

History and Importance of Masjidul Aqsa

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FOCUS ON FILASTEEN (PALESTINE)(In Four Parts)Glorified and exalted be He above all they associate with Him, Who took His slave (Muhammad) for a Journey by night from Al-Masjid Al-Haraam (in Makkah) to Masjid Al-Aqsa (in Al-Quds), the neighborhood whereof We have blessed in order that We might show him (Muhammad) our aayaat. Verily He is the All-Hearer, All-Seer (Soorah Al-Israa' Aayah 1)

In the following special feature article we offer to you the religious significance, history and importance of Masjid Al-Aqsa, Baitul-Maqdis and Al-Quds (Jerusalem) for our readers. It is somewhat lengthy but unfortunately it is evident that the significance of this holy place known as the "First of the Two Qiblahs and the third of the Two Masjids" (i.e. Masjid al-Haraam in Makkah and Masjidun-Nabawiyy in Al-Madeenah) is lost on a large number of Muslims. This lack of awareness only assists in underestimating and not understanding its importance and our obligations towards it as Muslims. We therefore pray that this small efforts assists you to increase your knowledge of this third of the holiest sites in Islam, ameen. - Ed.

PART I - THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF BAYTUL-MAQDIS From The Biography Of Muhammad (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) Change of the Qiblah (Direction in prayer) The Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) as well as the Muslims had been facing towards Jerusalem while worshipping, that is, they regarded it as housing the Qiblah. Such practice was followed for one year and four months after migrating to Madinah. It was the Prophet's (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) desire that the K'abah be made the Qiblah for prayers as did the other Arab converts to Islam, for they had been holding the sanctuary at Makkah in a reverential regard since time immemorial. To them the house of worship built by Ibrahim and Ismail ('alaihima salaam) was the holiest of the holy ones, incomparable in sanctity to any other sanctum or shrine. They were put to a severe test by being asked to face Jerusalem instead of the K'abah and they withstood this trial by dutifully obeying the divine command. Such was their devotion to the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) that they always replied, whether they found anything to their liking or not.

"We hear, and we obey," [Qur'aan 24:51] and "We believe therein: The whole is from our Lord," [Qur'aan 3:7] Thus, after the faith of the earliest Muslims had been brought to a test and they had defied it successfully, the Qiblah for the prayer was changed to the K'abah.

"Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witness against mankind and that the messenger may be witness against you. And We appointed the Qiblah which you formerly observed only that We might know him who followeth the messenger, from him who turneth on his heels. In truth it was a hard (test) save for those whom Allah guided." [Qur'aan 2:143]

The Muslims changed their direction promptly in prayer, in compliance with divine command, towards the K'abah which was henceforth selected as the Qiblah for all the believers, living in any part of the World, for all times to come. (See Sihah Sittah and the Qur'anic verses relating to the change of the Qiblah).

Al-Israa' It was during this period that the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) found himself transported at night to the Ka'bah and from there to the place of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, where Masjid-ul-Aqsa now stands. Then he was borne to the celestial regions where he witnessed the seven heavens, met the prophets of yore and saw the remarkable signs of divine majesty about which the Qur'aan says: "The eye turned not aside nor yet was overbold, verily he saw one of the greater revelations of his Lord." [Qur'aan 53:17-18]

Occurrence of the event at that time was meant to confer dignity upon the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam); it signified something like viands of higher regale in order to console and alleviate the feelings of distress caused to him by the persecution of the pagans at Ta'if. After the Ascension incident, the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) told the people about his nocturnal journey, but the Quraysh mocked him and shook their heads stating that it was inconceivable and beyond the bounds of reason. When Abu Bakr (radiallahu 'anhu) saw the Quraysh accusing the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) of falsehood he said, "What makes you wonder about it? If he said this, then it must be true. By Allah, he tells me that the revelation descends upon him from Heaven in a flash or in an instant during the day or night and I testify for him. This is even more unimaginable and difficult than what seems to astound you." (Ibn Katheer, Vol. II, p. 96, Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 399) Real Significance of Israa'The ascension did not occur in a routine or ordinary run of things only to demonstrate the profound phenomena of Allah's Kingdom in the Heavens and the earth to the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) of Islam. More than that, such a prophetic journey of tremendous importance alludes to a number of other significant and complex realities of far-reaching concern to humanity. The two Surahs of Israa' and An-Najm revealed in connection with this heavenly journey indicate that Muhammad (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) was charged with the office of prophethood for both the Houses of Allah, those in Jerusalem and Makkah, and was sent as the leader of the east and the west or the entire human race 'til the end of time. As the inheritor of all the prophets of old, he represented the fulfillment and consummation of mankind's religious development. His nightly journey from Makkah to Jerusalem expresses, in a figurative way, that his personality conformed and alluded to the oneness of Bait-ul-Haraam (K'abah at Makkah) and Masjidul-Aqsa. That all the prophets arrayed themselves behind him in Masjidul-Aqsa shows that the doctrine of Islam, preached by him, was final, universal and all comprehensive - meant for every class and section of human society throughout the ages. The event is, at the same time, indicative of the comprehensiveness of the Prophet's (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) prophethood, the place accorded to his followers in the great task of humanity's guidance and the distinctive character of his message.

Frankly speaking, the ascension of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) represents a demarcation line between the regional, limited and variable rules of divine guidance entrusted to the prophets of old and the global, comprehensive and abiding principles of faith conferred to the universal leader of human race. Had the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam)

been a sectional or regional guide, a national leader, the savior of any particular race or the restorer of the glory of any particular people, there would have been no need to honor him with ascension to the heavens nor would he have been required to perceive the hidden phenomena of the Heavens and the earth. Nor would it have been necessary to create a new link between the celestial and the earthly surface of the Divine Kingdom; in that case the confines of his own land, his surroundings environs and the times would have been sufficient enough and there would have been no need for him to divert his attention to any other land or country. Neither his ascension to the most sublime regions of the Heavens and to the "Lote-Tree of the Farthest Limit" (19) nor even the nocturnal journey to the far away Jerusalem, then in the grip of the powerful Christian Empire of Byzantium, would have been necessary at all.

The ascension of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) was a divine proclamation that he had nothing to do with the category of national or political leaders whose endeavors are limited to their own country and nation. For they serve the nations and races to which they belong and are a product of their time, they serve the need of a particular juncture. The Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) of Islam, on the contrary, belonged to the luminous line of the Messengers of Allah ('alahimus salaam) who communicate the inspired message of Heaven to the earth. They are links between Allah and His creatures. Their messages transcend the limitations of time and space, race and color and country or nation, for they are meant for the exaltation of man irrespective of color, race or country.

Obligatory Salaah On this occasion, Allah made fifty prayers a day obligatory for the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and his followers. The Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) constantly implored God for the reduction of the burden of prayers until the Lord was also pleased to limit these to only five times daily. The Lord was also pleased to declare that whoever properly performs these five times daily prayers would be recompensed for all the fifty daily prayers enjoined earlier. (Al-Bukhaari, Kitab-us-Salat) Within the Miracle of Israa' and Miraj are many potent salient points. However, only two of them will be mentioned here:

First, inherent within the miracle is the parallelism of the problems of Masjid Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, which is the farthest mosque and the area surrounding it, Palestine, to the problems of the Islamic world as a whole. Although Makkah became the center of the Islamic world after the message of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) was revealed, with Makkah serving as the focal point in the unity of its goals, the defense of Palestine is the defense of Islam itself and is the duty of every Muslim in the world. Being negligent with respect to defending and liberating Palestine means being negligent towards an aspect of Islam, a sin for which Allah may punish every believer in Allah and His Messenger (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam).

Second, the miracle symbolizes the loftiness of the Muslims and the obligation upon them to rise above worldly lusts and desires. They must distinguish themselves from other human beings by living up to the nobility of their role. They must always be of noble goals and purposes.

