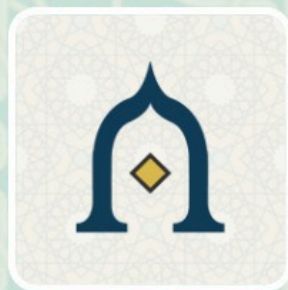


# **Non-Muslims Entering Mecca And Masjid Al-Haram**

# **Non-Muslims Entering Mecca And Masjid Al-Haram - Islamic Queries 21**



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**Translated by  
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# Non-Muslims Entering Mecca and Masjid al-Haram

Answer Provided By The Porch Of Wisdom Institute

Under The Guidance Of

**Ayatullah Shaykh Hadavi Tehrani**

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## Question

Is the Kaʿbah not considered the House of Allah, and do the followers of other Divinely-revealed religions not also worship God (Allah)? Have many of the past Prophets not only prayed, but rather, they are actually buried in the sacred city of Mecca? If this is the case, then why is entry to the city of Mecca

restricted to Muslims only?

## **Brief Answer**

All Divinely-sent Prophets invited humanity to worship One God – Allah. However, the validity of each Prophet’s teachings lasted only until the arrival of the next Prophet, as foretold in the preceding Scriptures.

Once a new set of teachings were revealed by Allah, and the deputing of a new Prophet who was accompanied by miracles and signs (*ayat*) had taken shape, all of the followers of previous Prophets and their teachings were required to follow the “new” religion.

With the advent of **al-Islam** and the revelation of the Quran by Allah to Prophet Muhammad as the final and most complete set of teachings, all of the previous teachings that the past Prophets were given, were abrogated.

Followers of earlier teachings were obligated to accept and follow the final religion al-Islam. Those who refused to do so were considered non-believers (*kuffar*) [as they did not believe in the next Prophet in line sent by Allah].

One of the Islamic rulings concerning such individuals (non-believers) is that they are not permitted to enter Masjid al-Haram. Muslim scholars cite a Quranic verse as the basis for this ruling:

...يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا...

***O you who believe! (Know that) Indeed, the polytheists are impure (najis), so let them not approach Masjid al-Haram after this year...” (9:28)***

Among the Shi’ite jurists, and indeed among all other Muslim scholars, there is consensus on this matter: People of the Book (*Ahlul Kitab*) – which are the Jews and Christians, as well as all other non-believers – are **not allowed** to enter Masjid al-Haram.

It is a known fact that Mecca is the spiritual capital of Islam and the centre of Divine revelation, where the House of Allah – the Ka’bah – is located. Based on this, the land of Mecca is a sacred region because the entire area is a *masjid*, and every *masjid* is sacred.

The sanctity of a *masjid* lies in its being a place for thought, reflection, and worship for those who have submitted – Muslims. Consequently, impurity and satanic thoughts have no place there.

For this reason, commentators of the Quran have addressed this issue in their interpretations on the verse previously quoted. The author of *Tafsir al-Kashif* [1](#) writes: “It is obligatory to prevent the entry of

anything impure – whether it be a person, an animal, or any type of impurity (whether material, physical, or spiritual) – into any *masjid*. If such impurity is present in a *masjid*, then it **must** be purified and removed from there.”

The author of the commentary of the Quran, *Min Huda al-Quran*,<sup>2</sup> mentions three reasons for the philosophy behind this ruling:

**1. Polytheism (*shirk*) is a false belief**, and the culture built upon it is contaminated with spiritual impurities. Muslims are obligated to distance themselves from polytheists in order to ensure that their negative influences do not spread among Muslims.

**2. Polytheists do not adhere to Islamic laws and customs**, especially regarding bodily cleanliness and hygiene. Therefore, they must not enter Muslim cities (such as Mecca), which have their own specific rules and regulations.

**3. Islamic countries are [and need to remain] economically independent**, so they must strive for self-sufficiency to achieve complete independence, particularly regarding essential needs such as food and drink, so that they are not forced to rely on outsiders.

Thus, it is clear that certain individuals (polytheists and non-believers) are not worthy of entering sacred places – and this is a purely rational matter.

