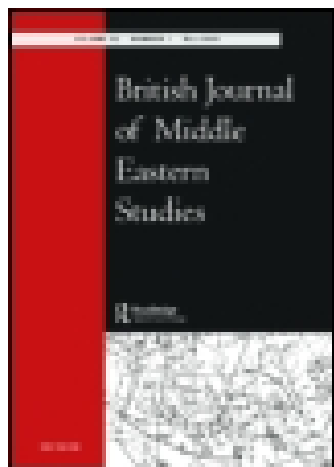


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### Jerusalem in the Qur'a<sup>n</sup>

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# Jerusalem in the Qur'ān

ABDALLAH EL-KHATIB\*

**ABSTRACT** *The focus of this article is Jerusalem and its status in Islam through the verses of the Qur'ān (the holiest text in Islam), ḥadīth literature, and early Islamic history. The importance of this study is two-fold. First, it deals with all the Qur'ānic verses which include either unambiguous references to Jerusalem and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā (the Furthest Mosque), or those that imply ambiguous but likely references to the same, or else those that imply ambiguous but unlikely references. Second, it shows why Jerusalem is so intrinsically important to Muslim beliefs and mentality. Therefore, it tries to help readers at large to understand the Muslim attitude in relation to this city.*

*This article is divided into an introduction, four major sections and a conclusion. In the Introduction, the article tries to explain the status of Jerusalem in Islam and why it is regarded as holy by the one billion Muslims now living on earth. The first section illustrates the merits of Jerusalem in Islam through the Qur'ān, ḥadīth literature, and early Islamic history. It also discusses the construction and the purposes behind building the Dome of the Rock. The second section illustrates and discusses the Qur'ānic verses which imply unambiguous reference to Jerusalem. The third section deals with the verses which imply ambiguous, but likely, references to the same. The fourth section deals with the verses that imply ambiguous, but unlikely, references.*

*It was found that there are about 70 places in the Qur'ān which fall into these two last categories. These places are scattered through 21 sūras. In order to discover and explain the verses related to Jerusalem, I have relied on various sources of exegeses, ḥadīth, history and geography. Further, contrary opinions about the interpretation of any verse have been addressed and a sort of balance between them has been provided. Finally, in the conclusion, the writer of this article expresses a desire for justice without which a comprehensive peace cannot be established in this holy city, so that all the followers of the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, will have their rights equally.*

## Introduction

Jerusalem (*al-Quds* in Arabic), the city of sanctuary, is sanctified and pure. 'Jerusalem, the Golden', the nursemaid of monotheism, occupies the foremost rank in all the three monotheistic religions, i.e. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.<sup>1</sup> 'Jerusalem had become a figure for heaven above or the future heaven on earth

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<sup>1</sup> For non-Muslim accounts and views about Jerusalem see the following articles: S. D. Goitein and O. Grabar, 'al-Ḳuds', Part a and b, in C. E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, B. Lewis and others (eds) *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. V. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), pp. 322–344 [hereafter Goitein, 'al-Ḳuds', *EP* and Grabar, 'al-Ḳuds', *EP*]; Benjamin Joseph, 'Temple Mount and Ḥaram al-Sharīf', in Reeva S. Simon, Philip Matter and Richard W. Bulliet (eds) *Encyclopaedia of Modern Middle East*, Vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan Reference, USA 1996), pp. 1753–1754; 'Jerusalem', in F. L. Crosland and E. A. Livingstone (eds) *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. (Oxford: OUP, reprinted 1990), pp. 732–733; and Michael Avi-Yonah, 'Jerusalem', in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 9 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., n.d.), p. 1384.

and there it remains to this very day in the religious imagination of the West ... Jerusalem had become an end time or “eschatological” event<sup>2</sup> in all the above-mentioned religions. Furthermore, ‘because of the perception by Islam of an intimate kinship with Judaism and Christianity, much that is holy to Judaism and Christianity is holy to Islam; and much of that is centred in Jerusalem’.<sup>3</sup> Jerusalem is ‘the city of peace and the centre of the universe’ as Dante Alighieri described it,<sup>4</sup> and in Pope Paul VI’s words ‘is the world’s centre for religion and peace’.<sup>5</sup> The city is holy in Islam for many reasons.

Firstly, it cradles *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* (the furthest Mosque), which includes on its campus *Qubbat al-Ṣakhra* (the Dome of the Rock).<sup>6</sup> This mosque is ‘the third holiest shrine in Islam after the *kaʿba* in Mecca and the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina’.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, ‘Imād al-Dīn al-Asfahānī said, describing *al-Aqṣā* Mosque: ‘*wa huwa ūlā al-qiblatayn, wa thānī al-baytayn, wa thālith al-ḥaramayn*’ [it is the first *qibla* (prayer direction) in Islam,<sup>8</sup> the second house of worship ever built on earth,<sup>9</sup> (after the *kaʿba* in Mecca, for worshipping Allāh), and the third holiest shrine in Islam].<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, Jerusalem witnessed, as the *Qurʾān* states,<sup>11</sup> a miraculous nocturnal journey, *isrāʾ*, by the Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca to Jerusalem, in the course of which the Prophet also ascended from Jerusalem to Heaven, the *miʿrāj*, according to Islamic sources.<sup>12</sup>

Thirdly, ‘a particular link also exists between Jerusalem and one of the five pillars of Islam—the five daily prayers, *ṣalāt*. According to Muslim tradition, it was during the *miʿrāj* that, after a conversation between the Prophet and Moses,

<sup>2</sup> W. Sibley Towner, ‘A Crisis of the Imagination: The Real Jerusalem Confronts the Ideal Jerusalem’, in Judith Tucker (ed.) *Arab Jerusalem, 1996 Symposium* (Georgetown: Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University), internet 1998, www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/ccas/jerusalem/towner.htm, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Walīd Khālīdī, ‘Islam, the West and Jerusalem’, in Judith Tucker (ed.) *Arab Jerusalem, 1996 Symposium* (Georgetown: Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University), internet 1998, www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/ccas/jerusalem/khalidi.htm, p. 3. [hereafter Khālīdī, ‘Islam’].

<sup>4</sup> ‘Adnūn Farḥān, *al-Quds fī l-wathāʾiq al-Vatikāniyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 1991), p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*’s compound comprises many buildings including the Dome of the Rock which is an integral and essential part of *al-Aqṣā* Mosque. The word *masjid* means ‘a place of prostration’ or ‘a place of prayer’ and this is applicable even to the Dome of the Rock in Islamic terms. Further, this Mosque was built by ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and ‘The name of the mosque, *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*, derives from verse 1 of *Sūrat al-Isrāʾ* ... in the *Qurʾān*. Ian Richard Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (London: Curzon Press, 1992), p. 37. It should be noted here that some historical sources such as *al-Kāmil* of Ibn al-Athīr relate the building of *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* to ‘Abd al-Malik’s son al-Walīd. For more information about who built this Mosque see Ibn al-Athīr, in M. Y. al-Daqqāq (ed.) *al-Kāmil* Vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1987), p. 239; and appendix 1 of Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Suyūṭī, in Aḥmad Ramaḍān Aḥmad (ed.) *Ithāf al-Akhiṣṣāʾ bi Faḍāʾil al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*, Vol. 2, (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿAmma, 1982), pp. 179–180 [hereafter al-Suyūṭī, *Faḍāʾil al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*]; *Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, al-ʿĀlām*, Vol. 8 (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm li’l-Malāyīn, 1995), p. 121 [hereafter al-Ziriklī, *al-ʿĀlām*]; and Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Maqdis fī Makhtūṭāt ʿArabiyya Qadīma* (Kuwait: Maʿhad al-Makhtūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, 1985), p. 351 [hereafter Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Maqdis*].

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 49.

<sup>8</sup> This symbolized Muslim allegiance to the continuity of God’s revelation.

<sup>9</sup> The *ḥadīth* related to the building of *al-Aqṣā* Mosque will be cited below.

<sup>10</sup> Aḥmad Baṣḥūṣ, *al-Quds Tunādikum* (Amman: Dār al-Bashīr, 1995), p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Qurʾān XVII, 1.

<sup>12</sup> For further information about references to the *miʿrāj* in the *Qurʾān* and *ḥadīth* literature see Qurʾān XVII, 1, Qurʾān XVII, 60, and Qurʾān LIII, 7–18 and Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, in Sayyid b. ‘Abbās al-Julaymī and Ayman b. ʿArif al-Dimashqī (eds.) *Fath al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Cairo: Dār Abī Ḥayyān, 1996), Vol. 2, pp. 164–165, Vol. 4, p. 104; Vol. 9, pp. 65–90; Vol. 10, pp. 363–364 [hereafter Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*].

the five daily prayers observed throughout the Muslim world became canonical'.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the prescription of prayer was made during that nocturnal journey.<sup>14</sup>

For all the above reasons, one finds many *ḥadīths* (Prophetic traditions), which will be cited later, praising the city. Jerusalem, as envisaged in Islam, is the city of the great prophets. The *Qur'ān* speaks about Hebrew patriarchs and prophets such as Abraham, Isaac, David, Solomon, and Jesus, who lived in the city or passed through it. Further, the *Qur'ān* speaks about important events which occurred in the city such as the destruction of Jerusalem.

The aim of this article is primarily to illustrate and discuss the status and merits of Jerusalem in the *Qur'ān* (not excluding its merits in *ḥadīth*, and early historical accounts) and, therefore, a survey of almost all the *Qur'ānic* verses was carried out in order to pin-point the verses that are related to Jerusalem. The verses related to Jerusalem fall into three categories: the first category deals with unambiguous references to Jerusalem; the second category deals with ambiguous, but likely, references to the same; the third category deals with ambiguous, though unlikely, references. During the course of this article, these three categories will, respectively, be illustrated and discussed.

## **The Merits of Jerusalem as delineated in the Qur'ān, ḥadīth literature, and early Islamic history**

### *In the Qur'ān*

The merits of Jerusalem in Islam stem firstly from the *Qur'ān* as we will see in the course of this article. However, we will discuss the latter two areas of *ḥadīth* and early Islamic history before surveying the *Qur'ānic* evidence.

### *In ḥadīth Literature*

There are many prophetic *ḥadīths* that glorify and exalt Jerusalem. These *ḥadīths* can be found in early *ḥadīth* collections such as the six canonical books and in early history books such as al-Wāqidī's *Futūḥ Bilād al-Shām* (d.207/823). Additionally, specialized books and manuscripts were written on the topic of *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis* (*The Merits of Jerusalem*). These books amount to about 45 in total. For example, the first specialized written book on this topic was Ishāq b. Bishr al-Bukhārī's book entitled *Futūḥ Bayt al-Maqdis* (d.206/821).<sup>15</sup> It suffices to cite only three *ḥadīths* on the merits of Jerusalem. These *ḥadīths* are generally accepted and regarded as trustworthy *ḥadīths* by the Muslim *muhaddithūn*. The *waqf* (religious endowment) made to Tamīm al-Dārī will also be cited, and discussed.

*The Three Mosques.* The most famous *ḥadīth* on the merits of Jerusalem is the *Ḥadīth* of the Three Mosques which says: '*lā tushaddu al-riḥāl illā ilā thalātha*

<sup>13</sup> Khālidī, 'Islam', p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> G. Monnot, 'Ṣalat', in *EP*, Vol. VIII, p. 927. See also Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Faḥ al-Bārī*, Vol. 9, pp. 67, 86–87.

<sup>15</sup> For further information about these books and manuscripts see Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*, p. 74. It should be noted here that the *muhaddithūn* (traditionists) divided the *ḥadīths* on the merits of Jerusalem and on other topics into the four usual categories: *ṣaḥīḥ* (trustworthy), *ḥasan* (sound), *ḍa'īf* (weak), and *mawḍū'ī* (forged).

*masājid, al-masjid al-Harām, wa masjid al-rasūl, wa 'l-masjid al-Aqṣā'* [The saddles of the camels shall only be fastened for a journey to three mosques, namely the *ka'ba*, my own mosque (i.e. in Medina) and the mosque of Jerusalem].<sup>16</sup>

Although this *ḥadīth* was regarded as trustworthy by Muslim *muḥaddithūn*, it came under scrutiny by some Orientalists such as I. Goldziher. Goldziher's main view is that this *ḥadīth* was forged by Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d.124/742) for political reasons when the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (d.86/705) wanted to direct people to visit Jerusalem instead of going on a pilgrimage to Mecca which was then ruled by his rival 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr (d.73/692). Therefore, 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān used al-Zuhrī to achieve his political ends.<sup>17</sup>

Goldziher based his arguments mainly on a report by Aḥmad b. Ishāq al-Ya'qūbī (d.292/905), a famous anti-Umayyad historian, who noted that al-Zuhrī, in reporting this *ḥadīth*, had achieved 'Abd al-Malik's aims by helping him to divert the pilgrimage from Mecca to Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> (al-Ya'qūbī's report will be extensively discussed below).