PART II - THE CONTINUING ISLAMIC HISTORY OF PALESTINE Fall of Jerusalem Under The Khilaafah of Umar Ibnul-Khattaab (radiallaahu 'anhu) Amr bin As was layinsiegege to Jerusalem. After the fall of Antioch, Abu Obaida, Khalid and other Muslim generals also joined Amr. The Christians had little hope of help from Byzantium. So they decided to give in. However, the Christians had some fears. They knew that other cities had given in before. In each case the victors had respected the life and property of the defeated. They had left alone their places of worship. They had allowed them to follow their own religion. But about Jerusalem the Christians were not very sure. It was as sacred to the Muslims as it was to them. Before giving in they wanted to make very sure that they would be treated well. So the Christians put their proposal before Abu Obaida. "We are ready to give in," they said, "but your Caliph must come here in person and sign the treaty of peace." The Muslim generals met in counsel and thought over the proposal. At last they decided to accept it. "Why spill human blood" they said, "if things can be straightened out without it?" So the Christian proposal was conveyed to the Caliph. Jerusalem could be taken without shedding a drop of blood. But for that Umar (radiallaahu 'anhu) had to come all the way from Medina to Jerusalem. To this Umar (radiallaahu 'anhu) readily agreed.

Umar in Jerusalem The Caliph left Ali (radiallaahu 'anhu) in Medina as his deputy and himself left for Jerusalem. He had only one attendant with him and only one camel to ride. Umar (radiallaahu 'anhu) and the attendant rode the camel by turns. It happened to be the servant's turn to ride on the day when they were to reach Jerusalem. "Commander of the Faithful," said the attendant, "I give up my turn. It will look awkward, in the eyes of the people, if I ride and you lead the camel." "Oh no," replied Omar, "I am not going to be unjust. The honor of Islam is enough for us all."

Abu Obaid, Khalid, Yazid and other officers of the army went some distance to receive the Caliph. All of them were wearing silk cloaks. This made Umar (radiallaahu 'anhu) angry. He took some pebbles and threw them at his generals, saying, "Have you changed so much in just two years? What dress is this? Even if you had done this two hundred years from now, I would have dismissed you." The officers replied, "Commander of the Faithful, we are in a land where the quality of clothes worn tells the rank of a man. If we wear ordinary clothes, we will command little respect among the people. However, we are wearing our arms underneath the silken robes." This answer cooled down the anger of the Caliph. Next the Caliph signed the treaty of peace. It ran as follows: "From the servant of Allah and the Commander of the Faithful, Umar: The inhabitants of Jerusalem are granted security of life and property. Their churches and crosses shall be secure. This treaty applies to all people of the city. Their places of worship shall remain intact. These shall neither be taken over nor pulled down. People shall be quite free to follow their religion. They shall not be put to any trouble..."

The gates of the city were now opened. Umar (radiallaahu 'anhu) went straight to the Temple of David (Masjidul-Aqsa). Here he said his prayer under David's Arch. Next he visited the biggest Christian church of the city. He was in the church when the time for the afternoon prayer came. "You may say your prayers in the church," said the Bishop. "No," replied

Omar, "if I do so, the Muslims may one day make this an excuse for taking over the church from you." So he said his prayers on the steps of the church. Even then, he gave the Bishop a writing. It said that the steps were never to be used for congregational prayers nor was Athaan [call to prayer] to be said there.

Umar's Mosque Umar (radiallaahu 'anhu) wanted to build a mosque in Jerusalem. He asked the Bishop which place would be suitable for the purpose. The Bishop suggested the "Sakhra," or the rock on which Allah had talked to Prophet Jacob. Here the Christians had heaped garbage to tease the Jews. Immediately Sakhra was cleared of the garbage. Umar (radiallaahu 'anhu) himself worked like a laborer with the rest of his men. Jerusalem the city of David and of Christ, witnessed equality of Islam. When the Sakhra had been cleared of every trace of dirt, a mosque was built on the site. The mosque stands to this day and is known as Umar's Mosque. Since the second Abbasid period, which commenced after the mid of the third Hijri century, the Islamic Caliphate State was progressively in weakening till it was broken down into three Caliphates instead of one. The Abbasid Caliphate was established in the East; the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, parts of North Africa and Syria, and the Umayyad Caliphate in Andalus. The Crusades took place under these circumstances. The political map of the region before the Crusades forty years before the Crusades, the Turkish Saljuks had succeeded in dominating Baghdad and took over the rule under the nominal Abbasid Caliphate. The Saljuks had managed to dominate over larger parts of Persia, northern Iraq, Armenia and Asia Minor around 1040 CE. The Saljuk ruler, Toghrul Bic, dominated over 1055 CE.

The Saljuks spread their rule over the Byzantines in Asia Minor. On 19 August 1071 CE, the Malathkard battle, under the command of the Saljuk ruler Alb Arsalan, took place, and a catastrophe befell the Byzantines till the end of the eleventh century CE. In 1071 CE, the Saljuks seized most of Palestine except for Arsout, and dismissed the Fatimid dominion from it. The Saljuks expanded their dominion to include most of Syria.

In 1092 CE (485 H [Hijra]), the Saljuk Sultan Malikshah passed away, thereby breaking down the Saljuks' dominion and launching many long and severe battles among them over the dominion and power. In 1096 CE, their rule was divided into five kingdoms: Sultanate of Persia (under the ruler Birkiyarouq), Kingdom of Khurasan and beyond the River (under the ruler Singer), Kingdom of Aleppo (under the ruler Radwan), Kingdom of Damascus (under the ruler Daqaq) and the Roman Saljuks Sultanate (under the ruler Qalj Arsalan). Most of the regions in Palestine were subjected to the Damascus regime, and during the weakness of the two rulers of Syria (Radwan and Daqaq), a lot of private rulers emerged, none of which dominated more than one city.

The Crusaders commenced their military campaign of 1098 CE (491 H) while Muslim regions in Syria, Iraq and others were torn apart because of their differences and bloody conflicts. The two brothers, Radwan and Daqaq, sons of Titish, launched a war against each other in 490 H. Many battles broke out between Mohammed Ibn Malikshah Birkiyarouq because of their conflict over the power in which they exchanged victories and sermons in the Caliphate court during the period 492-497 H.

First Crusader military campaign and its results During Pope Urban the Second's time (1088-1099 CE), the Europeans focused on the Holy Land. The Pope called on the Claremont Council on 26 November 1095 CE to restore the Holy Land by taking it back from the Muslims.

Many councils were held in Limoux, Angariz, Man, Tours, Bouwatieeh, Bordeaux, Toulouse and Neim, in which he called for launching the Crusades during the period 1095-1096 CE. He promised that any volunteer who would participate in the Crusades would be forgiven his sins. He also promised that any crusader's property would be kept under the auspices of the Church during their absence. He required that each warrior should wear a cloth cross on his tunic.

The Crusades were launched as public campaigns or callers' campaigns. They were poor in arms and in order. One of these campaigns was the campaign of Peter the Hermit, who was an eloquent person known for riding on a lame donkey barefoot and with tattered clothes. He gathered about 15,000 volunteers in France. En route to their destination, they committed the massacre of 4,000 individuals because of a dispute over rations. The bands of Walter the Penniless assembled with them in Constantinople, and they all entered the Asian seashore. A battle with the Saljuks took place and the Saljuks defeated them and killed 22,000 Crusaders. Only 3,000 Crusaders survived. As to the Volkmar and Ameikh campaigns, they began by massacring the Jews along their route. Thereafter, the two campaigns perished in Hungary! The first Crusade campaign took place in which professional European barons and knights participated. The campaign started to overcome the Muslim regions beginning in the summer of the year 1097 CE. In March 1098 CE, the Crusades formed Al-Raha State under the leadership of the Pole Baldwin. The Crusaders besieged Antioch for nine months. The ruler of Antioch, Baggissian, had shown courage, good opinion and took precautions more than anyone else. Thus, the Crusades perished. However, if their crowds had survived, they would have dominated over the Muslim countries. One of the Armenians who was guarding the walls of the city contacted the Crusaders. They gave him money and property for opening the door of the tower he was guarding. Because of this, the Crusaders occupied the city and formed their second State on 3 June 1098 CE (491 H) under Bohemond of Normandy.

