



Defining the Qiblah

Fatwa no. 4254:

Q 1:

Is it permissible to use a Japanese compass to determine the direction of the Ka`bah?

Q 2:

**Is it permissible to use a European compass to determine the direction of the Ka`bah?
Which of them is more precise?**

Q 3:

**Is it permissible to use astronomical instruments to determine the direction of the
Ka`bah?**

Q 4:

If the device determining the direction of Ka`bah gives a direction different from that given by astronomical instruments, which one should be followed, especially when the range of deviation is 17 degrees.

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What is the meaning of the Ayah (Qur'anic verse) ﴿ So turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid Al-Harâm (the sanctuary at Makkah)? ﴾

A: Muslim scholars and experts of navigation could find the direction of the Ka`bah at night by referring to the North Pole, other stars, and the moon rising and setting. During the day, they knew it by referring to the sunrise and sunset and by reference to other cosmic phenomena before the Japanese or European navigational devices and the like were invented. So knowledge of the Qiblah is not to be determined solely by the use of these tools. But if it is confirmed by trustworthy Muslim experts in this field that a specific device can show the direction of the Qiblah precisely or approximately, then there is no legal reason not to use it. Indeed, it may be obligatory to act in accordance with it if a person who wants to perform Salah cannot find any other way to know the Qiblah. To summarize, the answer of the first three questions, if the validity of determining the Qiblah using one of these two devices, is proven by people of experience, it should be used. Similarly, if the two devices were of the same precision, the person in charge is free to choose any. But if a device is proved to be more precise than the other, it should be used regardless of the place of manufacturing.

Allah says, ﴿ So turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid-Al-Harâm (the sanctuary at Makkah). And wheresoever you people are, turn your faces (in prayer) in that direction. ﴾ It refers to the obligation of facing the Ka`bah itself if you can see it during Salah or being told by a trustworthy person in Makkah about the exact direction based on the person's actual seeing of the Ka`bah. It also proves

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the obligation of facing its direction for whoever is away from the Honorable City of Makkah as in Yemen, Al-Sham (Ancient Syria), or Egypt. It is authentically reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to those in Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah and its whereabouts to the north, ﴿ Any direction that is between the east and west can be regarded as a Qiblah. ﴾

May Allah grant us success! May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family and Companions!

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