When we observe that all governments across the world prevent the entry of foreign nationals into their countries until they undergo medical tests to ensure their physical health [or other screening processes], we see how much importance is placed on physical well-being. How then can spiritual and intellectual health not be equally important? Does Islam not have the right to protect the intellectual and spiritual well-being of its followers?

## Detailed Answer

Although all Divinely-sent Prophets invited humanity to worship the one God – Allah – and obey Him, from the beginning of their missions, the laws and traditions of Allah has been such that each Prophet is followed during their time until a new Prophet is sent with new instructions.

When a new Prophet was sent with clear evidence and signs, the previous set of teachings was abrogated, and all followers were obligated to adhere to the “new” religion – or better yet, the new set of teachings brought by the new Prophet.

For example, during the time of Prophet Musa, the only religion accepted by Allah were the teachings propagated by Prophet Musa, and the teachings of all previous Prophets were abrogated.

Similarly, during the time of Prophet ﷺ, the only set of teachings accepted by Allah were those

promoted by Prophet ﷺ, and all previous teachings were abrogated – and this was the way of Allah since the first set of teachings were sent to humanity.

From the advent of Prophet Muhammad and the establishment of al-Islam, the only religion accepted by Allah is al-Islam, and no other religion will be accepted from anyone, as stated in the Quran:

...إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

**Indeed, the (only) religion in the sight of Allah is al-Islam... (3: 19)**

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

**And whoever desires a religion other than al-Islam, it will never be accepted from them, and in the Hereafter, they will be among the losers. (3:85)**

Therefore, in this era that we currently live in, those who knowingly remain adherents of previous religions (such as Judaism and Christianity), and do not accept al-Islam, cannot be considered as being obedient to Allah, nor are they counted as believers.

Allah says to His final Messenger, Prophet Muhammad and ordered him to proclaim this commandment to all:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

**Say [O Muhammad to humanity]: ‘If you love Allah, then follow me [Muhammad]; [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is All-Forgiving and All-Merciful.’ (3:31)**

For this reason, many jurists equate followers of other Monotheistic religions (People of the Book – Jews and Christians) with disbelievers and polytheists, thus do not permit their entry into Masjid al-Haram.

This is based on the direct command of Allah in the Quran:

...يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا

**O you who believe! (Know that) Indeed, the polytheists are impure, so let them not approach Masjid al-Haram after this year... (9:28)**

Moreover, most Shi'a jurists believe that all non-Muslims are absolutely prohibited from entering **any** masjid.

In Islamic Jurisprudence, especially in discussions about *jihad* and the rules concerning *dhimmi* (non-Muslims living under Islamic protection), this issue is addressed, and the books of Islamic Laws state that it is an obligation for every *dhimmi* to refrain from entering any *masjid*.

If *dhimmi* – who live under Islamic governance – cannot enter the *masajid*, then it is even more evident that polytheists, atheists, and disbelievers living in non-Islamic territories are strictly prohibited from doing so.

If they are barred from entering any ordinary *masjid*, then their prohibition from entering a grand *masjid* like Masjid al-Haram becomes even more apparent.

The late Shaykh al-Tusi states: “Our evidence for the prohibition of disbelievers entering any *masjid* is this statement from Allah: ‘O believers, the polytheists are impure; therefore, let them not approach Masjid al-Haram after this year.’<sup>3</sup> Allah has declared them impure. Once it is established that they are impure, then it is not permissible for them to enter any *masjid*, because there is no disagreement that *masajid* must remain free from impurities.”<sup>4</sup>

The most important evidence cited by both Shi’a and Sunni jurists for the prohibition of disbelievers entering Masjid al-Haram is this Quranic verse:

...يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا

***O you who believe! (Know that) Indeed, the polytheists are impure, so let them not approach Masjid al-Haram after this year... (9:28)***

These scholars argue that the term “polytheist” does not exclusively refer to idol worshippers, or those who associate partners with Allah in divinity, but also includes the People of the Book (Jews and Christians).