The Muslims' as well as some Orientalists' argument that al-Zuhrī 'invented *ḥadīth* in order to promote the interests of the Umayyads is, however, unacceptable'.<sup>19</sup> Al-Zuhrī was not able practically to forge this *ḥadīth* which he ascribed to his teacher, Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib (d.94/713), who was still alive when this *ḥadīth* was in circulation and who was known for his enmity with the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik in particular and with the Umayyads in general.<sup>20</sup> Forging a *ḥadīth* during Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib's life,<sup>21</sup> al-Zuhrī would have endangered his authenticity and even damaged his career as a well known authentic reporter.<sup>22</sup> Further, Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib would have objected to it. Lastly and more importantly, this *ḥadīth* was transmitted to us through 15 different *isnāds* (chains of narrators) only one of which was transmitted through al-Zuhrī.<sup>23</sup> This clearly indicates that this *ḥadīth* was known before al-Zuhrī knew it. Thus, Horovitz concluded: 'Whatever one may think about the authenticity of the *ḥadīth*, there is no ground to doubt but that al-Zuhrī really had heard the *ḥadīth* from the mouth of Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib'.<sup>24</sup>

To conclude, even if we assume that this *ḥadīth* is not a trustworthy one, the

<sup>16</sup> This *ḥadīth* is mentioned in the main *ḥadīth* collections compiled by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Dārimī, al-Nasā'ī, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Ibn Mājah, and Mālik. See A. J. Wensinck, *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*, Tome 2, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1943), p. 234. See also Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. 4, p. 101. The translation of this *ḥadīth* is taken from M. Lecker, 'Biographical Notes on Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 41 (1996) p. 42 [hereafter Lecker, 'Biographical Notes'].

<sup>17</sup> While Horovitz challenged Goldziher's view that al-Zuhrī has forged this *ḥadīth*, M. Lecker seems to support Goldziher's view and tries to prove al-Zuhrī's early connection with the Umayyads; therefore, he concludes: 'Suffice it to say that the *ḥadīth* was transmitted in the Umayyad period and that its transmission was expedient to Umayyad objectives'. Lecker, 'Biographical Notes', p. 42.

<sup>18</sup> Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1995), p. 261 [hereafter al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*].

<sup>19</sup> Lecker, 'Biographical Notes', p. 30, footnote no. 36.

<sup>20</sup> For more details about Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib's enmity with the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik who asked Sa'īd to give his daughter in marriage to his son al-Walīd and Sa'īd's refusal and his invocation of God against the Umayyads after each prayer see Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, in Muḥibb al-Dīn al-'Amrawī (ed.) *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), pp. 220–225, 228.

<sup>21</sup> Sa'īd died in AH 94/AD 713. See al-Zirikī, *al-A'lām*, Vol. 3, p. 102.

<sup>22</sup> M.A. al-Khateeb, *al-Sunna Qabl al-Tadwīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), p. 513.

<sup>23</sup> Muḥammad Shurrāb, *Bayt al-Maqdis wa'l-Masjid al-Aqṣā: Dirāsa Tārīkhīyya Muwaththaqa* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1994), pp 317–320 [hereafter Shurrāb, *Bayt al-Maqdis*].

<sup>24</sup> Lecker, 'Biographical Notes', p. 42, footnote no. 38.

importance of Jerusalem in Islam does not rest on this *ḥadīth*; *ḥadīth* literature includes many trustworthy *ḥadīths* which indicate its importance. The following are two examples:

- (1) It is narrated on the authority of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī who said: 'I asked the Prophet which mosque was built first on this earth?' The Prophet replied: 'The first mosque built on earth was *al-Masjid al-Harām* (in Mecca)'. I then asked: 'Which one succeeded it?' The Prophet replied. '*al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*', I asked? 'How many years elapsed between the building of them?' The Prophet replied: 'Forty years'.<sup>25</sup>
- (2) It is narrated on the authority of Abū al-Dardā' who quoted the Prophet as saying: 'Each prayer in *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* in Mecca equals one hundred thousand prayers elsewhere, each prayer in my mosque (in Medina) equals one thousand prayers elsewhere, and each prayer in *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* [in Jerusalem] equals five hundred prayers elsewhere'.<sup>26</sup>

The waqf (*Religious Endowment*) made to Tamīm al-Dārī (d.40/660). Tamīm al-Dārī b. Aws al-Lakhmī al-Filastīnī<sup>27</sup> was a companion of the Prophet, who came from Filistīn<sup>28</sup> with his brother and embraced Islam in 9/631. He was a knowledgeable man from the People of the Book.<sup>29</sup> He lived in Medina until the assassination of the third Caliph 'Uthmān. Later, he moved to Jerusalem, where he was appointed as a governor (Amīr),<sup>30</sup> and lived there and in the area which was bestowed on him and his descendants by the Prophet. Islamic sources mention four localities which were given to him.<sup>31</sup> These localities are: Habrūn

<sup>25</sup> Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī; see Muḥammad Sālim Hāshim (ed.) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim Ma' Sharḥihi al-Musammā Ikmāl al-Mu'allim*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1994), p. 409.

<sup>26</sup> There is a similar *ḥadīth* to the above which says: 'on the authority of Maymūna who asked the Prophet about *Bayt al-Maqdis* and he replied: 'It's the place where people will be gathered for the day of judgment, it is a place to which one should travel to pray because one prayer there equals one thousand prayers elsewhere'. See Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Quzwīnī Ibn Mājāh, in Khalīl Shīḥa (ed.) *Sunan Ibn Mājāh bi Sharḥ Abī al-Husayn al-Sindī*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1997), p. 173 [hereafter Ibn Mājāh, *Sunan*].

<sup>27</sup> For his biography see: 'Izz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr al-Jazarī, in 'Ādil Aḥmad al-Rifā'i (ed.) *Usd al-Ghābah fī Ma'rifa al-Ṣaḥāba*, (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1996), pp. 319–320; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, in Ṣidqī, Jamīl al-'Aṭṭār (ed.) *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), pp. 539–540; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī Tamayyūz al-Ṣaḥāba*, Vol. 21, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, reprinted 1910), pp. 183–184; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Vol. 24, pp. 83–84; Muḥammad b. Makram b. Manzūr, in Ma'mūn al-Ṣāghirī (ed.) *Mukhtaṣar Tārikh Dimashq li Ibn 'Asākir*; Muḥammad b. Sa'd al-Zuhrī, in Riyāq 'Abd al-Hādī (ed.) *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol. 7 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1995), p. 195; 'Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Sam'ānī, in Muḥammad 'Aṭā' (ed.) Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998), p. 505; and Abū al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf al-Mizzī, in Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (ed.) *Tahdhīb al-Kamal fī Asmā' al-Rijāl*, Vol. 4, (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1992), pp. 326–327.

<sup>28</sup> Filistīn, colloquially also Falastīn, an Arabic adaptation of the classical Palestine ... During the Islamic rule over the city the name of Filistīn was applied first to the administrative and military district (*djund*) established by the Arab conquerors on the territory of the ancient Byzantine province known as *Palestina Pira*. The latter comprised roughly Samaria and Judaea with the coastal area stretching from Mt. Carmel in the north to Ghazza in the south ...; 'The area referred to as Palestine today generally extends from the Mediterranean Sea (including the coast of Gaza) on the west to the Jordan River on the east and from the international boundary of Israel and Lebanon in the north to Negev, with its southern-most extension reaching the Gulf of Aqaba, in the south' See D. Sourdell, 'Filistīn', *EP<sup>2</sup>*, Vol. II, p. 910 and 'Palestine' in *The New Encyclopaedi a Britannica*, Vol. 9 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1997), p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol. 1, p. 539.

<sup>30</sup> Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*, p. 364.

<sup>31</sup> The above cited biographical as well as historical sources suggest different names for the towns bestowed on Tamīm al-Dārī. For detailed information see the above-mentioned sources about Tamīm al-Dārī's biography and the succeeding footnote by M. Sharon, 'al-Khalīl', Vol. IV *EP<sup>2</sup>* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), pp. 954–961 [hereafter Sharon, 'al-Khalīl', *EP<sup>2</sup>*].

or Ḥabrā; Bayt ʿAynūn; Marṭūm and Bayt Ibrāhīm (al-Khalīl).<sup>32</sup> He spent all his life there until his death in 40/660.

It is reported that Tamīm al-Dārī had asked the Prophet to grant him these areas near Jerusalem when they would be under Muslim control. The Prophet agreed to grant him those areas as a *waqf* on condition that they could not be sold to anybody. Tamīm asked the Prophet to write for him a document (*kitāb*) confirming that. When Jerusalem was captured during the era of the second Caliph ʿUmar I, Tamīm submitted to ʿUmar I the previous written document of the Prophet; ʿUmar I, in turn, gave him the area after dividing it into three parts: one third for Tamīm and his family, the second third for *Ibn al-Sabīl* (poor wayfarers and travellers), and the last third to be built on by the people.

This report on Tamīm's *waqf*, whether trustworthy or not, clearly indicates the early Islamic status given to al-Khalīl (Hebron) parallel to and following that of Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> The city was also sanctified for Islam in two phases. Firstly, by its connection with Abraham, *Abū al-anbiyā'* (the Father of the Prophets), and secondly, by its connection with the *isrā'* and *mi'rāj*. We find traditions saying that 'the Prophet was ordered, during the *isrā'*, to descend and pray on Mount Sinai, in Hebron, and in Bethlehem before finally reaching Jerusalem'.<sup>34</sup>

### *In Early Islamic History*

From the capture of Jerusalem, by the Caliph ʿUmar I in the year 16/637, and through Islamic history, during the Umayyad and the Abbasid eras and onwards,<sup>35</sup> this city was given great importance and care. This is evident from the construction of the magnificent building of the Dome of the Rock, *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*, and many other religious complexes. From a historical point of view, we will only focus on the construction of the Dome of the Rock and the purposes behind its construction.

*The Construction of the Dome of the Rock.* The Dome of the Rock is the oldest remaining monument of Islamic architecture, and probably the first conscious work of art of Islamic civilization.<sup>36</sup> It is an ornate octagonal shrine over a rock, a bed-rock<sup>37</sup> 'built on a large flat open area in the Old City, the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf*,

<sup>32</sup> Al-Khalīl is 'the Arabic name for Hebron, a town in southern Palestine, 32 km. south of Jerusalem ... The ancient Biblical name of Hebron, *Ḳiryāt Arba'*, is not mentioned in the Arab sources, which are very well informed about the original name of the town and which they repeat in many versions: Hbrun, Ḥfrun, Ḥibrā (or Ḥabrā), Bayt Ḥabrūn ... However, the number of four settlements hinted by the ancient Hebrew name (Arb'a, cf. B. Mazar, *Ḳiryāt Arba'*, in *Sefer Hevrūn* [in Hebrew], 20ff.) could have some reference to four localities in the city and its environment mentioned in the Islamic literature: Habrūn, Marṭūm, Bayt ʿAynūn (= Khirbet Beit ʿEnūn ...) and Bayt Ibrāhīm'. See Sharon, 'al-Khalīl', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. IV, pp. 954–955 and al-Munazzama al-ʿArabiyya li'l-Tarbiya wa'l-Thaqāfa wa'l-ʿUlūm, 'al-Khalīl,' in Husayn al-ʿAwdāt (ed.) *Mawsūʿat al-Mudun al-Filistīniyya* (Damascus: al-Ahālī li'l-Ṭibā'a wa'l-Noashr, 1990), p. 256.

<sup>33</sup> Sharon, 'al-Khalīl', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. IV, p. 956.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> For detailed information about Jerusalem during the Ottoman era, see for example: Rochelle Davis, 'Ottoman Jerusalem: The Growth of the City outside the Walls', in Salim Tamari (ed.) *Jerusalem 1948, The Arab Neighbourhoods and their Fate in the War* (Jerusalem: The Institute of Jerusalem Studies, 1999), pp. 10–29.

<sup>36</sup> O. Grabar, 'Ḳubbat al-Ṣakhra', Vol. V, *EF*<sup>2</sup>, p. 298 [hereafter Grabar, 'Ḳubbat al-Ṣakhra', *EF*<sup>2</sup>].

<sup>37</sup> F. E. Peters, 'Jerusalem', in Mircea Eliade (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 7 (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1995), p. 12.



which is also known as the Temple Mount. The Dome enshrines the tip of Mount Moriah and is a site holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews alike.<sup>38</sup>

Most contemporary and ancient scholars relate the construction of this magnificent building to the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (26–86/646–705), who completed it in 72/691–692.<sup>39</sup> However, some scholars have related its construction to 'Abd al-Malik's son al-Walīd (48–96/668–715).<sup>40</sup>

The decisive evidence that supports the first view is provided by the inscriptions inside the Dome of the Rock which clearly point to the year of its completion during 'Abd al-Malik's reign in 72/691–692.<sup>41</sup> 'Abd al-Malik's name was later obliterated by the builders who restored the Dome in 216/831 during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mūn (d.218/833). The builders obliterated 'Abd al-Malik's name and put al-Ma'mūn's name instead, but fortunately they forgot to change the original date of the building which is 72/691–692.<sup>42</sup>

*The Purposes of Building the Dome of the Rock.* There has been considerable debate over the purposes of building this spectacular work of architecture and the exact purpose is still a matter of controversy.<sup>43</sup> The literary sources on the Dome of the Rock give us different interpretations for the reasons of building it. 'The many explanations which exist can be divided into three broad groups.'<sup>44</sup>

The first explanation is maintained by most Muslim writers and scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyya,<sup>45</sup> who regard the motive and aim behind 'Abd al-Malik's work as religious. 'Abd al-Malik, as one of the most knowledgeable men of his time, knew the sacredness and holiness of this place in Islam; therefore, he wanted to build the Dome of the Rock not only for commemorating the Prophet's Night Journey and Ascension (*al-isrā'* and *al-mi'rāj*), but also to encourage Muslims to visit Jerusalem and pray there according to the many *ḥadīths* which have been cited above.