While the Saljuks were defending themselves against the Crusaders along the north of Syria, the Fatimids took the opportunity to invade and occupy Tyre in 1097 CE. They dominated over Jerusalem in February 1098 CE, while the Crusaders were besieging Antioch. In Tripoli, the Judge Ibn Ammar, one of the followers of the Fatimids, declared his independence. The Fatimids sent to the Crusaders, during their besieging of Antioch, a mission so as to join in alliance. They proposed to fight against the Saljuks provided that they should capture Palestine while the northern region (Syria) would be under the dominion of the Crusaders. The Crusaders sent a delegation to Egypt to manifest their "good intention".

While the Saljuks were engaged with the Crusades, the Fatimids were engaged in expanding their dominion in Palestine over the Saljuk's State till their borders reached Al-Kalb River north of the Jordan River in the east!

Treacheries and betrayals of the States of the cities, which were so eager to gain the Crusaders' friendship during their expansion, were manifested. This happened when the ruler of the Sheezar region contacted the Crusaders and agreed

not to encounter them and to provide them with what they needed, such as food and rations. He even sent two guides with them to help them find the right routes. The city of Homos also gave them gifts. The city of Mosyaf concluded a treaty with them. Tripoli paid to them taxes and provided them with guides. Beirut paid them money and proposed to be subjugated to them in case they managed to seize Jerusalem.

Raymond of Toulouse (Prince of Province and Toulouse in France) continued to lead the rest of the Crusaders' march to Jerusalem. Their number was only 1,000 knights and 5,000 infantry. In the springtime of the year 1099 CE, they entered Palestine. They passed by Acre, whose ruler provided the Crusaders with supplies, then by Qeisarya and Arsouf. After that, they captured Al-Ramleh, Lod and Bethlehem. On 7 June 1099 CE, the besiege of Jerusalem started. Iftikhar Al-Dawalah, who was appointed by the Fatimids, ruled it. The city was captured on 15 July 1099 (23 Sha'aban 492 H). The Crusaders continued killing the Muslims for one week. They killed more than 70,000 inside Al-Aqsa Mosque, including many groups of Muslim chiefs, scholars and worshippers. Both the Fatimid and the Abbasid States did not do anything to help but rather kept silent regarding these events. Jerusalem was ruled by the leader of the Crusades, Godfry of Bouillon, who was called humbly the "Jerusalem defender". Nablus and Hebron surrendered to the Crusaders. It is narrated that only 300 knights and 2,000 infantry of the Crusaders remained for this reason, they could not expand their dominion over more territories because most of them returned home after Jerusalem was conquered. Therefore, the kingdoms of the Crusaders became like islands surrounded by enemies. Nevertheless, these kingdoms continued to survive for 200 years where after the last one perished because of lack of supplies and expeditions. The Muslims were weak because they split into groups, making their numbers very small. They did not take advantage of the opportunity to overcome the Crusaders during their periods of spreading out over large areas in limited numbers. The Muslims lagged till it was too late. The Crusaders became strong during the Muslim period of weakness and it was no longer an easy task to drive the Crusaders out.

The Crusaders continued to capture more cities in Palestine. Jaffa was captured during the besieging of Jerusalem by Genoan ships (in the Mediterranean Sea) on 15 June 1099 CE. They also captured the eastern area of Lake Tiberias (Al-Sawad area) in May of 1100 CE. The Crusaders also captured Haifa by force during the month of Shawwal 94 H (August 1100 CE) with the help of a great fleet from Venice. They dominated over Arsouq peacefully and drove its inhabitants out. They captured Qeisarya by force on 17 May 1109 CE. They killed its inhabitants and robbed their property on 17 May 1101 CE. Thus, the Crusaders imposed their dominion over Palestine except Ashkelon owing to the Egyptians (the Fatimid) supplying it with ammunition, men and funds every year. Although the Crusaders used to besiege Ashkelon every year, they failed to capture it until the year 1153 CE (548 H). In that year, Ashkelon's inhabitants managed to drive the Crusaders back. But, when they got desperate and were about to retreat, they received tidings that Ashkelon's people were in dispute. So, the Crusaders waited with patience. The reason for the dispute between the parties of Ashkelon was because of a power struggle; each party alleged that they alone achieved the victory. However, the dispute increased in size till one person from one of the two parties was killed. This led to a much worse situation and, consequently, war broke out between them and many of them were killed. The Crusaders were hoping for this window of opportunity and shortly thereafter, they advanced to Ashkelon and easily occupied it.

Although the Crusaders were small in number, they managed to maintain great control by building fortified castles that were built like islands in many areas in Sham. And as the struggle continued between the Muslims themselves, some of them resorted to getting help from the Crusaders to overpower their foes. The Muslims at large were weaker, and the Crusaders became more powerful and dominant, to such a degree that they played the role of a guardian policing the region.

The struggle between Baktash and Tagatken over Damascus continued, and Baktash sought help from the king of the Crusaders in 498 H and from all those "who wanted corruption." However, the king's only help was to push Baktash for further corruption, which ultimately led to his downfall and the triumph of Tagatken. At the battle between the Fatimids and the Crusaders in 498 H, in an area between Ashkelon and Jaffa, the Fatimids were supported by a force of more than 300 knights from Damascus, and the Crusaders were helped by a group of Muslims led by Baktash Bin Tatash. When the Sultan's army, under the leadership of Barsaq Bin Barsaq, came from Iraq in 509 H to Damascus for the sake of fighting the Crusaders, the rulers of Halab and Damascus feared for their own interests and power. They collaborated, under the leadership of Tagatken, with the Antakya Crusader troops to oppose the Sultan's army. Tagatken fought the Crusaders of Bayt Al-Maqdis and won back the city of Rafnya after the Crusaders captured it.

Generally, however, the Muslim struggle (Jihad) against the Crusaders continued, though it actually lacked a strategic plan or organization. Some of the other reasons for the continuation of the struggle include the fact that there were many Muslim leaders, who appeared and disappeared frequently, which led to a lack of stable leadership. Also, the conflict with the Crusaders was distributed on many fronts simultaneously in Belad El-Sham. Furthermore, Muslims did not have a powerful centre that could be used as a launching base for their assaults on the Crusaders. More often than not, the battles were mainly in the form of a single Muslim city or castle trying to defend itself, or expand, against the Crusaders. The wars continued between the Muslims and the Crusaders. Sometimes the Muslims triumphed, and in other times the Crusaders achieved the victory. It was not difficult for Muslims to get into the middle of Palestine and fight the Crusaders at Ramleh or Jaffa, for instance, but the Crusaders continued to have great control over the areas they occupied.

As a result, many new Muslim leaders appeared, but they were not strong enough to unite the Muslim forces for the fight against the Crusaders. Nonetheless, these leaders kept the spirit of resisting the Crusaders alive, and they inflicted them with many casualties and damages. They deprived the Crusaders from the security they were after, and managed to kill and capture many of their prominent leaders. For example, when Mu'een Al-Dawlah Saqman was fighting a war with Shams Al-Dawlah Jakramesh, and Harran was surrounded by the Crusader forces in 497 H, they started to contact each other and pledged a solemn oath for sacrificing themselves for the sake of God and His retribution. They gathered near Al-Khabour area in an army composed of more than 10,000 men from various nationalities, among who were Turks,

Arabs and Kurds. They met with the Crusaders at Al-Bleekh River and defeated them. The Muslims captured the Crusader leader Burdawal and traded him for 35 dinars. They were also able to reclaim 160 Muslim prisoners of war that had previously been captured by the Crusaders. In this battle, however, more than 12,000 Crusader soldiers were killed. 'Imad ud-Din Zanki carries Al-Jihad banner The long era of Al-Jihad against the Crusaders entered a new phase with the appearance of 'Imad ud-Din Zanki Bin Aqsaqr, who founded the Zanki State at Mousel and Halab. Zanki was appointed as a ruler of Mousel in 521 H after he had shown great skill and efficiency in ruling the States of Basra and Waset in Iraq. During the holy month of Muharram in the year 522 H, he managed to gain control over Halab. Zanki started to fight the Crusaders, and he defeated them in many battles.

