



## Stories from the Hijaz

### THE MAKKAH CHRONICLES



# Janatul Mualla – the second most important graveyard

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JANATUL Mualla is also known as the Cemetery of Ma'la and Al-Hajun. It is located close to Masjid al-Haram, and near the Mosque of the Jinn, in Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

Today the cemetery appears barren, a large anonymous burial ground with neat geometrically aligned dividers evident throughout, all surrounded by a white stone wall.

Loose stones indicate the locations of graves but there are no forms of any identification and no indication of the historical importance of this graveyard.

Janatul Baqee, in Madinah, is considered by many to be the most important cemetery in Islam. Janatul Mualla is older than Janatul Baqee and is considered the second most important graveyard in Islam.

The history of Janatul Mualla can be traced to several generations prior to the birth of Nabi Muhammad (SAW). As it was situated close to the Kaabah, it was considered a sacred place and a number of dignitaries were buried there prior to the advent of Islam.

At the beginning of the sixth century, the Quraish tribe was the dominant force in Makkah. They established Janatul Mualla as their own private burial ground. Many members of the tribe, and especially members of the Prophet's (SAW) Banu Hashim clan, were buried there in the decades leading up to the birth of Nabi Muhammad (SAW).

During the early years of Islam, before Nabi Muhammad (SAW) was forced to emigrate to Madinah, several important early Muslims were also buried in Janatul Mualla.

These include Abdul Muttalib, Nabi Muhammad's (SAW) grandfather, Abu Talib, the uncle of Nabi Muhammad (SAW) and the father of Ali the fourth caliph, and Qasim, the son of the Prophet (SAW) who died in infancy.

One of the most important Muslims buried there is Sayyidatina Khadijah, the first wife of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). She passed away in Makkah in 619 AD, the same year as his uncle, Abu Talib. They were the last two major figures to be buried in Janatul Mualla before the Hijrah, when the Muslims undertook the journey to Madinah.

Nabi Muhammad (SAW) frequently visited the cemetery before the Hijrah.

In Madinah, the Maqbarat Al Baqee (Janatul Baqee) was established and this became the cemetery of choice for the Muslims.

Many domes and structures were built or rebuilt over famous graves over the years.

Books of the previous centuries describe visits to particular graves.

In the late 18th century, a particularly orthodox group came to power in the Arabian Peninsula. They held the view that visiting the graves was akin to idolatry and declared such acts as against the spirit of Islam.

When they seized control of Makkah, they set out to systematically destroy any structure that resembled a shrine in Janatul Mualla. This included any identification markings.



The burial site of Sayyidatina Khadijah, the first wife of Nabi Muhammad (SAW), was destroyed by an ultra-orthodox group when they ruled Makkah in the late 18th century. Today, the grave is indistinguishable from all the others in Janatul Mualla. Photo WIKIPEDIA

Even the house in Makkah where the Prophet (SAW) was born was not spared. Only the Grand Mosque and the Kaabah was spared. The Ottoman sultan sent in his army to ward off this group and some of the structures were rebuilt.

Makkah and Madinah were recaptured by the orthodox group in 1925 and all shrines and forms of identification were destroyed in Janatul Mualla and Janatul Baqee. This occurred despite an outcry by the international Islamic community.

Some sectors of the Shia community till this day mourn the destruction of shrines in Janatul Baqee as Yaum e Ghamor (Day of Sorrow). The Shia continue to protest the Saudi government's demolition of these shrines.

In Janatul Mualla, which was once filled with brilliant marble and white stone grave markers, and domed shrines which marked the tombs of Khadijah, Abu Talib and others, there are no longer such structures. Till today, both Janatul Mualla and Janatul Baqee are mere open landscapes with

only demarcated walkways evident and loose stones indicating the sites of graves. There is no form of any identification evident.

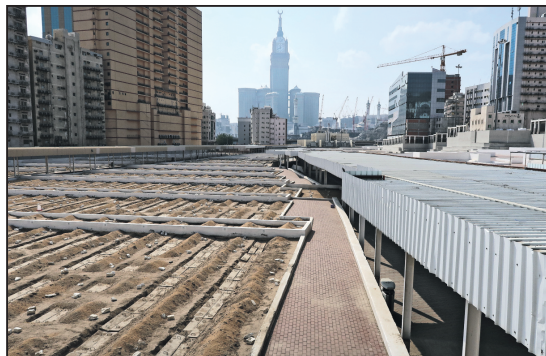
There are a number of texts which identify the graves in Janatul Baqee but very little evidence remains about the exact locations of those in Janatul Mualla.

As the latter is situated very close to the Grand Mosque, pilgrims often go to this graveyard. It is divided into two sections, with most of the older graves towards one side. Most pilgrims stand at the fenced perimeter and make a

general greeting at the family of the Prophet (SAW) who are buried there.

It is very easy to reach Janatul Mualla from the Haram. There are no restrictions to going to the cemetery but entering it is not easy unless a burial is taking place. It is very easy to view the whole graveyard from virtually everywhere along the perimeter, though.

Despite the seemingly barren appearance of Janatul Mualla, it is a reminder that many historically significant Muslims are buried there.



Janatul Mualla, the second most important cemetery in Islam, contains the graves of Sayyidatina Khadijah, the first wife of Nabi Muhammad (SAW), Abdul Muttalib, Nabi Muhammad's (SAW) grandfather, Abu Talib, the uncle of Nabi Muhammad (SAW) and the father of Ali the fourth caliph, and Qasim, the son of the Prophet (SAW) who died in infancy. Photos SALIM PARKER