The second explanation is a cultural-historical one, which is that this monument celebrated 'The new faith's presence in the city of Judaism and Christian-

<sup>38</sup> Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam*, p. 49.

<sup>39</sup> The books and manuscripts written on the merits of Jerusalem and its history relate the construction of the Dome of the Rock to 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān. See for example, Muḥr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, *al-Uns al-Jalīl fī Tārīkh al-Quds wa'l-Khalīl*, Vol. 2 (al-Najaf, 1967), pp. 272–273; and al-Suyūfī, *Faḍā'il al-Masjid al-Aqsā*, Vol. 1, pp. 241–242. For contemporary writers on this issue see: Zakī Ḥasan, *Funūn al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, n.d.), p. 39; Yūsuf Shawqī, *Qubbat al-Sakhra* (Masqat: Maṭba'a Mizūn, 1987), p. 111, 'Ārif al-'Ārif, *al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tārīkh al-Quds* (al-Quds, 1986), p. 109; Oleg Grabar, 'Jerusalem', in Joseph R. Strayer (ed.) Vol. 7 *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1986), p. 60 [hereafter Grabar, 'Jerusalem', *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*]; Angelika Neuwirth, 'The Spiritual Meaning of Jerusalem in Islam', in Nitza Rosovsky (ed.) *City of the Great King*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 107–109; E. Van Donzel, *Islamic Desk Reference* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994) p. 8; and H. A. R. Gibb, 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān', *IEP*, Vol. I, p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> See Ibn Kathīr, in Aḥmad Abu Miḥim and 'Ādil 'Abd al-Mawjūd (eds) *al-Bidāya wa'l-Nihāya*, Vol. 9 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1997), p. 141 and Shurrāb, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, pp. 367–368.

<sup>41</sup> For the starting and finishing dates of the building of the Dome see Lecker, 'Biographical Notes', p. 43, footnote 90.

<sup>42</sup> Grabar, 'Qubbat al-Ṣakhra', *IEP*, Vol. V, p. 298 and Zakī Hasan, *Funūn al-Islām* p. 39.

<sup>43</sup> Grabar, 'Jerusalem', *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Vol. 7, p. 60.

<sup>44</sup> Grabar, 'Qubbat al-Ṣakhra', *IEP*, Vol. V, p. 299.

<sup>45</sup> It is said that 'Abd al-Malik also made special cloths for the building to protect it from the severe cold weather. See al-Suyūfī, *Faḍā'il al-Masjid al-Aqsā*, vol. 1, p. 242 and Shurrāb, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, p. 340. It should also be noted here that al-Musharrāf b. al-Murajjā al-Maqdisī said in his manuscript entitled *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis wa al-Khalīl* 'Abd al-Malik wanted to build the Dome of the Rock and *al-Masjid al-Aqsā* to protect people from cold and heat'. This explanation could be added to the other explanations. See Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*, p. 224.

ity'.<sup>46</sup> The geographer al-Maqdisī, said that when 'Abd al-Malik entered Jerusalem and saw the splendour of the cupola of the Church of the Ascension built by Justinian, he was amazed and wanted to build a similar building above the Rock in order that no Muslim would exalt and be amazed at the Church of the Ascension.<sup>47</sup>

The third 'explanation is concretely historical and goes back to a passage from al-Ya'qūbī. This explanation holds that, during the struggle of the Umayyads with Ibn al-Zubayr, 'Abd al-Malik attempted to create in Jerusalem a shrine which could compete with the *Ka'ba* and the pilgrimage to Mecca'.<sup>48</sup>

The first and the second explanations seem to be plausible and better supported than the last one. There was a religious and cultural motive behind 'Abd al-Malik's work since he was one of the foremost famous jurists of Medina,<sup>49</sup> before being a caliph. He knew the holiness of the place from both the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* literature. Therefore, when he found that people had difficulties in reaching the *ka'ba*, he wanted to encourage them to visit Jerusalem by building this magnificent monument. The second explanation also agrees with the political and psychological circumstances of the times,<sup>50</sup> as al-Maqdisī's view suggests. Thus, 'Abd al-Malik planted this first monumental building of Islam in the heart of the supreme Christian City, modelling it upon Christian churches but intending to surpass them in splendour,<sup>51</sup> and 'by choosing the site, Islam manifested itself as the exclusive heir of the older religions',<sup>52</sup> i.e. Judaism and Christianity. The Dome of the Rock, in short, resembled a 'missionary monument of victory'.<sup>53</sup> This building clearly shows how material culture can be used to signal religious identity.<sup>54</sup>

The third explanation proposed by al-Ya'qūbī has been the subject of scholarly controversy. While al-Ya'qūbī's (292/905) view has been echoed and accepted by some historians such as Ibn al-Batrīq (328/940),<sup>55</sup> Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (654/1256),<sup>56</sup> Mujīr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Hanbalī (928/1522),<sup>57</sup> Eutychius,<sup>58</sup> some contemporary historians such as Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī<sup>59</sup> and some Orientalists such as Ignaz Goldziher,<sup>60</sup> W. Caskel,<sup>61</sup> Charles Matthews<sup>62</sup> etc., it has been rejected by most Muslim writers as well as some Orientalists who have severely

<sup>46</sup> Grabar, 'al-Ḳuds', part b, *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 341.

<sup>47</sup> Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maqdisī, in Muḥammad Makhzūm (ed.) *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālim* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1987), p. 139 [hereafter al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*].

<sup>48</sup> Grabar, 'Ḳubbat al-Ṣakhra', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 299.

<sup>49</sup> See Ibn al-'Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 4, p. 239; Ibn Manzūr, *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh Dimashq*, Vol. 15, p. 221 and Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa'l-Nihāya*, Vol. 9, p. 56.

<sup>50</sup> Grabar, 'al-Ḳuds', part b, *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 341.

<sup>51</sup> Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam*, p. 51. For a similar view see Grabar, 'Jerusalem', *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Vol. 7, p. 60 and Angelika Neuwirth, 'The Spiritual Meaning of Jerusalem in Islam', *City of the Great King*, p. 108.

<sup>52</sup> Goitein, 'al-Ḳuds', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 325.

<sup>53</sup> Grabar, 'Ḳubbat al-Ṣakhra', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 299.

<sup>54</sup> Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam*, p. 51.

<sup>55</sup> His book is called: *Naẓm al-Jawhar wa'l-Tārīkh al-Majmū' 'alā al-Taḥqīq wa'l-Taṣdīq fī Ma'rifat al-Tawārīkh*. See Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*, p. 57.

<sup>56</sup> Shurrāb, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, pp. 360–361.

<sup>57</sup> Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, *Tārīkh al-Quds wa'l-Khalīl*, Vol. 1, p. 272.

<sup>58</sup> Goitein, 'al-Ḳuds', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 325.

<sup>59</sup> Shurrāb, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, pp. 369–370.

<sup>60</sup> Goitein, 'al-Ḳuds', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 325.

<sup>61</sup> Grabar, 'Ḳubbat al-Ṣakhra', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 299 and Grabar, 'al-Ḳuds', *EF*<sup>2</sup> Vol. V, p. 341.

<sup>62</sup> Charles Matthews, 'Palestine: Mohamadan Holy Land', in *Muslim World*, (xxxiii), 1943, pp. 245–246.

criticized al-Ya'qūbī's report and declined to give it any credence. The latter include M. Azami,<sup>63</sup> M.A. al-Khateeb,<sup>64</sup> M.H. Shurrāb,<sup>65</sup> S.D. Goitein,<sup>66</sup> Oleg Grabar<sup>67</sup> and J. Horovitz.<sup>68</sup>

After examining al-Ya'qūbī's text, it suffices to say here that his views should not be accepted for the following reasons:

Firstly, as Goitein put it:

None of the great Muslim historians of the 3rd/9th century who describe the conflict between 'Abd al-Malik and Ibn al-Zubayr in utmost detail, nor any of the older geographers, including al-Ma'qaddasi, a native of Jerusalem, makes the slightest allusion to such an intention of the Umayyad Caliph ... Moreover, it is obvious that 'Abd al-Malik would not have strengthened, but endangered his position by trying to divert the *hajj* from the holy sites expressly mentioned in the Qur'ān, and this after the *qiblah* had been emphatically turned away from Jerusalem, he would have made himself a *kāfir* against whom the *jihād* was obligatory.<sup>69</sup>

Secondly, al-Ya'qūbī contradicted himself in his report about 'Abd al-Malik's obligatory diversion of the *hajj* from Mecca to Jerusalem. He said that this diversion continued throughout the Umayyad era.<sup>70</sup> This is not true because al-Ya'qūbī himself reports after a few pages of this report that in the year 68/687–688<sup>71</sup> 'The soldiers of 'Abd al-Malik's expedition force participated in the *hajj*. They wished to do so even during the very siege of Mecca; a request which Ibn al-Zubayr naturally had to refuse'.<sup>72</sup> In addition, al-Ya'qūbī as well as many historians expressly reported that many Umayyad Caliphs made the pilgrimage to Mecca, including 'Abd al-Malik who made his *hajj* in the year (75/694).<sup>73</sup>

For all the above reasons the views of al-Ya'qūbī should not be accepted especially when we know that he was a violently anti-Umayyad polemicist.<sup>74</sup>

In conclusion, it seems fair to say that the first two explanations for the purposes of building the Dome of the Rock seem to be sound and valid, and may provide us with 'Abd al-Malik's real motives. However, as M. Lecker put it, 'There may have been other motives behind 'Abd al-Malik's project ...',<sup>75</sup> and therefore, the debate over the real reason behind building the Dome is not yet closed and the exact original purpose of this spectacular work is still a matter of controversy.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the door is open for specialized scholars to support us with other new and valid explanations.

<sup>63</sup> See his book *Studies in Early Hadīth Literature* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1978).

<sup>64</sup> M.A. al-Khateeb, *al-Sunna Qabl al-Tadwīn*, pp. 511–515.

<sup>65</sup> Shurrāb, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, pp. 357–369.

<sup>66</sup> Goitein, 'al-Ḳuds', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 325.

<sup>67</sup> Grabar, 'Ḳubbat al-Ṣakhra', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 299.

<sup>68</sup> Lecker, 'Biographical Notes', p. 30 footnote no. 36, p. 42 footnote no. 88.

<sup>69</sup> Goitein, 'al-Ḳuds', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 325.

<sup>70</sup> Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1995), p. 261 [hereafter al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*].

<sup>71</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, Vol. 2, pp. 263–268.

<sup>72</sup> Goitein, 'al-Ḳuds', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 325.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, Vol. 2, p. 273; Aḥmad b. Yahyā al-Balādhurī, in Suhayl Zakkār and Riyād Ziriklī (eds) *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, Vol. 7 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), p. 212; Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, in Muḥammad Abu al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (ed.) *Tārīkh al-Umam wa'l-Mulūk*, Vol. 6 (Beirut: n.d.), p. 209; 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Mas'ūdī, in Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Laḥḥām (ed.) *Murūj al-Dhahab fī Ma'ādin al-Jawhar*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), p. 130 and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, in 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (ed.) *Tārīkh al-Islām*, Vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1998), p. 319.

<sup>74</sup> Grabar, 'Ḳubbat al-Ṣakhra', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. V, p. 299.

<sup>75</sup> Lecker, 'Biographical Notes', p. 42.

<sup>76</sup> Grabar, 'Jerusalem', *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Vol. 7, p. 60.

## Unambiguous Reference to Jerusalem in the Qurʾān

There is only one verse in the *Qurʾān* which falls into this category. It is the first verse of *Sūrat al-Isrāʾ* (Q 17 : 1) and reads as follows:

Glorified be He (*Allāh*) who took His slave for a journey by night from *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, to the furthest mosque, the neighbourhood whereof we have blessed.<sup>77</sup>

All Muslim exegetes are unanimous about the reference of this verse to Jerusalem. The great exegete Muḥammad Fakhr al-Dīn b. ʿUmar al-Rāzī commented on this verse: ‘The exegetes are unanimous that *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* means here the holy sanctuary in Jerusalem’.<sup>78</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī further said that ‘There should be no disagreement over the fact that the Prophet’s nocturnal journey to *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Jerusalem) was while he was awake and not asleep according to the apparent meaning of the above-mentioned verse. Had it been while he was asleep, his tribe *Quraysh* would not have accused him of lying’.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, as al-Ṭabarī put it, ‘(1) If the Prophet had not been carried away in a corporeal sense, the event would afford no proof of his divine mission and those who disbelieved the story could not be accused of infidelity. (2) It is stated in the Qurʾān that God caused His servant to journey, not that He caused His spirit to journey’.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, al-Ṭabarī preferred this view to the view which suggests that this journey took place while the Prophet was asleep.<sup>81</sup> In conclusion, the disagreement amongst Muslim scholars only concentrated on whether this journey was while the Prophet was awake or asleep. However, they unanimously agreed that the mosque mentioned in the verse refers to that in Jerusalem.