Zanki's efforts for uniting the Muslims against the Crusaders were relentless. He recaptured the cities of Hama, Hams, Ba'albek, Sarji, Dara, Ma'rra, Kafr Taleb, Al-Akrad, Shahrazour, Al-Hadeetha and many other cities, as well as Al-Soor castle in the Abu Bakr area, Al-Hameediya castle, Ba'reen's castle and Al-Ashhab's castle from the Hakarian Kurds. In the year 534 H, Zanki tried to capture Damascus twice, but his effort was in vain. Damascus was really the key to getting Palestine back. Unfortunately, Mu'een El-Deen Anz, the ruler at the time, contacted the Crusaders and made an alliance with them against Zanki and promised them the city of Banias and they agreed. But Zanki went after them before they came to Damascus and they decided to back off. Nonetheless, Mu'een El-Deen kept his promise of giving up Banias, not to the Crusaders, but to the Muslims! The most famous triumph ever made by Zanki, however, is his conquering the city of Al-Raha, and his destroying the kingdom of the Crusaders that was established there. He besieged the city for four weeks, and opened it perforce on the sixth of Jamadi Al Akhera in the year 539 H. He also captured all the cities that were under the province of the previous kingdom in the Peninsula. He also liberated the city of Surooj, and all the cities that were captured by the Crusaders adjacent to the east side of the Euphrates, except the city of Beerah. After a life of Jihad that lasted for 20 years, Imad El-Deen Zanki was martyred in the middle of September in the year 1146 CE (5 Rabee' Al-Awwal 541 H). This was accomplished by an act of treason by some of his followers while he was besieging Ja'beer's castle at the age of 60 or so. According to Ibn El-Katheer, Zanki was an able politician and was highly respected and esteemed by his military and civil subordinates. Before he came to power, the country was a wasteland full of corruption and alliances with the Crusaders by the previous rulers. When he came into power, all of that was changed, and he set the country right and brought its prosperity back to it. "Zanki was the best of kings in form and manners. He was courageous and powerful and managed to take control over all the other kings at the time. He was very kind with women, and very generous with all his subordinates." After his untimely death, Zanki was later known as the Martyr.

Zanki worked in the most difficult circumstances of conflict between the rulers and princes of the Salajiq dynasty on the one hand, and between them and the Abbasid dynasty on the other. In addition to that, he suffered from the atmosphere imposed by the inheritance ruling traditions and the greed of princes and rulers to obtain any city or a castle that they could reach. Moreover, the Crusaders were very powerful and strong during his time. Despite that, he managed to substantiate a firm base of Jihad against the Crusaders to the north of Irand Syria. He also defeated the Crusaders and humiliated them more than once. Zanki made it possible to fight for regaining the lost land, and he was a model leader under the banner of Islam who brought back the hope of liberating the occupied holy grounds of the Muslims all over the world.

After he passed away, his State was divided between his two sons according to the inheritance tradition; Noor ud-Din Mahmoud took the State of Halab and its subordinates, and Sayf El-Deen Ghazi took the State of Mousel and its subordinates.

Noor ud-Din Mahmoud was born 20 years after the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Crusaders on 17 Shawwal in 511 H (February 1118 CE). He was tall, good-looking with dark complexion and a light beard. He married the daughter of Mu'een El-Deen Anz in the year 541 H and had a girl and two sons.

Under his rule, a new great phase for Jihad started in Belad El-Sham. During his reign, which lasted for 28 years, Nour ud-Din Mahmoud had one goal...uniting Muslims and liberating their occupied lands. He left no stone unturned for the sake of uniting Muslims and elevating them in all the aspects of life within an integrated Islamic pattern to regain the Islamic glory and expel the unjust occupation of the Crusaders. To accomplish this purpose, Nour ud-Din Mahmoud initiated an Islamic renaissance that stressed the need for the Islamic solution. Ibn Katheer describes him, saying, "Of all the kings I read about in pre-Islamic periods, and in the Islamic period as well, I never saw a king more just and kind to his subordinates among the Rashideen caliphs and Umar Bin Abdul Aziz than Nour ud-Din Mahmoud. He was very clever and witty, and was well aware of his time." He never valued men for their social status and wealth. He only esteemed those who were honest and hard working.

He was also known for his piety and love of Allah. He was very keen to perform all the prayers and celebrate the ceremonies of Islam. He performed the Isha' prayer (the evening prayer), and then after midnight would awake to start praying till it was time for the dawn prayer. He also fasted a lot. He was known for his sound erudite knowledge. He was well versed with the Hanafiah tenet and was given license to relate the Prophet's talks and speeches. He wrote a book on the concept of Jihad. He was a sedate person and was bestowed with a great deal of charisma. "He was fearful though lenient and merciful. And in his court there was only science and religion and consulting on Jihad. In all his life he never uttered a bad word in anger or pleasure. He was a grave, silent man."

He was disinterested and modest "to such a degree that his expenses were not different from the poorest and neediest of his subordinates." When his wife complained from the hardships of the difficult life he put her in, he gave her three shops he owned in Hams city and told her, "That is all that I have. And do not expect me to lay a finger on the money of the Muslims I am entrusted with because I fear the wrath of Allah."

The great Sheik Al-Naysabouri told him once: "I beg you, do not jeopardize yourself and Islam. If you were killed in a battle, the Muslims will all be killed." The continuation of Jihad against the Crusaders The Crusaders whose cities and

castles were conquered gathered in the city of Sour. Salahuddin Al-Ayoubi was very lenient with them and allowed them to go to that city freely. So they started to send calls for help and received back up and support till they were strong again. Furthermore, Salahuddin Al-Ayoubi set free the king Jae in the year 584 H on the condition that he should go to France. Rather, Jae headed to Sour and took the leadership of the Crusaders with the help of the fleet of Biza the Italian. On that occasion, Ibn Katheer says, "It was all done because of the mistake by Salahuddin to let all those he captured go free. Thereafter, he was full of remorse for what he had done."

The Crusaders attacked the city of Akka from Sour in the year 585 H (1189 CE), and they waited there till they got the support they needed from the third campaign of the Crusaders, which was called upon by Pope Urban the Second to regain Jerusalem. Three European kings led the campaign - the Emperor of Germany Fredrick Barbarosa, whose most men died on the trip, Richard "the Lionhearted" king of England, who came by sea, and Philip Augustus, the king of France. King Richard was a remarkable man. He "had the evil of the Crusaders and their hatred for Muslims. He was courageous, smart and patient. He was a great source of trouble for Muslims." These three forces besieged the city of Akka (on Rabee' Ath-Thaani / Jumaada Al-Oolaa 587 H [June 1191 CE]), and it fell into their hands on 17 Jumadaa Al-Oolaa 587 (12 July 1191 CE). With this occupation, the Crusaders managed to create a base for themselves in Palestine again. The Muslims hit back, and there were many battles between both sides. However, the Crusaders continued their march and expanded their territories on the south coast by occupying the cities of Haifa and Jaffa.

