the inhabitants of al-Madīna, Allāh will dissolve them just like salt dissolves in water.¹⁴

m. Jābir ibn Samura (may Allāh be pleased with him) said, 'I heard the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) say,

Indeed Allāh Almighty has named al-Madīna Tāba.¹⁵

Imām al-Nawawī writes in the commentary of this hadith,

Tāba and Tayba comes from Tiyb which means a beautiful fragrance. Al-Tāb and al-Tayyib are two readings. It is also said it comes from Tayyib, meaning clean. Al-Madīna is so called because it is clean from *Shirk*.¹⁶

n. Al-Barrā ibn Āzib (may Allāh be pleased with him) reports in a Marfū hadith that,

Whosoever refers to al-Madīna as Yathrib, then he should seek forgiveness from Allāh. It is Tāba, it is Tāba.¹⁷

o. Even the people related to the city were given superiority by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). Abū Hurayra (may Allāh be pleased

¹² Recorded by Imām al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 26, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

¹³ Recorded by Imām al-Bukhārī. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 30, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

¹⁴ Recorded by Imām Muslim. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 33, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

¹⁵ Recorded by Imām Muslim. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 38, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

¹⁶ Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 39, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

¹⁷ Recorded by Imām Ahmad. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 39, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

with him) reports that the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said,

Soon people will embark on camels [in travel]. But they will not find a scholar more learned than the scholar of al-Madīna.¹⁸

Imām al-Tirmidhī is of the opinion that this is referring to Imām Mālik (may Allāh be pleased with him), who lived in al-Madīna. He was a great beloved of the Messenger (peace be upon him) and his sayings and actions reflected this fact. Once, he decreed the lashing of anyone thirty times who dared criticise even the soil of al-Madīna.¹⁹

p. There is cure in al-Madīna, even in the soil. Sayyida Ā'isha (may Allāh be pleased with her) reports,

When any person fell ill with a disease or he had any ailment or he had any injury, the Messenger of Allāh would place his forefinger upon the ground and would then lift it, saying after reciting Bismillāh, "The dust of our ground with the saliva of any one of us would serve as a means whereby our illness would be cured with the permission of Allāh."²⁰

Imām al-Nawawī writes that it is said this is specific to the land of al-Madīna only.

q. In short, al-Madīna is a place to live in, it is a perfect place to die in too. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said,

Whosoever can die in al-Madīna, should do so. For I will indeed intercede for the one who dies in al-Madīna.²¹

This is just a small selection of tradition on the virtues of al-Madīna and the Prophet's mosque. The great scholars like Imām al-Bukhārī have included separate chapters on the city in their collections.

3.1. Objections on visiting the Prophet's resting place.

There are some Muslims who have recently questioned the superiority of the Prophet's mosque. Specifically, the scholar in question is Sheikh Abd al-Azīz ibn

¹⁸ Recorded by Imām Ahmad and Imām al-Tirmidhi. Cited in '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 34, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

¹⁹ '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and the authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 44, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

²⁰ *Sharh Sahīh Muslim*, XIV: 191, Book of Salam.

²¹ Recorded by Imām Ahmad and al-Tirmidhi. '*Seventy Superiorities of al-Madīna al-Munawwara, in light of the Qur'ān and the authentic ahādīth*' (Arabic); p. 50, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawthar, Maktaba al-Malik al-Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1429 AH.

Abd Allāh ibn Bāz. What follows is an extract from his book that is distributed free to all visiting Muslims during the Hajj season.

Visiting the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is not an obligation imposed on the Muslim, nor is it a pre-condition for an accepted pilgrimage, as some people think...Those who are far from Madīna are not duly bound to travel with the purpose of visiting the grave.²²

He continues,

The hadiths which are cited to support the legitimacy traveling to Madīna with the purpose of visiting the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) have weak transmission chains; indeed they are fabricated. Memorizers, such as al-Dāraqutnī, al-Bayhaqī, Ibn Hajar and others, have pointed out this weakness and it is not permitted to contradict the sound Hadiths that prohibit packing off towards any mosque except the three mentioned [mosques, namely Makkah, Madīna and al-Quds].²³(p.126 Ibid.)

Note that Ibn Bāz does not (and in fact cannot) deny the abundance of ahādīth extolling the virtues of visiting the Prophet's mosque and the city of al-Madīna. He is against those people who come with the intention of visiting the Prophet, what we call al-Ziyara. So they have conveniently dismissed those ahādīth in which the Prophet asked his believers to 'visit him.'