Regarding the above-mentioned verse, there are two points which have to be taken into consideration. Firstly, all the three major monotheistic religions agree that the Jerusalem of today is the same as the Jerusalem of the past as far as location is concerned. However, the Samaritans, a Jewish sect, believe that the Jerusalem of the past was located in Samaria’s mountains and not at the current Jerusalem.<sup>82</sup> Secondly, the nocturnal journey, *isrāʾ*, to Jerusalem was one year before the *hijra* and there is great support amongst Muslim exegetes, traditionists (*muḥaddithūn*), historians, as well as geographers for the view that the Prophetic nocturnal journey was to Jerusalem first, and that the ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad to Heaven (*miʿrāj*) started from Jerusalem, from *al-Sakhra*,

<sup>77</sup> The translation of the verses are mostly taken from the translations of both Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān, *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qurʾān, in the English Language* (Riyād: Dār al-Salām, 1995), 11th edn, [hereafter al-Hilālī and Khān, *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qurʾān*] and ʿAbdullāh Yusuf ʿAlī, *The Holy Qurʾān Text, Translation and Commentary* (New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qurʾān, INC, 1987) [hereafter Yusuf ʿAlī, *The Holy Qurʾān, Translation*]. The translation of Marmaduke Pickthall was also consulted: Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Qurʾān, Bi-Lingual edition with English Translation* (Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari, 1996).

<sup>78</sup> Muḥammad Fakhr al-Dīn b. ʿUmar al-Rāzī, in Muḥyiddīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (ed.) *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Vol. 20, (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Miṣriyya, 1938), p. 146 [hereafter al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*<sup>1</sup>]. For other interpretations of this verse see B. Schrieke [J. Horowitz], ‘Miʿrāj’, *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. VII, pp. 97–98 [hereafter Horowitz, ‘Miʿrāj’, *EF*<sup>2</sup>].

<sup>79</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. 2, p. 166. See also Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, Vol. 3, (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1994), p. 33.

<sup>80</sup> See Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, in Ṣidqī Jamīl al-ʿAṭṭār (ed.) *Jamīʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, Vol. 10 (Beirut, 1995), pp. 60–61 [hereafter al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*<sup>2</sup>] and Horowitz, ‘Miʿrāj’, *EF*<sup>2</sup>, vol. VII, p. 98.

<sup>81</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 9, p. 22.

<sup>82</sup> Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, *al-Uns al-Jalīl fī Tārīkh al-Quds waʾl-Khalīl*, Vol. 1 (ʿAmmān: Maktabat al-Muḥtasib, 1973), p. 241 [hereafter Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, *Tārīkh al-Quds waʾl-Khalīl*].

known now as *Qubbat al-Sakhra* (the Dome of the Rock),<sup>83</sup> during the same night of *isrā'*.<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, it is clearly evident from Islamic literature that there was a kind of building in al-Aqsā compound which the Prophet described to the Quraysh when they disbelieved him and challenged his nocturnal journey.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, when 'Umar I captured the city in 16/637, Sophronius, the then Patriarch of Jerusalem, directed him to *al-Masjid al-Aqsā*. Upon the site of the mosque, 'Umar I said, 'This is exactly the place which the Prophet had described to us', so he then ordered the site to be cleaned and restored.<sup>86</sup>

### **Ambiguous, but likely, References to Jerusalem in the Qur'ān**

The verses which deal with ambiguous, but likely, references to Jerusalem, and the verses which deal with ambiguous, but unlikely, references to Jerusalem, have been found to allow various interpretations, unless contextually or historically proven to refer to Jerusalem. There are about 70 places in the *Qur'ān* which allow for interpretations referring to Jerusalem directly or indirectly. These places are scattered throughout 21 *sūras*. The reference to Jerusalem in some of these verses is evidently clear, while it is remotely possible in others. This study has depended heavily on exegetical, traditional, historical and geographical works in order to determine the weakness, i.e. the validity and reliability, of the references to Jerusalem made in these verses. Furthermore, the references to Jerusalem mentioned in these verses are through words, phrases, pronouncements, expressions and patterns. There are, for example, some verses that refer to people and events which occurred in Jerusalem. To start with, mention will be made of the ambiguous, but likely, references to Jerusalem through various expressions. References to the opinions of scholars who regarded these verses as referring to Jerusalem or to other places will be cited in the footnotes. These verses can be categorized in six groups which are expressed below.

#### *Verses which use Location Expressions that Refer to Jerusalem*

Before explaining these verses, there would seem to be a need to define what is meant by the following terminologies and expressions in the Qur'ān: 'The Holy Land', 'The Blessed Land' and 'The Blessed Towns'. These terminologies occur respectively in the following verses: Q 5 : 21, Q 7 : 137, Q 21 : 71, 81 and Q 34 : 18.

When consulting the contexts of these verses, it was found that the Qur'ān did not designate a particular area for 'The Holy Land'. However, the Qur'ān spoke explicitly about the holiness and blessing of Jerusalem and the area surrounding it in Q 17 : 1. Therefore, Jerusalem is an essential part of 'The Holy Land'.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. 9, pp. 75–76. It should be noted here that the Qur'ānic references to the ascent of the Prophet Muḥammad to Heaven (*mi'rāj*) are in the following verses: Q 17:60 and Q 53:7–18.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 166.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

<sup>86</sup> Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, *Tārīkh al-Quds wa'l-Khalīl*, Vol. 1, p. 256. It should be noted here that *al-Aqsā* mosque was abandoned when the Muslims captured the city.

Although the *ḥadīth* literature does not have a specific definition for ‘The Holy Land’,<sup>87</sup> there are citations referring to *Bilād al-Shām* of which Jerusalem was a part, as ‘The Holy Land’.<sup>88</sup> It was the role of the exegetes and scholars to define the boundaries of this area. Al-Ṭabarī is quoted as saying (when commenting on Q 5 : 21) that the exegetes, writers of the biography of the Prophet and historians are unanimous that the boundaries of ‘The Holy Land’ stretch from the Euphrates in Iraq to al-‘Arīsh<sup>89</sup> in Egypt.<sup>90</sup> For this reason we find the exegetes differ when they explain a verse which includes the term ‘The Holy Land’. Some of them mention areas which are part of *Bilād al-Shām*<sup>91</sup> such as Jerusalem, Arīhā (Jericho), Damascus, Jordan and Palestine. Others mention also Mount Sinai in Egypt. In conclusion, the term ‘The Holy Land’ in the Qur’ān does not necessarily refer to Jerusalem. It may either refer to the whole area of ‘The Holy Land’, or to Jerusalem, or to any other parts and sites in ‘The Holy Land’. This could only be determined through the context of the verse and through reliable traditions which explain the verse.

*Al-arḍ al-muqaddasa (The Holy Land) Q 5 : 21* The verse reads: ‘O my people! [Moses said] Enter the holy land which Allāh has assigned to you’.<sup>92</sup>

The scholars who interpreted ‘The Holy Land’ as being Jerusalem, in this verse, and the verses that follow it (Q 5 : 22–24, and Q 5 : 26), include al-Ṭabarī,<sup>93</sup> Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī,<sup>94</sup> al-Māwardī,<sup>95</sup> al-Nasafī,<sup>96</sup> al-Qurṭubī<sup>97</sup> and others.

However, the above exegetes quoted different opinions to define ‘The Holy

<sup>87</sup> Ibn ‘Asākir cites only one *ḥadīth* which says that Allāh has blessed the land stretching from al-‘Arīsh to the Euphrates. See Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtasar Tārīkh Dimashq li Ibn ‘Asākir*, Vol. 5, p. 65.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn ‘Asākir cited many reports related to the companions and their successors who regarded *Bilād al-Shām* as the Holy Land which was mentioned in the Qur’ān. See *ibid.*, pp. 67–68.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Al-‘Arīsh or ‘the ‘Arīsh of Egypt, the Rhinokorura of the ancients, towns on the Mediterranean coast situated in a fertile oasis surrounded by sand, on the frontier between Palestine and Egypt’. See F. Buhl, ‘Al-‘Arīsh’, *IEJ*, Vol. 1 p. 630.

<sup>90</sup> Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fi Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān*, Vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifā, 1980), p. 110 [hereafter al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*<sup>1</sup>].

<sup>91</sup> Prof. C. E. Bosworth defined *Bilād al-Shām* as ‘In early Islamic usage, the term *Bilād al-Shām* covered what in early twentieth-century diplomatic and political usage became known as “Greater Syria” including the modern political entities of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel and the West Bank of Palestine’. C. E. Bosworth, ‘*Bilād al-Shām*’, *IEJ*, Vol. IX, p. 261. For more information about the definition of *Bilād al-Shām* see Yāqūt b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Hamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1984), p. 312; Zakariyyā b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād wa Akhbār al-‘Ibād* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt li ‘l-Ṭibā‘a wa ‘l-Naṣr, 1984), p. 159 [hereafter al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*]; Abū al-Qāsim b. Ḥawqal al-Naṣībī, in M. J. De Goeje *et al.* (eds) *Kitāb Sūrat al-Arḍ*, Vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1939), pp. 165–168, 171 [Hereafter Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Sūrat al-Arḍ*]; and Ibn al-Faḥḥ, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Hamadhānī, in M. J. De Goeje (ed.) *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, p. 92 [hereafter Ibn al-Faḥḥ, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*].

<sup>92</sup> Yusuf ‘Alī, *The Holy Qur’ān, Translation*, p. 248, footnote no. 724.

<sup>93</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*,<sup>1</sup> Vol. 6, p. 110.

<sup>94</sup> Naṣr b. Aḥmad Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, in Maḥmūd Maṭarjī (ed.) *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Karīm Baḥr al-‘Ulūm*, Vol. 1, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), pp. 405–407.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Izziddīn b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abd al-Salām, in ‘Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Wuhay bī (ed.) *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān (Ikhtisār al-Nukat wa ‘l-‘Uyūn li ‘l-Māwardī)*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1996), p. 379 [hereafter Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*].

<sup>96</sup> ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī, in Marwān al-Sha‘‘ar (ed.) *Tafsīr al-Nasafī Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā‘iq al-Ta’wīl*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā‘i, 1996), pp. 403–404.

<sup>97</sup> Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, Vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1996) pp. 83–84, 86 [hereafter al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘*<sup>1</sup>].

Land' which is mentioned in this verse. Their opinions can be summarized as follows: 'The Holy Land' means either Damascus, or Palestine, or parts of Jordan, or Arihā, or al-Ṭūr (Mount Sinai). Al-Ṭabarī tends not to define a particular place within 'The Holy Land' because we do not have a reliable report that defines what is exactly meant here by 'The Holy Land'. We definitely know, as al-Ṭabarī suggests, that the area referred to in this verse stretches from the Euphrates in Iraq to al-ʿArīsh in Egypt.<sup>98</sup>

By comparison, al-Qurṭubī, al-Rāzī,<sup>99</sup> Ibn Kathīr,<sup>100</sup> as well as al-Maqdisī<sup>101</sup> prefer to interpret 'The Holy Land' as referring to Jerusalem and the area surrounding it. Al-Qurṭubī's, al-Rāzī's, Ibn Kathīr's and al-Maqdisī's views seem to have more ground as the context of the verses which follow this verse is in favour of Jerusalem and the area surrounding it rather than any other place. Q 5 : 22, 23, 24 and 26 speak about the Israelites' refusal to enter Jerusalem and thus speak about God's punishment of forbidding them to enter it. Further, al-Qurṭubī, in order to support his view, cited a *ḥadīth* which says that Moses, when in the wilderness, asked Allāh to be allowed to die by the road near the Holy Land.<sup>102</sup> Al-Qurṭubī commented on the word 'by the road' as meaning the road of Jerusalem. This comment by al-Qurṭubī means that Jerusalem and the area surrounding it are the Holy Land. A contemporary Shaykh al-Azhar of Egypt has said that 'The Holy Land' here more likely refers to Jerusalem.<sup>103</sup> This last interpretation is, as we have seen, logically more sound since it has support from both the context and from *ḥadīth* literature. Therefore, this verse implies an ambiguous, but likely, reference to Jerusalem.

*Mashāriq al-arḍ wa maghāribahā allatī bāraknā fihā (Lands in both East and West, Lands whereon We sent down our Blessings) Q 7 : 137* The verse reads: 'And We made the people who were considered weak to inherit the eastern parts of the land and the western parts thereof which we have blessed.'<sup>104</sup>

The scholars who interpreted blessed lands, cited above, as a reference to *Bilād al-Shām* of which Jerusalem was an important part, are al-Ṭabarī,<sup>105</sup> al-Māwardī,<sup>106</sup> al-Qurṭubī,<sup>107</sup> and al-Wāḥidī,<sup>108</sup> and al-Rāzī.<sup>109</sup>

Al-Qurṭubī also quoted another opinion which interprets these lands as being in Egypt. Al-Ṭabarī, however, totally rejected this latter view because it did not go with the context of the verses preceding and succeeding this verse since they speak about the triumph of Moses with the Israelites over the Pharaoh, the

<sup>98</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 6, p. 110.

<sup>99</sup> Muḥammad Fakhr al-Dīn b. ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), p. 5 [hereafter al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*<sup>4</sup>].

<sup>100</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1994), p. 125 [hereafter Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>3</sup>].

<sup>101</sup> al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, p. 161.

<sup>102</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, in ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Bāz (ed.) *Fath al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), p. 567 [hereafter Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*<sup>2</sup>].

<sup>103</sup> Muḥammad Sayyid Ṭanṭāwī, *Banū Isrāʾīl fī ʿl-Qur'ān* (Cairo: al-Zahra' li ʿl-ʿIlām al-ʿArabī, 1987), p. 460.

<sup>104</sup> Al-Hilālī and Khān, *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'ān*, p. 314.

<sup>105</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 9, p. 30.

<sup>106</sup> Ibn ʿAbd-al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 1, p. 500.

<sup>107</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 7, p. 172.