It is important to note that the struggle was a bitter and bloody one between the two sides. Ibn Katheer noted that Salahuddin defended Akka very bravely, and he and his forces fought for it for 37 months and killed more than 50,000 soldiers from the Crusaders. The third campaign of the Crusaders ended when Salahuddin made the Ramleh treaty with Richard the Lionhearted on 21 Sha'aban 588 H (1 September 1192 CE). The treaty was held for three years and three months, during which time the Crusaders took control of the coast from Jaffa to Akka and were allowed to visit Jerusalem and to carry out their commercial activities with either of the two sides. It is of extreme importance to elaborate here on some of the clauses of the treaty, which, unfortunately, some of those defeatists who live among us now take against Salahuddin as a man who wasted the rights of Islam and Muslims and turned to making up with the Jews:

1. Salahuddin was not in favour of the treaty. When he gathered the consulting princes to discuss the issue, his opinion was to refuse the treaty. According to Al-Imad Al-Asfahani, Salahuddin said, "Thanks to Allah we are great in force, and our victory is approaching. We are used to Jihad, so it is difficult for us to live without it, and we have nothing to do more than fighting the Crusaders. I see that I should leave everything regarding the treaty behind. We should opt for Jihad instead, and Allah is with us, and upon His Grace and Care we depend." However, his counselors agreed to the treaty on the pretext that the country was about to be totally destroyed; the soldiers were very tired and fatigued, and food supplies were scarce. If there were no treaty, the Crusaders would insist on fighting, which would be very bad for the Muslims. If there was a treaty, the country would take a rest and restore its prosperity, and the soldiers would rest as well and be able to prepare for retaliation. They all agreed that the Crusaders were not of the kind that abide by their word of promise, so they advised Salahuddin to make the treaty so that the forces of the Crusaders would dismantle and divert. They kept pushing and pressuring him till he finally agreed to the treaty.

2. This treaty was a short, temporary truce. It was not intended to last as a permanent solution. The Islamic shariah (the Muslim code of religious law) authorizes the making of temporary truces with the enemy for the general good of the Muslims. The history of Islam is full of such treaties. However, the battles continued immediately after the treaty.

3. This treaty did not contain any admittance on the part of the Muslims for the Crusaders to have any legal right in Palestine. The treaty simply stated that there should be no fighting over the lands they had occupied for a certain period of time. What a great difference there is between this treaty, of which Muslims had made many over their history, and the peace agreement made now with the Zionist entity in our contemporary time. Salahuddin died shortly afterward, may Allah rest his soul, on 27 Safar 589 H (4 March 1193 CE), i.e., only six months after the treaty. The Ayoubis and their struggle with the Crusaders After his death, Salahuddin's successors were fiercely fighting each other, a thing that weakened the Muslims and strengthened the kingdom of the Crusaders in Akka, which was expanding at the expense of the Muslims. The love of power and pleasure, even at the expense of principles and values, was the basic characteristic of some of the Sultans of the Ayoubi State. They made alliances more than once with the Crusaders to help them against their rivals. Sometimes they even offered Jerusalem city to the Crusaders in exchange for help against the Sultan of Sham or Egypt and vice versa! The Crusaders were very happy with the role they played, but their greed was centred on everyone and everything. But their spring did not last very long.

The fourth campaign sent by the Crusaders to the west in 601 H (1204 CE) ended in Constantinople and did not reach as far as Sham or Egypt. As to the fifth campaign, it was launched from Akka under the leadership of its own king, Johanna Bareaen, to the city of Demiat in Egypt between 615-618 H (1218-1221 CE). When the Ayoubian Sultan Al-Kamel Mohammed Bin Mohammed Bin Ayoub realized the gravity of the situation, he offered peace to the Crusaders in exchange for the surrender of Jerusalem and most of Salah El-Deen's liberated cities. They refused and asked for the southeast of Jordan, too, i.e. the cities of Karak and Shoubak. As a result, the great king Issa Bin Ahmed Bin Ayoub, the ruler of Damascus, ruined and sabotaged the walls of Jerusalem in 616 H (1219 CE) so that they could be of no use to the Crusaders should they invade the Holy City. But the Ayoubis finally gathered their forces and managed to defeat the Crusaders, who returned, humiliated, to Akka after they had missed a great opportunity.

The discord between Al-Kamel Mohammed and the great Issa led to the former going to seek help from Fredrik the Second, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, who became regent on the throne of the kingdom of the Crusaders in Akka. Al-Kamel promised the emperor the city of Jerusalem if he helped him against his brother the great Issa. Fredrik the Second led the sixth campaign of the Crusaders and reached Akka in the year 625 H (1228 CE). Even though the great Issa died and his brothers Al-Kamel and Al-Ashraf took his State and gave his son Al-Nassir Dawoud the cities of Karak, Balqa, Agwar, Salt and Shoubak, and Al-Kamel was not in need for Fredrik the Second any more, he gave him

Jerusalem just to fulfill the promise he made to him! Fredrik, at the time, did not have the power to force Muslims to surrender Jerusalem. He even begged, at certain stages of his negotiation with Al-Kamel, for it. Fredrik was quoted as saying to Al-Kamel, "I am your subordinate and faithful slave. If your Highness granted me the honour to take the country, it would be a great gift that would make me proud of myself amongst all the kings of the sea." Al-Kamel responded, and made the Jaffa treaty with Fredrik in 626 H (18 February 1229 CE). The treaty was meant to last for 10 years. It stated that the Crusaders would take the Holy City of Jerusalem, Bayt Laham, Tabneen, Honeen, Sayda and a strip of Jerusalem land that went through Al-Lad and ended at Jaffa, in addition to the cities of Nassira and the west of Al-Jaleel. The treaty also stated that the holy shrine of Al-Sakhra dome and its mosque should be left to the Muslims. Thereafter, Jerusalem was returned to the control of the Crusaders. "The Muslim people were very saddened by the loss of Jerusalem; they were crying and performing obsequies everywhere. The scholars and preachers repeatedly said that this incident was a shame on the Muslim kings, and the people of Damascus started to hate Al-Kamel and resent him for what he did." And Ibn Katheer is quoted as saying, "It was a great shock for Muslims, and the whole nation was weakened and self disappointed (131)." The struggle between the successors of Salahuddin continued. Al Nassir Dawoud, the monarch of Jordan, seized the opportunity of the termination of the Jaffa treaty and the fortification of Jerusalem by the Crusaders. In violation of the stipulations of the treaty, he took back Jerusalem and expelled the Crusaders from it on 6 Jamadi El Aoula 637 H (7 December 1239 CE). However, Al-Salah Isma'il, the monarch of Damascus, gave it back to the Crusaders in the year 638 H (1240 CE)! He did it in exchange for their help to him against the ruler of Egypt, Al Salah Najm El-Deen Ayoub. Not only that, but he also gave them the cities of Ashkelon, Sayda, Tabbarriyya and the rest of the coastal cities, as well as Alshaqeef castle, Al-Mojeb river, Safad castle and Amel mountain. This behaviour increased the resentment and malcontent of the Muslims, "who were very angry at Al-Saleh Isma'il." Once again, Jerusalem was in the hands of the Crusaders.

When Al-Salah Isma'il mobilized his forces to join the Crusaders against Al-Salah Ayoub in Gaza, most of his soldiers refused to join the Crusaders against their fellow Muslims. Instead, they took the side of the Egyptian soldiers and defeated the Crusaders bitterly. But Al-Salah Ayoub made another treaty with the Crusaders in 638 H (1240 CE), and they regained their control over Jerusalem and the other territories under their rule.

