

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

7535 - How can we define the qiblah for Muslim students at the University of California?

the question

i am the president of muslim student association in california state university at long beach, and by allah help we were able to have a place to pray in the campus, but the problem is that we asked about the direction of ALQIBLA i have found two different answers one is southeast **which i agree** on the other is north east. i now on big problem because i do not know where to place alqibla in the place we got. i know it does not make any sense but i really do not know what to do.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allaah.

Firstly:

Wa 'alaykum al-salaam wa rahmat-Allaahi wa barakaatuhu (and upon you be peace and the mercy and blessings of Allaah). We congratulate you and your companions for your efforts in getting a place to pray. We ask Allaah to fill it with you and with people who will stand and bow and prostrate there.

Secondly:

One of the essential parts (pillars) of the prayer is facing the qiblah; this is a must. Whoever knows the direction of the qiblah and can face it, but does not do so, his prayer is invalid and he is a sinner, because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“so turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid Al-Haram (at Makkah). And wheresoever you people are, turn your faces (in prayer) in that direction” [al-Baqarah 2:144].

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Unless one has a valid excuse, this is the requirement in fard (obligatory) prayers. With regard to naafil (supererogatory) prayers, it is permissible to face any direction one wishes if one is riding whilst travelling. But if one is able to dismount, then it is not permissible for one who is praying a naafil prayer to face any direction other than the qiblah, when one does not have the excuse of riding whilst travelling.

Thirdly:

Whoever is near the Ka'bah has to face the Ka'bah itself, because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“so turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid Al-Haraam” [al-Baqarah 2:144].

Hence the rows of worshippers around the Ka'bah are circular; the further away they are, the wider the circle is, and the closer they are, the smaller the circle is. Whoever is inside al-Masjid al-Haraam has to face the Ka'bah itself. Whoever is in Makkah has to face al-Masjid al-Haraam; whoever is outside Makkah has to face Makkah. Facing in that direction is sufficient, because of the hadeeth, “Whatever is between the east and the west is the qiblah.” (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 342; Ibn Maajah, 1011).

This reference to the east and the west applies specifically to the people of Madeenah and others for whom the direction of the Qiblah is the same, because the Messenger [an error occurred while processing this directive] (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said this to the people of Madeenah.

Fourthly:

After looking at the map – which is what you should do – if you look at the map and draw a line between California and Makkah and look at the direction of this line, this will tell you what the direction of the qiblah is.

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(This is according to a fatwa given to us by our shaykh, Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen. The worshipper does not have to pay attention to the curvature of the earth's surface when determining the qiblah; he can work out the direction of Makkah by a straight line).

When we look at the map, we find that the direction of the qiblah (from California) is towards the east, with a very slight deviation towards the south which is hardly worth mentioning.

So your qiblah lies between the north and the south, so if you face east, somewhere between the north and south, that will be OK. There is no need to cause big problems and fitnah among the Muslims concerning this issue which Islam has made easy, when it says that the qiblah is between the east and the west, and the scholars have stated that a slight deviation from the direction of Makkah does not matter. So use whatever means are available to determine the direction of the qiblah.

The Standing Committee was asked about using astronomical instruments to determine the direction of the Ka'bah, and they replied as follows:

The Muslim scholars and those who were experienced in navigation could find the direction of the Ka'bah at night by referring to the Pole Star and other stars, and the moon as it rose and set, and during the day by referring to the sun as it rose and set, and by reference to other natural phenomena, before there were any Japanese or European navigational devices and the like. So knowledge of the qiblah is not to be determined solely by use of these tools. But if it is confirmed by trustworthy Muslim experts in this field that a specific device can show the direction of the qiblah precisely or approximately, then there is no shar'i reason why we should not use it; indeed, it may be obligatory to act in accordance with it if a person who wants to pray cannot find any other evidence of the qiblah.

May Allaah help us and you to do all that is good. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad.