

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

115825 - Is the qiblah of the Muslims when they pray always towards the East?

the question

Please why do Muslims face the east in prayers. please your answer with references.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allaah.

Firstly:

The Muslims turn to face the Ka'bah when they pray, in response to the command of Allaah, This is the qiblah (direction of prayer) of their father Ibraaheem (peace be upon him).

There is great wisdom in this command to turn towards the Ka'bah when praying.

The scholars of the Standing Committee for issuing Fatwas were asked: What is the wisdom behind the Muslims taking the Ka'bah as their qiblah or direction of prayer?

They replied:

It is no secret that the Muslim is required to do whatever he can of the things that are enjoined, and to refrain from all the haraam things that are forbidden, whether or not he understands the wisdom behind the prohibition, whilst believing that Allaah does not command His slaves to do anything but that which is in their best interests, and He does not forbid them to do anything but that which is harmful to them. His laws are all for a reason which is known to Him, and He makes apparent whatever He wills of it, so that the believer will increase in faith thereby. And He conceals whatever He wills thereof, so as to increase the believer in submission to the command of Allaah out of faith.

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

The Muslims take the Ka'bah as their direction of prayer in response to the command of Allaah in the verse where He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, We have seen the turning of your (Muhammad’s) face towards the heaven. Surely, We shall turn you to a Qiblah (prayer direction) that shall please you, so turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid Al-Haraam (at Makkah). And wheresoever you people are, turn your faces (in prayer) in that direction”

[al-Baqraah 2:144]

Perhaps one of the reasons why Allaah commanded them to do that is that it was the qiblah of their father Ibraaheem (peace be upon him). It is also narrated concerning the reason for revelation of this verse that our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) wanted to be commanded to turn to face the Ka'bah when praying instead of turning towards Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), and Allaah commanded him to do that.

It may also have been to put an end to the Jews’ argument that he was facing the same direction of prayer as they did.

And it may have been for other reasons. Allaah knows best. End quote.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Razzaaq ‘Afeefi, Shaykh ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Ghadyaan, Shaykh ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Qa’ood.

Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa’imah (6/311, 312)

For more information please see the answer to question no. [1953](#).

Secondly:

It is not correct to say that the Muslims face east when praying, rather for some Muslims the

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

Ka'bah may be in the east, or it may be in the west or the north or the south. That varies according to the geographical position of a country in relation to Makkah al-Mukarramah.

As for those whose direction of prayer is always to the east, they are some groups of Christians, not Muslims!

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And even if you were to bring to the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) all the Ayaat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.), they would not follow your Qiblah (prayer direction), nor are you going to follow their Qiblah (prayer direction). And they will not follow each other’s Qiblah (prayer direction). Verily, if you follow their desires after that which you have received of knowledge (from Allaah), then indeed you will be one of the Zaalimoon (polytheists, wrongdoers)”

[al-Baqarah 2:145]

Imam al-Tabari (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the words “nor are you going to follow their Qiblah (prayer direction)”, He is saying: You have no way, O Muhammad, of following their direction of prayer, because the Jews turn to face Jerusalem when they pray, and the Christians face towards the east. So how can you follow their direction of prayer when they differ from one another? So stick to the qiblah which you have been commanded to turn towards, and ignore what the Jews and Christians say when they call you to turn towards their qiblah.

Tafseer al-Tabari (3/185).

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said in al-Mughni (1/429) that the Christians turned towards the East, and the Christians’ turning towards the east is one aspect of the way in

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
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which they have distorted their religion and gone against the Messiah and the Gospel.

Shaykh Saalih ibn al-Husayn al-Ja'fari al-Haashimi said:

Another issue is that the Christians pray towards the east, where the sun rises, and they take this as their direction of prayer. The Messiah (peace be upon him) throughout his stay on earth, prayed towards Bayt al-Maqdis or Jerusalem, which was the qiblah of Moosa ibn 'Imraan and the Prophets. He said:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished”

[Matthew 5:17-18]

But the Christians went against the Messiah and the Prophets, and they gave as their excuse for turning to face towards the east the notion that this is the direction facing which their Lord was crucified and their God was killed.

It may be said to them:

O fools! If you had any understanding you would hate the direction of the east, and despise it, and regard it as inauspicious, and you would refuse it in ordinary matters, let alone matters of worship, because it is not the direction towards which the Messiah prayed and the Gospels do not testify to that. None of the Prophets prayed facing it at all. Moreover it is the direction from which you were destroyed and scattered and divided into groups. So the fact that you venerate this direction which is the worst of directions for you is something which makes a laughing-stock of you and brings scorn upon you. It would have been better for you not to turn away from the direction of

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
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Jerusalem because the Gospel says that the Samaritan woman said to the Messiah:

“ ‘Sir ... our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.’

21]Jesus declared, ‘Believe me, woman, ... you Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know’”

[John 4:19-21]

Here the Messiah is testifying that God has no direction which is to be faced in prayer except Bayt al-Maqdis, which is Jerusalem. Do you know better than the Messiah what God has enjoined? Verily we belong to God and unto Him is our return; we mourn the loss of your reason, which lead to your doom. End quote.

Takhjeel man harrafa al-Tawraat wa'l-Injeel (2/591, 592)

Thus it is clear that the questioner is mistaken in thinking that the Muslims always face towards the east when they pray, and it is clear that this is the religious practice of the Christians.

And Allaah knows best.