Again, the Ayoubis started to fight amongst themselves for power, and Jerusalem was the prize, manipulated to achieve their greed for power and control. Al-Salah Isma'il once again offered the Crusaders an alliance in Akka in exchange for permanent control over Jerusalem and the holy places, including the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Al-Nassir Dawoud joined him with this proposal. Meanwhile, Al Salah Najm El-Deen Ayoub, the monarch of Egypt, offered the Crusaders the same thing. The Crusaders chose Al-Salah Isma'il for the alliance. He invaded Egypt with the assistance of Al-Nassir Dawoud, and Al-Mansour Ibrahim, the king of Hams. On the other hand, Najm El-Deen sought help from the Khwarezmia, who came to him with an army comprised of more than 10,000 soldiers, and occupied Tabbarriya and Nablus. These forces entered Jerusalem on 17 July 642 H (1244 CE) and restored the city entirely to the Muslims. With that, Jerusalem was finally under control by the Muslims. They kept its Islamic identity until 10 December 1917 CE, when the English occupied it. Then the Khwarezmia helped Al-Salah Ayoub against Al-Salah Isma'il and his allies, and the second Gaza battle took place (near the city of Gaza in a place called Herbia) in 642 H (1244 CE). Al-Salah Isma'il and the Crusaders were severely defeated, and the casualties of the Crusaders were estimated to be more than 30,000 soldiers and more than 800 prisoners were taken to Egypt. This battle was the strongest blow to the Crusaders after the battle of Hitteen and is considered one of the most crucial battles in the history of Palestine because the Crusaders never were able to regain their strength even though they tried to keep what they already had. Then Al-Salah Ayoub took control over the cities Jerusalem, Hebron, Bayt Jabreen, Al-Agwar and Damascus in the year 642 H (1245 CE). He punished the Crusaders and occupied Tabbarriya castle and Ashkelon. Because of this, the kingdom of the Crusaders was limited to the gates of Jaffa in the year 644 H (1247 CE). Egypt was later attacked by the seventh campaign by the Crusaders, headed by Louise the Ninth, the king of France, in the year 646 H (1249 CE). The campaign failed, and the king was taken prisoner and later was set free to go to Akka. One year later the Ayoubi dynasty was terminated in Egypt, and the Mamaleek dynasty took over in the year 647 H (1250 CE). Thereafter, a new phase of Jihad against the Mongolians and the Crusaders began.

Al-Mamaleek and their confrontation with the Tartars In the seventh expatriation century, the thirteenth century, the Mongolian (Tartar) threat to the Islamic State started to emerge. The Mongolian tribes were all united under the leadership of Ghengis Khan and started a huge campaign of expansion. They controlled Manchuria, China and Korea, and they destroyed the army of the Khwarezmia Muslim State in 1221 CE. The Khwarezmia army was the strongest hurdle against the Mongolian expansion to the Islamic world, which had previously triumphed over the Mongolians more than once. Ghengis Khan died in the year 624 H (1227 CE), but the Mongolians continued their march and entered Middle Asia and Russia and controlled Moscow and the Ukraine. They attacked Poland and defeated the German and Scandinavian armies and went deeply into Europe. They also headed to the Islamic world and took Turkestan, Afghanistan, India and Persia.

The Mongolians were very ruthless and merciless with the countries they occupied. The whole world was afraid of their savagery and barbarism. They were winning the battles not only by their force and efficiency, but also by the psychological fear they inflicted in the minds of their opponents. The Mongolians invested the thunderbolt tactics in their wars, which were dependent upon swift movement. They also depended on the psychological war tactics by letting their opponents know about their horrible austerities before they even met them.

The Muslim State at the time was suffering from disjunction and weakness, so it was easy for the Mongolians to sweep entire Islamic armies and take over their kingdoms. The Muslim leaders were so weak then that one of them sent a pair of slippers on which his face was drawn so that the feet of Holako could honour him if he wore the slippers!

Thereafter, the Mongolians took Iraq. They besieged Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid dynasty, which was suffering

from great weakness, the cause of which was the conspiracy of the minister Ibn Al-Alqami with the Mongolians to topple the Caliph. In addition, he demobilized the majority of the official army, which was once composed of more than 100,000 soldiers; it was reduced to only 10,000. Baghdad fell at the hands of the Mongolians in the year of 656 H (1258 CE). For 40 days, the Mongolians massacred the people of Baghdad. Ibn Katheer states that there were more than 800,000 dead and some say as many as 2,000,000. It is said that the Caliph Al-Mu'tassem Bi'llah was put in a bag and killed by kicking. The Mongolians invaded the rest of the cities and took over Harran, Al Raha and Deyar Bakr, then they crossed the Euphrates and took Halab in the year 658 H (1260 CE). The Ayoubi rulers in Sham were very coward and defeatists; Al-Nassir Yousef Al-Ayoubi, the ruler of Halab, announced his submission to the Mongolians who, despite that, entered Halab and massacred the citizens to the degree that there were streams of Muslim blood throughout the city. Al-Mansour Bin Al-Modhaffar, the ruler of Hama, took his sons and women and escaped to Egypt, leaving Hama and its people behind him to meet their doomed fate. Al-Nassir Yousef went from Damascus to Gaza so that he could go to Egypt. He deserted Damascus and its people. Thus the Ayoubi dynasty was terminated in Belad El-Sham very quickly. The Mongolians reached Damascus and took it without force in the year 1260 CE, and then betrayed its people. During the spring, they occupied Nablus and Karak and headed to Gaza without facing any resistance whatsoever. Thus, Palestine was divided between the kingdom of Akka ruled by the Crusaders and the Tartarian Mongolians. Palestine was once more under the onus of the blasphemers.

The Crusaders and the Tartars in Europe were very happy with the Mongolian invasion of the Islamic State and tried to coordinate with them against their common enemy. They also tried to spread Christianity amongst the Tartarians themselves. They partially succeeded at first, for it was known that the Mongolian leader Holako had an inclination towards the Nestorian Christians, and his court was full of many of them. His wife was a Christian, too. She played a major role, of which the Church was very proud, in diverting the Mongolian march from Europe. Instead, the march was directed at the Islamic State. Moreover, the Mongolian leader of the Ayn Jalout battle, Katbaga, was a Christian. The Christian influence was so great on the Mongolians that one priest described the Tartarian invasion as "a Crusader campaign in the full sense of the word--a full Nestorian Christianity." The West even hoped that Holako and his leader Katbaga would eliminate the Muslims entirely. Hatton the First, the king of Armenia, and Bohemond the Sixth, the prince of Tripoli, along with the Crusader princes in Sour, Akka and Cyprus, made an alliance with the Mongolians that stressed the elimination of Muslims in Asia and the return of Jerusalem to the Crusaders.

At that time, Egypt, under the Mamaleek dynasty, was ruled by the Sultan Al-Modhaffar Qutz in 657 H (1259 CE). He was a leader known for his piety and love of Allah and Islam. He was the student of the greatest scholar at the time, Al-Aziz Bin Abdul Salaam. Ibn Katheer said that Qutz was "a courageous hero who loved doing the good and following Islam; people loved him very much and kept making invocations for him."

After a few months of his ascension to power, he faced the problem of the Tartarian invasion and received a threatening letter from Holako, before he left Syria, telling him to surrender Egypt. The letter read, "Look what we have done with the others and take a lesson from them; surrender, because we show no mercy to begging or crying. Where do you think you could escape from us? Who can protect you from our swords? Neither your forts nor men nor invocation can save you from us."

But Qutz, the Muslim leader who only feared Allah, knew that victory comes from Allah, and if he prepared well for the battle and made everything connected to Allah, victory would be achieved. He decided to announce the holy Jihad and to confront the Crusader invasion. After reading the letter, he gave orders to kill the messengers and divide them into two halves, and their heads were to be hung over one of the gates of Cairo (The Gate of Zuweela), as a sign of an unflinching determination to fight and challenge the Tartarian invasion.

Furthermore, Qutz decided to seize the initiative and attack the Tartarian forces to boost the morale of the Muslims and to emphasize the spirit of Jihad that fosters the concept of martyrdom for the sake of Allah. Further, he would be defending the Muslim land of Egypt and would liberate the occupied Muslim land in Belad El-Sham, including Palestine and the holy Al Aqsa Mosque. This would send the Tartarians a message that he was a new kind of man they had never encountered before, because the best way to defend is to attack. In the holy month of Ramadhan in the year 658 H (1260 CE), the Muslim army, under the leadership of Qutz, crossed the borders and liberated Gaza, where he stayed for one day. Then they headed north to meet the Tartarian forces. The two armies met at the Ayn Jalout area to the northeast of Palestine. Ayn Jalout Battle Ayn Jalout witnessed one of the most crucial battles in history on Friday, 25 Ramadhan 658 H (6 September 1260 CE). The Tartars had the logistic and scientific potential to win the fight against the Muslim army. Their advantages included: · Efficiency and experience gained from the great number of wars they witnessed. · High morale because they were never defeated. · They had a large number of fighters and more weaponry. · The efficiency of their cavalry who knew many advanced fighting techniques such as the thunderbolt method, which was a distinctive feature of the Tartarians. · They were able to manage well because they were close to the bases of their supplies and support. · The strategic locations of their army were better than those of the Muslim army.