<sup>108</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī, in ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd, Muḥammad ʿAwaḍ et al. (eds) *al-Wasīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1994), p. 402.

<sup>109</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 14, p. 221.

Passover and the inheritance of the holy lands east of Egypt, i.e. *Bilād al-Shām*.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, al-Ṭabarī said that none of the reliable exegetes cited any report in relation to Egypt.<sup>111</sup> From the arguments put forward by al-Ṭabarī and other exegetes, one can confidently conclude that this verse implies ambiguous, but likely, reference to Jerusalem.

There are two other verses using the exact wording of the earlier verse with little additions, which can be interpreted in the same manner as the earlier verse.

And We rescued him [Abraham] and Lut (Lot) to the land which We have blessed for nations. (Q 21 : 71)

Al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī and al-Māwardī, cited many interpretations for the blessed land in this verse such as: Jerusalem and its Rock, the whole land of *Bilād al-Shām*, the land stretching from Iraq to *Bilād al-Shām*, Egypt, and Mecca. Al-Ṭabarī totally rejected the interpretation which regards the blessed land here as referring to Mecca because Mecca was never a residence to Abraham. Instead, al-Ṭabarī preferred the view which regards the land referred to here as *al-Shām*, especially Jerusalem and its Rock because it was a domicile to Abraham after his immigration from Iraq.<sup>112</sup>

And to Sulaymān (Solomon) (We subjected) the wind strongly raging, running by his command towards the land which We had blessed (Q 21 : 81).

There is another verse in the Qurʾān which gives more details about the wind subjected to Solomon and was also interpreted as referring to Jerusalem. Q 34 : 12 reads: ‘And to Sulaymān (Solomon) (We subjected) the wind, its morning (stride from sunrise till midnight) was a month’s (journey), and its afternoon (stride from the midday decline of the sun to sunset)’.

Al-Ṭabarī, al-Māwardī and al-Qurṭubī agree that the blessed land here is referring to *Bilād al-Shām*. It was narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās that Solomon used to travel by the wind from Jerusalem to Iṣṭakhr,<sup>113</sup> and he used to return to sleep in Jerusalem on the same day. According to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, ‘Solomon used to travel from Damascus to Iṣṭakhr’.<sup>114</sup> The interpretation which regards the reference in the above two verses as being to Jerusalem seems to be logical, since Jerusalem was Solomon’s headquarters and the capital of his vast kingdom.

It should be noted here that there are five other verses which use the word ‘*al-Ard*’ (the earth) and are interpreted as, more likely, referring to *Bilād*

<sup>110</sup> Al-Maqdisī stresses that this verse includes all the area of Palestine especially Jerusalem. See al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, p. 161.

<sup>111</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 9, p. 30.

<sup>112</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 10, pp. 60–63; ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Māwardī in al-Sayyid b. ‘Abd al-Maṣṣūd ‘Abd al-Raḥīm (eds) *al-Nukat wa ʿl-ʿUyūn Taḥṣīr al-Māwardī*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, n.d.), p. 454 [hereafter al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa ʿl-ʿUyūn*; and al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, Vol. 11, p. 202.

<sup>113</sup> Iṣṭakhr, ‘a town in Fars. The real name probably Stakhr, as it is written in Pahlavi ... Iṣṭakhr lies in 29°50’ north-latitude and about 53° east longitude, a short hour’s journey north of Persepolis, in the narrow valley of the Pulwar or Murghāb (also called Sīwand-Rūd) ... Iṣṭakhr was at first merely the chief town of the district of Fārs, the center of which had probably always been in this neighbourhood’. M. Streck [G.C. Miles], ‘Iṣṭakhr’, *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. IV, p. 219.

<sup>114</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 3, p. 73; al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa ʿl-ʿUyūn*, Vol. 3, p. 460; and al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 14, p. 173.



*al-Shām* and especially to Jerusalem. These five verses are: Q 7 : 128,<sup>115</sup> Q 7 : 129,<sup>116</sup> Q 17 : 4,<sup>117</sup> Q 17 : 104,<sup>118</sup> and Q 28 : 5–6.<sup>119</sup>

*Mubawwa'a šidqin* (*An Honourable Dwelling Place*) Q 10 : 93. The verse reads as follows: 'And indeed We settled the Children of Israel in an honourable dwelling place'.

This honourable dwelling place was interpreted by some exegetes as Jerusalem.<sup>120</sup> Other exegetes have said that it refers to *Bilād al-Shām* (Jordan and Palestine in general), or to Egypt.<sup>121</sup>

It seems that the exegetes did not give any preference to any opinion over the other. However, most of them cite reports which interpret this verse as referring to *Bilād al-Shām* which embraces the greater part of the Holy Land, including Jerusalem. Thus, this verse implies an ambiguous, though likely reference to Jerusalem and the area surrounding it.

*Al-qarya* (*The Town*). This word was used in the Qur'ān to refer to Jerusalem in different patterns.

*Al-qarya* (the town) Q 2 : 58. This word is used with a definite article. The verse in which this word occurs reads: 'And (remember) when We said: Enter this town (Jerusalem) and eat bountifully therein with pleasure and delight wherever you wish, and enter the gate in prostration (or bowing with humility) and say: "forgive us," and We shall forgive you your sins and shall increase (reward) for the good doers'.

This is the first verse in the Qur'ān that implies ambiguous, but likely, reference to Jerusalem. The exegetes have given three possible interpretations to the name of the town referred to in this verse because its name was not clearly stated in this Qur'ānic verse. Firstly, al-Suddī, Qatāda, al-Rabī' b. Anas and Abū Muslim al-Asfahānī said that the reference here is to Jerusalem.<sup>122</sup> The Israelites

<sup>115</sup> See Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, p. 92.

<sup>116</sup> See Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 1, p. 498.

<sup>117</sup> See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 10, p. 141. Al-Qurṭubī said: 'the word "the earth" in this verse means the entities of *al-Shām*, Jerusalem and the area surrounding it'. See also Šiddīq b. Ḥasan al-Qinnawjī in 'Abdullāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Ansārī (ed.) *Faṭḥ al-Bayān fī Maqāšid al-Qur'ān* Vol. 7 (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya li'l-Ṭibā'a wa'l-Nashr, 1992), p. 356.

<sup>118</sup> See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup> Vol. 10, p. 219 and Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 2, p. 234.

<sup>119</sup> See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 10, p. 165 and Ismā'īl b. Kathīr, in, 'Alī Shayrī (ed.) *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1985), p. 628 [hereafter Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>].

<sup>120</sup> Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, p. 93. Compare with Yusuf 'Alī who said: 'After many wanderings the Israelites were settled in the land of Canaan, described as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod.iii. 8). They had a prosperous land; and they were supplied with spiritual sustenance by men sent to deliver God's Message'. Yusuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān, Translation*, p. 508, footnote No. 1474. For explanation about the land of Canaan see art. 'al-Kan'āniyyūn', in *al-Mawsū'a-'Arabiyya al-'Ālamiyya*, Vol. 20 (al-Riyāḍ: Mu'assasat A'māl al-Mawsū'a li'l-Nashr wa'l-Tawzī', 1996), p. 104.

<sup>121</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 2, pp. 698–699; Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, Vol. 2, p. 131; Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 2, p. 76 and al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 8, p. 243.

<sup>122</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 426; al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa'l-'Uyūn*, Vol. 1, p. 125; al-Husayn b. Ma'sūd al-Baghawī, in 'Abd al-Salām Muhammad 'Alī Shāhīn (ed.) *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, in *Hāshiyat Kitāb Tafsīr al-Khāzin*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1995), p. 84; 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Khāzin, *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*, *al-Musammā Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'āni al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1995), p. 84 [hereafter al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'āni al-Tanzīl*]; 'Abd-al-Raḥmān b. al-Kamāl Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī'l-Tafsīr bi'l-Ma'thūr*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), pp. 172–173 [hereafter al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī'l-Tafsīr bi'l-Ma'thūr*]; Ibrāhīm b. 'Umar al-Rubāṭ al-Buqā'ī, in 'Abd al-Razzāq Ghālib al-Mahdī (ed.) *Nazm al-Durar fī Tanāsib al-Āy wa'l-Suwar*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1995), p. 140.

were ordered to enter Jerusalem from its eighth gate. Secondly, Ibn ʿAbbās and Abū Zayd said that the reference here is to Arihā (Jericho).<sup>123</sup> Thirdly, some exegetes said that the reference here is either to Egypt, or al-Ramla, or Tadmur (Palmyra), or al-Balqā'<sup>124</sup> etc.<sup>125</sup>

Most exegetes support the first interpretation. Here, Moses was ordering his people (the Israelites) that once they had completed their 40 years of wandering aimlessly in the wilderness, to enter the town of Jerusalem.<sup>126</sup>

Al-Rāzī and Ibn Kathīr,<sup>127</sup> also supported the first view but excluded other interpretations because the verse Q 5 : 21, which has been discussed earlier, clearly pointed to the location of this town as being in the Holy Land. This Holy Land in Q 5 : 21 was also interpreted as a reference to Jerusalem. In both Q 2 : 58 and Q 5 : 21 the reference was more likely to Jerusalem and not to Arihā (Jericho) because, as Ibn Kathīr suggested, Arihā (Jericho), was far away from the Israelites' road when they were marching towards Jerusalem.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, although al-Ṭabarī cited different opinions about the name of this town, he seems to support Jerusalem as the correct interpretation because when he commented on a similar verse which is Q 7 : 161, he only cited Jerusalem as the name for the town cited in the verse. In addition, al-Qurṭubī also favours this interpretation because when he cited the exegetes' opinions on the name of the town, he said that the majority of the exegetes (*al-jumhūr*), consider the name of the town to be Jerusalem.

The second interpretation as regards the name of the town referred to in this verse is Arihā (Jericho) because the verse that succeeds it directly, Q 2 : 59, includes the conjunction *fa* annexed to the word *baddala* (changed). The conjunction *fa* clearly indicates the fact that the Israelites entered the city immediately after this order and took some action in it. Moreover, this order was from Moses and we definitely know that he never entered Jerusalem, therefore, the town which the Israelites entered could not be Jerusalem but Arihā (Jericho).

However, Ibn Kathīr totally rejected this interpretation for the above reason indicated. Furthermore, Q 2 : 58 does not clearly mention the name of the person who ordered the Israelites to enter this town. The verse reads: 'And (remember) when We said', using the plural 'we' without indicating to whom it refers.

<sup>123</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 426.

<sup>124</sup> 'Al-Balkā', name given by the Arab authors either to the whole of the Transjordanian territory corresponding approximately to the ancient countries of Ammon, Moab, and even Gilead, or to the middle part of it, having depending on the period 'Amman Ḥuṣbān or al-Ṣalt as its chief town. Although a certain lack of precision still persists to-day in the use of the term, its geographical meaning is usually restricted to the limestone plateau (average altitude 700–800 m) comprised between the Wādī 'l-Zarḳā' (or Jabbok) in the north and the Wādī 'l-Mūdġġib' (or Arnon) in the south ...' J. Sourdell-Thomine, 'Al-Balkā', *ET*<sup>2</sup> Vol. 1, pp. 997–998.

<sup>125</sup> See al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥṣīn al-Kabīr*<sup>4</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 5; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 125; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 1, pp. 338–339; al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa 'l-'Uyūn*, Vol. 1, p. 125; al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1995), p. 84; Muḥammad b. Ahmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1993), p. 278 [hereafter al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>2</sup>]; al-Khāzin *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'āni al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 1, p. 84; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī 'l-Taḥṣīn bi 'l-Ma'thūr* Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), pp. 172–173. Yusuf 'Alī suggested that the town in this verse probably refers to Shittim, 'the town of acacias' just east of Jerusalem. Yusuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān, Translation*, p. 31, footnote no. 72.

<sup>126</sup> Al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa 'l-'Uyūn*, Vol. 1, p. 125.

<sup>127</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 125.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

Therefore, there is a possibility that the person who ordered the Israelites to enter Jerusalem was Yūsha<sup>c</sup> b. Nūn and not Moses.<sup>129</sup>

The third interpretation did not have support from any exegete, because the names of the places they provided were far away from the Israelites' route after they had completed their 40 years in the wilderness.<sup>130</sup>

In conclusion, the arguments put forward by the supporters of the Jerusalem interpretation and the context of this verse supports the view that this verse implies ambiguous, but likely, reference to Jerusalem and not to any other place.

There is another verse in Q 7 : 161–162 similar to this one in its meaning and context with minor differences.<sup>131</sup>

*Qaryatin* (a town) Q 2 : 259 The verse reads as follows: 'Or like the one who passed by a town and it had tumbled over its roofs. He said: "Oh! How will Allāh ever bring it to life after its death? ..." '.

This verse has been the subject of much controversy as to the precise place and person, whose names are not expressly mentioned but alluded to. Exegetes differed in opinions regarding the exact names of both the person who passed by the town and the name of this town. As to the name of the town, the exegetes cited many reports identifying it as Jerusalem or Dayr Sābir Ābād, or Muslim Ābād, or Dayr Hiraql, etc.<sup>132</sup> The exegetes also cited many opinions regarding the name of the person who passed by this town. They suggested the following names: 'Uzayr (Ezra), or Irmīyā (Nehemiah), or the slave of the Prophet Lūṭ, or an Israelite, or an infidel who did not believe in the resurrection (*al-ba'ṭh*).

