

Abrahamic Family House interfaith complex

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Seminar #3





Name: The Abrahamic Family House
Location: Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Design: Adjaye Associates
Client: Higher Committee Of Human Fraternity

The Abrahamic Family House

Arabic: (بيت العائلة الإبراهيمية)

Is an interfaith complex designed by architect [David Adjaye](#). It has opened in [Abu Dhabi](#). Located on [Saadiyat Island](#).

a cultural hub positioned off the coast of [Abu Dhabi](#) – the project incorporates three separate houses of worship for the three [Abrahamic religions](#) **Christianity, Judaism and Islam.**

It houses the [St. Francis Church](#), [Imam Al-Tayeb Mosque](#) and [Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue](#) in separate structures.

The mission was inspired by the [Document on Human Fraternity](#) on **Feb. 4, 2019** in [Abu Dhabi](#).

The project was announced on **Feb. 5, 2019** .

It was officially initiated on **16 February 2023**

The implementation of the project is supervised by the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity (HCHF).



Purpose

Model of the site and its three main buildings
The Abraham Family House aims to serve as a **community for inter-religious dialogue and exchange and be a physical manifestation of the Document on Human Fraternity.**

It will provide learning resources as well as spaces for worship.

The complex seeks to represent interfaith co-existence, **preserves the unique character of the religions represented and build bridges between human civilization and the Abrahamic messages.**



Design

The design of the Abraham Family House has been prepared by the award-winning architectural and design firm [Adjaye Associates](#), headed by Ghanaian-British architect [David Adjaye](#).

The **three cubic** houses of worship sit upon a **secular visitor pavilion**, and aim to represent the diverse worshippers, residents, and visitors of [Abu Dhabi](#).

Adjaye highlighted that he wanted to "create a building that starts to **dissolve the notion of hierarchical difference** – **it should represent universality and totality** – something higher, that enhances the richness of human life".



Design

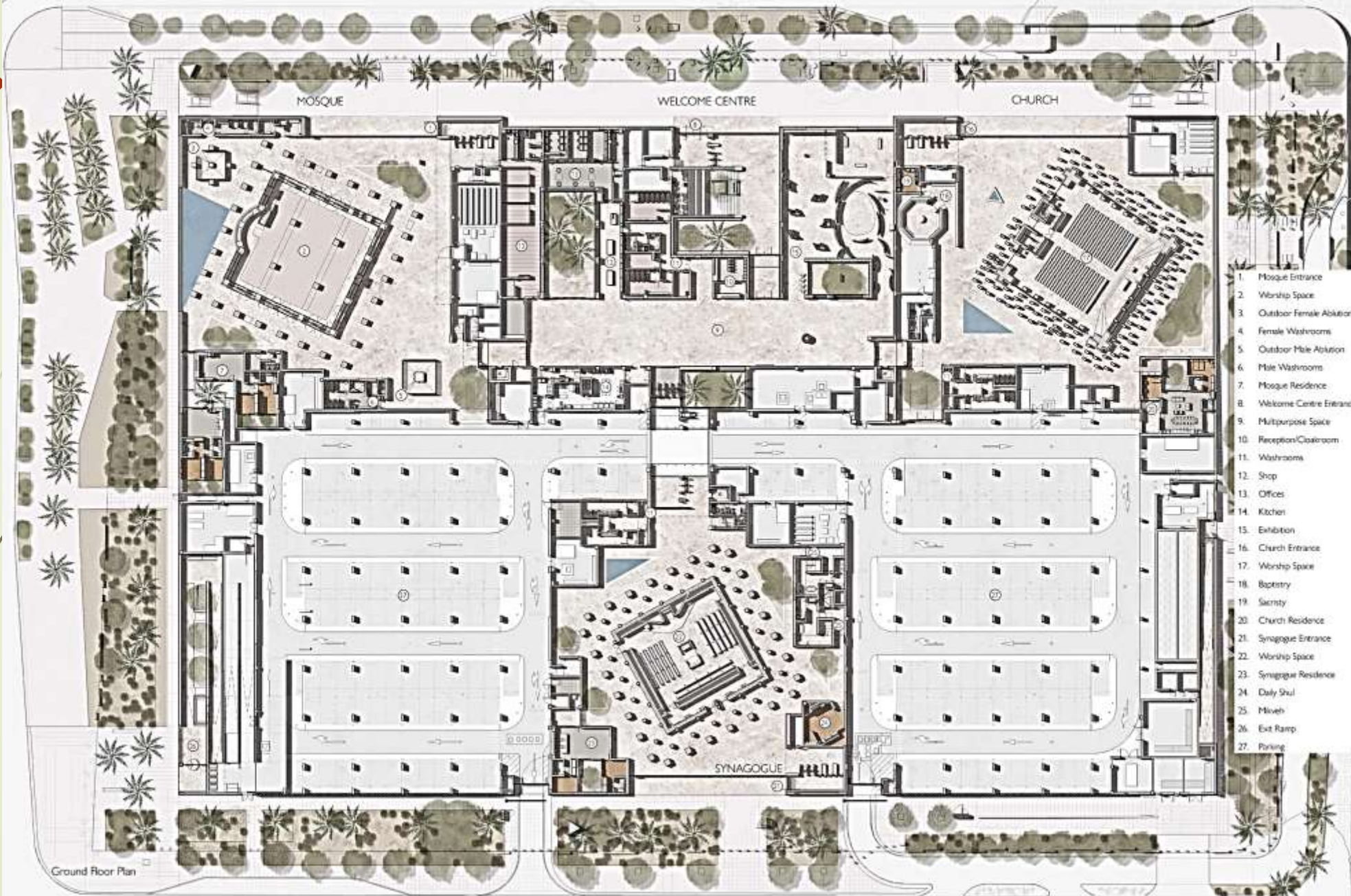
The Abrahamamic Family House is made up of a **trio of standalone cubic buildings with flat roofs**, each equal in volume but distinguished by their own features including differently sized courtyards.

