

JERUSALEM IN ISLAMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

A TEXTUAL SURVEY OF MUSLIM CLAIMS AND
RIGHTS TO THE SACRED CITY

DR. HATEM BAZIAN
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY





JERUSALEM IN ISLAMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

A TEXTUAL SURVEY OF MUSLIM CLAIM AND RIGHTS
TO THE SACRED CITY

DR. HATEM BAZIAN
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

2006

Copyright © 2006 by Hatem Bazian

ISBN: 1-4276-0619-6

Front cover photo © David H. Wells/Saudi Aramco World/PADIA

Back cover photo © William Tracy/Saudi Aramco World/PADIA

All Rights Reserved.

ISBN 1-4276-0619-6



9 781427 606198

90000



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
<i>Al-Quds: The Background of the Topographical Name</i>	7
<i>Al-Quds (Jerusalem) in the Qur'an</i>	33
<i>The Isra' and Mi'raj</i>	57
<i>Islam, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), and Claims on Bayt al-Maqdis</i> . . .	69
<i>Tamim bin Aws al-Daari and the Early Muslim Presence in Bayt al-Maqdis</i>	87
<i>Consciousness of Bayt al-Maqdis and its Historical Continuity</i> .	107
Notes	140



Introduction

What has been done and what is being done in the misrepresentation of the Palestine question is, on the one hand, an attempt to establish territorial claims through a selective portrayal of historical chronology, which lends maximum support to a particular argument, namely the right of modern Zionists to Palestine as their ancestral home. On the other hand, by means of omission of a historical period, attempts are made to create doubt and challenge claims by those who are actually living in the land, the Palestinians, 90% of whom were Muslims at the turn of the 20th century.

At times when omission is not practiced a much more refined approach is deployed, contesting Palestinian history and the narrative accompanying it. In certain corners, Palestine's history started around 1000 BC, stopped after 500 BC (or for some 70 BC) and then once again was re-initiated in 1948. As to the period before 1000 and after 500, they are but a footnote to the real history, the one advanced by Israel and its supporters in the West. What this approach represents is a way to cast doubt upon the history of a people by an outsider group that has a vested interest in negating the existence not only of the history but also of the people who are its subject. Such an approach is undertaken not by someone engaged in the pursuit of historical facts whatever they might be; rather it is an effort to contest the other as a means of affirming the collective self-interest of modern Zionism and its many supporters in the West.

The existing omission of Palestine's Islamic history has had a far deeper consequence, whether intended or not, of rejecting indigenous Muslim claims and rights to the land. History is written within the scope of time and space; thus the Islamic period's time is omitted which also leads to a discontinuity of a people's right or claim to their own space. The Palestinians, who are the inhabitants of this land, are either completely absent from the history or at most a side show to the main act of Jewish history in Palestine, both ancient and present.

How would a Palestinian feel by being in a play about oneself but not able to contribute a single line, offer particular roles, and not even allowed presence on the stage at any moment. In ancient times the Palestinians

(this term is contested) are only a backdrop to history's major unfolding epics and they are movable parts in a pre-determined play occurring in their own homes and lands. Historically speaking, it is simply astounding that such an ancient people are completely absent and the only fault is that they did not play along when they were supposed to and should have learned to step aside for a more important history to emerge. The play has a Divine purpose and the Palestinians deemed to be dispensable i.e. they should happily move away for the star cast to emerge on history's greatest stage, the Holy Land.

The same stage used in ancient times is currently being offered for replay purposes but with an improved light show before, after, and in between. The same cast, the same Divine purpose, the geography and the end is already well known, the cast is set to triumph over the Palestinians. All that is missing is more death and destruction to be visited upon the Palestinians (who really don't exist) before the curtain is removed and another glorious day is ushered in but to be sure about it again that you (Palestinian/Muslim) are not included.

The problem of the contemporary Palestinian is that he/she doesn't understand the bigger picture! Yes, that one which is so big that it does not include him/her. How can the Palestinians be so insolent and not recognize that the star cast is coming to the stage, why they are still in the way, why are they still occupying the dressing rooms, and why are they eating the food! In the ancient period we were at the wrong place at the wrong time, during the Islamic era our real job was as a postman transmitting to Europe what belonged to it while it was asleep and in the present nationalism ours is an inferior brand born only in response to and inspiration of the main cast and is rooted in jealousy.

To be more precise, Palestinians are nameless and faceless. They were in ancient times and they continue to be so today. The West is pre-occupied with the main actors who have returned 2000 years after a pro-longed absence to claim what rightfully belonged to them and the Palestinians have just to move out of the way. If you examine it closely, the Palestinians, have no real claims to their own lands, homes and history and whatever they have it was borrowed from the main cast, the ancient Jews and Jews of Islam. If we move a little closer we can see an even further dismissal of the Palestinians and in particular the Muslims among them for Islam represents an imposter religion, a false prophet, and a fraud emerging through a combination of Muhammad's (PBBH) intelligence and eloquence he managed to capture people's minds but in reality all what he brought forth was borrowed from the main cast. Islam and its followers, we are informed by this cast, are a 14th century fraud and what they managed to do was to mine the old source and come up with a new play that says they are the main players or even worse that they actually want to direct, write their own lines, set up the stage, select the costumes, hire the staff, sell the tickets, and direct the whole show. It should be

obvious to anyone with "sound" mind that the Muslims were incapable in the past and surely the present to undertake or develop any unique project and most surely not religion or spirituality; for they are inferior and lack sound intellect.

I might sound a little to sharp or bitter but this is not the case. What I am bringing up is Islam's designation in the West as some kind of an illegitimate force that has no authenticity to it, which comes into the fore around Palestine and its Islamic history. Yes, I do see some Western concerns about Palestinians' Human Rights. While this is welcome, it really does not begin to address the obfuscation and to a certain extent culpability in what was and is under way. It is not a function emerging out of Palestinians/Muslims confronting Israeli forces but more so of a deeply held belief that they don't belong on the same stage and as such it becomes a problem of management of a group that is not equal and God forbid it to be deemed superior in rights. Are we just when we inform an owner of a house that he has equal rights to his own house as the thief who is already living in it! This is how the West deals with the Palestinians and Muslims.

At present, Palestine and Al-Quds (Jerusalem) are attracting world attention and we can see that an increasingly vocal Muslim population is raising its collective voice demanding a hearing. Are we able to hear, are we ready to accord 1.2 billion people a modicum of respect and most of all do we have the ability to think outside our own imaginary boxes; ancient and contemporary. The journey toward understanding Muslim perspectives and the apparent increase in frustration in their ranks begins with the readiness to explore the Islamic textual foundations that influence almost all of Islam's followers in relations to Palestine and Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The need for this work and its timeliness cannot be overstated as the world, Muslim and otherwise, is moving into a greater period of tension and confrontation whereby Palestine and Al-Quds (Jerusalem) loom large in the background. My intent of this book is to highlight established Muslim beliefs relating to Palestine and Al-Quds in the hope of bringing about a greater understanding among all parties involved and possibly to help usher-in a better approach to resolving the existing conflict. A starting point, in my view, should be an examination of Islamic records on Palestine in general and Al-Quds in particular. The fact remains, even at this late period in human history, that Islamic history and Muslim affinity to Al-Quds and Palestine remains relegated to the deepest corners away from our immediate consciousness, such is a cause calling for attention.

In order to remedy this imbalance in the treatment of the Islamic historical periods in Palestine and the claims advanced in connection with them, I propose an examination of Al-Quds in Islamic Consciousness, which can be done by undertaking a textual and cursory historical survey of relevant sources. What I propose to undertake is an exploration of the

recorded Islamic history of al-Quds and Palestine and to establish the high reverence Muslims hold for this area. This is not intended to be an extensive chronological treatment of the subject, but to provide focus on the religious foundations used to advance Muslim claims first to al-Quds, and by extension to the whole of Palestine.

The research will seek to answer the question often asked: what are the basis of Muslim claims to Palestine? What do Muslim sources say about al-Quds and the land? Why is al-Quds significant to the followers of Islam? Why should this Islamic understanding convey a legitimate territorial claim by the present day Palestinians? Finally, how has this Islamic consciousness been expressed in various periods? My hope is to work on a series of books dealing with this subject and this volume only serves as an initial foray into the subject to be followed by further research in the near future.

Chapter One

Al-Quds: The Background of the Topographical Name

In the ongoing period of occupation in Palestine and, in particular, the city of *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) not a single aspect of the Muslim and Arab character of the land has been left uncontested. The scope of the contestation and outright distortion of geography has caused much disservice to scholarly knowledge and to the understanding of the history of a land that holds great religious significance for many people.

In certain ways *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem), with its many names throughout the ages, reflects various periods of human history and represents civilizations that made their way to the area; those of the original Canaanites, Hittites, Arabs, Egyptians, Romans, Persians, and Hebrews all chose a particular name for the city. Our concern is not to argue for or against any given name; rather, it is to explore the names that Muslims have commonly used to refer to this important city. Embarking on this path will lead us at times to a commentary on earlier names of the city which appear in Islamic texts and need to be understood in the context of their Muslim usage at the time.

My interest in investigating this aspect of Palestine's Islamic history stems primarily from ongoing attempts, scholarly and otherwise, to dismiss the validity of a unique Muslim context related to *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem). It should be clear that such a dismissal or removal of Islamic context is often supported by pro-Israeli groups, Jewish and otherwise, who see in this approach a way to remove Palestinian rights to the land but also to reaffirm their own distinct historical narrative. Thus debating or rejecting Muslims' specificity related to *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) is not undertaken for "pure" academic/intellectual purposes; rather it is vested in affirming the current occupier's narrative over that of the Palestinians. It is not a new or novel idea, and many occupiers in the past have undertaken a similar strategy of erasing the existing signposts before placing new ones while using different names and languages.

In terms of established research, the earliest written reference to the city is contained in six cuneiform tablets in a group of more than 350 such tablets discovered in Egypt, dating to approximately 1400 BCE. The tablets were found in the "Egyptian capital of Akhetaten, the modern

Tell el-Amarna" and contain "correspondence between the pharaoh of Egypt and the kings of Asiatic States and petty rulers of Canaan." For our purposes, the tablets contain letters and correspondence "written by Abdi-Heba, the king of *Urusalim* (the Late Bronze Age name for Jerusalem)," and they "reveal the character of his kingdom as a thinly settled highland region, loosely supervised from the royal citadel in Jerusalem."¹ We consider this to be the first recorded name in our possession while leaving the possibility of an earlier term since the area has been inhabited from the earliest periods of human existence. In addition, the date of the name is pre-biblical, thus eradicating the unhistorical notion that real history in the area begins somehow with the Bible, an idea that is widely held and believed even though it is a purely constructed myth.

As we embark on this investigation, a note of caution is necessary. In itself, a name does not convey rights or ownership of a given land or country. A name can be considered a signpost indicating a particular group's affinity with a location. Often, a name, whether it occurs in the past or the present, becomes for many a sign of ownership and possession which, for the purpose of our study, is not an acceptable approach. A name, past or present, does point to the existence of a relationship between a given group and the land, which might or might not include legal claims of possession.

A second important note relevant to *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem), Palestine, and the Arab world in general, is that they are often understood and imagined through a particular reading of the Bible and not through archeological or scholarly research. For many researchers, their starting point is the Bible as well as its timeline and its terminology, which are privileged over and above all considerations including those emerging out of sound archeological research. I am not offering a critique of Biblical studies or narratives contained therein since the area in general falls outside my own immediate specialization and research but I do have to point out that the Biblical narrative is dominant in discourse related to *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem), Palestine and the Arab world.²

The task at hand is to trace the development of the Islamic name(s) used for al-Quds, the city known in English as Jerusalem. However, before we embark on our task, it will be worthwhile to discuss in brief the Islamic concept of a name in general and the elements contained therein. For example, in Islam, the name of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is not a random name and neither is it the same or equal to any other name. For Muslims the name of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is a name that has a reality and existence that is not equal to any other of Allah's creations, and it is believed that it causes the bestowal of blessings on the one who utters it. Thus, in Islam, not all names are equal and they do not share the same reality. In order to partly understand Muslim feelings toward the Arabic name al-Quds (Jerusalem), we need to explore the basis of this name, first by examining the Islamic concept of a

name on the theoretical level and then by tracing the linguistic foundations upon which the Arabic name of the city is based.

Why Do We Need a Name?

What is the meaning of a name? This question is ancient, but at the same time contemporary. Does a name have a meaning independent of that given to it by someone in the naming process, and does it have a reality that is not contingent upon the consensus of a given community? How do we develop names and what meaning is contained within them?

These questions and others are very important and essential to everyday life, yet few stop to reflect upon them and attempt to present an adequate answer. Since the earliest times, the act of naming a person, a thing or an area has been a source of disputation, which indicates that people throughout history have taken the act of naming seriously. What names we use for something or someone constitute in essence our way of relating to them on a mental level.

Muslim scholars had to define what is meant by a name in order to better comprehend Qur'anic revelations. Three elements appear in the Qur'an necessitating the definition of the meaning of the name for a proper exegesis: 1. "The beautiful names of Allah;"³ 2. "The names of all things;"⁴ and, 3. "Names that you and your fathers had named."⁵ Muslim scholars of the Qur'an had to embark on an investigation of the concept of a name before giving any commentary on what is meant by verses containing the above elements. In each of the three cases, the scholars' abstract definition of the name served as a basis for the articulation of theological points constituting a foundation for Islamic belief without which much confusion would exist. The concept of a name is thus central in Islam.

A human being in Arabic is defined as a *al-hayawan al-natiq*, the rational animal (speaking animal is also used), reason or speech being a characteristic that differentiates humans from the animal kingdom. Al-Ghazali, in his writing about the ninety nine names of Allah, maintained that "the name is different from both the act of naming and the object named, and that those three terms (name, act of naming, and the named) are distinct and not synonymous."⁶ Furthermore, "in explaining the definition and essential reality of the name," al-Ghazali argued that, "things have existence as individuals, in speech, or in the mind."⁷ The three types of existence are not the same. Al-Ghazali points to the fact that "existence as individuals is the fundamental and real existence, while existence in the mind is cognitional, formal existence; and existence in speech is verbal and indicative." As far as speech is concerned, al-Ghazali further comments that:

"Our saying indicates what is in the mind, and what is in the mind is a representation of that which corresponds to it. For if there were

no existence in individuals, there would be no form impressed on the mind, and if there were no form impressed on the mind and no man conscious of it, it would not be expressed in speech. So the word, the knowledge, and the object known are three distinct things, though they mutually conform and correspond; and are sometimes confused by the dull-witted, and one of them may fail to distinguish from the other."⁸

For Al-Ghazali, man has a real existence distinct from that expressed in speech. Thus, to speak is to be able to relate to others through the use of a common set of agreed upon symbols, which "can differ" over time, and also "vary according to the usage of countries."⁹ Our main task at this point is confined to the area of language, and in particular the name, naming and the named. Language and its usage are a part of human existence and constitute a foundational rock for societies' development.

At the base level, communication is an act that involves a process of mediation for a meaning that is shared by a group of people, and if no meaning is found, then another process of naming must occur for communication to take place. On the theoretical level, no communication is possible between two people who cannot agree on a shared or mediated meaning. From an Islamic point of view, this mediated meaning can be deduced from two possible sources, either through the medium of revelation or through the medium of human agency, which depends, according to Muslims, upon Allah permitting its production and its application by humans. In reality, for Muslims all mediated meaning comes from one source, Allah; however, Muslims maintain that His gift to mankind is that He made it possible for man's production to occur through a perceived independent agency.