An esteemed jurist, and author of *Jawahir al-Kalam*,<sup>5</sup> mentions the following: “*Shirk* (Polytheism) includes Jews and Christians as well, based on the statement of Allah:

...وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عِزْرُ بْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ بْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ

***The Jews say: ‘Ezra is the son of Allah,’ and the Christians say: ‘The Messiah (Jesus) is the son of Allah’... (9:30)***

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

***They take their rabbis and their monks as lords besides Allah, as well as the Messiah, son of Mary; whereas they were commanded to worship none except the One God – there is no deity except He. All-Glorified is He in that He is absolutely above their association of partners with Him! (9:31)***

Similarly, the address of Allah to Prophet ﷺ:

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ أَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلَهَيْنِ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ تَعَلَّمَ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ

***And (beware the Day) when Allah will say: ‘O ﷺ, son of Maryam, is it you who said to the people: ‘Take me and my mother for deities besides Allah?’ He (ﷺ) will answer: ‘All-Glorified You are (in that You are absolutely above having a partner or having any need or deficiency whatever)! It was not for me to say what I had no right to. If I had indeed said it, You would surely have known it. You know all that is within myself, whereas I do not know what is within Yourself. Surely, You and You alone are the Knower of the unseen.’ (5: 116)***

As well as the claim of the Christians that:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهُوا عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ٧٣

***Assuredly, they have disbelieved who say: ‘Allah is the third of the three,’ whereas there is no deity except the One God. And if they do not desist from saying this, there shall touch those of them who disbelieve a painful punishment. (5:73)***

This interpretation of Shirk extends the Quranic prohibition to both polytheists and the People of the Book, barring them from entering Masjid al-Haram.

In any case, despite differing opinions on the definition of “polytheist” and whether it applies to the People of the Book or not, there is consensus among Shi’a jurists – and indeed among all Muslim scholars – on this matter.

Therefore, it can be said that this consensus (agreement between the Shi’as and other Muslims) is a key argument for prohibiting not only polytheists, but also other disbelievers from entering Masjid al-Haram.<sup>6</sup>

Mecca is a sacred land, the center of Divine revelation, and the location of the House of Allah. This land is considered a holy place because it is a *masjid*, and every *masjid* is sacred. The sanctity of a *masjid* lies in its being a place for thought, reflection, and worship.

Consequently, polytheism, uncleanness, and satanic thoughts have no place there. For this reason, commentators of the Quran have addressed the philosophy behind this Divine ruling and stated that this prohibition serves as a preventative measure to keep the sacred space free from all forms of impurity and defilement.

The late Shaykh Muhammad Jawad al-Mughniyah, author of *Tafsir al-Kashif*, writes: “It is obligatory to prevent the entry of anything impure – whether it be a person, an animal, or any form of impurity (whether material, physical, or spiritual) – into any *masjid*. If such impurity is found in a *masjid*, then it must be purified and removed from there.”<sup>7</sup>

The late Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah,<sup>8</sup> author of *Tafsir min Wahy al-Quran*, elaborates on the philosophy behind this ruling more clearly: “This [verse<sup>9</sup>] is a call to believers to define the boundary between Muslims and polytheists. It outlines all the firm teachings regarding disassociation from polytheists and striving against them.

The practical outcome of polytheism is spiritual and moral impurity, as well as an invitation to such defilement. A polytheist lives in a state of intellectual, spiritual, and moral impurity.

When their life and intellectual/spiritual environment revolve around such defilement – when their soul and thoughts are immersed in the polluted atmosphere of idolatry – and when their intellectual focus revolves around lifeless objects like stone, wood, flesh, etc., then there is no sign of intellectual vitality or movement towards progress and perfection within them.

What is certain is that the human soul and intellect possess purity that can transform them and guide them towards an abundant source of spirituality which constantly renews life within human beings.

In interactions with a true believer, a person can feel pure morality and faith embodied within them. When these qualities are reflected in a believer’s character, one establishes friendship and intimacy with them while sensing that everything around them is clean because they operate within an internal sphere of cleanliness devoid of any impurity or vile traits.