"Each building's architectural articulation is unique, and specifically oriented to its siting and religious references," said the architect

The **silhouette of the building makes the cubes look unified**, and each of them is illustrated with colonnades, screens and vaults.

The site also includes a **cultural center** that will promote the values of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence while the unique character of each faith is preserved.





MOSQUE

WELCOME CENTRE

CHURCH

SYNAGOGUE

Ground Floor Plan

1. Mosque Entrance
2. Worship Space
3. Outdoor Female Ablution
4. Female Washrooms
5. Outdoor Male Ablution
6. Male Washrooms
7. Mosque Residence
8. Welcome Centre Entrance
9. Multipurpose Space
10. Reception/Classroom
11. Washrooms
12. Shop
13. Offices
14. Kitchen
15. Exhibition
16. Church Entrance
17. Worship Space
18. Baptistry
19. Sacristy
20. Church Residence
21. Synagogue Entrance
22. Worship Space
23. Synagogue Residence
24. Daily Shul
25. Mivneh
26. Ext Ramp
27. Parking

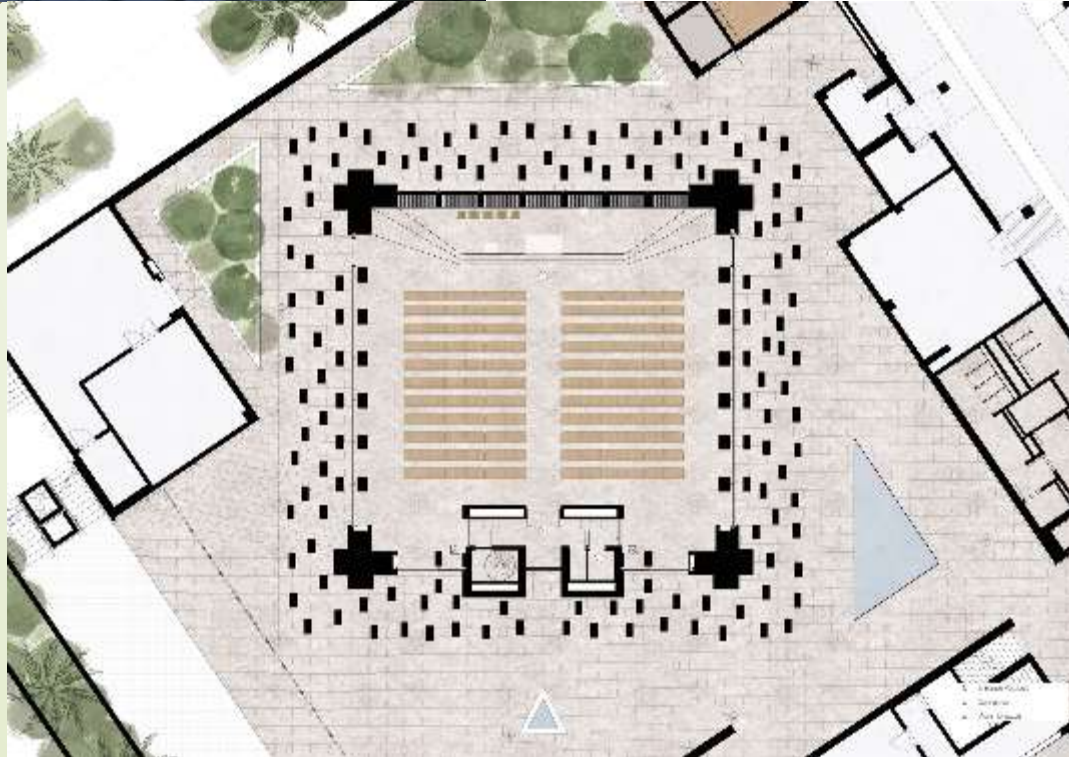


Francis Church

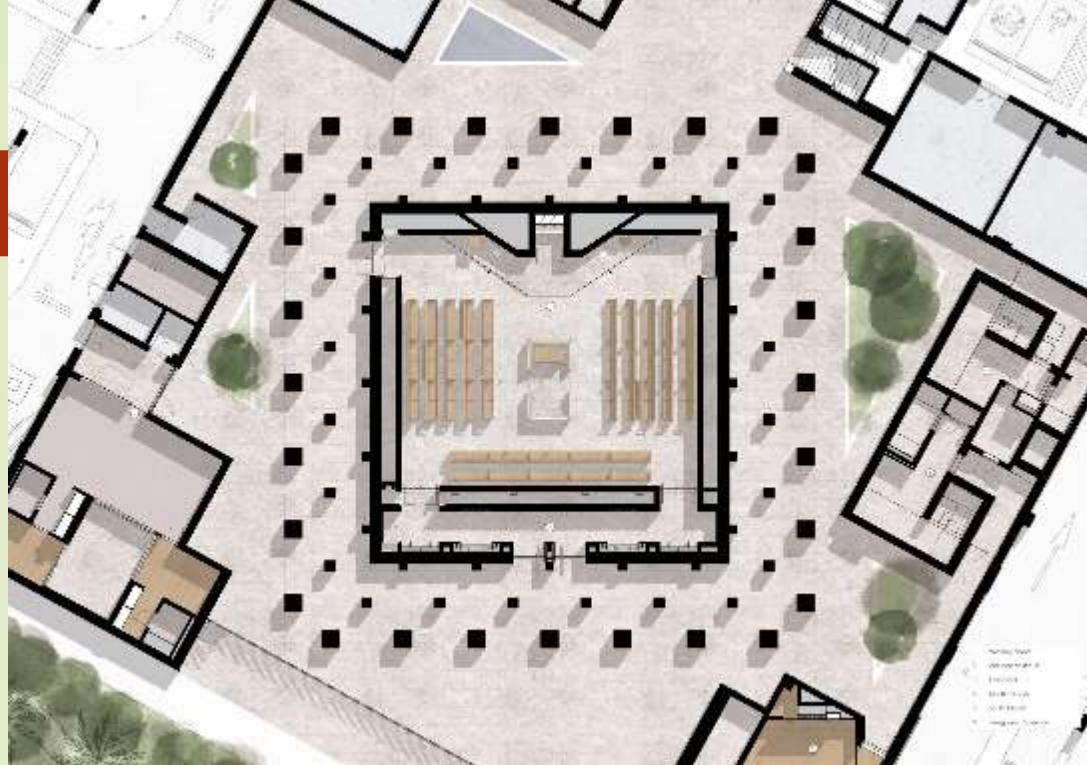
characterised by a facade of **towering Omani limestone columns** that **are positioned from east to west** to enhance morning sunlight on the interior, **referencing light as a symbol of divinity in Christianity**.