Al-Ghazali defines words as "consisting of segmented letters, which posited by human choice indicate individual things."¹⁰ This means that language is an indicator of something that comes out as a result of the human agency. The posited indicator, for al-Ghazali, must have "a positor, a positing, and the thing posited itself."¹¹ In the Qur'anic text we can see that when Adam (peace be upon him) was created,¹² out of all the possible subjects that could have been mentioned, Allah spoke of teaching His new creation "the names of all things."¹³ For Muslim scholars the fact that Allah used this to be the starting point for differentiation between Adam (peace be upon him) and the angelic realm led to the conclusion that the use of names, i.e. language, is fundamental to man's mission in the world. Moreover, the teaching of the "names of all things" further cements the ability of man to acquire the knowledge, which is taught to him directly by Allah. Thus, in this process we have Adam the student, "the names of all things" are the subject taught, and Allah is the teacher and the source of knowledge that constitutes the basis for the elevation of mankind above all other creation. The honor of man, however, is to be restricted and at the

same time proportional to man's adherence to his relationship to Allah, as the source of his existence and knowledge.

This lead Qur'anic commentators to conclude that Adam (peace be upon him) did not only deal with one element of the naming process, but was much more involved. Applying Al-Ghazali's definition we can see that the process of teaching Adam (peace be upon him) had "a positor, a positing and the thing posited."¹⁴ Scholars differed on what is meant by the "names of all things," but one of the possible interpretations that they suggest is that man was endowed with the ability by Allah to give names to elements in creation.¹⁵ If we consider this interpretation, we can conclude that man's knowledge of the world must go through the agency of the name, named, and namer and that what is known by man is that which he can relate to by means of a given name.

To name something is to create a mental framework through which one is able to construct a relationship with the named object. While our minds have the ability to comprehend, store, and recall visual images, it is the verbal component of communication, i.e. the act of naming that makes it possible for us to develop a common code of reference. Man can be defined as a symbol-using animal, and language is nothing but a common set of symbols agreed upon by a given society. To name something is an action that is unique to human beings, and this ability to name differentiates humans from animals.

What is also of great significance is that according to Muslim commentators of the Qur'an, the first thing Allah created is the Pen, which in human terms, is an instrument of communication used to convey a given meaning through the agency of language.¹⁶ The second object Allah created is the Tablet, which may also be understood at the human level to be an instrument of communication used to store information conveyed through the agency of the Pen. We can conclude from the above that among the first elements of creation that Allah brought forth were two agents that can be used for the transmission of meaning, and that the creation of Adam was initiated with an element of language, i.e. "the names of all things." In addition, the first revelation to the Prophet (pbuh) was the command "Read!"¹⁷ For Muslims, this first revelation from Allah is also an agency for the reception of meaning, which is a prerequisite for the transmission of meaning. At this point, the content of what is read and what is transmitted is not of concern to us; it is the abstract process itself that is relevant to our discussion.

So far we know that Allah created the Pen, the Tablet, taught Adam the "names of all things" and gave the imperative command to His Prophet (pbuh) to Read. Another question arises as to the presence of various languages that are used by mankind the world over. Muslim scholars maintain that Allah in the Qur'an points out that the differences in tongues and modes of speech are a reflection of Allah's act of creation, for He refers to them as His signs. "And of His signs is the creation of

the heavens and earth, and the differences of your languages and colors! Lo! Herein indeed are portents for men of knowledge."¹⁸ Therefore, from among the signs of Allah is the embedding of the principle of diversity in the human family which also gives rise to the multiplicity of languages and a manifestation of the Divine act that brought them into existence, for they are a reflection of His act in creation. Furthermore, in another verse the Qur'an states: "And We never sent a messenger except with the language of his people in order that he might make (the message) clear for them. But Allah leaves in error whom He will and guides whom He pleases. He is the Mighty, the Wise."¹⁹

Muslim scholars understand the existence of multiple languages as a result of Allah's principle of diversity in the creation, and, as such, they are to be honored regardless of who the people are that speak a given language.²⁰ In addition, Muslim scholars assert that every nation was sent a messenger that spoke to it in its own language and called upon the nation to worship Allah, the One God. Modern discourse on language has been completely divorced from the Divine. Therefore, this present discussion might seem to be outside the bounds of the secular academic discourse. For Muslim scholars however, it is central to man's existence and his understanding. Differences in language have served as the basis for separation in the modern nation-state structure, and as Muslim scholars readily point out, this is contrary to Islamic ethics concerning linguistic diversity. Whether these ethics are adhered to or not is secondary; the principles in them are independently valid and not contested at any point in Islamic history.²¹

We can say therefore that every language has developed a way of understanding and relating to the world around it, resulting in the emergence of an epistemological map in the course of historical interaction within and outside the given group. The Qur'anic text, which establishes that a messenger has been sent to every nation to speak to it in its own tongue, leads us to conclude that they must have an idea of what is divine and sacred in the world, conveyed to them by the agency of revelation. Thus, we can say that a name by itself, while it might appear to be cut-off from any historical connection, emerges rather as the result of a historical process dependent upon a given society's epistemology that has its roots, according to common Muslim understanding, in an ancient Prophetic tradition.

It is precisely this aspect, the ability of each society to develop a particular epistemology founded upon a language divinely bestowed upon it through Prophetic tradition or enabled for it by means of the initial act of creation, that sits at the center of the purpose of diversity. It gives us the ability to look at the world through different divine lenses. It is the collectivity of lenses that can bring us closer to understanding the intended divine meaning. In other words, the demise of a language is a loss, not to the particular society that uses that language, but to all humanity, which

loses not a mere spoken tongue but an epistemological map that connects to other similar human maps. What we are losing is part of ourselves, and it is this understanding that informs Islamic views on language.

Every language group uses a different symbol to relate to the same object, which can mean either that all of them are wrong with respect to what is the "real" name for the object, or that all of them are right in their act of naming the thing in accordance with their particular language system. The question is whether a name has an independent reality outside the agency through which it achieved its name, and if it does, then how do we know this name? The Islamic concept of creation suggests that every created thing has an independent reality separate and distinct from the names given it by various languages. For Muslims it is only Allah Who knows this reality and those among His creation for whom He makes it possible to experience this reality.

What is meant by this independent reality is that Allah is the only One that knows without conjecture the essence of His created elements and the names given to them by Him at the moment of their creation. Our human act of naming is based on a conjecture that may or may not correspond to the essence and the reality with which Allah has endowed a given creation. Thus, if the human act of naming is based on conjecture, this arises from the multiplicity of the human agents that produce diverse possibilities for the name of a given object, as is the case in the world today. We can see this clearly since each language uses a different word to name a horse, a cup, or a wall for that matter. On the mental level, each language group has an abstract notion of what a cup looks like, but each society's mental abstract will differ with those conceived by others. The point of agreement is possibly the function of the cup; however, even in this area, we might have divergence on the exact functionality of a given cup. The only exception to this apparent human problem, for Muslims, is Allah's revelation that might give a specific name that transcends linguistic diversity.

Precisely this aspect of the human act of naming is at issue in the discussion of the name *al-Quds* (Jerusalem). As a land, *al-Quds* (Jerusalem) has a distinct and specific reality and the name in the Arabic language. It also has a reality that corresponds to that of the land. Muslims maintain that Allah endowed the land with a specific reality and the name that corresponds to this reality proceeds from His revelations to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). The name of the land for the Muslims is *al-Quds* because of this intrinsic relationship between Allah's assigned reality to the land and its foundation upon revelation.

This does not mean that earlier names for the city did not possess a reality, which most likely was dependent on earlier revelations. On the contrary, previous names emerged as a result of a comparable process, and they were valid for the communities that held them to be true and also reflected the understanding of the revelation at the time (this is

not the case for all earlier names but at least for some of them as will be mentioned below). Therefore, we cannot say that earlier names did not possess a reality. What they lack, however, is a historical continuity of this reality as it relates to revelation and the communities' existence in the area. The name of al-Quds (Jerusalem), the most often used Muslim name for the city, is originally based on Qur'anic revelation, Prophetic Hadith and emerges from both of them. We will now embark on a study of the Islamic spiritual foundations for the city's name.

Al-Quds: The Emergence of a Name.

Our quest must begin with an investigation of the name and its historical roots in Islam. How did the city come to be known by its current Arabic name? Was this the only name that the city ever had? What are the epistemological foundations for the Arabic name of the city? And can we trace the name of the city to the early Islamic period? These are some of the questions that we must deal with in attempting to define the foundations for the name of the city, and to establish the historical process by which the name emerged.

To begin with, Muslims from early on recognized that a number of earlier traditions had existed in the land of Palestine and that they gave the area different names across the generations. Al-Imam al-Suyuti in his book, *Ithaf al-Akhissa bi Fada'il al-Masjid al-'Aqsa*, mentions that he "has collected a total of seventeen names" for the area that we call al-Quds. Al-Suyuti lists the Islamic name of the area first and then proceeds to include the names Elia and Urushalim among them.²² In chapter one al-Suyuti writes:

"Know that the presence of numerous names is an indicator of the honor of the place named. The author of the *I'lam al-Sajid bi Ahkam al-Masajid* said: 'I have collected seventeen names and all importantly precious. *Al-Masjid al-Aqsa*, and it is called *al-Aqsa*, because it is the most distant of mosques from the Sacred Mosque (*Mecca*) which is visited and where reward is sought out. It is said that beyond it there is no place for worship, and it is said [that it is so called] for its distance from filth and impurity. It is reported that 'Abdullah ibn Salam told the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) when he recited the words of the Exalted 'to *al-Aqsa Mosque*' why He named it *al-Aqsa*. He said it was because it is in the middle of the world, it is in the center, neither to this side nor to that. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: 'You have said the truth.'

It is also named 'the Mosque of *Elia*' (*Elya* and *Elia* are also common), which means *Bayt Allah al-Muqaddas* (the purified holy or sacred house

of Allah), narrated by *al-Wasiti* in its virtues.... *Bayt al-Maqdis* is the place that is purified from all pollution and it is derived from the word *al-Quds* meaning the location purified, blessed or holy. *Al-Quds* is a verbal noun that has the meaning of purification and sanctification. Thus *Ruh al-Qudus* (the Holy Spirit) is *Jibril* (peace be upon him) because he is a holy spirit and causes holiness and purity. From it comes also *nuqaddisu laka* (We Proclaim Your sanctity)²³ which means, We sanctify and separate from You those elements that are not becoming of You. For this reason the bucket is also called *qudas* because a person uses it to perform acts of purification. Thus the meaning of *Bayt al-Maqdis* (House of the Holy or Consecrated) is a place where we may obtain purification from sin. It is also said that it means the 'Upraised Place' uncontaminated by paganism. In addition, it is called *al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* (the Consecrated House), with a *damma* over the *mim*, and a *fatha* over the *dal*, which has *tashdid*, signifying a pure, sacred place emptied of idols.

"... It is called *Salem*, because of the abundance of angels of mercy upon it. *Ibn Musa* said it's origin comes from *Shallam*; the initial letter being *shin*, which is a foreign *shin* in this case, and the *lam* following the *shin* has *tashdid*. It is a synonym for *Bayt al-Maqdis*... In Hebrew it is called the house of peace 'Urshalim', with a *damma* over the *hamza*, a *fatha* over the *shin* and a short *kasra* under the *lam*; and this was said by *Abu 'Ubaydah* to 'Umar *ibn al-Muthana*. However, the majority spell it with a *fatha* over the *shin* and the *lam*. It is also named *Kurat Elia*, *Salem*, *Bayt Ayyil*, *Sihun* (Zion), *Qasrun* ... *Pabush*, *Kurat Shalah*, *Shalim*, and *Salun*. In *Muthir al-Gharam* he (al-Maqdisi) said that the words *Bayt al-Maqdis* may be spelled either with long or short vowels and the last word may have a *sukun*. It is also named *al-'Ard al-Muqaddasa* (the Holy Land), *al-Masjid al-Aqsa* (the Farthest Mosque), *Elia* and *Ailia*, *Shallum* with *tashdid*, 'Urshalim, which means the House of the Lord, *Sihun*, the *sad* having a *kasra* under it. Also, *al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* (the Consecrated, Holy, or Purified House) is referred to as *al-Zaytun* (the Place of Olives) but it is not called *al-Haram* (the Sanctuary)."²⁴

Al-Suyuti could have embarked on what many writers do, which is to speak only of the name that he identifies with and negate the presence of all others, but this would have been contrary to Islamic scholarly ethics. In fact Al-Suyuti maintain that "all" the names included in his work to be "importantly precious."²⁵ Also, one can see that he mentions all the names but we don't see any reference to contestation or dismissal of any earlier or contemporary names at the time, for him it was a matter of record and nothing else.

Elia and *Urushalim* are the names given to the area by the Romans

and the Hebrews respectively. *Urushalim* is one of the oldest names for the city first appearing in "the Egyptian Execration Texts of the 19th-18th centuries BCE in the form *Rushalimum*" and then again "in Akkadian in the Amarna letters of the 14th century BCE as *Ursalimmu*."²⁶ The name is a compound one consisting of two parts: *urr* and *shalim*. In terms of etymology, while doubt is cast on the word's origins, we can say with some level of accuracy that both *urr* and *shalim* are of a Canaanite and possibly even of an earlier, Jebusite origin. *Urr* means "to found" or "to establish" and *shalim* refers to the Canaanite god *Shalm*. The Bible does have a reference to this name in the episode of the "Prophet Abraham meeting with Melchizedek, king of 'Salem' in Genesis."²⁷

We are certain that the name 'Salem' here refers to the same city *Urushalim*, but leaving out the first part of the name. The English name *Jerusalem* comes from the Hebrew articulation of *Urushalim*, which is written *Yerushalayim*, then when translated into Greek becomes "Ierousalem or aspirated Hierousalem," and "from Greek writers the name passed into Latin as *Ierousalem*, *Hierusalem*, or *Hierosolyma*."²⁸ Thus, both the name used in Hebrew and English for the city originate from the pre-Hebrew era in the area. Furthermore, the name comes to both languages from the Canaanites who lived in Palestine and who came to the area in a wave of Yemeni Arab tribes migrating northward after the destruction of the Ma'rib Dam. Although another theory of ancient Arab migration maintain that they originated first from the north, migrated south toward Yemen and then returned back north afterward. In either case, the evidence points to constant movement among the tribes inhabiting what we presently refer to as the Middle East.

Iliia is the Arabised shortened version of the name *Aelia-Capitolina*, a name given to the city by the Greco-Romans after conquering the area around 132-135 CE. The Romans took control of the city after putting down the Jewish Bar Kochba Revolt in the year 132-135 BCE. During this period and thereafter, up to the Muslim conquest of the city, Romans banned Jews from worshipping or living in the area. The city was redesigned, rebuilt and renamed *Aelia-Capitolina*, with *Aelia* being a name derived from Hadrian the Emperor's second name while *Capitolina* is a reference to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, the deities of the Capitoline in Rome, who became the patrons of Hadrian's new city."²⁹ Early Muslim texts often used this name in conjunction with one of the Arabic names or epithets to identify the city.

We find another prominent Muslim scholar of the 8th/15th century, al-Imam Badr al-Din Muhammad b. 'Abdallah al-Zarkashi, also listing a total of 17 names for the area and tracing, in a limited fashion, the background of each one of them.³⁰ Muslim scholars in dealing with earlier knowledge understood their position to be the confirmation of that which came before them, and the summoning of people to rectify their ways; it was not their purpose to negate the contributions of earlier civilizations. Early Muslim

writings concerning al-Quds (Jerusalem) always mentioned the previous names of the city and made it a point to trace their historical foundations.

History of Muslim Name Usage for al-Quds:

Tracing the history, in a chronological manner, of names used by Muslims in reference to the city is somewhat difficult, even though all the names used are readily available. Some names are easier to identify and place in a particular historical context while others lack the exact evidence that makes it possible to pinpoint a date. What we have for some names is an approximation of the period of usage, which, for the lack of better evidence, can be used with qualification.

Reasons for a lack of such record are many but one major factor is the constant strife associated with the area that often resulted in destruction of useful materials. In the classical period the area witnessed major conflicts among competing Islamic dynasties resulting in poor record keeping during such transitions. Also, the Mongol invasion wiped out all the Abbasid records after the ransacking of Baghdad and if you add the onslaught of the Crusades, then one can appreciate the fragmented nature of the record. Add to this the modern conflict arising as early as 1800 with the French Campaign to Egypt and Palestine and our ability to stitch together the record becomes much more difficult.