Despite the overwhelming superiority of the Tartarian army, the Muslim army scored a momentous, exceptional victory. The Qutz army was characterized by the fact that it was an "Islamic" army aimed at consolidating Islam and protecting its Holy Land. The great scholars and religious men of Egypt joined this army making it was a sacred army constructed and built for the sole purpose of prioritizing the word of Allah and supporting its religion, Islam, in the land. Moreover, the army was further characterized by having a faithful leadership who cherished a true "will to fight", the crucial factor in winning any battle.

Qutz told his army to wait until they finished the Friday prayers: "Do not fight them till it is sunset and the shadows appear and the winds stir, and the preachers and people start to implore Allah for us in their prayers", and thereafter the fighting began. Jullanar, the wife of Qutz, was killed during the battle. He rushed towards her saying, "Oh my beloved one". She told him while uttering her last breath, "Do not say that, and care more for Islam." Her soul ascended to Allah after telling

her husband that the Jihad for the sake of Allah and Islam is more important than love and personal relations. Qutz stood up saying "Islamah…Islamah". The whole army repeated that word after him until they achieved their victory. During the battle, the horse of Qutz was also killed, and he stepped down and started to fight on the ground till they brought him another horse. He refused taking the horse of the other princes who volunteered their horses to him saying that he did not want to impede them from their holy duty, rescuing himself instead. He was asked why he did not ride on a horse and why he jeopardized himself and Islam. He answered, "If I was killed, I would have gone to Heaven, and as to Islam, Almighty Allah is well capable of protecting it." After the battle was over and the victory was achieved for the Muslims, Qutz stepped down from his horse and smeared his face with the dust of the battleground and kneeled to Allah in thankfulness and gratitude.

The Muslims immediately started to chase the Mongolians, and Qutz entered Damascus five days after Ayn Jalout battle. The chase continued to Halab, and when the Mongolians felt the approach of the Muslims, they left behind the Muslim prisoners, and suffered a great deal. In one month's time, the Muslims were able to restore Belad El-Sham entirely from the hands of the Tartars and the Mongolians.

This battle is considered to be one of the greatest battles in history in which the Mongolian invasion was put to an end. It was the beginning of the end of the Mongolians, who were forced to retreat. This liberated Belad El-Sham from their occupation. As for the Mongolians who stayed in the Muslim State, they embraced Islam in great numbers and that was another victory for the religion of Allah. Al-Mamaleek and their elimination of the Crusaders Although the Tartarian Mongolians were expelled from Palestine and the Muslims crushed them at Ayn Jalout, the kingdom of the Crusaders in Akka kept its control over the coastal area that stretched from Jaffa to Akka. The Sultans of the Mamaleek dynasty took the responsibility of liberating the rest of Palestine till they managed to expel the last Crusader from the Holy Land 30 years after the Ayn Jalout battle. Al-Dhafer Bebars succeeded the Sultan Qutz, whose reign lasted for about one year. Bebars played a major role in fighting the Crusaders in Belad El-Sham, for he was constantly assaulting their bases there. Sometimes he resorted to making treaties with them if he felt there was a need. The custom was that the treaty should last for 10 years and 10 months and 10 days and 10 hours. After finishing with the internal problems in his State, he turned to fight the Crusaders. In the year 662 H (1263 CE), he went to Palestine. When he arrived at Akka, the Crusaders came to ask him for renewing the treaty saying that they would release the Muslim prisoners and keep the promises they made. But Bebars did not consider their demands and went on to attack their various bases, especially Akka, so that he would know their level of strength and exhaust their resources and strike them at the right time and place.

He once again headed to Palestine in the year 664 H (1265 CE) and took control over Qaysarryat El-Mahsana and destroyed its walls. A part of his army attacked Akka and Haifa. He conquered Arsouf in the same year.

The next year, he went to Palestine again and besieged the city of Safad and conquered it. He then came back to Palestine in the year 666 H (1267 CE), and the Crusaders asked him for a treaty. He used to follow the policy of divide-and-rule with the Crusaders so that their forces would not be united against him all at once. This policy helped him conquer the city of Antakya in the year 667 H (1268 CE). This is considered the greatest victory the Muslims ever achieved over the Crusaders since Salahuddin liberated Jerusalem in the year 583 H (1187 CE). Bebars agreed, after conquering Antakya, to make a treaty with Akka that lasted for 10 years on the condition that he should rule half of Akka, and he should control the heights surrounding Sayda.

The Sultan Al-Mansour Sayf El-Deen Qalawoun continued liberating Belad El-Sham from the Crusaders after Al-Dhafer Bebars died. At his time an alliance against the Muslims was formed among the Crusaders, the Tartarians and Sanqur Al-Ashqar, the deputy of Damascus, who turned on the Muslims. But their alliance failed and Qalawoun started to tighten his grip on the Crusaders and occupied Al-Marqab Fort in the year 684 H (1285 CE). He conquered Al-Ladeqyya in the year 686 H (1287 CE) and Tripoli in the year 688 H (1289 CE). Qalawoun took advantage of the unstable state of the Crusaders in Akka in particular and in Belad El-Sham in general because of the ongoing struggle over power. He was very strong and powerful and could eliminate the presence of the Crusaders in the eastern Arabic region. On the Shami coast, the Crusaders were in control of only Akka, Sour, Sayda and Etleet. Qalawoun found that it was time for the total elimination of the Crusaders in Palestine. He used the incidence of the Crusaders attacking and killing some Muslim pilgrims as an excuse to announce Jihad against the Crusaders. He summoned his forces from Egypt and Sham. He stayed out of Cairo waiting for the arrival of the assistance forces, but he suddenly fell ill and died in the year 689 H (1290 CE). His son Ashraf Salahuddin Khaleel succeeded him. The Crusaders wanted to take advantage of the situation and offered Ashraf another treaty, but he refused and took his forces and besieged Akka and liberated it in the year 1291 CE. The king of Akka, Henry the Second, escaped to Cyprus. After conquering Akka, Ashraf took Sayda, Sour, Haifa and Etleet. He gave orders to destroy all the fortifications in those cities. Thus, the last base of the Crusaders was destroyed at the hands of Al-Mamaleek dynasty, and the existence of the Crusaders in Palestine and Sham was finally terminated after two centuries (492 - 690 H [1099-1291]). With this accomplishment, Palestine was back under Islamic rule again till the British forces occupied it.

Part III: Significant Dates in the History of Al Haram Al Sharif 636 CE: Jerusalem was conquered by Omar Bin Al Khattab, the second Rightly-guided Caliph, and he built his well-known mosque. 685 CE: The Umayyad Caliph Abdel Malek Bin Marwan began to build the Dome of the Rock. 691 CE: The building of the Dome of the Rock was completed. 693 CE: The Umayyad Caliph Abdel Malek Bin Marwan began to build Al Aqsa Mosque, which was completed by his son Al Waleed. 705 CE: Al Aqsa Mosque was completed. 15 July 1099: The Crusaders invaded Jerusalem and changed the Dome of the Rock to a church and Al Aqsa to a stable and they hoisted a cross over them. 2 October 1187: Saladin liberated the city and cleaned the dirt and filth off of Al Haram. 9 February 1924: The British General Allenby occupied the city and Al Haram was ruled by the British Mandate. 16 August 1929: The Revolution of Al Buraq broke out when the Palestinians defended the Wall against the Jews. 16 July 1948: The Israeli fighters raided Al Haram by dropping 65

bombs and hitting the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa. 7 June 1967: The Israeli forces occupied the city and Al Haram has been under the Israeli occupation ever since. 11 June 1967: The excavations were started under Al Haram Al Sharif. 15 August 1967: The chief rabbi of the Israeli army and his followers performed prayers in Al Haram Al Sharif. 21 August 1969: An Australian tourist by the name of Michael Rohan burned Al Aqsa urged by the extremist terrorist parties in the Israeli government.

