

## Praying in or building a Masjid over a grave

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

I am writing this letter to inquire about:

**Question:** Offering Salaah (prayer) in a Masjid (mosque) with a grave inside it. Some scholars say that it is impermissible to pray there and if there is no other Masjid in town, it is better to pray at home than in a Masjid with a grave inside it. Other scholars say that it is permissible to pray there, because the grave of the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم)<sup>1</sup> is inside his Masjid, as well as the graves of his two Companions, Aboo Bakr and 'Umar. This matter seems confusing to me, so I wrote this letter to inquire about the truth. I live in the countryside of Senegal where there is only one Masjid in our town in which there are four graves.

Three of them are outside the Masjid, but they are adjacent to its southern part, whereas the fourth is completely inside the Masjid. Please inform me of the truth supported by evidence, as I know nothing about this matter, therefore I am asking you, for Allaah says in His Glorious Book (what means): [So ask the people of the Scripture, if you do not know.]<sup>2</sup>

**Answer:** First: it is impermissible to build Masjids over graves, or offer Salaah in a Masjid that was built over a grave or graves, as it is authentically established that Lady 'Aaishah<sup>3</sup> (رضى الله عنها)<sup>4</sup> said, "When death came upon the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم), he started to cast a garment of his over his face, and when it made him short of breath, he would remove it from his face; while in that state he said, 'May the Curse of Allaah be upon the Jews and the Christians; for they have taken the graves of their Prophets as places of worship.'" ('Aaishah said), "He was warning against (doing) what they did." She also said, "Had it not been for that, his grave would have been made prominent, but he feared lest it might be taken as a place of worship."<sup>5</sup> Jundub ibn 'Abdullah (رضى الله عنه)<sup>6</sup> also narrated that he heard the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), five days before his death, saying, "I, before Allaah, disown having taken anyone of you as a Khaleel (close friend), for Allaah has taken me as a Khaleel as He took Ibrahim (Abraham) as a Khaleel. Were I to have taken anyone from among my Ummah (nation) as a Khaleel, I would have taken

<sup>1</sup> (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him

<sup>2</sup> سورة النحل – Soorah an-Nahl [16:43]

<sup>3</sup> Umm-al-Mumineen 'Aaishah, the Mother of The Believers (رضى الله عنها)

<sup>4</sup> (رضى الله عنها) (rad iyallaahu `anhaa) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with her

<sup>5</sup> Narrated by Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim.

<sup>6</sup> (رضى الله عنه) (rad iyallaahu `anhu) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him

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**Aboo Bakr as a Khaleel. Beware! Those who came before you used to take the graves of their Prophets and righteous people as places of worship. Do not take graves as places of worship; I forbid you to do that.**<sup>7</sup> Narrated by Muslim. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) forbade building Masjids over graves, and cursed those who do so, which indicates that it is one of the major sins.

Building Masjids over graves and offering Salaah in them is an exceeding of the limits in religion and a means leading to Shirk (associating others with Allaah in His Divinity or worship), we seek refuge with Allaah from that; therefore, `Aaishah (رضى الله عنها) said, **“He was warning against (doing) what they did.”** She also said, **“Had it not been for that, his grave would have been made prominent, but he feared lest it might be taken as a place of worship.”**

**Second:** If the Masjid has been built over a grave, it should be demolished, because it has been established upon something other than what Allaah has ordained. Maintaining the Masjid and continuing to pray in it is persistence in the sin of establishing it, also an exceeding of the limits in religion, and glorification of those upon whose grave the Masjid was built, which may lead to Shirk - we seek refuge in Allaah from that. Allaah the Exalted says (what means): **[Do not exceed the limits in your religion.]** The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) also said: **“Beware of exceeding the limits in religion, for those who came before you were destroyed because of exceeding the limits in religion.”** If the Masjid has not been built over a grave and a dead body was buried there later, it should not be demolished; however, the body should be exhumed and buried outside in a Muslim cemetery, because burying it in the Masjid is a Munkar (that which is unacceptable or disapproved of by Islamic law and Muslims of sound intellect), which can be only eliminated by removing its cause.

**Third:** The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) laid the foundation of his Masjid (Al-Masjid Al-Nabawee) on piety to Allaah and His Good Pleasure.

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was not buried there after his death, rather he was buried in the room of Lady `Aaishah (رضى الله عنها). When Aboo Bakr (رضى الله عنه) died, he was buried with him in the same room, and when `Umar (رضى الله عنه) died, he was also buried there. This room was not inside the Masjid or in the direction of its Qiblah (direction faced for Prayer towards the Ka'bah), but to the left of the praying place, outside the Masjid. It did not become part of the Masjid when `Uthmaan (رضى الله عنه) enlarged Al-Masjid Al-Nabawee, but it was included after the time of the Al-Khulafaah' Al-Rasheedoon (the Rightly-Guided Caliphs) (رضى الله عنهم)<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, Salaah there is permissible; it is even better than a thousand Salaah elsewhere, except in Al-Masjid Al-Haram which is not like those Masjids that have been established over graves or in which people were later buried, as Salaah is prohibited in them.

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<sup>7</sup> Narrated by Muslim.

<sup>8</sup> (رضى الله عنهم) (rad iyallahu 'anhum) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with them

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**Fourth:** You are not allowed to offer obligatory Salaah at home; you must perform it in congregation with some of your fellow Muslim brothers in any place other than the Masjid which was built over a grave, even if in an open area. You must establish another Masjid based upon what Allaah has ordained in order to offer the Five Obligatory Daily Prayers in accordance with Sharee'ah (Islamic law) and away from what Allaah has prohibited.

May Allaah grant us success. May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and Companions.

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