What we are certain about is the presence of a constant reference to the area in Islamic sources from the earliest period and continuously up to the present. Also, the record does point out to shifts and changes occurring in the exact terms used in reference to the area, which we can attribute to a variety of influences - internal and external alike. However, the fact that changes occur over time should not be taken as a lack of attention prior to the change or the adoption of a particular name or construct for the area. Rather it can be seen as a long process of adjustment and refinement that begins with the prophetic period and continues until the present time although under difficult circumstances.

Our discussion of Islamic names for the area must begin with the prophetic period, which would by definition include the Qur'anic references. During the prophetic period we find a number of names appearing in the Qur'an and in Hadith,³¹ but we are not sure whether those names were in common currency among people or merely present but lacking any concrete identification. Also, revelation took place mainly in the cities of Mecca and Medina, somewhat far from Palestine, so there is a question whether the names used in the Qur'an and Hadith can be considered in the study of the history of Muslim name usage for Jerusalem. To think of it differently, the Qur'an and Hadith made references to the area but does this mean that the terms used were uniquely and specifically used by Muslims and Arabs in Mecca and Medina or did they represent a common frame of reference among a larger community that includes

Arabs living in Palestine at the time?³²

In chapter 17 verse one of the Qur'an, the reference is made to the "al-Masjid al-Aqsa" (the Farthest Mosque), which by consensus commentators identified as located in Palestine and the city of Jerusalem. What we have here is the first name used for the area by Muslims during the prophetic period. It appears from the sources related to this usage that the Arabs of Mecca knew of the place bearing that name. Palestine and its main cities were known to the Arabs of Mecca for they constituted a regular way station for merchant caravans, which pre-dated the advent of Islam by hundreds of years and continued thereafter. The trade routes from north to south and east to west have existed long before the advent of Islam and references to the areas were well-known to the Arabs of Mecca. Even if we take it from the Biblical narrative we do come into an appreciation of people's connectedness in the general area under discussion.³³ Not only did war take place between tribes mentioned in the Bible (not to imply the historical accuracy of every reference but as a general point of argument) but also more often than not they traded with one another and moved from one area to another. Often we think of the movement of the Jews in reference to the area, however a more accurate reading would see a constant movement in the area among all existing tribes mainly in search of food and shelter which often resulted in territorial conflicts, not much different from today except that we are more sophisticated in hiding our tracks.

Coming back to the term appearing in the Qur'an and whether it was limited to people of Mecca and Medina or if it had any currency beyond their confines. We are certain that the term "*al-Masjid al-Aqsa*" had no currency among the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the time, the proper name of the city being Iliia. However, the Meccans at the time seem to have understood this reference and argued whether it was possible for the Prophet to undertake his night journey and be back in such a short time, which according to knowledgeable travelers needed about a month each way.³⁴ Our concern is not with the length of the journey but with the usage and application of the name "*al-Masjid al-Aqsa*"; the evidence points to the Meccan population having some acquaintance with it and a knowledge of its exact location. If the Meccans understood this reference, how did they come to know of this particular name for Jerusalem?

One possible explanation is that the Arabs of the Hijaz and their counterparts in Palestine had used a common name for the city, a usage distinct from the name given to the area by the Romans. The tribal links between the Arabs of Palestine and those of the Hijaz lend some support to this possibility of a shared name operating in an informal way. Roman control and the institution of a new name might have been followed at all levels of the government at the time, but no one can limit informal references, and it is highly possible that "*al-Masjid al-Aqsa*" was known and used by the Arabs. No written evidence of this exists, but we advance

it as an educated speculation.

Yet a more important question is the term itself and if the Arabs of Mecca understood it to be Jerusalem how then did this come to be since the city at the time was known as Iliá. The recorded evidence on this is rather scant and we have one statement attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him); when asked about the first mosque placed on earth for mankind, his answer was Mecca and then asked about the second, he said the one in Jerusalem with 40 years between them.³⁵ The term "*Al-Masjid al-Aqsa*" appears in the Qur'an and then is narrated from the Hadith when referring to the episode mentioned in Ch. 17 verse 1 in the Qur'an. All evidence on this term is thus contained in the Qur'an and in the Hadith in reference to the same incident. All evidence comes from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) either through Qur'anic revelation or expounding on it while being quizzed by the Meccans. No written or oral record of an actual usage of the term existed prior to this episode in the Qur'an and its elucidation by means of a Hadith. All references to this term are internal to the Islamic tradition, however this should not imply a lack of recognition of the area described. On the contrary not a single contestation exists on this issue from the Prophetic period or generations of scholars thereafter. We are certain that the Meccan response to the episode was one of shock and mockery for they deemed such a night journey to Jerusalem and back to be impossible. It is a fact that knowing the reference to the area is not the same as establishing the record for the usage, which is in our hands through the Qur'an and Hadith only.

One possible explanation that can be forwarded to explain away the use and Meccan knowledge of "*Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa*" is the firmly established lineage extending through Ishmael and connected to Abraham, who did live in Palestine and in close proximity to Jerusalem. We do have references in the Bible to Ishmael taking part in Abraham's burial, a piece of evidence pointing to possible contact if not actual relations existing almost two thousand years prior to the advent of Islam.³⁶ We do know that Ishmael did live among and married into the Arabs and if we take the possibility of contact and relations with Abraham and the rest of the family then the reference might have longer connections than the written or oral record might indicate. The Qur'an in chapter two firmly establishes that it was both Ishmael and Abraham who undertook the "raising of the foundation of the sacred house" in Mecca, which for our purposes dates the spiritual connections between Jerusalem and Mecca to the same period.³⁷ It is a distinct possibility that a name as "*Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa*" was used in reference to Jerusalem since it would have been at a distance away from Ishmael's vicinity. However, whether the name was likewise used by Abraham is a mere speculation since the Biblical evidence and those who lived in the area are not recorded to have used it. What I raise is a distinct possibility pertaining to Abraham's and Ishmael's connection

to Mecca that might lead us to project a possible introduction of a term to describe the distance between the two places which at a later point is affixed through revelation.

Moving from the first term in Islamic sources to another name appearing in *Hadith* collections, that of *Bayt al-Maqdis* (The Sacred/Holy/Sanctified House).³⁸ What is meant by *Bayt al-Maqdis* and the areas it covers can be discussed at another juncture, but our attention at this stage is to establish its usage during the Prophetic period. The name of *Bayt al-Maqdis* was used in reference to Palestine on a number of occasions by the Prophet, and also it seems that his contemporaries understood it to refer to the land of Palestine. In all the *Hadith* using the name *Bayt al-Maqdis* we find no one asking the Prophet, "Where is this place and why do we use this name?" This name in the *Hadith* has connections to the Qur'anic references to "*al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*" (the Sacred/Holy Land), which was known to the Arabs through their relations with the surrounding Christian and Jewish populations.³⁹ "*Al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*" was a name that included more than Jerusalem, and the areas it encompasses are subject to various interpretations not only among Muslim scholars but Christian and Jewish as well. For Muslims "*al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*" was used in reference to the totality of the land of Palestine and its adjacent regions.

References to the Sacred/Holy Land are associated with the narratives of earlier Prophets (peace be upon them all), Abraham, Lut, Ishmael, Issac, Jacob, Moses, David, and Jesus, which might give the impression that Islam and its followers as they are represented by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) do not have immediate or direct connection to this piece of spiritual property. Such thinking, I am afraid, is widely held and more so in the current period of contestation which seeks to limit or dismiss any connection to this land with the resulting implication of removing any Palestinian claims to their own land as they happen to be mostly Muslims and Christians.

The response to this notion is provided by Muslims viewing any reference in the Qur'an to "*al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*" (the Sacred/Holy Land) pertaining to them whether it is spoken directly to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) or to one of his Prophetic ancestors. It is firm Islamic belief that Islam is only the last of revelations and a culmination of what all earlier Prophets (peace be upon them) have brought forth. So Muslims don't see themselves as outsiders looking into earlier tradition but view themselves as the rightful inheritors of all the spiritual meaning and significance associated with the term. The Qur'anic reference, be it to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) or any of the earlier Prophets (peace be upon them all), constitutes a continuity rather than an exclusivity thus translating to Muslim identification not only of the earlier narrative but actually internalizing it as being their own. For Muslims it is an item of faith to believe in all the Prophets from Adam all the way to Muhammad (peace be upon them all) since they all are

message conveyers that attest to the singularity and oneness of God. To sum up this point, Muslims don't consider themselves some type of spiritual carpet beggars. On the contrary, they consider themselves the upholders and defenders of the essence of the Prophetic tradition itself and not merely late comers to a sold out spiritual show.

We move away now from the well-established name across many religious traditions to a uniquely Islamic name for Jerusalem emerging out of the early Prophetic period. For starters in Islam it is important to realize that Muslim prayers are valid only if they are performed facing the direction of Mecca but this was not the case for a period of 17 months where Jerusalem was the point of orientation. Prior to the Qur'anic injunction commanding the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and the believers to face Mecca, the Muslims prayed in the direction of Jerusalem. Thus, Jerusalem was known during that period as the *qibla* i.e. the point of orientation in prayers. After the change toward Mecca the city kept the name but had added to it the qualifier of being the "first *qibla*," *Ula al-Qiblatayn*. This appears in commentaries on chapter 2 of the Qur'an explaining the shift from Jerusalem to Mecca 17 month after the Hijra.⁴⁰ Some have argued that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) directed his followers toward Jerusalem as a way of gaining support of the Jewish communities in Medina after the migration, however, the direction of prayers was instituted sometime prior and the change took place once the migrants settled into their new city. If the intention was to gain the support of the local Jewish community, it would seem more appropriate to maintain it for a longer period of time and some indication in the Qur'an would have appeared to warrant such a diplomatic move but on the contrary no such evidence is present. In actuality the Qur'an itself points to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) looking and searching for guidance as his intent was to pray toward Mecca which was not yet granted. The Qur'an is directing itself to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and is informing him that we see you "turning your face" toward the heavens seeking change and the response came with granting him an orientation that he would be pleased with it. If the intent was to gain diplomatic favor, then the timing would seem to be very ill conceived since the community has just barely set itself up and was about to have a face off with the Meccan tribes. Also, not a single narration from a Muslim or a Jewish source is available to us relative to this new argument and until such evidence is presented this hypothesis does not warrant further consideration.⁴¹

The term 'first qibla' has a wide currency and usage throughout the generations. We can trace it in every Qur'anic commentary from the first such work attributed to Ibn Abbas to the most recent work of Sayyid Qutab, a unanimity and a consistency that is rare. Likewise we find the reference to its usage in early Islamic history texts, Sufi writings, and many legal manuals dealing with prayers since often a beginner student would

ask the question whether praying toward Jerusalem would be valid after the change and the teacher would answer in the negative while presenting evidence to this regard.

Another term appearing in the *Hadith* is that of "*Ard al-Mahshar*" (the land of ingathering), which is a reference to Al-Quds (Jerusalem) and possibly Palestine as a whole being the location where all humanity will be ingathered. The term does appear in commentary on Qur'anic verses pertaining to the end of time and awaiting God's judgment on humanity. Among many Sufis, a practice developed of wanting to spend time in Al-Quds so as to be prepared to meet God and to await the ingathering moment. Since Sufis do prescribe to the notion of Fana (completely erasing or annihilation of the self), which is followed by Baqa (come back into existence or being), what a better place to undertake this process than the land of ingathering. The notion of dying before you die is understood in Sufi thought of preparing the self by taking it into account and possibly removing its diseases before they can harm the self and those around. An ingathering place identified by the *Hadith* is the best place to practice and undertake this regressive spiritual program. Not to imply that all Muslims take to this practice; on the contrary few and fewer Muslims in the present context take this approach and even in the olden days it was limited to few practitioners. What is significant for our purposes is the presence of the name in the Prophetic period and its clear identification with the area as well as a continuity of usage.

To sum up the Prophetic period with respect to names used in reference to Jerusalem and appearing in the Qur'an and *Hadith*, we can conclude that the focus was on five topics: the narrative of the Prophet Abraham and his sons, the children of Israel and their tribulations, the Prophet Jesus, the Prophet Muhammad's night journey to the city, and the signs at the end of time. The names used in these narratives constituted the basis upon which later Muslim use was established, at times in odds with local identification.

Post-Prophetic Period

In the 17th-19th year of the Hijra, Muslim armies conquered Ilia and most of the lands of greater Syria. For the city, the Muslims and in particular the second caliph Umar established a particular status, expressed in the signing of a surrender treaty with the city's inhabitants. The text of the treaty used Ilia as the proper name of the city and the Caliph Umar did not ask for it to be changed or demanded any alterations in it (the text will be examined in detail in the following chapters). Furthermore, the second caliph Umar on his visit and tour of Ilia asked to be shown the rock, the location of "David's Mosque" and the location of the Prophet Muhammad's prayers and ascension to the heavens. The caliph Umar, upon reached this spot, identified it with the name "*al-Masjid al-Aqsa*"

(The Farthest Mosque),” thus recalling chapter 17 of the Qur’an. From Umar’s tour of the city, we can see that he made reference both to the period of the Children of Israel in connection with David’s mosque and to the Prophet’s night journey to the city; these being two areas relating to Muslim name usage and identification. Also, we can see from Umar’s requests that early Muslims had knowledge of the significance of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) and its spiritual history.

In these early years following the Prophetic period, the most common name used by Muslims for the city was *Bayt al-Maqdis* but often it was used with some type of explanation that it refers to Ilia. It is not clear why they resorted to this type of usage but one possible explanation has to do with the dynamics between the local population which was still accustomed to an earlier name and the Muslims who came from Arabia and were committed to carrying out the exact teachings of the Prophet. Since the Muslims entered the city upon the signing of a treaty with the inhabitants, which included the name of the city, then maintaining the name was in fulfillment of the articles of the treaty. However, one can say that it would have been difficult to administer a city or an area where the local population was not accustomed to the new name. The administrators must therefore have resorted to a dual usage to make things run smoothly. Also, the rate of conversion after the Muslim conquest in Palestine was initially slow, which also might have contributed to the use of double names for a period. We can perhaps assume that some in Palestine might have resisted the use of a new name and found in maintaining Ilia current a way of getting back at the new Muslim rulers, who, after all, were not Christians. However, it seems from the many references with the double usage that the Muslims did not mind at all the employment of both names and they resorted to the use of a note following Ilia to specify what was meant by it, namely *Bayt al-Maqdis*.

Thus, it is not uncommon to read early Islamic sources and find the name Ilia listed together with the explanation that it refers to *Bayt al-Maqdis*. Many writers with ill-conceived intentions take this double usage to mean that the Muslims did not have a name for the city, and that they acquired a name for it only after interaction with the local population. Such an argument is plausible, but it runs contrary to logic and fact for if late coming Muslims took on a name from local Christian sources then the only likely name for the city used by these Muslims would have been Ilia since it was the operative name of the city for some 500 years, it was the name sanctioned by the Church in Palestine, and was included in the text of the treaty.

The Muslims maintained *Bayt al-Maqdis* as the name of the city for a long time, though during the Ottoman period a new name, Al-Quds, emerged in many documents. We have no evidence for the time of the first emergence of this name or a specific decree for its institution. What we are sure of is that the name of the city during the Ottoman period

is Al-Quds but we know nothing of the cause/s for such a change and what underlay it. There is, of course, linguistic affinity with "*al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*" and "*Bayt al-Maqdis*" but beyond this we know little of the background for the change.