What purity could be greater than the river of faith flowing through the heart and mind of a person who lives with Allah – the One who is the Source of Purity for all things, and the secret behind cleanliness throughout life?

Through this connection with Allah via the innate nature and pure conscience, a person can link oneself to everything in existence – objects, humanity, and the world – with purity at its core.

Just as faith represents purity in nature and character, polytheism represents defilement, darkness, ignorance, and stagnation – the polluted residues that accompany the life of a polytheist.

When their life and intellectual/spiritual environment revolve around these elements, then it is natural that they should **not** approach any *masjid* – a place that Allah has designated as an area of purity. The

*masajid* are places where people cleanse themselves from sins, vile traits, and bad habits that would otherwise render life meaningless.

How then can polytheists – who worship idols embodying all forms of intellectual, spiritual, and moral defilement – be allowed to enter such sacred places?”[10](#)

The author of *Tafsir min Huda al-Quran* mentions three reasons as the philosophy behind the prohibition of disbelievers entering sacred places:

**1. Polytheism (*Shirk*) is a false belief**, and the culture built upon polytheism is inherently corrupt. Muslims are obligated to distance themselves from polytheists to prevent their negative influence from spreading among the Muslim community.

**2. Polytheists do not adhere to Islamic laws and customs**, particularly those related to bodily cleanliness and hygiene. Therefore, they should not enter Muslim cities, which operate under specific laws and regulations.

It is evident that in matters of cleanliness and hygiene, substances such as alcohol, urine, blood, and other impure things are sources of dangerous diseases. A person who carries such impurities (a disbeliever or polytheist who does not believe in the impurity of substances like alcohol or blood) is excluded from the Islamic community – as long as they do not adhere to its laws.

**3. Islamic countries are economically independent**; thus, they must strive for self-sufficiency to achieve complete independence, especially concerning essential needs such as food and drink.[11](#) This ensures that they do not have to rely on outsiders for these necessities.[12](#)

In conclusion, we note that it is evident that individuals like polytheists and disbelievers are not worthy of entering sacred places. This reasoning is rational.

When we observe how governments and countries prevent foreign nationals from entering their territories until they undergo medical tests to ensure their physical health [and other screening processes], it becomes clear how much importance is placed on physical well-being.

How then can spiritual, intellectual, and moral health not be equally important? Does Islam not have the right to protect the intellectual and spiritual well-being of its followers by setting certain guidelines on who can and cannot enter premises which are sacred?

*O Allah! Send Your prayers upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad!*

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[1.](#) The author of this book, late Shaykh Muhammad Jawad al-Mughniyah, son of the late Shaykh Mahmud, was a prominent Shi'a scholar and commentator of the Quran in the 14th century AH. He was born in Lebanon, where he began

his education before traveling to Najaf for further studies. Upon returning to Lebanon, he assumed the positions of judge and head of the judiciary. Shaykh Jawad authored numerous works in various fields, and is renowned for his two commentaries, *Tafsir al-Kashif* and *Tafsir al-Mubin*. He passed away in 1980 and is buried near the Shrine of Imam ʿAli in Najaf al-Ashraf. (Tr.)

2. The author of this commentary is Sayyid Muhammad Taqi al-Modarresi (b. 1945), and he is a well-known Shi'a marja taqlid residing in Iraq. He is the author of numerous works in various fields, including Islamic jurisprudence, principles of Islamic law, and the history of the Ahlul Bayt. One of his most significant books is *Tafsir Min Huda al-Quran*. Some of his notable views include addressing the backwardness of the Muslim World and efforts to resolve it, advocating for non-secular governance in Islam, and critiquing the syncretism within mainstream Islamic Philosophy.

In 1970 CE, due to a death sentence issued against him, he secretly fled to Kuwait. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, he migrated to Tehran. Following the fall of Iraq's Ba'ath Party, he returned to Karbala.

His activities include publishing various journals, establishing television networks, founding publishing houses and Islamic centers, participating in international conferences and assemblies, organizing gatherings, delivering speeches at religious events, and establishing Seminaries in different countries. Mirza Shirazi – known for issuing the famous verdict (fatwa) against tobacco consumption – was one of his maternal ancestors, and Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Shirazi was his uncle. (Tr.)