In particular, Ibn Bāz refers to two traditions and ask Muslims to 'know them and avoid being beguiled and misguided by them'. They are:

*** 'He who performs the pilgrimage and does not visit me, will have shunned me'.**

*** 'He who visits me after my death, is just like him who visits me during my lifetime'.**

3.1.1 Answer to the objections.

With regards to the first hadith, ('He who performs the pilgrimage and does not visit me, will have shunned me') very little evidence exists to suggest that it is fabricated. In fact, numerous narrations are available which express the same meaning. Imām al-Ghazālī (may Allāh be pleased with him) has mentioned a similar hadith in *Ihyā Ulūm al-Dīn*. The words are 'Whoever had the ability to visit me and chose not to, has shunned me'.²⁴ Allāma Zayn al-Dīn Abū'l Fadl Abd

²² p.124. *Authentication and Explanation of Many Matters Related to Hajj, Umrah and Visit in the Light of the Holy Book and the Sunnah*. Abdul Azīz ibn Abdullah ibn Baz. Published by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 1998.

²³ p. 126, Ibid.

²⁴ p.348, Book of the secrets of Hajj, Chapter 'the visiting of Madīna and its etiquettes, *Ihya Ulum al-Din*. Imām al-Ghazali, Volume One, Darul Fajr lil-Turaas, Cairo, Egypt.

al-Rahīm ibn Husayn al-Irāqī (d. 806 A.H.) wrote a commentary on *Ihyā*, and added that the aforementioned Hadith had been recorded by Ibn Addī, al-Dāraqutnī and Ibn Hibbān. Imām al-Ghazālī has not mentioned a word in *Ihyā* to suggest that visiting al-Madīna is ‘not an obligation’ upon Muslims. To the contrary, he has included a heartwarming chapter in his book offering sincere advice to Muslims on how one should make the journey to al-Madīna, what one should read and how one should offer ones salutations to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

The second hadith (‘He who visits me after my death, is just like him who visits me during my lifetime’) too has been mentioned by Imām al-Ghazālī (may Allāh be pleased with him) in *Ihyā*.²⁵ Scholars note that the hadith has been narrated by Ibn Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) and has been recorded by al-Tabarānī and al-Dāraqutnī. Qādī Iyād (d. 544 A.H/ 1149 A.D), mentions the same hadith in his book *al-Shifā*, from Imām al-Bayhaqī with the words ‘Whoever visits me after my death, it as if he visited me while I was alive.’²⁶

Qādī Iyād continues to specifically mention the practice of visiting al-Madīna during the Hajj season:

Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm, the *faqīh*, said that when someone goes on Hajj, he should go to al-Madīna with the intention of praying in the Mosque of the Messenger of Allāh, seeking the blessing of seeing his Meadow (i.e. the area in the mosque between his tomb and the minbar, referred to as the *rawdah*), his minbar, his grave, the place where he sat, the places his hands touched and the places where his feet walked and the post on which he used to lean, where Jibrīl descended to him with the Revelation, and the places connected with the Companions and the Imām of the Muslims who lived there. He should have consideration for all these things. (p. 266, *Ibid.*)

A similar hadith exists which has been narrated by Ibn Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) and recorded by al-Tabarānī. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said, ‘Whoever comes to me as a visitor and did not intend but to visit me, it will be the incumbent upon Allāh to make me an intercessor for him on the Day of Judgement’. Ibn Sukkūn has authenticated this saying. By discouraging Muslims from visiting the grave of the Blessed Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), Ibn Bāz is effectively denying Muslims from an immense reward and from comfort and relief on the Day of Judgement.

An observer will find it impossible to find support for Ibn Bāz’s opinions from the great scholars of yesteryear. Imām al-Bukhārī added countless ahādīth in his *Sahīh* on the superiority of al-Madīna in the ‘Book of Hajj’, which thus implicitly

²⁵ p.348, Book of the secrets of Hajj, Chapter ‘the visiting of Madīna and its etiquettes, *Ihya Uloom Uddin*.

²⁶ p.265, *Muhammad- Messenger of Allāh. Ash-Shifa of Qadi Iyadh*. Translated by Ā’isha Bewley. Madīna Press Granada.1991.

suggests that the Hajj and the visiting of al-Madīna are almost synonymous. Imām Muslim did exactly the same with his *Sahīh*.

The Companions made visits to al-Madīna, specifically to visit the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). Perhaps the most famous case was Sayyiduna Bilāl (may Allāh be pleased with him). Shaykh Habīb Alī Jī'frī explains the story in the following link

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4_5Tq4DozY

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