Also, we are not sure whether the name Al-Quds actually started with the Ottomans or originated prior to their coming into Palestine around 1517 CE. The name remained throughout Ottoman rule over Palestine and was also kept during the British Mandate. One possible explanation is that al-Quds was current among the population but it referred to a small section constituting the historical city and Muslims viewed *Bayt al-Maqdis* to be a larger unit than only the city proper. The Ottomans upon taking control of the city might have resorted to employing a name defining the city itself as being al-Quds but not everything around it which was intended by *Bayt al-Maqdis*. I am more inclined to say that the name of al-Quds is limited to the city proper, *Bayt al-Maqdis* being a larger area constituting what we call today the West Bank and "*al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*" a still larger region, possibly encompassing all of Palestine, parts of Syria, Jordan and the northern parts of Egypt. This use of the three designations emerges more clearly during the Ottoman period and it might be related to the systematic and bureaucratic nature of their rule. The Ottoman had a very well structured administration and the name might have been instituted in order to define a specific area for the purposes of Waqf, Zakat and appointments to the bureaucracy.

Islamic Sources for Al-Quds' Name

What are the Islamic sources for the name al-Quds? To explore the importance of al-Quds and the role it plays in Islamic consciousness, we must embark on a multilevel analysis of the various textual sources that deal with the area. The first item that deserves our immediate attention is the Arabic name of the city, al-Quds (Jerusalem), and how it came to be known as such. The name al-Quds (Jerusalem) comes from the Arabic trilateral root *qadusa*, which means to be pure, holy, blessed and sacred. It was common to call the location as *Bayt Allah al-Muqaddas* or *al-Bayt al-Maqdis*, which refers to a place that was purified of all sins, sanctified, dedicated, and consecrated, or to the location where purification of sins possibly takes place. Another meaning given to *al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* is the location that is exalted and protected from *shirk* (association with Allah), meaning that it was purified by the removal of idols from it.⁴² The name al-Quds is therefore ultimately derived from the name *al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* meaning the house that is purified, and at the same time, blessed. As the verbal noun that comes from the root *qadusa*, al-Quds refers to holiness, sacredness and sanctity. Therefore, al-Quds is the proper name of a city that possesses sacred, pure and blessed attributes.

As to the nature of the purification, sacredness and holiness, we turn to consider one of the sources for the name of al-Quds, the Qur'an, in one

verse of which Allah mentions "*al-'Ard al-Muqaddasa*" (the sacred, blessed or purified land). Without doubt, Muslims during the Ottoman period must have had this in mind when they established the name of the actual city. In the Qur'an, we find a total of ten verses that use words based on the trilateral root *qadusa*, and three of them refer directly to the actual area. For example, the following verse speaks of the Holy Land:

"O my people! Go into the holy land which Allah has ordained for you. Turn not in flight, for surely you would then turn back as losers." (C. 5, V. 21)

Other occurrences of words derived from the root *qadusa* are in the following verses:

"Recall the time when your Lord told the Angels I am setting a man (Adam) on the earth as a vicegerent. They asked: Will you put there one that will work evil and shed blood, when we praise You and sanctify Your name? He replied, Surely I know what you know not." (C. 2, V. 30)

"And assuredly We gave Moses the Scripture, and after him We sent messenger after messenger. We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear miracles (to serve as proofs of Allah's sovereignty) and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit (the Angel Gabriel)." (C. 2, V. 87)

"We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear miracles (to serve as proofs of Allah's sovereignty) and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit (the Angel Gabriel)." (C. 2, V. 253)

"Then will Allah say: O Jesus son of Mary! Remember My favor to you and your mother; how I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit (the archangel Gabriel) so that you spoke to mankind in the cradle as in maturity." (C. 5, V. 110)

"Say: The Holy Spirit brought it down from your Lord in truth, to strengthen those who believe, and as a guidance and good tidings to those who have surrendered (to Allah, thereby entering Islam)." (C. 16, V. 102)

"He is Allah besides whom there is no other god. He is the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Source of Security, the Keeper of Faith; the Guardian, the Mighty One, the All Powerful, the Proud! Exalted be He above partners they ascribe to Him." (C. 59, V. 23)

“Whatever is in the heavens and in the earth glorifies Allah, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Mighty, the Wise.” (C. 62, V. 1)

We can see from the above verses that the Qur’an uses the trilateral root *qadusa* for various words that all share some aspect of the meaning contained in it. In verses 87 and 253 of chapters 2, 110 of chapter five and 102 of 16, the name of the Archangel Jibril appears in Arabic as *Ruh al-Qudus*, which comes from the same root *qadusa*, and can be translated as the Holy Spirit. Jibril, who is the conveyer of Allah’s revelations to Prophets (peace upon them all), has direct relations to al-Quds through the many Prophets that were sent to the area, and to whom he transmitted revelations. In three of the above verses, *Ruh al-Qudus* conveys revelations to the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), while in the fourth, the recipient is the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). We can see that both Prophets (peace be upon them) had a relation to the land of al-Quds (Jerusalem), and both were recipients of revelations through the agency of *Ruh al-Qudus*. Thus, al-Quds (Jerusalem) and Jibril are ever linked through the process of revelations that were transmitted to two prophets, Jesus and Muhammad (peace upon them both).

What is of great importance is that the name *Ruh al-Qudus* in the Qur’an is used only in reference to the revelations sent to both Jesus and Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon them both). It is the Qur’an and the Gospel that are the subject of revelations in the above verses and both Prophets and their revealed books are linked to the area. Thus, the *Ruh al-Qudus* transmits both Sacred Books (the Qur’an and the Gospel) that contain within them the means through which guidance, purification and sacredness can be achieved, while those who reject them have no portion of their benefits.

In addition, Jibril was intimately involved with Prophet Muhammad’s (peace and blessing be upon him) miraculous journey of *Isra’*, which took place between Mecca and al-Quds (Jerusalem), and constitutes one of the fundamental bases for Islamic religious attachment to the land. The name of al-Quds (Jerusalem) is thus linked to *Ruh al-Quds*, Jibril, and is further blessed by the fact of his traversing the land of Palestine to convey the revelations to the many Prophets (peace be upon them all).

In verses 23 of chapter 59 and 1 of 62, Allah’s attribute of the Holy One is used, which in Arabic is *al-Quddus*. The attribute of *al-Quddus* is a noun from a form in Arabic used for hyperbole, which means that Allah is Sacred, Purified and Holy in Himself and is the cause of all holiness that exists in creation. Al-Imam al-Ghazali defines and gives a commentary on how we should understand Allah’s name *al-Quddus*:

Al-Quddus—The Holy—is the one who is free from every attribute

which a sense might perceive, or imagination may conceive, or to which imagination may instinctively turn or by which the conscience may be moved, or which thinking demands. I do not say: free from defects and imperfections, for the mere mention of that borders on insult; it is bad form for one to say: the king of the country is neither a weaver nor a cupper, since denying something's existence could falsely imply its possibility, and there is imperfection in that false implication.

I will rather say: The Holy is the one who transcends every one of the attributes of perfection which the majority of creatures think of as perfection. For creatures look first to themselves, become aware of their attributes, and realize that they are divided into (1) what is perfect regarding them, such as their knowledge and power, hearing, seeing and speaking, their willing and choosing—so they employ these words to convey these meanings, and say these are perfection terms. But the attributes also contain (2) what is imperfect regarding them, like their ignorance, debility, blindness, deafness, dumbness; and they employ these words to convey these meanings.

So the most they can do, in praising God the most high and qualifying Him, is (1) to describe Him by attributes taken from their perfection—from knowledge, power, hearing, seeing and speaking—and (2) deny of Him attributes taken from their imperfection. But God—may He be praised, the most High—transcends attributes taken from their perfection as much as He does those reflecting their imperfection. Indeed God is free from every attribute of which the created can conceive; He transcends them and above [sic] anything similar to them or like them.⁴³

Muslim, accordingly, believe that Allah has given the land a name related to one of His ninety nine names and, hence, the meaning of al-Quds is directly related to that of the attribute. Al-Quds is thus related in its root to one of the names of Allah, *al-Quddus* (the Most Holy, the All-Holy), which conveys a more emphatic meaning of purification, sacredness and holiness of the land.

Al-Qadi 'Iyad in his book, *al-Shifa'*, mentions that one of the names of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is also derived from Allah's name *al-Quddus*. He writes the following:

“One of Allah's names is the Pure (*al-Quddus*). It means the One disconnected from imperfections and pure of all traces of intineness. It is said that the *Bayt al-Muqaddas* (Jerusalem) is called so because in it the Prophet was purified from wrong actions. From this root comes the Pure Valley [or Sacred Valley] (*Wadi Muqaddas*) and the Spirit of Purity [or Spirit of Holiness] (*Ruh al-Qudus*). It has come down from the books of the Prophets that one of the Prophet's names is *Muqaddas* (Pure). That is, he is purified of wrong actions as Allah says, “That Allah might forgive you

your wrong actions," (48:2) or that he is the one by whom people are purified of wrong actions and that following him frees people of wrong actions as Allah says, "... to purify you." (62:2) Allah also says, "He will bring you out of the darkness into the light." (5:16) Or it can mean purified of blameworthy qualities and base attributes."⁴⁴

What Qadi 'Iyad points out is that Allah's name *al-Quddus* has been directly linked to one of the Prophet's own names, *Muqaddas*, and as such shares with it the concept of pure or holy and purity or holiness. Thus, Muslims believe that the name of the city is intimately connected to one of the names of the Prophet and this has its origin in the episode of *Isra'*, the night journey from Mecca to al-Quds.

In verse 21 of chapter 5 of the Qur'an Allah gave the land a name derived from and related to one of His names, and the attributes emanating from this name bestow on the land sanctity, blessings and purification. The English translation commonly used for *al-Ard al-Muqaddasa* is Holy Land, which is defensible on some grounds, but at the same time it fails to transmit all the meanings of the Arabic term.

Thus far, we have established that Allah is *al-Quddus*; the name of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is *Muqaddas*, the name of the Archangel Jibril is *Ruh al-Qudus*; the land is named *al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*; and the city name is *al-Quds*, and all of them share the same root *qadusa*. There is an intrinsic relationship in meaning and in significance between the name that Allah has chosen for Himself and the name He has used to designate the land. Since for Muslims Allah is the source of all purification and blessings, therefore His choice of the name is an act that is significant in and of itself, for it points to a direct link, not on the temporal plane between the name of the source and the recipient of the name, but rather on the spiritual level. Furthermore, the relationship between the land as the recipient of the act of purification and blessings and the source is also a direct one. Allah is consistent in His extension of *taqdis* (active bestowal of sanctification, dedication, purification and blessings) to the land and, hence, al-Quds, as a city, is in a constant state of reception of Allah's favors.

Allah, as *al-Quddus*, is Himself Holy and is the cause for any state of holiness that occurs in creation, and the connection between both, source and recipient, is constant. To Muslims, the name al-Quds was not an act of random choice; rather it points to a clear manifestation of purpose for the land that attained this name, even though we lack an exact date for when the name was instituted; after all, Allah's purpose, for Muslims, is not subject to time limitations. To better understand this issue, consider the name of the Prophet Muhammad, which relates in its root to Allah's name, *Al-Hamid* (The Praiseworthy and Source of Praise). In the same way that the name of the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) is linked to Allah

by the meaning shared in the root *ha-ma-da*, al-Quds is selected and linked for a purpose specific to the land. Consider the following verses on the Holy Land:

“But when he reached that place a voice was heard: O Moses! I am your Lord. So take off your sandals; for you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa.” (C. 20, V. 11-12)

“And when he reached it, he was called from the right side of the valley in the blessed field, from the tree: O Moses! Lo! I, even I, am Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.” (C. 28. V.30)

“Has the story of Moses reached you? How his Lord called out for him in the sacred valley of Tuwa. (Saying) Go to Pharaoh: he has transgressed all bounds!” (C. 79, V. 15-17)

In two of the above verses, the sacred valley, which in Arabic is *al-Wadi al-Muqaddas* is derived from the root *qadusa*. These verses speak of the Sacred Valley, Tuwa, which is in the southern part of the sacred land, the Sinai desert in Egypt. The sacred nature of the land is in reference to the story of the Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) and the call that came to him from Allah in this sacred valley. Muslims do, in fact, believe in Prophet Musa (peace be upon him), and they also believe that Allah spoke to him directly in the valley of Tuwa. Allah is the One, Who called the valley *al-Muqaddas*, the form of this word indicates that it is Allah Who purified and blessed this valley.

From our discussion, we can conclude that the name al-Quds has linguistic foundation that can be traced to the Qur’anic text. In addition, our detailed discussion casts great doubt upon the claim that the Muslims had no connection to the land and that the name al-Quds resulted from their interaction with the Jews and Christians. While it is true that the Qur’an does spend considerable time addressing the Jews, this focus is warranted because Muslims believe in all the Prophets and the purpose of certain portions of the Qur’anic text is in part to refute Jewish stories concerning the earlier revelations. The text of the Qur’an establishes without a doubt that the Muslims at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and at the time of revelation of the Qur’an had a clear idea of the sacred land of Palestine, and they clearly knew its geographic location. The verses provided above from the Qur’an clearly point to the development of a cohesive idea about the sacred land, its history and its significance for the Muslims even prior to the coming of Islam to the land of Palestine. Later, we will discuss the episode of the *Isra’* from Mecca to al-Quds, which serves to crystallize Muslim beliefs concerning the sacred nature of the land and their quest for its control.

Some maintain that the actual name al-Quds comes from Hebrew and

not from Arabic. In the Jewish tradition we find the use of the term '*ir ha-qodesh* (the Holy City), which appears five times in the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁵ In fact we do have ruins called *Qadesh* in the south of Lake Tabris as well as a river in the northern part of Lebanon, as well. What we have possibly is an actual location known to Jews as '*ir ha-qodesh* that is distinct and different than that of Jerusalem. Even though the term appears in the Hebrew Bible in reference to the city, it was not the name most used by Jewish communities to refer to the city and it was not the name used for the city when the Zionists occupied half of it in 1948; the choice was *Urushalim* and not '*ir ha-Qodesh*.

What we find is that *Urushalim* was the most frequently used name for the city by the Jewish community. Dr. Al-Khateeb, who considered the same question of the origin of the name, stated that "Al-Quds, which became its standard designation in Islamic sources, recalls the ancient Hebrew name '*ir ha-Qodesh*, literally 'City of Holiness'."⁴⁶ Dr. Al-Khateeb's work is very critical and does provide valuable information on the name of the city, however the supporting evidence is not conclusive. The name Al-Quds can be just as easily derived from the Qur'anic and Arabic term *al-Ard al-Muqaddasa* (the Holy Land), which is the term found in early Muslim references to the city, together with other names used in the pre-Islamic period. Another possibility is that both languages coming from the same linguistic tree have come to share a number of common words and Al-Quds in Arabic and '*ir ha-Qodesh* in Hebrew might be one instance of this!

Another distinct possibility points to a Yemeni origin for the term Al-Quds itself being applied to the hilltop in the city. Since many of the early Arab inhabitants of Palestine have direct links and tribal affiliation with Yemen and we do find a pyramid shaped mountain to the south of *Sabr* Mountain identified as *Qads*. We also find a similarly named mountain, *Qads* in Najid, the eastern part of present day Saudi Arabia. It is possible that some of early Yemenis and other Arabs who settled the area early applied a name to the plateau due to similarities with what was known to them before their movement.⁴⁷

Al-Quds then is only one name among many others that are used by Muslims in reference to various parts of the land. Al-Quds refers to the actual city, while *al-Ard al-Muqaddasa* designates a larger area encompassing a number of modern day nation-states (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Parts of Egypt and Iraq). Al-Quds is the name currently used by Muslims to designate the plateau that has a sweeping view of a narrow valley opposite the Mount of Olives encompassing among many other monuments two distinct Muslim buildings; *Masjid al-Aqsa* (the Farthest Mosque) and *Qubat al-Sakhira* (Dome of the Rock). As was mentioned earlier, *Al-Aqsa* mosque is the third holiest site for Muslims and for some 17 months was the first *qibla* (orientation) for the daily prayers of the Muslims. What we established in this chapter is the presence of a long standing Muslim name,

Al-Quds, designating a city housing *al-Aqsa* Mosque, a location visited by the Prophet himself and known by the early community.