Some exegetes mentioned some of the above names without any preference. Al-Ṭabarī, for example, did not favour any particular report regarding the exact names of either the town or person who passed by it. He seems, instead, to pay more attention to the general meaning of the verse itself and to what could be inferred from it.<sup>133</sup> Al-Ṭabarī's view was followed exactly by al-Khāzin,<sup>134</sup> Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā,<sup>135</sup> and Sayyid Quṭb.<sup>136</sup> However others, such as al-Baghawī, were more of the opinion that the person concerned here was Irmīyā (Nehemiah)<sup>137</sup> who visited Jerusalem in captivity, after it was ruined and captured.<sup>138</sup> Ibn Kathīr<sup>139</sup> believes 'Uzayr (Ezra) was the person referred to in this verse as many famous (*mashhūr*) reports suggested<sup>140</sup> 'Uzayr (Ezra) visited

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. and al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*<sup>4</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 125.

<sup>131</sup> For a comparison between the verbal changes in Q 2:58 and Q 7:161, see Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an, Translation*, p. 31, footnote no. 72 and p. 390, footnote no. 1136.

<sup>132</sup> See al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 2, p. 21; al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 1, pp. 355–356; and al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 3, p. 289.

<sup>133</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 3, pp. 31–32.

<sup>134</sup> Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 1, p. 355.

<sup>135</sup> Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, Vol. 3, p. 49.

<sup>136</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, n.d.), p. 99.

<sup>137</sup> al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 1, pp. 357–358.

<sup>138</sup> Yusuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'an, Translation*, p. 105, footnote no. 304.

<sup>139</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, n.d.), p. 389 [hereafter Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>2</sup>].

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. Yusuf Ali suggests three possible names for the person who passed by Jerusalem, of which two are Ezra and Nehemiah. Yusuf 'Ali concluded by saying: 'As to (1) [Nehemiah] and (2) [Ezra], there is nothing specific to connect this verse with either. The wording is perfectly general, and we must understand it as general. I think it does refer not only to individual, but to national, death and resurrection'. Yusuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'an, Translation*, p. 105, footnote no. 304.

Jerusalem after it was destroyed by Bukhtanassar (Nebuchadnezzar).<sup>141</sup> In conclusion, based on the many famous (*mashhūr*) reports which explain this verse, it is safe to say that Jerusalem and the Holy Land are the core of this verse and even if the reference to Jerusalem in this verse is ambiguous, it is more likely than not a true reference.

*Al-qurā allatī bāraknā fhā* (the blessed towns) Q 34 : 18. The verse reads as follows: ‘And We placed between them (Saba’ or Sheba) and the towns which We had blessed towns easy to be seen, and We made the stages (of journey) between them easy (saying): “Travel in them safely both by night and day”’.

The word *al-qurā* is mentioned as a plural definite noun. Most exegetes suggest that these towns are located in al-Shām, Jordan and Palestine<sup>142</sup> (Jerusalem).<sup>143</sup> This land wherein Allah ‘had poured His blessings’, was blessed as being a rich fertile country<sup>144</sup> where Abraham had lived<sup>145</sup> and many other Prophets. Since Jerusalem is one of the most important towns of the Holy Land, the reference here to it, though ambiguous, is nevertheless likely to be a true reference to it and to the towns around it.

### *Verses which Refer to Jerusalem by Using Expressions Related to Places of Worship*

These expressions are represented below:

*Al-masjid* (*The Mosque, Literally: A Place of Prostration or a Place of Prayer*) Q 17 : 7. The word *al-masjid* is mentioned here as a singular noun with a definite article. The verses which precede this verse are related to what was decreed by God for the Children of Israel in the Scripture, i.e. to commit mischief twice on the earth and the outcome of their mischiefs, promised by God. The verse related to *al-masjid* reads as follows:

Then, when the second promise came to pass, (We permitted your enemies) to make your faces sorrowful and to enter the mosque (of Jerusalem) as they had entered it before, and to destroy with utter destruction all that fell in their hands.

The exegetes adopted the view that the verse regarding the mosque refers to the holy sanctuary, the Furthest Mosque in Jerusalem.<sup>146</sup> This view is solidly grounded since the first verse in this *Sūra* xvii expressly speaks about the Furthest Mosque in Jerusalem, and the article (*al*) with the word *masjid* in Q 17 : 7 are related directly to the mosque mentioned in the first verse, which is the Furthest Mosque in Jerusalem. Secondly, the context of the verses (Q 17 : 4–8)

<sup>141</sup> Compare with al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1992), pp. 31–40 [hereafter al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*<sup>3</sup>]; al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa ‘l-‘Uyūn*, Vol. 1, p. 331; al-Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 1, pp. 357–358; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘<sup>2</sup>*, Vol. 3, pp. 288–289; al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta’wīl fī Ma‘ānī al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 1, pp. 355–356; al-Suyūfī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī ‘l-Tafsīr bi ‘l-Ma’tūr*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), p. 29.

<sup>142</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘<sup>1</sup>*, Vol. 14, p. 185.

<sup>143</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, Vol. 3, p. 12; and Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān<sup>1</sup>*, Vol. 3, p. 880.

<sup>144</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘<sup>1</sup>*, Vol. 14, p. 185.

<sup>145</sup> Yusuf ‘Ali, *The Holy Qur’ān, Translation*, p. 1139, footnote no. 3816.

<sup>146</sup> See Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Karīm Baḥr al-‘Ulūm*, Vol. 2, p. 302; al-Nasafī, *Madārik al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 3, p. 44; Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, Vol. 2, p. 213; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān<sup>1</sup>*, Vol. 3, p. 494; Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Jawzī, *Zād al-Masīr fī ‘Ilm al-Tafsīr*, Vol. 5 (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1984), p. 11.

deals with the events which took place in and around Jerusalem and its Furthest Mosque, and in particular with their destruction in history as in the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar,<sup>147</sup> Titus<sup>148</sup> and others. For example Q 17 : 5 reads: 'So, when the promise came for the first of the two, We sent against you [the Children of Israel] slaves of Ours given to terrible warfare. They entered *al-Diyār* (the very innermost parts of your homes). And it was a promise (completely) fulfilled'.

The exegetes interpreted this verse, those that preceded and followed it, as referring to events which took place in Jerusalem.<sup>149</sup>

*Al-qibla* (Prayer Direction) Q 2 : 142, 143 and 145. Jerusalem was the first direction of prayer in Islam. We are told that Muslims when praying faced towards *Bayt al-Maqdis* for 17 consecutive months after the *Hijra*, until this was abrogated by the revelation of Q 2 : 142–146. These verses ordered the Prophet and the Muslim community to turn in prayer towards the *ka'ba* in Mecca instead of Jerusalem.

The Qur'ān, in *Sūrat al-Baqara*, nevertheless, employs this particular word *qibla* three times, to refer more likely to Jerusalem. In Q 2 : 142, 143 and 145 the word *qibla* is mentioned in different patterns. Muslim exegetes and jurists agree almost unanimously that these and the verses that succeed, and precede them (Q 2 : 140–150) are related to the abrogation of facing towards Jerusalem in prayer. These verses explicitly order the Prophet to face the *ka'ba* in Mecca (Q 2 : 144).<sup>150</sup> However, Jerusalem in these verses 'is not mentioned expressly, but the Islamic tradition that it was intended by "the first *kiblah*" is no doubt genuine; since the new *ka'ba*, which satisfied the Prophet's heart, was to the direction of the sanctuary of his native city, it stands to reason that the original one also was oriented to a holy city, and there was none for monotheists except Jerusalem'.<sup>151</sup> Thus, the importance of Jerusalem, both in Islamic literature and in the Muslim mind is clearly illustrated in these verses which refer to it as the first *qibla* in Islam.

*Mihrāb* (A Prayer Place or a Private Room or Chamber) Q 3 : 37, 39 and Q 38 : 21. According to Muslim geographers the location of the *mihrābs* of the

<sup>147</sup> See al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa'l-'Uyūn*, Vol. 1, pp. 114–115; 'Alī b. Ahmad al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Rayyān, 1991), p. 36; G. Vajda, 'Bukhtanassar', *EF*, Vol. 1, pp. 1297–1298; Donald J. Wiseman, 'Nebuchadnezzar', in Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (eds) *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp. 552–553; 'Jerusalem', in F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (eds) *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 732–733; Michael Avi-Yonah, 'Jerusalem', in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 9 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd, 1974), p. 1384; and Bustanay Oded, 'Nebuchadnezzar', in *ibid.* Vol. 12, p. 914.

<sup>148</sup> See al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, p. 36; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 2, p. 84; al-Khāziri, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 1, p. 131; Lea Roth, 'Titus Flavius Vespasianus', in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 15, pp. 1168–1169; and Yusuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān, Translation*, p. 695, footnotes no. 2176–2180.

<sup>149</sup> Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa'l-Tanwīr*, Vol. 15 (Tūnis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li'l-Nashr, 1984), p. 30. Ibn 'Āshūr commented on the word *diyār* saying: 'It comprises Solomon's temple'. See also Muḥammad Fakhr al-Dīn b. 'Umar al-Rāzī, in Khalīl al-Mays (ed.) *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Vol. 10 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1995), p. 158 [hereafter al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*].

<sup>150</sup> For comments on verse Q 2:142, see al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 3, pp. 101–108; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 2, pp. 100–110; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 1, pp. 166–171. For comments on Q 2:143 see al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 2, pp. 106. For comments on Q 2:146 see al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 2, pp. 110; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 3, p. 146. For comments on Q 2:146 see al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 2, pp. 113; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 305; Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* Vol. 1, p. 172 and al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 3, p. 156. For comments on Q 2:148 see al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 2, pp. 111; and Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 1, pp. 303–304.

<sup>151</sup> Goitein, 'al-Ḳuds', *EF*, Vol. V, p. 323.

Prophets David, Zachariah and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are located in Jerusalem. These *miḥrābs* are mentioned in the following places: Q 3 : 37 mentions Mary's *miḥrāb*,<sup>152</sup> Q 3 : 39 mentions Zachariah's *miḥrāb*,<sup>153</sup> and Q 38 : 21 mentions David's *miḥrāb*.<sup>154</sup>

*Verses which Refer to Jerusalem through Symbolic Expressions*

The only verse which falls under this category is: *wa ʿl-tīn wa ʿl-zaytūn* (by the fig, and by the olive) Q 95 : 1.

The exegetes offered two major interpretations for the meaning of the fig and the olive in this verse.

*The First Interpretation is Literal.* The fig and olive refer to well known fruits and trees. Allāh has sworn by them because of the benefits they provide for man. These exegetes confined themselves to the literal meaning of these words as there is no logical reason to substitute it with a metaphorical or symbolic meaning unless required or well-founded.<sup>155</sup>

*The Second Interpretation is Symbolic or Rhetorical.* It suggests that these two words (i.e. the fig and the olive) are used figuratively to refer to sacred places where these trees grow. There is a lot of controversy among the exegetes about the sacred places that the fig and the olive refer to. Three different views are held:

- (1) The fig and the olive refer to two mountains. The Mount of the Fig in Damascus and the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.<sup>156</sup>
- (2) The fig and the olive refer to two mosques.<sup>157</sup> While the fig refers to the Damascus mosque, the olive refers to *al-Aqṣā* mosque in Jerusalem. These places are famed for their olive and fig trees. Furthermore, Allāh swore by these two mosques because they represent some of the best places on earth dedicated to the worship of the true God.<sup>158</sup>
- (3) The fig and the olive refer to two cities or places: the fig refers to Damascus or *Bilād al-Shām*; the olive refers to *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Jerusalem) or Palestine.<sup>159</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, and al-Buqāʿī<sup>160</sup> favoured the third view.

<sup>152</sup> al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, p. 162.

<sup>153</sup> Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, p. 101; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-Arḍ*, Vol. 1, p. 171 and al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, p. 162.

<sup>154</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-Arḍ*, Vol. 1, p. 171 and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Hamdhānī, Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, p. 95.

<sup>155</sup> See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 12, pp. 631–633; al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa ʿl-ʿUyūn*, Vol. 6, pp. 300–301; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 15, p. 112; and al-Suyūfī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Vol. 8, p. 555.

<sup>156</sup> Muḥammad Fakhr al-Dīn b. ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥṣīr al-Kabīr*, Vol. 32 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1990), p. 10 [hereafter al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥṣīr al-Kabīr*<sup>2</sup>].

<sup>157</sup> See *infra* n. 158 for those who refer to this possibility.

<sup>158</sup> See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 12, pp. 631–633; al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa ʿl-ʿUyūn*, Vol. 6, pp. 300–301; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 15, p. 111; al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥṣīr al-Kabīr*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 32, p. 10; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 4, p. 628; and al-Suyūfī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Vol. 8, p. 558.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 12, pp. 631–632; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 15, p. 112; al-Buqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, Vol. 18, pp. 470–471 and Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Vol. 8 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1992), p. 486 [hereafter Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*].

They say that Allāh, in reality, swears by these sacred places in order to emphasize their glory as they are full of resources and blessings due to the many Prophets who have lived there. The fig and olive are symbols which 'refer to God's light of revelation, which offers man the highest destiny if he will follow the Way. Mecca [the city of security] stands for Islam; Sinai for Israel, and the Mount of Olives for Christ's original and pure message'.<sup>161</sup> All these places have witnessed great Prophets, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. This is the real meaning of the verse and the ones that follow it. ('By the fig and the olive. By Mount Sinai. And by the city of security (Mecca)' Q 95 : 1–3.)