3. Quran, Surah al-Tawbah, 9:28.

4. Shaykh al-Tusi, *Al-Khilaf*, Vol. 1, Pg. 518.

5. *Jawahir al-Kalam fi Sharh Sharaʿi al-Islam* (Jewels of Speech in the Commentary on the Laws of Islam), commonly referred to as *Jawahir al-Kalam*, is a comprehensive commentary on *Sharaʿi al-Islam*, which is a seminal Islamic Jurisprudence text authored by Muhaqqiq al-Hilli. This commentary was written by Muhammad Hasan Najafi (1788–1850), a prominent Shi'a jurist and scholar. The work is renowned for its exhaustive treatment of Jurisprudential topics, analytical depths, logical reasonings, inclusion of diverse legal opinions on each issue, and its clear and accessible language. The book has inspired several abridgments, commentaries, and marginal notes.

*Jawahir al-Kalam fi Sharh Sharaʿi al-Islam* is considered one of the most detailed works of Shi'a Jurisprudence. Aqa Bozorg Tehrani described it as a comprehensive book that covers all aspects of Islamic Law. Muhsin Amin, in his *Ayan al-Shi'a*, quotes Shaykh Murtada Ansari as saying that *Jawahir* and *Wasa'il al-Shi'a* (another key Jurisprudential text – a multi-volume compilation of ahadith on Islamic Jurisprudence), alongside earlier scholars' writings, suffice for attaining *ijtihad* (*Ijtihad* is defined as the intellectual effort of a qualified jurist to deduce Islamic legal rulings (*ahkam*) from the fundamental sources of the *Shari'ah*, specifically the Quran, the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams (*ahadith*), consensus (*ijma*, but only as an indicator of tradition), and reason (*ʿaql*). Amin further regarded *Jawahir al-Kalam* as a cornerstone for jurists and students in the Seminaries.

Note the definition of *ijtihad*: *Ijtihad* is a mental endeavor to deduce the rules of the sharia from the sources of Jurisprudence with the use of proper methods. It is a deduction of practical obligations in Islam from sources with the methods elaborated in principles of jurisprudence. For Shi'a scholars, the sources of jurisprudence are restricted to the Quran (*al-Kitab*, the Book), the *ahadith* of the fourteen immaculate ones, *ijma* (consensus), and *ʿaql* (intellect). The consensus is not, by itself, a separate source for jurisprudence; it is a source of evidence for tradition. It reveals the traditions of the Prophet and Imams.

The late Murtada Mutahhari referred to this book as an "Encyclopedia of Shi'a Jurisprudence," emphasizing that no jurist can do without it even today. The late Ayatullah Khomeini, a leading religious authority and political leader of the 14th century AH, coined the term *Fiqh-e Jawahir* (Jurisprudence based on *Jawahir al-Kalam*), and urged Religious Seminaries to base their studies on this methodology. He emphasized its importance and discouraged deviation from it. (Tr.)

6. Refer to *Miqat al-Hajj*, Issue No. 45; Najafi, Muhammad Hasan, "The Entry of Non-Muslim Tourists into Sacred Places (Part 1)."

7. See *Mughniyah*, Muhammad Jawad: *Tafsir al-Kashif*, Vol. 4, Pg. 28.

8. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah (b. 1935 – d. 2010) was a Lebanese Shi'a scholar and author. He regularly performed religious and cultural activities in Lebanon. He passed away on July 4th, 2010, in Lebanon, and was buried in Haret Hreik inside his masjid. (Tr.)

[9.](#) Quran, Surah al-Tawbah (9), Verse 28.

[10.](#) Fadlallah, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn; Tafsir min Wahy al-Quran, Vol. 11, Pp. 68–69.

[11.](#) Refer to Tafsir min Huda al-Quran, Vol. 4, Pg. 153.

[12.](#) Economic exchanges with non-Muslims are subject to specific conditions outlined by Muslim jurists and scholars in relevant discussions on this topic.

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