In the next chapters we will use al-Quds (Jerusalem) for the actual old city and its immediate surroundings; *Bayt al-Maqdis*, a larger designation encompassing all of Palestine by some scholars while others when using it include Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and parts of Egypt and Iraq as well. Also, the English name Jerusalem will be used sparingly throughout this work and it will designate the same city known in Arabic as Al-Quds.

Chapter Two

Al-Quds (Jerusalem) in the Qur'an

In examining the Qur'an, the primary textual source for Muslims, one can hardly find a specific mentioning of the proper name *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem). The immediate implication of this scarcity could be a wholesale discounting of Muslim reverence of or claims to the city. While the lack of specific name is accurate, the conclusions drawn from it, after further textual and historical analysis, should be altogether rejected. The effort is not directed only at a pure examination of Islam's primary text, the Qur'an, but doing so with the intention of privileging contemporary political and power configuration related to Palestine in general and *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) in particular.

As a way to illustrate the low importance Islam's primary text assigns to *al-Quds*, none other than Daniel Pipes sums up the attitude of contemporary pro-Israeli forces on the subject with the following: "One comparison makes this point most clearly: Jerusalem appears in the Jewish Bible 669 times and Zion (which usually means Jerusalem, sometimes the Land of Israel) 154 times, or 823 times in all. The Christian Bible mentions Jerusalem 154 times and Zion 7 times. In contrast, the columnist Moshe Kohn notes, Jerusalem and Zion appear as frequently in the Qur'an "as they do in the Hindu Bhagavad-Gita, the Taoist Tao-Te Ching, the Buddhist Dhamapada and the Zoroastrian Zend Avesta"—which is to say, not once."¹

In listing all the Biblical names, adjectives and titles bestowed upon *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) Pipes is not purely reviewing religious text; rather through it also he is asserting political rights based on frequency of name usage. If this is what we find in the Bible, then it must be established that this is an irrevocable deed to the land and Muslims lack such mentioning in their own primary text. Thus, the conclusion is that present day Muslims in Palestine and outside are usurpers of both the territory as well as the religious rights bestowed first upon the Jews, as a "nation", followed then by Christians, who can assert a similar territorial claim, even though both disagree among themselves as to who has real rights to the land. Through this understanding Muslims can aspire only to be either a false

and pretentious religious cult lacking in authenticity or third stringers claiming that which belongs primarily to Jews, the first stringers in the spiritual superball, with the Christians, deemed second stringers in the same process. What claims do third stringers have in the above defined spiritual Super Bowl world? In the view of many, none whatsoever, and the same attitude applies to Muslim spiritual attachment to *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem).

Looking for the specific rendition of the name *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) in the Qur'an is a defensible point of departure but it must be expanded to include a variety of references to the area used in the Qur'an and by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Our starting point should be with the main source for Muslims' attachment to and consciousness of *al-Quds* (Jerusalem), the Qur'an. However, while the Qur'an is the first and primary source, it is complemented by the second source, the *Hadith*, (prophetic statements actions and consent), which serve as a binding source for Islamic Law. The argument dismissing Qur'anic authority on the subject is likewise applied to *Hadith* but the claim here is of forgery, and it treats the *Hadith* as some sort of celebratory text emerging long after the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) demise. By dispensing with Islam's primary text we are left with personal opinion, power and interpretation of the past, and in this all are equal, both occupier and occupied.

The discussion above has to be kept in mind while examining the Qur'anic text and Muslims' consciousness toward the *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) and Palestine in general since what comes next is not formulated in a vacuum but rather has immediate consequences pertaining to current global debates. The strongest explicit Qur'anic text illustrating and establishing the collective Muslim feeling toward *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) and Palestine in general can be found in chapter seventeen, verse one, which reads:

Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque Whose surroundings We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs, for He the Hearer, the Seer. (Al-'Isra' 17, verse 1)

One cannot understand Muslim veneration of *al-Quds* without comprehending the significance and overall meaning of this verse and the specific occasion for its revelation. The verse under consideration is so significant that scholars of Islamic theology consider a person who rejects the validity of the miracle contained therein to be outside Islam; because the verse appears in the Qur'an, and the validity of its content is categorical, as a legal proof in Islamic Law, and not based on conjecture. By the way, this scholarly Islamic position was not formulated in response to the modern occupation or in response to external criticism of the text,

on the contrary the debate and the determination was an internal one and was undertaken in the immediate post-prophetic period. A general legal and theological debate emerged among the Companions and was centered on the possibility of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) seeing Allah directly without a veil, which was a position taken by some Companions while others opted for the possibility of witnessing God through the heart but not physically. Again, I am pointing this out as I foresee the argument coming down from some who would claim that this development occurred in response to modern events, this is not the case. To point out the obvious, Islam as a religion, society and legal tradition has been around over 1426 years and many debates occurred in the past prior to the contemporary period.

Coming back to Chapter 17, verse one of the Qur'an, we find the emphasis is directed at the episode of the Isra' and it is complemented with *Hadith* discussions of the Mi'raj. Taken together, Qur'an and *Hadith*, they provide the basis for Muslim consciousness toward *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem). If compared to the Qur'an, the *Hadith* contains far more specific references to the city and more detailed descriptions due to the occasion of the verse cited earlier. The episode mentioned in the verse, from beginning to end, appears in the following detailed prophetic tradition:

Anas ibn Malik said that the Messenger of Allah said: "The Buraq² was brought to me. It was a white animal somewhat taller than a donkey, but smaller than a mule. Its step covered a distance equal to the range of its vision. I mounted it and rode until I was brought to Jerusalem. Then I tied it to the ring which the prophets use. Then I entered the mosque and prayed two *rak'ats*³ there. I came out and Jibril brought me a vessel of milk and a vessel of wine. I chose the milk and Jibril said, 'You have chosen the *fitra*.'⁴

Then he went up with me to the first heaven. Jibril asked for it to be opened and a voice said, 'Who is it?' He replied, "Jibril." The voice replied, "Who is with you?" He replied, "Muhammad." It said, "Was he sent for?" He replied, "He was sent for," and the door opened for us. I found Adam who welcomed me and prayed for me. Then we went up to the second heaven and Jibril asked for it to be opened. A voice said, "Who is it?" He replied, "Jibril." It said, "Who is with you?" He replied "Muhammad." It said, "Was he sent for?" He replied, "He was," and the door was opened for us. There I found my cousins, 'Isa ibn Maryam and Yahya ibn Zakariyya. They welcomed me and prayed for me. Then we went up to the third heaven and the same thing happened. It was opened for me and there was Yusuf. He had been given half of all beauty. He welcomed me and prayed for me. Then we went up to the fourth heaven and the same thing happened. I found Idris, and he welcomed me and prayed for

me. Allah said, "We raised him up to a high place." (Ch. 19, V. 56) Then we went up to the fifth heaven and the same thing happened. There was Harun who welcomed me and prayed for me. Then we went up to the sixth heaven and the same thing happened. There I found Musa who welcomed me and prayed for me. Then we went up to the seventh heaven and the same thing happened. There I found Ibrahim leaning against the Frequented House (Al-Bayt al-Ma'mur). Every day, seventy thousand angels enter into it and do not emerge.

Then he took me to the Lote-tree of the Furthest Limit whose leaves are like the ears of elephants and whose fruits are like earthenware vessels. When a command from Allah covers it, what is covered undergoes a change which no creature is capable of describing due to its sublime beauty. Then Allah revealed to me what He revealed and He made fifty prayers every day and night obligatory for me. I came down to Musa and he asked, "What did your Lord make obligatory for your people?" I replied, "Fifty prayers." He said, "Go back to your Lord and ask Him to lighten it. Your community will never be able to do it. I have tested the Banu Isra'il and know by experience." So I went back to my Lord and said, "My Lord, lighten it for my community!" So He deducted five prayers. I went back to Musa and said, "He deducted five for me." He said, "Your community will not be able to do that, so go back and ask Him to lighten it.

I kept going back and forth between my Lord and Musa until Allah said, "Muhammad, they are five prayers every day and night. Each prayer counts as ten, so that makes fifty prayers. Whoever intends to do something good, and then does not do it, a good action will be written for him. If he does it, then ten will be written for him. Whoever intends to do something bad and does not do it, nothing will be written against him. If he does it, then one bad action will be recorded." Then I went down to Musa and told him about that. He said, "Go back to your Lord and ask Him to lighten it." The Messenger of Allah said, "I have gone back to my Lord so often that I am ashamed before him."⁵

Both the Qur'an (C. 17, v. 1) and the *Hadith* above constitute the two pillars that underline Muslims' attitudes and feelings toward the city. We can find in the Qur'an and *Hadith* collections a number of direct and indirect references to *al-Quds* (Jerusalem), but the above cited verse and *Hadith* are the most specific and constitute a foundation for Islamic understanding of the spiritual importance of the area. To better comprehend the scope of the verse, we need to examine a number of important issues connected with it. The common approach to Qur'anic exegesis is critical for a sound understanding of the verse in question.⁶ I will begin my exploration of this

verse by canvassing existing Islamic scholarly exegesis covering a rather extended time span from the earliest such commentaries to ones written in the 20th century. An often-used method among Muslim commentators is to begin with examining the language itself and what is indicated in the few words constituting this specific verse. This approach to exegesis begins with unfolding the meaning of words in a particular verse and then examines the variety of grammatical constructions contained therein, both of these elements being essential for the basic understanding of what is being said. Hence, I will rely in the examination of the precise meaning of the terms used to describe the night journey from Mecca to al-Quds on a representative selection of existing commentaries.

My examination of the commentaries begins with selections providing basic word meanings and structures then moving to those offering a more detailed treatment of the subject matter extending to issues of history, occasions of revelations, and law. The approach is defensible from the point of view as it remains true to the text and viewing it from within the Islamic tradition. Since our goal is to understand and, to a certain extent, appreciate Muslims' worldview concerning *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem), which might not agree completely or possibly departs altogether from commonly held western views.

The verse begins with "Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night," hence establishes right from the beginning the journey to be undertaken with the direct involvement of God Himself in the movement of the Prophet from Mecca to *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) and thence to the heavens. Theologically speaking, the attention and care extended by God to the Prophet in this journey is far more significant than what actually transpired in the material world for it establishes a direct relationship with the divine in this episode. The Arch Angel Jibril was involved in the episode but the Qur'an, which for Muslims is the exact unaltered word of God, speaks of Allah being the cause of the carrying of the prophet by means of al-Buraq, since neither Jibril nor al-Buraq are mentioned in the verse. From a temporal point of view, the journey, distance, and mode of transportation are what is most significant in this episode, as indeed they were for the Meccans at the time, but from a spiritual perspective the material world is only a distraction or a veil away from true reality, God. The Prophet's journey was toward the divine through the direct help of the divine in order to witness Him away from the contingent reality of the material world. It would be one thing if a king invited you to a dinner, you drove to his palace and entered the main hall to dine; and it would be completely different if the king came unexpectedly to your house, took you in his arm, drove you in his car, walked with you through the palace and then sat next to you as you ate.⁷

Even though the Arabic verb *'asra* in itself means "to carry or travel at night," the Qur'an uses the noun *laylan* "by night" in indefinite form with an adverbial function. Since the verb already indicates the time

of travel, *laylan* implies that the journey took place in a small portion of the night. Therefore, the inclusion of *laylan* "by night" is to emphasize the short period of time in which this whole journey took place. This was understood by the Arabs at the time and, hence, gives the event the significance of a miracle bestowed upon the Prophet.⁸ When we ask about whether such a journey in a short period of time is possible or not, what we are truly questioning is the extent of God's power. If God is the All-Powerful and the All-Able, to say claim the night journey was impossible is to limit God, and if He is limited then He is not a God able to act independently in His creation. Muslims therefore view this episode as compatible with and affirming their belief in a most powerful God, to argue against it or to negate its veracity would be a challenge to their conception of God, not a mere discussion of an event presented in the Qur'an. Moreover if we look beyond Islamic confines we find that the concept of miracles is firmly established in other religious traditions including Judaism and Christianity.

Another important element is the use of the epithet *'abdihi* "His servant" to describe the Prophet. The Arabic expression is more expressive than the translation for it conveys a close awareness of Allah by the Prophet and simultaneously Allah's bestowal of honor upon His prophet by describing him as "His servant." In addition, there is the fact that the attribute *'abd* "servant" refers to the primary relationship of the Prophet, which is that with Allah; since in the *'isra* and *mi'raj* he is on his way to meet his Lord, it is appropriate that he should be described as *'abd* "servant" rather than *rasul* "prophet." The possessive pronoun, which refers back to Allah, by being attached to the noun "servant", is an indication of the intimate awareness of the Prophet of his servitude to Allah. Also, Allah by the use of the noun *'abd* "servant" with the possessive ending (*hu*) is acknowledging the Prophet and drawing him nearer to Him, a sign of his elevated position with Allah. It is this relationship, complete servitude to Allah, that best defines the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) relation to his Lord, which each and every Muslim, in their own way, attempts to emulate.

From all possible honors and titles that can be used to describe the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) it is that of servant that is most glorious and beloved to the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) himself since it established the primary and most significant relationship, the one with Allah. All others, if examined from the primary relationship with the Divine are a mere distraction from the only real. A title of a king expressed the relationship with mortal humans and is finite but the servitude to Allah that is given recognition by Him is infinite. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has many names and titles of honor, which if taken can give us a window into basic Muslim attitudes toward him and by extension everything associated with him including *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem). Muslim love and honoring of the Prophet is in

full conformity with the text of the Qur'an and *Hadiths* in as far as they describe and enumerate his qualities and position with Allah. To better comprehend the meaning contained in the verse above we need therefore to explore how in the text of the Qur'an Allah extended many honors to "His servant." For example, Allah in the Qur'an bestows blessings upon the Prophet together with the angels and commands all the believers to offer blessings and prayers upon him, which is the primary reason that any reference to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is accompanied by this expression since the verse below is an explicit Divine command to do so:

Indeed Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet.
O you who believe! Ask (and send) blessings (salat) on him and salute him with a worthy salutation. (Q 33:56)

This is but one of the many Qur'anic verses that signify the exalted station of the Prophet. Ibn Kathir in his *tafsir* of this verse offers a number of possibilities for the meaning of Allah's blessings: 1. "Allah's blessings are His praise of the Prophet to the angels, and the praise of the angels is in the form of a supplication; 2. Allah's blessings are His mercy and those of the angels are asking for Allah's forgiveness for the Prophet; 3. Allah informed those who are in the heavens of the exalted status of the Prophet by His offering of blessings upon him, the angels offer blessings upon the Prophet and He commanded the believers of the lower realm (earth) to send their blessings upon him and salutation."⁹ Also, Ibn al-'Arabi in his book, *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, mentions that "Allah's blessings can be real or they can carry the meaning of His mercy."¹⁰ As for the angels, Ibn al-'Arabi states that they are in a constant state of asking Allah for forgiveness for the people of the earth, i.e. the believers among them:¹¹

And they ask for forgiveness for those on earth. (Q 42: 5)

The (angels) who bear the (Divine) Throne and those around it, all are glorifying their Lord with His praises. They affirm faith in Him, and ask forgiveness for the believers ... (Q 40:7)

In a *Hadith* narrated by Abu Hurayra the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) is reported to have said "the angels are offering blessings upon each one of you as long as he is in his place of prayer where he prayed, and they say, O Allah, bestow blessings upon him, and O Allah, be merciful unto him."¹²

It is common for such differences of opinion to emerge based on the various readings of the verse above and the meaning of the command to offer salutations contained in it. A number of possibilities can in general be implied by the imperative, a topic that is outside the scope of this work.

What is important for us at this point is to recognize that the believer has been commanded by Allah to offer his salutation to the Prophet.

Allah has exalted the mentioning of the Prophet in a number of other Qur'anic verses including the praising of his character, manner, honesty and patience in fulfilling his mission. In addition, Allah made use of two of His own attributes in describing the Prophet, "compassionate" (*ra'uf*) and "merciful" (*rahim*):

There has come to you a messenger from among yourselves, grievous to whom is your burden, concerned for you; for the believers full of compassion, and merciful. (Q 9:128)

Surely you have a Sublime Character. (Q 68:4)

It is said that throughout the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) mission every time he was presented with two options he always took the lighter one as a means of making it easier upon his followers, this being one manifestation of his compassion and mercy.