Part IV: Disturbing Yet Revealing Information That Every Muslim Should Know Occupied Jerusalem: After having come back from his visit to the United States on 26 February 1997, the Israeli Premier Benyamin Netanyahu took a serious decision to build a new settlement on Abu Ghneim hill in Jerusalem, which action was described by the late King Hussein of Jordan as the last of its kind as told to him by the Israeli premier. This settlement is one in a continuing series of colonies built since the Israeli aggression began on 5 June 1967 and meant to encircle the city in an effort on their part to Judaize Jerusalem. Through this plan, Israel seeks to reinforce its capture of the city and isolate it from the other cities in order to impose new geographical and demographic facts to change the cultural and demographic features of the holy city. The reinforcement of these procedures in the city must not make us forget the serious excavations under the Holy Mosque of Al-Aqsa, which came dangerously close to collapsing, especially with the continued Israeli attempts to rebuild their so-called third Temple (al-Haykal) on the ruins of Al-Aqsa. The following revealed hints and implications indicating this plan should not be forgotten: The gift presented to the head of the Greek Church, Archbishop Maxim Soloum, on 29 December 1996, which was a silver statue of Jerusalem minus Al-Aqsa and replaced by the Temple. Israeli TV broadcast a documentary showing that Al-Aqsa would soon collapse as the result of an earthquake which will strike the area within two years. Moreover, the excavations will help in this process, having already weakened its foundations, and because geologists have confirmed that the area is one of the most active for earthquakes to take place. The publication of a new book in occupied Palestine entitled, *The Daydreams*, in which Israeli writers presented four hypotheses to destroy Al-Aqsa and rebuild their Temple. Some extremist Israelis indicated that the birth of the Red Cow, as it was described in the Bible, in a colony near Haifa, was a Heavenly sign that the rebuilding of the third Temple in Jerusalem has come nearer. Although they consider it a miracle, they have to wait until the Cow becomes three years old, then they will start to build their Temple. Sheikh Ra'ed Salah, the mayor of Um Al-Fahem, revealed that a Jewish attempt to enter Al-Marwani Mosque, located in the eastern basement of Al-Aqsa, was stopped through a gate in the south wall of Al-Aqsa in the last week of Ramadan. In another escalation, the office of the premier allowed the Jews to pray in Al-Aqsa under the pretext that this has never been prohibited. In addition, this move was synchronized with the building of the new settlement on Abu Ghneim and the continued excavations under Al-Aqsa, which began with the Israeli occupation in 1967. In this context, a video prepared by Sheikh Ra'ed Salah and Najeh Bkeirat, the chief of the Islamic Heritage Committee, showed that several tunnels under Al-Aqsa were threatening to collapse its foundations. One of these tunnels starts in the southwest of Al-Aqsa along with the west wall, 4 metres away, at a height of 6-9 metres and a distance of 30 metres. It ends with small stones which have been recently built and could be removed easily. Consequently, it will be quite easy to enter the heart of the holy mosque. The largest tunnel lies under the so-called Single Door (al-Mefred), while the other two tunnels lie under the Double Door. Both of them lead to the eastern basement under Al-Aqsa. Therefore, the excavations on the western and southern sides of Al-Aqsa and Bab Al-Rahma Cemetery have led to the following: The removal of more than 100 tombs and shrines of the Prophet's Companions and Followers in the cemetery located west of Al-Aqsa. There were several cracks and collapses in the walls of Al-Aqsa, especially on the south wall, which the documentary tape revealed that the Jews were using it as a place to store their papers, including their hymns and carols, as part of their rituals. This means that they have started using it the same way they do the Wailing Wall (Al-Buraq), and they intend to change it into a place for their prayers as occurred with Al-Buraq wall previously. Changing the features of the area around the Mosque, in addition to the intensive building boom, which could be considered as part of building the third Temple. Moreover, the Israeli Archeology Authority is building a rest house (a bar) near the windows of Al-Aqsa Holy Mosque, and this bar could be a place for lovers and displaying vices openly.

Jewish Scenarios to Destroy Al-Aqsa and Build the Temple A book entitled, *The Daydreams*, has been recently published in Palestine in which the writers adopted four possible scenarios concerning the future of Al-Aqsa. The first scenario calls for the building of 10 columns representing the Ten Commandments near the west wall of Al-Aqsa and its height would reach the yard of the Dome of the Rock. The second scenario is quite similar to the first in that it calls for rebuilding the third Temple vertically near the west wall of the Mosque so it will be higher than the Mosque itself and will be connected to the internal yard of Al-Aqsa. The third adopts the notion of architectural transfer, which suggests digging a very deep spiral path around the Dome of the Rock which could be transferred outside the city in order to build the third Temple on its location. Finally, the fourth scenario appeals for rebuilding the third Temple on the ruins of Al-Aqsa in general, and this scenario has a lot of future imaginary concepts. We have mentioned in an article published in August of 1995 that there are seven various organizations preparing for the rebuilding of the third Temple. The first one has already prepared the geometric and architectural designs, the second has already prepared the special stones, the third has prepared the décor and interior designs, the fourth will prepare the special costumes to be worn in the Temple, and the fifth is collecting funds to finance the building. Meanwhile, Sheikh Ekremeh Sabri, one of the preachers of Al-Aqsa, mentioned in one of his orations on the second Friday of Ramadan that a Jewish organization had warned him that Al-

Aqsa would soon be pulled down in order to build the third Temple.

The Declaration Concerning the Path Under Al-Aqsa The Israeli daily paper, Yediot Ahrenout, revealed in its 21 March 1997 issue that the Israeli forces had carried out new excavations under Al-Aqsa in order to find a path which had been the main entrance for the Temple 2,000 years ago. The Israeli sources indicated that this ancient path was discovered accidentally one week before during the excavations carried out by the city municipality under Al-Buraq yard near the western and southern walls of Al-Aqsa under the pretext of working on sewage networks. Consequently, the municipality stopped the excavations at a depth of 4 metres and called some experts from the archeology department whose general director Amir Dury claimed that the underground discovered path belonged to the era of the second Temple, and it was one of the main roads crossing Jerusalem north-south adjacent to the west wall of Al-Aqsa. The Birth of a Red Cow is Celebrated as a Sign of Rebuilding the Temple The extremist Jews received the birth of a red cow as a holy sign that the rebuilding of the third Temple is imminent. This was confirmed by a group of Jewish rabbis when a red cow was born six months ago in a kibbutz for the extremists near Haifa because the cow has the characteristics of the holy cow mentioned in the Bible. According to the Old Testament, the red cow without any spots is essential for the purity of the Jewish rituals and so this cow will be slaughtered and burned, then its ashes will be turned to liquid to be used in a religious ceremony which should take place before the rebuilding of the third Temple in the place of Al-Aqsa. The extremists claimed that no red cow has been born since the second Temple was destroyed by the Romans, so the birth of the red cow has been considered a miracle which will enable them to enter the holy shrine in Jerusalem. However, they have to wait until this cow becomes three years old, at which time they can start rebuilding the third Temple. Yahuda Atzion, a member of the gang which attempted to blow up the Dome of the Rock in 1985, said that they had been waiting for this miracle from God for 2,000 years but they have already been granted a red cow by God.

Permission for the Jews to Pray in Al-Aqsa In a reply letter which was sent recently by Sham'soun Stien, the legal consultant of the Israeli premier, to Yesrael Medad, the chief of the Temple Mount Group, he wrote that as far as he knows the Jews have the right to pray in the Temple Mount, Al-Aqsa Mosque, and they have never been forbidden to do so. Consequently, he addressed the chief of the city police forces, Major-General Ya'air Yetshaky, to allow the Jews to perform prayers and rituals quietly and peacefully with the full coordination with the police forces in Jerusalem, as reported by Haretz.

Source: http://www.alharamain.org/english/newsletter/issue41_42/feature.htm.