Allāh's swearing by Jerusalem was in Mecca, before the Hijra in AD 622, when the *Sūra* of the fig (Q 95) was revealed there. The arguments put forward by those who regarded this verse as referring to Jerusalem are very sound, and therefore, one can confidently conclude that the verse ('By the fig, and by the olive' Q 95 : 1) implies an ambiguous, but likely, reference to Jerusalem and the area surrounding it. Furthermore, this verse confirms the high status that Jerusalem has in the Qur'ān and consequently in every Muslim's mind.

### *Verses which Mention Seasonal Expressions Referring to Jerusalem*

The only verse which comes under this context is Q 106 : 1–2.

The verse reads as follows: 'For the covenants (of security and safeguard enjoyed) by the Quraish. Their covenants (covering) journeys by winter (to the south), and summer (to the north). Let them adore the Lord of this House'.

The Quraysh, as custodians of the *ka'ba*, the central shrine of Arabia, were the noblest tribe in Arabia. 'In those days of general insecurity, their prestige as custodians of Mecca enabled them to obtain covenants of security and to safeguard it from the rulers of neighbouring countries on all sides—Syria, Persia, Yemen, and Abyssinia—protecting their trade journeys in all seasons'.<sup>162</sup>

Some exegetes have interpreted those trips as follows: The winter journey was directed towards Yemen as the weather was acceptable only during that season. The summer journey was directed to *Bilād al-Shām* (including Jerusalem) as the weather then was nice and not cold.<sup>163</sup>

Other exegetes suggested that both the winter and summer trips were directed to *Bilād al-Shām*, but the winter trip was to Ayla<sup>164</sup> on the shores of the Red Sea,<sup>165</sup> while the summer trip was to Busrā and Adhri'āt.<sup>166</sup>

It is a well established fact that the tribe of Quraysh was familiar with Jerusalem during their trips to the area called then *Bilād al-Shām*. We are told that Abū Sufyān, a Qurayshite leader and one of the Prophet's fiercest rivals before he embraced Islam, was 'called to the presence of Heraclius in Jerusalem.

<sup>161</sup> Yusuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān, Translation*, p. 1758, footnote no. 6198.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1794, footnote no. 6276.

<sup>163</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 4, p. 927 and Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 3, p. 492.

<sup>164</sup> Ayla is a 'sea port at the north end of the Gulf of 'Aḳaba, now succeeded by al-'Aḳaba'. H. W. Glidden, 'Ayla', *EP*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 1, pp. 783–784.

<sup>165</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 3, p. 492.

<sup>166</sup> Adhri'āt is 'the Edrei of the Bible, today Der'ah, chief town of Ḥawrān, 106 km south of Damascus'. F. Buhl-N. Elisseeff, 'Adhri'āt', *EP*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 194.

The Emperor questioned him closely about this new Prophet'.<sup>167</sup> Abū Sufyān answered honestly and in detail about the Prophet's character and followers.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, the Quraysh knew Jerusalem, for they challenged the Prophet to describe it for them to ascertain the truthfulness of his nocturnal journey there.<sup>169</sup>

From the above facts, one can confidently conclude that verse two in this *Sūra* implies ambiguous though likely reference to different important towns in *Bilād al-Shām* including Jerusalem, Busrā and Adhri'āt.

### *Verses which Mention Stories Related to People and Prophets who Lived in the Holy Land Including Jerusalem*

These stories are related below.

*Abraham.* The Qur'ān cites important stories about the great Prophet and the father of all Prophets, Abraham. The Qur'ān tells us about his obedience and submission to Allāh, his patience with his people who worshipped idols. Abraham and Lot, after suffering at the hands of their people, migrated from Iraq to the Holy Land, Jerusalem and the area around it. Their migration is mentioned in the Qur'ān (Q 21 : 71).<sup>170</sup> It was in Jerusalem that Abraham was given the good tidings of Isaac—a Prophet from the righteous (Q 37 : 112).<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, Abraham fulfilled his prophetic vision (vision of sacrificing his only son) in Jerusalem as Q 37 : 102–107 suggests.<sup>172</sup>

*David and his Son Solomon.* The Qur'ān elaborates on stories and miracles related to both the Prophets David and his son Solomon. According to the exegetes, many of those stories and events took place in the Holy Land including Jerusalem. It is a well known fact that David's reign in Jerusalem was from BC 1006 till 966 while Solomon's era in Jerusalem lasted from BC 963 till 922. The Holy Qur'ān refers to events which subsequently took place in Jerusalem, according to some scholars, and were related to David and Solomon.

Q 38 : 18–20 read:

Verily We made the mountains to glorify our praises with him [David] in 'ashiyya (after the mid-day till sunset) and *ishraq* (i.e. after the sunrise till mid-day). And (so did) the birds assembled: all with him [David] did turn (to Allāh, i.e. glorified His Praises). We made his kingdom strong and gave him *al-ḥikma* and sound judgement in speech and decision.<sup>173</sup>

He was also tempted there and sought Allāh's forgiveness. Allāh forgave him.<sup>174</sup> For being pious and ever turning in all matters with repentance towards Allāh, Allāh appointed him a successor on earth and ordered him to rule

<sup>167</sup> Yusuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān, Translation*, p. 1074.

<sup>168</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. 1, pp. 86–109.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, pp. 363–364.

<sup>170</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 10, pp. 60–61; al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa 'l-'Uyūn*, Vol. 3, p. 454 and al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 11, p. 202.

<sup>171</sup> Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, p. 95.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*; there is in Islamic literature a more common view that Ismā'īl was the one Abraham wanted to sacrifice in Mecca.

<sup>173</sup> All these events took place in Jerusalem. See *Ibid.*, pp. 93–94.

<sup>174</sup> Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, p. 95 and Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Sūrat al-Arḍ*, Vol. 1, p. 171.



among men on matters of truth and justice (Q 38 : 26). All these events took place in Jerusalem.

During David's reign, in Jerusalem, he was given his son Solomon by Allāh (Q 38 : 30).<sup>175</sup> Solomon was later chosen by Allāh as a prophet; he was an excellent subject and ever turning in all matters with repentance towards Allāh (Q 38 : 30).<sup>176</sup> Allāh subjected many forces of nature to Solomon. Allāh gave him dominance over the winds which he used to travel from the Holy Land to any place he wanted (Q 21 : 81; Q 34 : 12; Q 38 : 36),<sup>177</sup> caused a fount of (Molten) brass<sup>178</sup> to flow for him, and there were jinn that worked for him as builders and divers (Q 34 : 12; Q 38 : 36–37).<sup>179</sup> In addition, it was in Jerusalem that he asked Allāh to bestow upon him a kingdom which would not belong to any other after him (Q 38 : 35). During his rule over Jerusalem, 963–922 BC, the throne of Bilqis, the queen of Sheba, was brought to Jerusalem miraculously by one of Solomon's disciples who possessed some knowledge of the Scripture (Q 27 : 38).<sup>180</sup> Solomon was tried by Allāh in Jerusalem and was granted forgiveness by Him (Q 38 : 34).<sup>181</sup> Lastly, Solomon died in Jerusalem (Q 34 : 14).<sup>182</sup>

*Moses.* As mentioned above, there are many verses which concern Moses and the Israelites, that imply ambiguous, but likely, references, to Jerusalem. Those verses are as follows: Q 2 : 58; Q 5 : 21–22, 26; Q 7 : 128–129, 137, 161; Q 10 : 87, 93; Q 17 : 104; Q 28 : 6; Q 34 : 18.

*Jesus and his Mother Mary.* Mary's mother, who lived in Jerusalem, said: 'O my Lord! I have vowed unto You what (the child that) is in my womb to be dedicated for your services (free from all worldly work; to serve Your place of worship in Jerusalem's mosque) so accept it from me', (Q 3 : 35–36).<sup>183</sup> Mary was accepted by God. He chose her, purified her (from disbelief), and put her above the women of mankind of her lifetime (Q 3 : 35, 42).<sup>184</sup> Mary dedicated her whole life for the worship of God and she received the good tidings about her conception of Jesus in Jerusalem (Q 19 : 16, 22–23).<sup>185</sup> She was told that Jesus would be held in honour in the world and in the hereafter (Q 3 : 45).<sup>186</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, pp. 93–94.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 14, p. 173, Vol. 11, p. 212 and Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 3, p. 460.

<sup>178</sup> See Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 3, p. 3. Ibn 'Abd al-Salām interpreted the words '*ayn al-qitr'*' as: 'a spring of water' in the region of *al-Shām*.

<sup>179</sup> Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, pp. 95–96.

<sup>180</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 13, p. 137 and Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 3, p. 602. Ibn Kathīr specified that this event was in Jerusalem.

<sup>181</sup> For details about this trial see al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 15, pp. 131–133; Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 3, p. 83; Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, pp. 93–94; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 4, pp. 58–59; al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, p. 162 and Yusuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān, Translation*, p. 1225, footnote no. 4189.

<sup>182</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 3, p. 874; compare with Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 3, p. 10; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 14, p. 181; and Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, pp. 93–101.

<sup>183</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 563; Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, Vol. 1, pp. 233–234 and Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 1, p. 259.

<sup>184</sup> Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, pp. 93–94.

<sup>185</sup> Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Qummī, *Tafsīr Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 4, p. 109 and al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 11, p. 60.

<sup>186</sup> Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, pp. 93–94.

In Jerusalem, Jesus spoke to the people in the cradle (Q 3 : 46). He lived in this holy city with his mother (Q 23 : 50).<sup>187</sup> He, also, promulgated his message there and showed the people his miracles and signs such as raising up the dead (Q 3 : 49). Lastly, he was raised up to the heavens from Jerusalem (Q 3 : 55; Q 4 : 158).<sup>188</sup> All the above-mentioned stories and events concerning those people and Prophets took place in Jerusalem.

*Verses which Mention Stories Related to Events Which Took Place in Jerusalem*

These events can be divided into two categories. Firstly, the events which occurred before the advent of Islam. Secondly, the events which occurred after the advent of Islam.

*The Events which Occurred in Jerusalem before the Advent of Islam.* There are two events that relate to this category. Firstly, the destruction of Jerusalem in Q 2 : 114, 259 and Q 17 : 4–7 which has been discussed previously. Secondly, the Qurayshite caravan journey to *Bilād al-Shām* including Jerusalem in Q 106 : 1–2 which has also been discussed earlier.

*The Events which Occurred in Jerusalem after the Advent of Islam.* There are three events that relate to this category. Firstly, the Prophet's nocturnal journey, *isrā'*, to Jerusalem, which was discussed earlier regarding Q 17 : 1. Secondly, the change of *qibla* (prayer direction) from Jerusalem to Mecca which was also discussed earlier with reference to Q 2 : 142–150. Thirdly, the defeat of the Byzantines and the fall of Jerusalem into Persian hands. The *Qur'ān* cites, 8 years before the *Hjra* in AD 622, the defeat of the Byzantine army by the Persians who captured the city of Jerusalem. The verse reads as follows:

The Romans have been defeated (by the Persians). In the nearer land (*Bilād al-Shām*: Syria, Jordan, and Palestine, including Jerusalem),<sup>189</sup> and they once again will be victorious. Within three to nine years. (Q 30 : 1–3)

The clause 'the nearer land' was interpreted as *Bilād al-Shām*, which includes Jerusalem that fell to the Persian armies in AD 614 or 615. The city was burnt and pillaged, the Christians were massacred, the churches were burnt. Additionally, 'Heraclius, the Roman [= Byzantine] Emperor, then recaptured the Syrian cities,<sup>190</sup> including Jerusalem, from the Persians and celebrated his triumph in Constantinople in March AD 628 and marched from Ḥimiṣ (Emessa) on foot to Jerusalem'.<sup>191</sup> This event, as we have seen, has a strong, but ambiguous, reference to Jerusalem.

<sup>187</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 3, p. 408.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 909–910.

<sup>189</sup> See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 14, p. 5 and Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 2, p. 521.

<sup>190</sup> Damascus fell into Persian hands in AD 611 and in AD 613 or 614 the Persians, in the course of their victorious campaign against the Byzantines, sacked the town of Adhri'āt, to-day Der'ah, chief town of Hawrān, 106 km south of Damascus, and destroyed the olive-groves of the region. See F. Buhl-N. Elisseeff, 'Adhri'āt', *EF*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 194.

<sup>191</sup> Yusuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān, Translation*, p. 1074.

## Ambiguous, but Unlikely, References to Jerusalem in the Qur'ān

There are many verses in the Qur'ān which are ambiguous, but unlikely, references to Jerusalem. These verses may be divided into three groups.

### *Verses which Refer to Jerusalem by using Expressions Related to Places of Worship*

These expressions are discussed below.

*Masājid Allāh (Allāh's Mosques) Q 2 : 114.* The word *masjid* is mentioned as a plural noun in a possessive structure. The verse reads as follows: 'And who is more unjust than those who forbid that Allāh's name be glorified and mentioned much (i.e. prayers and invocations, etc.) in Allāh's Mosques and strive for their ruin? It was not fitting that such should themselves enter them (Allāh's Mosques) except in fear'.

Because there is no explicit mention of the names of the mosques and the people referred to in this verse, the exegetes have disagreed upon their places and names.<sup>192</sup> The exegetical literature offers two major interpretations. On the one hand, the word *masājid* (mosques), a plural noun, is applicable to any mosque on earth as a target for destruction by any person adopting a different religion. This view is supported and favoured by both the exegetes al-Jassās and al-Ḥarrālī.<sup>193</sup> On the other hand, other exegetes believe that the word *masājid*, mentioned in the plural form, refers to a specific mosque. There was disagreement, however, among these exegetes upon the exact mosque referred to in the verse.