And We exalted your fame. (Q 94: 4)

Allah in this verse exalted the fame of His prophet in perpetuity. This particular honor Allah bestowed upon the Prophet can be seen in the inclusion of his name in the utterance by every Muslim of the profession of faith (there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger). In addition, the call to prayer, which is made five times a day across the world includes the affirmation of Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah. This is a fulfillment of Allah's promise to His Messenger in the Qur'an, when He says "We exalted your fame."¹³

Al-Imam al-Shafi'i considers the offering of a salutation upon the Prophet to be incumbent in the last sitting of a four *rak'a* (prostration) prayer, and he makes its utterance a condition for the validity of the prayers. Since the offering of salutation is part of the profession of faith, which is part of the prayers, the scholars have differed on its status during the sitting section of the prayers. The Hanafi and Maliki schools consider the making of salutation in the prayer to be a Sunnah, and the Shafi'i school considers it to be incumbent.¹⁴

The command contained in the verse above is being fulfilled at every moment of the day, since the exaltation of the name of the Prophet is included in the call to the prayer, in the prayer itself, and in many of the supplications that are done during the day. The exaltation of his fame is a promise from Allah for the fulfillment of which each believer, in uttering the formula, is acting as an agent. Furthermore, the salutation is in itself a form of supplication that brings back benefits for the one who utters it. The offering of blessings and salutations upon Prophet is rewarded

tenfold for each time that it is made, and it is believed that the Prophet is enabled by Allah to return the greetings upon the person who offered the salutation. Al-Shurunbulali in his Hanafi *fiqh* text mentions that one of the five guardian angels is responsible for the task of delivering the salutation from the believer who makes it to the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) who then responds back with his own salutation.¹⁵

Another honor bestowed upon the Prophet can be seen in the many names and attributes accorded him by Allah. In Arabic the importance of a person can be deduced from the number of names, attributes and titles used to describe him.

Muhammad ibn Jubair bin Mut'im from his father that the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) said: I have many names, I am Muhammad, I am Ahmad, I am the *mahii* (the one who erases or eradicates) through whom Allah eradicated *kufr*. I am the *hashir* (the one who gathers), at whose feet Allah will raise all people [on the day of judgment]. I am *'aqib* (the one who comes last), after whom there shall be no other Prophet.

Hudhaifa reports: I once met the Prophet Peace and blessings upon him on one of the roads of Medina. He said, I am Muhammad, and I am Ahmad, and I am the Prophet of Mercy, the Prophet of Repentance, the last Prophet, and I am the *Hashir* [whom Allah will raise first], and I am the Prophet of al-Malahim (fierce battles).¹⁶

For Muslims the Prophet being the most honorable of all creation has been named and given titles that are worthy of his status on this earth and in the hereafter. Ibn al-'Arabi has enumerated some one thousand names, attributes, and titles for the Prophet, which he included in a book entitled, *al-Ahudhi fi sharh Jami' al-Tirmidhi*. Al-Imam al-Suyuti also has written a complete work on the names of the Prophet, which he called *al-Bahja al-sania*, it lists some 500 names and titles.

The Qur'an contains seven proper names for the Prophet and they are: *Muhammad*¹⁷, *Ahmad*¹⁸, *Yasin*¹⁹, *Taha*²⁰, *al-Muzammil*²¹, *al-Mudathair*²², and *'Abd Allah*²³. The name *Ahmad* comes from the root *hamada*, "to praise" and Ahmad is on the relative paradigm pattern of *afa'l*, it thus comes to mean one who praises more or the one who is praised more. This paradigm is used to convey both the superlative and the comparative. By the token of this name, the Prophet praised Allah the most and was himself the subject of most praise. Ahmad is thus a name that signifies the character of the Prophet for he was in a continuous state of praising and thanking Allah in all his affairs.

Furthermore, the Prophet on the day of judgment will carry the banner of *hamd* (praise) in his hand which means that Allah will grant His messenger all kinds of praiseworthy favors and the response of the Prophet

will be to praise Allah more than anyone before him had ever done. So the name Ahmad can mean the one who praised his Lord the most. The most significant element in the names of *Muhammad*, *Ahmad*, and *Mahmud* is that all of them are derived from the root *hamada* meaning to praise; they are therefore directly connected to Allah being the one to whom all praise belongs, which means that Allah bestowed on the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) a name intrinsically related to His attribute.

Al-Qadi 'Iyad ibn Musa al-Yahsubi in his book, *Al-Shifa*, provided the following commentary on the Prophet's names Ahmad and Muhammad:

Jubayr ibn Mut'im said that his father said that the Messenger of Allah said, "I have five names. I am Muhammad. I am Ahmad. I am *al-Mahi* (the Obliterator) by whom Allah will wipe out disbelief. I am *al-Hashir* (the Gatherer) at whose feet people will gather. I am *al-'Aqib* (the Last in Succession)." Allah calls him *Ahmad* and *Muhammad* in His Book.

One of the special gifts of Allah to him lies in the fact that He made his names contain praise of him so the immensity of the Prophet's gratitude is contained in his mention. The Prophet is the most sublime of all who give praise and the best of those who are praised and the person who deserves the most praise. He is the most praised (*Ahmad*) of the praised and the one who praises the most. He will have the Banner of Praise on the Day of Rising as the completion of the perfection of praise for him. He will be known in that place by the attribute of praise. His Lord will give him the Praiseworthy Station there as He promised him. The first and the last generations will praise him at that time and plead for his intercession on their behalf. On that day the Prophet will begin with praises which, as he said, "no one else has been given." In the books of the prophets his community are called "the praisers", therefore it is only fitting that he be called *Muhammad* and *Ahmad*.

One of His names is the Praiseworthy (*al-hamid*). This means the One who is praised because He praises Himself and His slaves praise Him. It also means the One who praises Himself and praises acts of obedience. The Prophet is called *Muhammad* and *Ahmad*. *Muhammad* means praised, and that is how his name occurs in the *Zabur* of Da'ud. *Ahmad* means the greatest of those who give praise and the most sublime of those who are praised. Hassan ibn Thabit indicated this when he said: It is taken from His own name in order to exalt him. The one with the Throne is praised (*Mahmud*) and he is *Muhammad*.²⁴

In addition, the name *Mahmud* "is praised" further indicates the status of the Prophet for he is in continuous reception of praise. The verse commanding the angels and the believers to offer prayers and salutation upon him is but one visible manifestation of the meaning of *Mahmud* "is praised."

The Prophet is the principal source for all the sciences of Islam, for he was the recipient of the revelation and the one endowed with the necessary knowledge from Allah to make it clear to his followers. Allah is the source of the revelation, and the Prophet the means by which the transmission and elucidation took place. The Qur'anic text addresses the tasks to be undertaken by the Messenger (peace and blessings upon him) in the propagation of Islam: "Thus We have sent to you a Messenger from among you, who will recite to you Our signs (revelations) and purify you (or: cause you to grow), who will teach you the Scripture and wisdom, and teach you that of which you have no knowledge." (Q 2, 151) Also, in verse 164 of Al-'Imran and verse 2 of Al-Jumu'a similar statements are to be found.

Thus, the title "His servant" is one of the most exalted epithets that are used for the Prophet, for it designates a state of perfection in servitude to Allah. More importantly, it was a title that he chose for himself over that of a king, when he was presented with the two possibilities during the miracle of *al-isra'* and he opted for being a humble slave of Allah.²⁵ In the Qur'an the term "slave" is used in a number of verses as a positive epithet for the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) and signals his closeness and awareness of Allah:

(O Prophet:) Will not Allah defend His slave? (Q 39: 36)

To sum up what we know up to this point, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has many names and attributes but the one that most defines his mission and is beloved to him is "servant." We will now examine another issue in verse one of chapter seventeen, the meaning of *al-Masjid al-Aqsa* "the farthest mosque" and "its surroundings." *Al-Masjid al-Aqsa* "The Farthest Mosque," is the name that is used for the sacred mosque in *al-Quds* (Jerusalem). It is believed by Muslims that this mosque was first built some forty years after the building of the *Ka'ba* in Mecca. From the Qur'an we have evidence that speaks of the *Ka'ba* being the first house of worship established on the earth²⁶, and in a very well known *hadith*, the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) said that the second place was that of *al-Aqsa* in *al-Quds* (Jerusalem) with the difference in time between them being forty years:²⁷

Ab, Dharr reported: "when I asked the Prophet of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) about the first masjid placed on earth," he responded: "al-Masjid al-Haram (Mecca)." Then I said: "then which one?" He said: "al-Masjid al-Aqsa." I said: "How many between them?" He said: "Forty years, and the whole earth is a mosque for you so wherever the time of prayer comes upon you, pray!"²⁸

Some Western scholars attempt to argue that the reference in the verse to *al-Masjid al-Aqsa* "the Farthest Mosque" is vague and cannot be taken to mean the sacred mosque in *al-Quds* (Jerusalem). The verse, however, uses the Arabic definite article "*al*" in reference to "the Farthest Mosque," and persons contemporary to the time of the revelation completely understood the Qur'anic reference to the location to mean *al-Quds*. Furthermore, when the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) told Quraysh of his night journey they mocked him because they knew that such a trip to al-Sham and Palestine would normally take over 40 days by camel, which indicates that they understood and accepted the designation of *al-Quds* as the location of "the Farthest Mosque" mentioned in this verse.²⁹

In Ibn Kathir's *Life of the Prophet Muhammad* we are informed of the difficulty faced by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) upon his return to Mecca as he correctly felt that people will not believe what has transpired during the night. Ibn Kathir states:

"He, however, became merely somber, quiet that is, and was fearful that if he started to tell his people what he had seen they would promptly disbelieved him."

And so at first he told them calmly that he had been to Jerusalem that night. That was when Abu Jahl, God damn him, saw the Messenger of God (SAAS), in the sacred mosque sitting in somber silence and spoke to him, asking, "Well, anything new?" He replied, "Yes." "What is it?" Abu Jahl asked. "I was taken this night to Jerusalem."

"To Jerusalem?"

"Yes."

Abu Jahl asked, "If I were to call your people over to you for you to tell them, would you say to them what you said to me?" "Yes, I would," he replied. Abu Jahl wanted to assemble Quraysh to hear that from him, and so too did the Messenger of God (SAAS) also want to gather them to tell them and so give them information. Abu Jahl then said, "Come, O tribe of Quraysh!" They gathered there from their assemblies. He then said, "Well, tell your people what you told me." The Messenger of God (SAAS) related to them what he had seen, that he had gone to Jerusalem that night and prayed there. Amidst the clapping and whistling of disbelief and derision at this report, the news spread quickly over to Mecca.

People then went to Abu Bakr, God bless him, and told him that Muhammad (SAAS) was saying such-and-such a thing. He responded, "You are telling lies about him!" They replied, "No, we swear it, he is saying that." "Well," said Abu Bakr, "if he said that, he spoke the truth." He then went to the Messenger of God (SAAS) who was surrounded by the pagans of Mecca, and asked

him about that. He told him of it all and Abu Bakr asked him to describe Jerusalem, so that the polytheists would hear him and recognize the veracity of what he had told them. In the sahih collection the account has it that it was the polytheists who asked the Messenger of God about that.

He said, "I then began telling them about His signs, and I became somewhat confused. And so God made Jerusalem clear to me until I could see it beyond 'Uqayl's house, and I described it to them."³⁰

Over the centuries, all Islamic sources have identified "the Farthest Mosque" in the Qur'an to be the one located in the city of *al-Quds*. All the commentators on the Qur'an, centuries before the emergence of the modern Jewish Zionist movement, have identified the area under consideration in verse 1 of chapter 17 to be *al-Quds* (Jerusalem) and the surroundings to be *Bilad al-Sham*, the lands of historical Syria. Take for example the following commentators on the Qur'an and their opinion of this verse:

Al-Nasai: he cites a number of *Qad-ths* in his commentary on this verse, numbered by him 302, 303, 304, and 305 and all of them describing *Bayt al-Maqdis* in "the Farthest Mosque."³¹

Tabari: "From the Sacred Mosque to the mosque in *Bayt al-Maqdis*."³²

Ibn Kathir: "The Farthest Mosque" is *Bayt al-Maqdis* that is in 'Il-a', which is the source of prophets from the lineage of Ibrahim."³³

Al-Suyuti: "The Farthest Mosque" is the one in *Bayt al-Maqdis*."³⁴

Al-Zamakshari: "The Farthest Mosque" is *Bayt al-Maqdis* because at that time there was no other masjid beyond it."³⁵

al-Wahidi: "The Farthest Mosque," it is *Bayt al-Maqdis*, and it was called Farthest because of the great distance between it and the *al-Masjid al-Har®m* [in Mecca]."³⁶

al-Nawawi: To "the Farthest Mosque": meaning the farthest from the earth and the closest to heaven and it is the mosque in *Bayt al-Maqdis*. It was named "farthest" because it is the farthest of mosques that is visited from the Sacred Mosque [in Mecca] with reward granted for its [visitation]."³⁷ (Tafsir al-Imam al-Nawawi)

al-Qasimi: "The Farthest Mosque" is the mosque of *Bayt al-Maqdis* and it was known as the Monument of Sulaiman, because he was the one who built it. "The Farthest" because of its distance from Mecca."³⁸

Al-Andalusi: "The Farthest Mosque" is *Bayt al-Maqdis*, and it is named 'Farthest' because at that time it was the most distant of virtuous houses of Allah from *al-Ka'ba* [in Mecca].³⁹

al-Nasafi: "The Farthest Mosque" is the one in *Bayt al-Maqdis*, because at that time beyond it there was no other mosque [on earth].⁴⁰

al-Kalbi: "The Farthest Mosque" is *Bayt al-Maqdis*, the one in 'Ilia' (the name of al-Quds before the coming of Islam), and it was called the farthest because there was no other mosque beyond it at the time. Also, it is possible that the farthest means the most distanced, and therefore, it would be for the purpose of showing the wondrous nature of the 'Isra'.⁴¹

al-Baydawi: "The Farthest Mosque" is *Bayt al-Maqdis* because at that time there was no masjid beyond it.⁴²

al-Balansi: To "the Farthest Mosque" meaning *Bayt al-Maqdis* which is 'Ilia'; this means the house of Allah.⁴³

Al-Ansari: The reason for his ascension beginning from *Bayt al-Maqdis* and not from Mecca was that it is the location of the in-gathering of creation [at the time of resurrection]. He traversing upon it with his foot in order to make it easy for his ummah (community) to stand on the Day of Judgment on the traces of his blessed foot.⁴⁴

al-Tha'alibi: "The Farthest Mosque" is *Bayt al-Maqdis*, and "Farthest" means "distant."⁴⁵

al-Shirazi: To "the Farthest Mosque" means "the most distant." Certainly, the people of Mecca used to call *Bayt al-Maqdis* "the Farthest Mosque" for its long distance from there location, this in opposite to the Near, which was used for al-Masjid al-Haram [in Mecca].⁴⁶

Al-Tabarsi: "As to what location he was taken to on the *isra'* It was to *Bayt al-Maqdis*."⁴⁷

Available commentaries on the Qur'an also unanimously identify the "Farthest Mosque" as *Bayt al-Maqdis*, which is the name used by all earlier Muslims in connection with this verse. Furthermore, the last two cited commentaries above belong to Shia authorities which illustrates the agreement between the Shia and Sunni scholars on the subject and any argument to prove otherwise is at odds with all available evidence. Needless to say, this evidence provides us with a clear consensus among Muslim scholars of tafsir on the identity of the location mentioned in this

verse. There are other issues on which the scholars differed with respect to the episode mentioned in this verse, but the name and the location of the "Farthest Mosque" is not one of them.