Inside, a cluster of linear timber battens are suspended from the ceiling. These were designed to evoke the notion of "a shower of ecstatic redemption". Light filters through the octagonally-shaped baptistery.

Other design elements within the church include geometric seats formed from traditional hard-wearing oak and a purposefully minimal central crucifix that aims to welcome worshippers from all denominations.







Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue

Oriented towards the holy city of Jerusalem, the Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue's facade was formed from **three layers of V-shaped columns** that take cues from the palm fronds found on sukkahs – traditional huts constructed during the Jewish festival of Sukkot.

"The columns on each side of the building have **seven points that touch the ground and eight points that touch the soffit** – with seven being a representative symbol of man, and eight representing God above,"

A suspended bronze mesh tent descends from a central skylight inside, echoing the tent-like structure of sukkahs already referenced on the exterior, as well as the original [tabernacle](#).

The synagogue's **layout was designed to be "as flexible as possible"** to allow for **changing seating formations**, depending on the congregation, and includes a traditional mikveh – a bath used for ritual immersion.





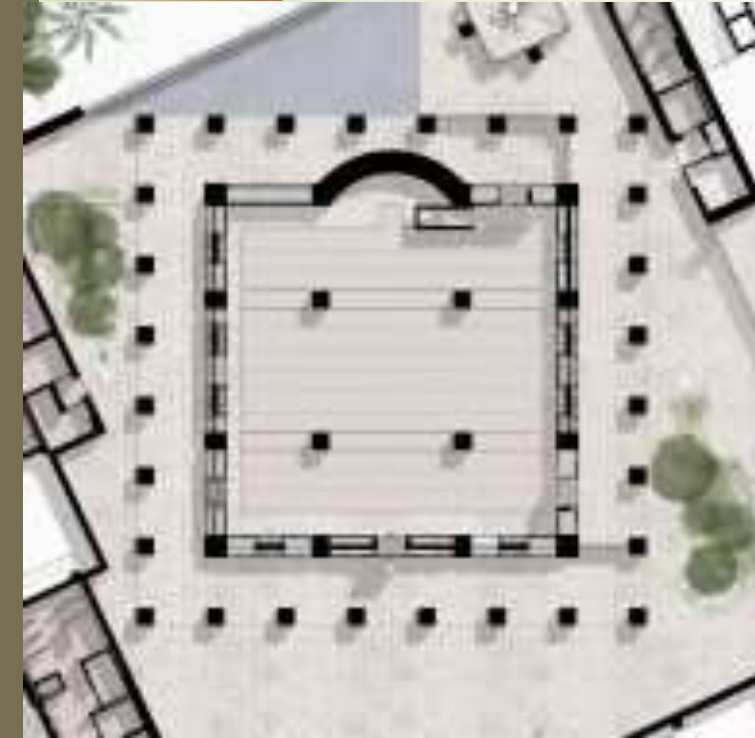
The Imam Al-Tayeb Mosque

is defined by **seven elongated arches** on each of its sides, as an homage to the **importance of the number seven** in Islam, and is oriented towards Makkah.

"The walls feature more than 470 **operable panels of delicate latticework, creating the mashrabiya on a grand scale** – one of the most admired features of Islamic architecture,"

A four-column interior grid creates nine ascending **vaults** on the interior, which positions worshippers towards the mihrab and **intends to reference stability, order and fullness.**

Separate, external ablution spaces for men and women are constructed in concrete and shaped like an inverted pyramid and inverted sphere respectively.







Culture center

The three buildings sit atop a one-storey plinth that also features a **secular gathering space** with a **library and exhibition areas** known as the Forum, as well as an **elevated communal garden** that connects the church, synagogue and mosque.

According to the architecture firm, the plinth references the universal concept of a **mound**, which intends to move people closer to higher things and encourage interfaith dialogue.



podium



visitor center — interior view



podium — exterior view



The journey continues with the discovery of the common **ground**, the public space in between where the difference joins.

The **garden** serves as a powerful symbol, a secure zone where community, connection, and civility can coexist – this space sits between the three chambers or faiths.

The **podium** allows you to interact with each place without fear of being judged, dispelling notions of exclusion and encouraging the celebration of our national past and collective identity.