Three different views were held:

- (1) The mosques referred to here are *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* in Mecca and the mosque of the Prophet in Medina. The Jews stirred up some pagans to destroy both of them when the *qibla* was transferred from Jerusalem to Mecca. This view is adopted by al-Rāzī.<sup>194</sup>
- (2) The view favoured by Ibn Kathīr is that the mosque referred to is also *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, in Mecca. The pagans in Mecca brought about spiritual rather than materialistic destruction to *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* and to its *ka'ba* by worshipping different idols<sup>195</sup> and preventing the Muslims from worshipping the true God therein. 'If Pagans had succeeded, they would only have caused drastic division amongst the Arabs and destroyed the sanctity and the very existence of the *ka'ba*'.<sup>196</sup>
- (3) Al-Ṭabarī and many other exegetes, however, suggest, among other opinions, that the mosque referred to here is *Bayt al-Maqdis* (al-Quds'

<sup>192</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 545.

<sup>193</sup> Aḥmad b. 'Alī Abū Bakr al-Jassās, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1996), pp. 61–62; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, in Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥafnāwī and Muḥammad Ḥāmid 'Uthmān (eds) *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1994), p. 84 and al-Buqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, Vol. 1, p. 225.

<sup>194</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥfīr al-Kabīr*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 4, p. 11.

<sup>195</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 196.

<sup>196</sup> Yusuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān, Translation*, p. 49, footnotes no. 117.

Mosque)<sup>197</sup> which was destroyed first by Nebuchadnezzar and later by many Romans such as Titus in AD 70 and some Christians who did not respect the place of the mosque. On the one hand, al-Ṭabarī preferred this view, while on the other hand, Ibn Kathīr,<sup>198</sup> al-Rāzī<sup>199</sup> and al-Jassās did not.<sup>200</sup> The reasons for al-Ṭabarī's preference are as follows: firstly, Ibn 'Abbās and Qatāda supported this view; secondly, the reference here could not be to the *ka'ba* because the Pagans never tried to destroy it; on the contrary, it was exalted by them; thirdly, the context of the verses that precede and succeed this verse is about the People of the Book and not about the pagans.<sup>201</sup>

Al-Jassās, al-Rāzī, and Ibn Kathīr challenged al-Ṭabarī's view for the simple basic reason which was that the Christians used to respect this place as much as the Jews<sup>202</sup> and Muslims did. All in all, one is inclined to prefer the first opinion, adopted by al-Jassās and al-Ḥarrālī, which regards the word 'mosques' as a general word applicable to no definite mosque but rather to all mosques on earth, including *al-Aqṣā* Mosque in Jerusalem, since the reports which suggested some particular mosques are not solid enough to exclude the other reports. Furthermore, 'This verse', as A. Yusuf 'Ali rightly suggested, 'taken in a general sense, establishes the principle of freedom of worship in a public mosque or a place dedicated to the worship of God'.<sup>203</sup> Therefore, this verse is an ambiguous, but unlikely, reference to Jerusalem.

*Fī buyūtin (In Houses) Q 24 : 36.* The verse reads as follows: 'In houses (mosques), which Allāh has ordered to be raised (to be cleaned and to be honoured)'.

In this verse the adverbial clause *fī buyūtin* (in houses), is mentioned using an indefinite noun to include all places of pure worship, but some commentators (such as al-Qurṭubī) cited, among other opinions, three which understand special Mosques and places of worship that are specially held in honour. These places are as follows:

- (1) The Three Holy Mosques (the *ka'ba* in Mecca, the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina, and *Masjid Bayt al-Maqdis* (the Holy Sanctuary) in Jerusalem in addition to the first mosque built in Medina, the Mosque of *Qibā'*).
- (2) The Prophet's private apartments (*al-ḥujurāt*).
- (3) The houses of Jerusalem.<sup>204</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, however, tends to prefer the view that the reference, in the clause *fī buyūtin* (in houses), is to all places of worship and to all mosques on earth since the context of the verse does not hint at any particular place and gives praise applicable to all mosques. The rest of the above cited verse reads: 'In them His name is glorified in the mornings and the evenings'. Al-Qurṭubī's view seems to be logically and

<sup>197</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 545; al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, p. 36 and al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 2, p. 84; al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 1, p. 131.

<sup>198</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 196.

<sup>199</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 364.

<sup>200</sup> Al-Jassās, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 1, p. 61.

<sup>201</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>3</sup>, Vol. 1, p. 547.

<sup>202</sup> Al-Jassās, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 1, p. 61.

<sup>203</sup> Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān, Translation*, p. 49, footnotes no. 117.

<sup>204</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 12, p. 176.

contextually accepted; therefore, the verse is an ambiguous, but unlikely reference to Jerusalem.

*Qiblatan (A Prayer Direction) Q 10 : 87.* The exegetes differed about the meaning of the above-mentioned verse. Some say it means 'take dwellings for your people (ordering Moses) in Egypt, and make your dwellings as places for your worship'.<sup>205</sup> According to this interpretation, the word *buyūt* means 'dwellings' and the word *qibla* means 'a place of worship'. Al-Qurṭubī<sup>206</sup> and other exegetes,<sup>207</sup> however, assert that it means: 'take dwellings for your people in Egypt, and let your mosques face a prayer direction (Jerusalem or Mecca)'. According to this interpretation, the word *buyūt* means 'mosques' as it meant in Q 24 : 36, discussed earlier, and the command given in this verse to face a prayer direction is interpreted here as Jerusalem or Mecca. Al-Qurṭubī, moreover, did not supply us with any preference as to the exact place they were ordered to face, whether to Mecca or to Jerusalem. Even the latter opinion seems to be more sound than the first one, since the word *buyūt* clearly indicates mosques; however, it seems very difficult to establish in which direction they were ordered to face. Therefore, this verse should be classified as an ambiguous, but unlikely, reference to Jerusalem.

#### *Verses which use Location Expressions that Refer to Jerusalem*

There is only one verse that falls into this category. This verse is Q 23 : 50. The location expression used in the verse is: *rabwatin dhāt qarārin wa mā'in* (a high ground, a place of rest, security and flowing streams) Q 23 : 50. The verse reads as follows:

And we made the son of Maryam (Mary) and his mother as a sign, And we gave them refuge on high ground, a place of rest, security and flowing streams.

Both al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr have provided us with different interpretations and reports for the location of this high ground and secured place which has flowing streams. Their reports suggest the following places: Damascus, or al-Ramla,<sup>208</sup> or *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Jerusalem). While on the one hand, al-Ṭabarī excluded al-Ramla from being this place, because it does not have flowing streams, on the other hand, the traditional exegete, Ibn Kathīr, favoured Qatāda's opinion which locates this high ground place in Jerusalem.<sup>209</sup>

It seems from the context of the verse that it is very difficult to allocate the exact place that the Qur'ān was referring to; therefore, this verse should be regarded as being an ambiguous, but unlikely reference to Jerusalem.

<sup>205</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 17, pp. 147–148; Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 2, p. 75 and al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 11, pp. 106–107.

<sup>206</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 8, p. 237 and Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 2, pp. 693–694.

<sup>207</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 17, pp. 147–148; Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 2, p. 75 and Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Qummī, *Tafsīr Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān*, on the margin of al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 11, p. 109.

<sup>208</sup> Al-Ramla, 'A town of Palestine, in early Islamic times in the djund ... of Filīṣṭīn [...]. It is situated on the coastal plain 40 km/25 miles west-north-west of Jerusalem ... and now lies between the modern Israel towns of Rehovot and Lod(Ludd)'. A. Zysow, 'Al-Ramla', EI<sup>2</sup>, Vol. VIII, pp. 423–424.

<sup>209</sup> See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 3, pp. 407–408 and al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 10, pp. 34–36.

*Verses which Speak about Eschatological Events Consequently Referring to Jerusalem*

As has been stated at the beginning of this article, Jerusalem became a site for eschatological events in the three monotheistic religions including Islam. This can clearly be seen from the interpretations given to the following Qur'anic verses related to eschatological events.

*Makānin qarībin* (A Near Place) Q 50 : 41 and *yawma tashaqqaqu al-arḍ* 'anhum (The Earth Shall Be Cleft Off Them) Q 50 : 44. Q 50 : 41 reads: 'And listen on the Day when the caller will call from a near place' and Q 50 : 44 reads: 'On the Day when the earth shall be cleft off them (they will come out), hastening forth. That will be a gathering, quite easy for us'. Both the phrases *makānin qarībin* (a near place) in Q 50 : 41 and *al-arḍ* (the earth) in Q 50 : 44 were interpreted as references to Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock.<sup>210</sup> Furthermore, the exegete Abū Ḥayyān refused this interpretation since it lacked authentic reports to support it.<sup>211</sup> It is fundamental for the exegete when explaining a verse related to eschatological events to have support either from the Qur'ān or from *ḥadīth* literature.<sup>212</sup> From this lack of evidence in these verses, it seems logical to say that these verses are ambiguous, but unlikely, references to Jerusalem.

*Sūrīn lahu bābun* (A Wall with a Gate) Q 57 : 13. The verse reads as follows: 'On the Day when the hypocrites—men and women—will say to the believers: "Wait for us! Let us get some of your light!" It will be said: "Look behind you! Then seek a light!" So a wall will be put up between them, and a gate the inside of which will be mercy, but the outside of it will be torment'.

In this verse the exegetes mentioned two interpretations of 'the wall' and 'the gate'.

The wall refers to the eastern wall in *al-Aqṣā* Mosque in Jerusalem as well as the gate. It is believed that the Prophet, in his nocturnal journey to Jerusalem, saw Hell from that place, and therefore, the valley facing *al-Aqṣā* Mosque was called the Valley of Hell or the Hell Valley.<sup>213</sup>

Most exegetes regard the wall and its gate as related to a real wall dividing the believers from the hypocrites in the hereafter. This place according to Qatāda is called *al-A'raf*.<sup>214</sup> It has nothing to do with Jerusalem's eastern wall. These exegetes refuse the first opinion as based on a weak tradition. Furthermore, the

<sup>210</sup> Al-Qurtūbī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 17, p. 19.

<sup>211</sup> Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Vol. 9, p. 543.

<sup>212</sup> It should be noted here that there are many authentic reports in *ḥadīth* literature, as in the previous *ḥadīth* cited on the authority of Maymūna, that speak about Jerusalem as a site for eschatological events. However, Abū Ḥayyān's view should be strictly confined to these verses only since he did not find any authentic report that directly explains these verses.

<sup>213</sup> See al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa 'l-'Uyūn*, Vol. 5, p. 475; Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Vol. 10, p. 106; al-Suyūfī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafsīr bi'l-Ma'thur*, Vol. 8 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), p. 55; and al-Qurtūbī, *al-Jāmi'*<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 17, p. 106.

<sup>214</sup> Al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa 'l-'Uyūn*, Vol. 5, p. 475.

context of the verses does not support the first view as much as the latter.<sup>215</sup> For these reasons, this verse should be regarded as an ambiguous though unlikely reference to Jerusalem.

## Conclusion

This article has methodically tried to discuss and to illustrate the importance of Jerusalem in Islam through investigating the holiest text in Islam, i.e. the holy Qur'ān.

Notwithstanding the fact that only one Qur'ānic verse (Q 17 : 1) includes explicit reference to *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* (the Furthest Mosque) in Jerusalem and the name of the city was not mentioned expressly in the Qur'ān, the Qur'ān abounds with implicit but likely references to Jerusalem, or has ambiguous, but unlikely, references to the same. About 70 verses fall into these two latter categories. The expressions used in the Qur'ān to refer to Jerusalem, and the stories of the Prophets and events which took place in the holy city have all been discussed in detail. It was concluded that the terminology of 'The Holy Land' in the Qur'ān does not necessarily refer to Jerusalem. It may either refer to the whole area of 'The Holy Land', or to Jerusalem, or to any other site in 'The Holy Land'. This can only be determined through the context of each verse and through reliable traditions which explain that verse.

Since Jerusalem (*al-Quds*), the holy sanctuary, as it is firmly established in the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunna* of the Prophet, and Islamic history, occupies the highest status in every Muslim's belief, mind and heart, any future settlement and negotiation on the fate of this city has to take into account this important issue in order to achieve lasting peace. Indeed, 'there must be adequate recognition of the special interest of the three religions in the Holy places of Jerusalem, and its future should be determined by negotiations'.<sup>216</sup> Our hope, still, is that justice and a comprehensive peace will prevail in this prestigious city, and that cooperation among the followers of the three religions will also prevail.

<sup>215</sup> Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Vol. 10, p. 106; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*<sup>2</sup>, Vol. 4, p. 366; and Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Shawkānī, in Ahmad 'Abd al-Salām (ed.), *Fatḥ al-Qadīr al-Jāmi' Bayn Fannay al-Riwāya wa 'l-Dirāya fī 'Ilm al-Tafsīr* Vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994), pp. 213–214.

<sup>216</sup> Don Peretz, 'America and Jerusalem', in Judith Tucker (ed.) *Arab Jerusalem, 1996 Symposium* (Georgetown: Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University), Internet 1998, [www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/ccas/jerusalem/towner.htm](http://www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/ccas/jerusalem/towner.htm), p. 14.