It has become fashionable among politically motivated scholars to dismiss Muslim religious connections to *al-Quds* (Jerusalem) by invoking a variety of arguments in support of their position. This approach is part of the general strategy aimed at strengthening current Zionist claims to the land at the expense of the indigenous Muslim, Christian and limited Jewish populations of Palestine. These scholars maintain that the Qur'anic reference to the "Farthest Mosque" is vague and cannot be clarified with certainty on the basis of early sources. Yet these same scholars proceed from a basis of rejecting the authenticity of *hadith* transmitted from the prophetic period, which are precisely the primary foundation of tafsir; they are the main source material for defining opinions on the subject. These politically motivated scholars first insist on the vagueness of the reference and then they reject the evidence available for clarifying it authoritatively.

The third subject to examine in the verse under discussion is the geographic scope of "whose surroundings We have blessed." Commentators on the Qur'an agree that the "surroundings" include all the lands of *Bilad al-sham* (present day Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan).⁴⁸ Some say that in addition to the above it also includes parts of Iraq, Egypt and the northern section of the Arabian Peninsula. The verse itself suggests that "the blessed land" is very extensive for it includes, in addition to the Mosque itself, all the lands that surround it. It is impossible for only *al-Quds* or the Mosque compound to constitute the entirety of the blessed land. Its scope extends to include territories that are far removed from the immediate area of the Mosque and include three present-day countries in addition to Palestine. Even the term Palestine, as a geographical term, is too narrow in relation to the merits of *al-Quds* and its blessed surroundings. The historical term, which is to be found in Islamic sources, is *Bilad al-Sham*, a region broader than Palestine. The terms Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and others, with their present territorial connotations derive from 20th century colonial history with its intended policy of divide and conquer. Use of these names to refer to modern states should not be taken to implying that they reflect well-established geographical divisions. Such divisions did not indicate lines of political demarcation as they do today. The area referred to in the verse as the surroundings which have been blessed is, for the Muslims, *Bilad al-Sham*, a region which in its entirety has been continuously endowed with blessings from Allah.

Many discussions of *al-Quds* (Jerusalem) today ignore the well-established meaning of the Qur'anic verse with reference to the boundaries of the land. *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) is certainly the centerpiece, but the lands surrounding it extend beyond the present day land of Palestine, which

has to be understood as a geographic term designating only a part of the blessed land. The limitation of blessedness to Palestine stands in stark contrast to the dominant opinion among Muslim scholars throughout the generations. In addition, there are numerous *Ahadith* which mention the virtues of al-Sham as a whole, not simply al-Quds. The following are a few examples:

1. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "How blessed is al-Sham, how blessed is al-Sham. They asked O messenger of Allah, "With what?" He said: Those are the angels of Allah spreading their wings on al-Sham."⁴⁹
2. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "The center of the realm of Islam is in al-Sham."⁵⁰
3. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I saw (in a dream) the pillar of the book was taken from underneath my pillow and I looked and saw a column of light extending to al-Sham. Certainly, safety during tribulation is to be found in al-Sham."⁵¹
4. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "The people of *al-Sham* with their wives and husbands, off-springs and slaves to the boundaries of the Peninsula are in a state of *ribat* (keeping guard) in the way of Allah. Whosoever settles in one of its cities is in a state of *ribat* (keeping guard), and whoever occupies a border outpost in it, is in a state of *jihad*."⁵²

What is significant in these *hadiths* is that all of them speak of *al-Sham* as a single territory.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the last *hadith* establishes as its southern boundary the point where the Arabian Peninsula begins. The territory mentioned in these *hadiths* extends, therefore, beyond the modern political formation called Syria and encompasses all the countries that surround the land of Palestine. All the *hadiths* taken together provide further commentary on the verse under discussion.

The fourth topic in the verse requiring clarification is the meaning of the blessing that is bestowed upon al-Quds and its surroundings. The term *barakna* (We blessed) derives from an Arabic root meaning to grow and to increase in the good. In the *shari'a*, it is defined as the permanent placing of good by Allah in something.⁵³ *Al-baraka*, the noun means growth, increase, and happiness.⁵⁴ When Allah places His *baraka* in something or in someone, He causes a manifestation of growth, increase and happiness to occur in the recipient. The word for lake in Arabic is *birkah*, cognate with *baraka*, for a lake is the location where water, the source of life, can be found. In addition, the name for the inner part of the camel's chest is also *birkah*, which the camel uses to store water for later use, comes from the same root. The significance of the word *baraka* is its direct relation to that which gives life, growth and sustenance.

In what sense are the surroundings of al-Masjid al-Aqsa blessed

by Allah? The past tense verb *barakna* has the pronominal ending "na" indicating that Allah is the subject of the verb. This use of the attached pronoun with the verb is a sign of closeness and of a direct link between Allah and the land. Particularly significant is that the verb *barakna* appears in the same form a total of six times in the Qur'an. All of the references are to the land or events taking place in it. The following are the verses in question:

And We caused the people who were despised to inherit the eastern parts of the land and the western parts thereof which We had blessed. And the fair word of the Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel because of their endurance; and We annihilated (all) that Pharaoh and his people had done and that they had contrived. (Q 7: 137)

And We rescued him and Lot and directed them to the land which We have blessed for all peoples. (Q 21: 71)

And to Solomon (We subdued) the wind in its raging. By his command it flowed towards the land which We had blessed. And of all things We are aware. (Q 21: 81)

And We set, between them and the towns which We had blessed, conspicuous cities, and We made the journey there by easy stages (saying): Travel in them safely both night and day. (Q 34: 18)

And We gave him tidings of the birth of Isaac, a Prophet of the righteous. And We blessed him and Isaac. And of their seed are some who do good, and some who plainly wrong themselves. (Q 37: 112-113)

These verses establish the status of the land as a recipient of blessings from Allah. The use of the past tense verb in all the above verses, however, raises the question of whether these blessings are somehow limited to an act in the past or represent something trans-historical in nature which is ongoing and eternal. Answering this question depends in part on the different meanings in relation to time conveyed by the past tense verb in Arabic.

The past tense verb has four different possibilities in regard to time.⁵⁵ First, it can refer to an act done in the past which concludes before the speaking occurs, whether the speaking takes place immediately after the act or at a later time. An example for this case would be the sentence, *Kharaj min al-saff* (he went out from the classroom), which refers to an act that was completed before the speaking.

Second, the past tense can be used to refer to the immediate time

period, and in this case the verb is in the past in utterance but present in relation to time. The example for these kinds of distinctions can be seen in the verbs: *ba'tu* (I am selling), *Ishtaraytu* (I am buying), and *A'taytu* (I am giving), all of which indicate an act that is being done in the present through the use of the past tense verb.

Third, the verb can be past in its utterance but refer to a future time. This distinction can be seen in sentences involving supplication to Allah where the verb is used in the past, but the nature of the request is to be fulfilled in the future. For example it is said, *Sa'adaka Allah* (may Allah help you)⁵⁶ where the verb is past tense but the supplication is for a future fulfillment. Also, the making of a promise by Allah to someone can be expressed through the use of the past tense with the actual manifestation being understood to be in the future. The Qur'an is replete with examples of this fine point, thus in the first verse of chapter 108 Allah mentions, '*ina a'taynaka al-Kawthar*' ("We gave thee the Kauthar"), which uses the past tense to indicate the giving to the Prophet of the spring or fountain in Paradise. The verb is in the past, but it is known that this fountain will be given on the Day of Judgment, i.e. a time in the distant future.

Fourth, the time of the past tense has the possibility of being either past or future, and in this case a number of qualifiers can precede and be used with the verb to provide a clue for the time indicated. Extremely interesting in the varying uses of the past tense verb in the Arabic language is their precise correspondence to Islamic teaching. Islam maintains that Allah's actions are not within the linearity of time, since time itself is a created thing. Allah's actions are not subject to time even though we experience these acts and their manifestations within the limitations of time. The uses of the past tense verb in the Arabic language thus conform fully to Islamic theology and can only be accurately understood with this correspondence in mind. For the acts of Allah to be subject to time they would by necessity be restricted by it, which also would mean that the source of the act was subject to the same criterion. In our discussion of the past tense verb, *barakna*, we will deal with the verb from the vantage point of our own experience within time, not that of the act itself as it relates to its source.

If we take the past tense of the verb *barakna* to mean that the act was completed in the past, as a one-time occurrence, we must assume that the nature of the blessing in this context was confined to the historical past. However, even with such an implausible and restricted understanding of the verb, Allah's blessing is of such a nature that the immediate present and the future benefit from the residues of an act of blessing accomplished in the past. Every element of our existence at present is indeed directly linked to Allah's extension of blessing at some point in the past. The most significant manifestation of this fact is the Prophet, from whose sending as a mercy to mankind we continue to draw blessings and benefits. If we took the past tense verb *arsalnaka* in the Qur'an, "We sent you as a

mercy to mankind," to be confined to a distant past and, therefore, no longer valid as an act, the interpretation would be a grave mistake. For the Prophet will be "a mercy to mankind" even on the Day of Judgment when Allah grants him the station of intercession, which enables him to intercede for many and save them from Hellfire.

Another past tense verb in the Qur'an with unrestricted application is the one in which Allah says: "We have exalted your fame."⁵⁷ While this verse uses the past tense of the verb *rafa'n* in describing one of Allah's favors to the Prophet, the efficacy of the act is for perpetuity, given the many honors Allah has bestowed upon the Prophet. Among them are the inclusion of the name of the Prophet in the utterance by every Muslim of his profession of faith ("there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger"). In addition, the Muslim call to prayer includes the affirmation of Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah. This was in fulfillment of Allah's statement to His Messenger in the Qur'an, "We have exalted your fame," a past tense verb not restricted by time. If we accept this to be the case, we can properly consider the second possibility for the past tense verb *barakna* that it is unrestricted by time.

The second possibility is, then, that the verb refers to a constant and ongoing state of blessing. This position is in far greater conformity with majority Muslim opinion, for the scholars have considered the meaning of "We blessed" to represent a constant state, even if the verb implies an act completed in the past. The following commentators are representative in their views on the matter:

al-Zamakhshari: "He [Allah] means the blessings of al-Din and al-Dunya [religion and worldly life], because it [the environs] is the location of worship for the prophets from the time of Musa, and the location of the descending of revelations. It is also surrounded by running rivers and fruit bearing trees."⁵⁸

al-Tha'alibi: "The *baraka* around it is of two kinds; one of them consists of the prophecy, the revelations, and the messengers that were in this land and its surroundings. The other consists of the bounties such as trees, water and useable land."⁵⁹

al-Andalusi: "Its surroundings 'We blessed' is an attribute of praise ... and its blessing is what was bestowed upon it including the spiritual bounties like the prophets, revelations, and the messengers who were sent in that land, and worldly bounties such the many trees, rivers and, fertility of the land. According to the Hadith, Allah, the Glorified has blessed what is between the Euphrates river and al-'Arish and has ennobled Palestine uniquely with Taqddis."⁶⁰

al-Balansi: "Its surroundings 'We blessed' meaning al-Sham. Al-Sham in

the Syriac language means "the good"; and it was called that because of its goodness and fertility."⁶¹

al-Kalbi: "Its surroundings We have blessed" is an attribute for Masjid al-'Aqsa. The blessings are of two kinds; one of them consists of prophets that came to it and its vicinity; and the other of the abundance of agriculture and trees with which Allah endowed al-Sham."⁶²

al-Nawawi: "A worldly blessing with flowing waters and trees, and a spiritual blessing because it is the place where revelation came down, the place of worship for the prophets and their homeland, in life and in death."⁶³

al-Qasimi: "Its surroundings We blessed" means its environs were given sides of the worldly and spiritual blessings. For this Holy Land is the heartland of the prophets, the place of descending of their revelation, and from it are derived agriculture and fruits. Therefore, the divine blessings have encompassed it (al-'Aqsa Mosque) from all directions, and its blessings are multiplied for being in a blessed land and for being one of the greatest mosques of Allah, the Exalted; and the mosques are the houses of Allah. Also, for being the place of worship for the prophets, their place of residence and the place where revelation was sent down to them, so that, blessings were placed in it through their blessings."⁶⁴

In his book, *Haqiq Qura'nia Haul al-Qadhia al-Filistinia*, Dr. Salah Khalidi considers the use of the past tense verb *barakna* in the Qur'anic verses to be "absolute with no restriction or limitations" involved. He further maintains that this usage indicates that the "divine blessing for this blessed land is absolute, unrestricted, without any limitation and it encompasses all types of blessings."⁶⁵ In addition, the use of the past tense, in Dr. Khalidi's view, implies "firmness and constancy," which suggests, "The blessings in the land are fixed and permanent."⁶⁶

The actual manifestation of *baraka* in the land can now be examined. On one level every human being is in reception of Allah's *baraka*, which causes each one of us to grow and develop. We can refer to this as a general *baraka* that is given at the moment of ensoulment of the fetus in the womb given to all of humanity by Allah. No one can exist without receiving this blessing from Allah, which is one of the reasons why rejecting Allah and associating partners with Him is such a grave sin, for rejection implies a lack of gratitude toward the sustainer of all existence. To show true gratitude to Allah is to employ His blessings for purposes pleasing to Him, and one of these blessings is man's intellect. Gratitude for the intellect, from an Islamic point of view, is using it to lead to Allah, and ingratitude for this blessing is to use it to reject the Creator or associate partners with him. Allah informs humans that if they want to enumerate the many

blessings of Allah, they will not be able to do so, because the blessings are limitless, both in number and scope.⁶⁷

A second level of *baraka* is that which Allah designates for a particular person, location, or period. An example of such *baraka* which extended to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was when food was made to increase by his touch;⁶⁸ water was purified and increased with his supplications⁶⁹; and date trees were made to grow when he planted them in Medina with his own hands. For Muslims, the sending of the Prophet, moreover, was the greatest blessing of all, because he is the means through which guidance has been brought to mankind. While Allah is the source of all guidance, the Prophet is the means, and hence he is a blessing to all mankind. By means of this blessing, many people have been guided from darkness to light and from the threshold of Hellfire to reaching the highest abodes of Paradise. The Prophet is a blessing from Allah that will continue to manifest its fruits for humanity in perpetuity.⁷⁰

Muslims consider all the Prophets (peace be upon them all) sent to mankind as a blessing and as a favor from Allah to enable man to be guided to his Lord. The importance of al-Quds is directly linked to all the prophets, who walked, lived, preached, and were buried in this blessed land. One can see that since the sending of the prophets is in itself a blessing to mankind, the fact that they lived and walked in the land al-Quds endowed it with a blessed character. By way of example let us take the city of Medina, which had no blessed character prior to Islam; in fact, it was inhabited by two warring clans. The advent of the Prophet, his presence on its streets, and his burial there elevated and endowed the land with an aspect of paradise. In fact, a certain part of the land of Medina is indeed a piece of paradise according to a very well known *hadith* from the Prophet:⁷¹

Narrated Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him): The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Between my house and my pulpit there is a garden from amongst the gardens of Paradise, and my pulpit is over my astern."⁷²

Al-Quds has been a land traversed during the Isra' by every prophet of Allah. According to the narratives concerning the Isra', all the prophets of Allah were gathered for the Prophet Muhammad, and he lead them in prayer as an Imam.⁷³ This makes the land of al-Quds, the only land that has the distinction of being visited by all the prophets (peace upon them all). In essence, this is an act of blessing that Allah has reserved for this land in contrast to all other parts of His vast realm.

While a person's *baraka* can lead to its transmission to someone or something else, the *baraka* identified with a specific time operates differently. *Barakas* that are related to time are numerous, but for our purposes we will

consider only three of them. The month of Ramadan,⁷⁴ the time of Hajj,⁷⁵ and the day of Friday⁷⁶ are periods of time identified with *baraka*. These periods of time cause an increase in the receipt of blessing for devotional acts performed during them, and also in the rewards given for them. It is common for Muslims to prepare themselves to meet these blessed times as a way of seeking the favor of Allah. These times can also be related to the blessed lands. Performing the Friday prayer or fasting the month of Ramadan in al-Quds has a higher reward than other areas, with the exception of Mecca and Medina.⁷⁷ Also, it is highly praised to embark on the Hajj journey from al-Quds.⁷⁸ Below are a number of *hadiths* that qualify the merits of performing certain devotional acts in al-Quds and the reward associated with them:

Anas Ibn Malik narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever visited Bayt al-Maqdis in a devotional state, God will grant him the reward of a thousand martyrs.

Qutada from Anas ibn Malik narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: Whosoever prays in Bayt al-Maqdis five supererogatory prayers, each one of them consisting of four *rak'as* and reading in the five prayers 10,000 times "Say: 'He is Allah, the One!', then he has purchased his soul from Allah and hellfire shall have no power over him.

Abu Dharr narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I said, O Messenger of Allah! is prayer in your mosque, this one, better than praying in Bayt al-Maqdis? He said, one prayer in my mosque is four times better than a prayer in Bayt al-Maqdis, but what a good place of prayer it is. It is the place where the raising of the dead on judgement day, the place of ingathering; and a time will come upon men that at a distance of a bow shot will see Bayt al-Maqdis would be better for him and more beloved of him than the whole world."⁷⁹

Anas ibn Malik narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: A man's prayer in his own home is counted for him as one prayer, his prayer in the tribal mosque is equal to twenty five prayers, his prayers in the mosque where Fridays prayers are held is equal to five hundred prayers, his prayer in al-Masjid al-Aqsa is equal to fifty thousand prayers, his prayer in the Sacred Mosque (in Mecca) is equal to one hundred thousand prayers, and his prayer in my mosque counts for fifty thousand prayers.⁸⁰

Abu Umama al-Bahili, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated

that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: Whosoever performed Hajj to the House [Ka'ba] and made 'Umra⁸¹, prayed in Bayt al-Maqdis, participated in Jihad and stood guard on the borders, surely this person has completed my Sunani.⁸²

Abu Huraira, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: Do not set out on a journey except for three mosques: Al-Masjid al-Haram [in Mecca], Masjid al-Rasul (peace and blessings be upon him) [in Medina] , and Masjid al-Aqsa [in al-Quds].⁸³

Baraka for locations that have been established by both the Qur'an and the *hadith*, which provide a higher status for them than other parts of the world. Mecca, Medina, and al-Quds are locations that have been assigned a *baraka* for the lands they occupy, a *baraka* that sets them apart from all other parts of the world.⁸⁴ Allah made these three locations sacred and assigned them qualities and favors specific to them. What might be permissible in other locations is deemed prohibited in these sacred locations. Rewards and punishments are increased in these sacred lands. *Baraka* is inherent in a land by virtue of its selection to be a sacred site; whatever unfolds in the land is also determined to fulfill the role chosen by Allah for the land. Therefore, the land of al-Quds is a sacred location that is a recipient of blessings because of specific designation by Allah; whatever takes place on its surface is also a further elevation of its status.⁸⁵

All this being the case, "*barakna*" (We have blessed) can indicate the permanent placing of good by Allah in al-Quds and its surroundings. "Good" can include whatever is of benefit to creation, the best of which is the many prophets (peace be upon them all) that were sent and are buried in the land of al-Quds. Allah identified Himself with the act of blessing by using the verb *barakna* (We have blessed), which is a further indication of the close association between the source and the recipient of the blessing. It is a direct relationship implying a sense of closeness and intimate association with the land by the bestowal of blessing. Allah is the source of all the *baraka* in the world, but in this verse, He could have used a noun or a passive form to speak of a general non-specific state of blessings; however, He used a verb with "We" attached to it as the subject.

In another verse cited above, the *baraka* of Allah was not confined to al-Quds and its surroundings, but extended to include *al-'alamin* (the worlds). Allah declares in the following verse:

And We rescued him and Lot and directed them to the land which We have blessed for all the worlds. (Q 21: 71)

With its mention of *al-'alamin* (all the worlds) this word provides ample evidence for the centrality of the land of al-Quds as a location through

which blessings are extended to the rest of creation. Not only are the surroundings of the furthest mosque blessed, but Allah has placed in it blessings that extend to every element of creation. Hamid Algar in his commentary on *Surat al-Fatiha* defines the term *al-'alamin* in the following manner:

This word expresses the totality of all that exists; certainly we should not interpret it to mean this world and other worlds in space. It might even be the case that this world we inhabit, together with those other worlds which lie for the most part beyond our detailed perception, constitutes a single '*alam*, just one "world." "World" here means an order of being, an aspect or dimension of Allah's creation.⁸⁶

Since the blessings that come to the "worlds" are directly linked to al-Quds, the converse of this will also have to be true. The withholding or removal of blessings from al-Quds would necessitate its absence from the "worlds." Consequently, the blessings upon al-Quds is an act of Allah that manifests itself in every dimension of creation, both in the temporal and spiritual. Hence, we can say that the state of al-Quds in the temporal and spiritual at any given point in history is an indicator of the level of the blessings that are bestowed upon creation. Since the blessed land has a direct connection to Allah its treatment by humans has an inevitable impact: the blessings are increased when its sanctity is observed and are withheld when it is desecrated.

Chapter Three

The Isra' and Mi'raj

One of the most seminal events in the life of Prophet Muhammad was a journey that took him from Mecca to *Bayt al-Maqdis* (the Isra') and then to the heavens and back (the Mi'raj) in a portion of a night. The event has been related to us in the Qur'an¹ and a number of *hadiths* providing greater detail. This episode constitutes a primary Shari'a foundation for Muslims', their attachment to, and affinity to *Bayt al-Maqdis* land. It is therefore important for an understanding of the merits and rights toward *Bayt al-Maqdis* in general and *al-Quds* (Jerusalem) as a city in particular. The primary text in this respect is verse one of chapter seventeen of the Qur'an:

Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque Whose surroundings We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs, for He is the Hearer, the Seer. (Al-'Isra' 17, verse 1)

For Muslims, the verse above makes a direct reference to the miraculous night journey that took the Prophet from Mecca to the "Farthest Mosque" the location of which as *Bayt al-Maqdis* was established in an earlier chapter. Indeed, one of the titles given to chapter seventeen is *Al-Isra'* because of the episode mentioned in verse one. For Muslims a number of questions arise in connection with *al-Isra'* and *al-Mi'raj*.

When did this event take place? Was it during the Meccan or Medinan period? Was it a onetime occurrence or did it occur several times? Some might ask whether the occurrence falls within the realm of the possible or is it simply a myth made up by Muslims at a later date. This question is easily answered from the point of view of a believing Muslim or anyone who accepts the existence of an All Powerful God. This issue is secondary to the fundamental question of the existence of God; everything else is but a mere distraction. What is relevant to our purpose is to examine what Muslims believe with respect to *Bayt al-Maqdis*, for miracles that are accepted as Allah's intervention in His own creation for a reason, which is

sometimes expressed and known but often it is not. A point of contention among Muslim scholars is whether this event was a dream or took place in both body and spirit, which we will examine briefly below.

The answer to many of the questions raised will cause us to consider the stages of *al-Isra'* and the conflicting accounts of it appearing in various *hadith*. These differing accounts actually make a significant contribution to understanding Muslims' feelings toward the al-Aqsa mosque. In some accounts of the *Isra'*, we find that the Prophet is reported to have prayed in Bayt al-Maqdis. We may ask whether indeed this prayer took place, was it before or after the *Mi'raj*, and what was its significance? These are just a few critical questions that are relevant to our main theme.

What is the *Isra'*?

The term *Isra'* comes from a root meaning 'to undertake a journey at night.' Thus the verse and the chapter's name both refer to the night journey undertaken by the Prophet to Bayt al-Maqdis, aided by the angel Jibril. Even though the word *Isra'* itself means to travel at night, the verse in Arabic uses an adverbial expression (*laylan*) meaning 'by night' which is understood to imply that the entire event took place in only a portion of the night. The miraculous aspect of this journey is not that it took the Prophet from Mecca to Bayt al-Maqdis but that it was completed in a portion of the night – something impossible at that time considering the modes of transportation available. People contemporary with the Prophet viewed this journey as impossible for it would have taken about a month in each direction. The historical context of the miracle is therefore important. The length of the portion of the night is not made clear to us; it is left to the imagination to contemplate this aspect of the miracle.

The *Mi'raj*, on the other hand, derives from a root meaning 'to ascend a ladder,' and it refers to the Prophet's journey to the heavens going by way of a jewel laden ladder the base of which is at the center of a gate leading into another world. The gate is believed by Muslims to be located in al-Quds (Jerusalem) and it constitutes the link between this realm and the heavens, which explains in part the choice of the location for the Prophet's journey to meet his Lord. While it is accepted as a fact that the Prophet did travel to the heavens, the word *Mi'raj* does not appear in the Qur'an, the only references to it are in the *hadith*. The *Mi'raj* is considered the second stage of an episode beginning with the *Isra'*. An absence of the word itself in the Qur'an is not the same as the lack of Qur'anic textual proof to support it, as can be seen from verses 5-18 of chapter 53.

In verse 9 we are informed of the Prophet being drawn near to the distance of "two bows length, or even nearer," and in verse 14 that he came "near the Lote-tree of the utmost boundary." The reference to the "two bows length, or even nearer" had two possible meanings for commentators of the Qur'an with the majority maintaining that it refers

to Jibril while some see it as referring to the Prophet being drawn near to Allah.² As for the "Lote-tree," it is understood to indicate the Prophet's travel toward the "utmost boundary," the location of the meeting with Allah.³ The meeting with Allah has been a subject of debate among scholars. One group of scholars has maintained that the Prophet did not see his Lord with his own eyes, but he witnessed Him through his heart's inner eye, while others hold the view that he did actually see Him, this being possible for him as a Prophet.⁴

When Did the *Isra'* Take Place?

As to the date of the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj*, all scholars agree that it took place in the Meccan period of the prophetic mission but they differ on the exact date, month and year. The most widely cited narration is that of Ibrahim al-Harbi who states that it took place on the 27th day of Rabi' al-Akhir, one year before the migration to Medina. However, al-Harbi's position has been challenged by a number of other scholars. Among them Ibn Hajar disputes the dating as one year before migration while al-Qadi 'Iyad considers five years after the beginning of the revelation to be a more likely date.⁵

In the *Sira* of Ibn Katheer we find a number of possible dates mentioned. He quotes Ibn 'Asaakir as placing the event ten years after the beginning of the prophet's mission, al-Bayhaqi as affirming the date of one year prior to the emigration, and Al-Hakm as affirming the date of 16 months before the move to Medina.⁶ What is certain is that the event took place in the Meccan period most likely towards its end rather than the beginning. The narrations of one year and 16 months are very close, the difference of only four months indicating perhaps an error in oral transmission.

We may also be certain that the event took place after the death of Khadija, the Prophet's first wife, which would place it at least three years prior to the emigration to Medina.⁷ There is a divergent account that places it prior to her death, in light of her having spoken of her prayers with the Prophet, the prayers which were fixed definitively during the *Mi'raj*.⁸ This account runs contrary to the established consensus that the episode took place after her death.⁹ Furthermore, the Prophet had a set of prayers mandated for him before the final prescription of the prayers during the *Mi'raj*.¹⁰ If we take the event to have occurred after the death of Khadija, then the dating of the episode five years into the prophet's mission would be ruled out. However, Ibn Hajar maintains that the one year date is not the object of consensus among scholars; he identifies a total of ten possibilities for dating the event.¹¹ On the other hand Ibn Juma'at in his book, *Mukhtasar al-Seera*, puts the *Isra'* on the 17th of Rabi' al-Awwal and the Prophet's age at the time as 53 years, which would be about one year prior to the migration.¹² In short, the question of the year is not settled, but most evidence points toward the end of the Meccan period, not earlier.

There are also a variety of possibilities with respect to the month and the day of the week on which the event took place. We find, for example, that al-Suddi places the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* in the month of Dhu al-Qa'da, al-Zuhri and 'Urwa mention Rabi' al-Awwal, while al-Hafiz 'Abd al-Ghani b. Surur al-Maqdisi chooses the 27th of Rajab as the date.¹³ There are also two days of the week used in reference to the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj*, Monday and Friday.¹⁴ Both Monday and Friday have significance in Islamic spirituality. Monday is known to be the day on which the Prophet was born, and as such it is highly regarded and is recommended for additional acts of worship including voluntary fasting outside the Month of Ramadan. Friday, on the other hand, is the day Adam was created, was given an abode in paradise, and placed down on earth; the day of prayers for the Muslims; and according to a number of *hadiths* the day on which judgment day will take place. It may be for these reasons that the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* were assigned to a Monday or a Friday. At present, the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* are celebrated in the Muslim world on the 27th of Rajab, signifying an acceptance of this date among Islamic institutions, the rejection of all other narrations is the result of state organization of religious festivals.

The Events of the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj*

We now turn our attention to the event itself and attempt to discover what took place during this journey. The sources offer two possibilities for the event: 1. it was a real event including both the spirit and the body; 2. it was a dream that came to the Prophet and did not involve the physical motion on his part. Both possibilities regard the event as a form of revelation since prophetic dreams are considered a form of Divine communication to prophets. A clear example of this can be seen in the narrative of the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) in which he saw himself sacrificing his only son; he set about doing so until Allah intervened to save the child and ordered an animal to be sacrificed in its place.¹⁵

Some have argued that the sequence of *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* took place more than once, one time in body and spirit and another time in a state of sleep. The majority of Muslim scholars have taken the position that it took place only once, and in both body and spirit. They offer verse one of chapter seventeen as evidence.¹⁶ For the verse begins with "Glory be to Him," argue the scholars, which is used for a matter of great significance, not a mere dream. Furthermore, the Quraysh would not have raised any objections if the Prophet had said, "I had a dream in which I took a night journey to Bayt al-Maqdis and back in a short period of time." However, the Quraysh used the incident in an attempt to discredit the Prophet and his of followers. The fact that it was a miracle in body and spirit made the episode of the *Isra'* so difficult for the Quraysh to accept and therefore they embarked on testing the Prophet's knowledge of Bayt al-Maqdis.¹⁷ The Prophet answered every question they had about Bayt al-Maqdis,

providing specific descriptions of the city and the roads leading to it.

Another critical issue which has caused disputation among Muslim scholars is whether the Prophet saw Allah with his own eyes or not. The first opinion is that of Ibn 'Abbas who affirms the seeing of Allah by the Prophet and with his own eyes.¹⁸ The second originates with 'Aisha who argued that it was a seeing, but by the means of the heart, and not through the naked eye.¹⁹ Furthermore, 'Aisha cited the Qur'anic verse, "We appointed the vision which We showed you as a test for mankind,"²⁰ maintaining that the Prophet did not make the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* in his body; but only in his spirit. In support of this, 'Aisha testified that the body of the Prophet was not absent at any point during the night of the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj*. However, 'Aisha's testimony was not accepted as decisive since at the time she was not yet married to the Prophet and did not share a bed with him until after the migration to Medina, which means that her testimony must have been based on a third party left unidentified by her. 'Aisha's position therefore conflicts with the dominant opinion and the verse cited by 'Aisha cannot be regarded as sufficient proof to negate the miraculous nature of the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj*.

In the same connection, 'Aisha also cited verse 103 of chapter 6, stating: "Vision comprehends Him not, but He comprehends all vision,"²¹ which might imply the impossibility of humans seeing God with their own eyes. To this Imam al-Nawawi and Ibn Hajar have responded that the verse speaks of the ability to comprehend and encompass Allah, which is impossible for any human, but does not negate the possibility of seeing him which, in the view of both of them, is something made possible by His permission on judgment day, the verse does not constitute proof of absolute impossibility. Imam al-Nawawi further commented that 'Aisha's statement was not based on any *hadith* she had from the Prophet, because if she had had one she would most certainly have used it. For al-Nawawi, 'Aisha's position is based on her *istinbat* (inference or deduction) from the Qur'anic verse, and a number of companions have disagreed with her on the subject. Accordingly the issue becomes one of Usul (principles of jurisprudence), since the expressed position of a given companion is challenged by another companion endowed with understanding; the earlier opinion loses its validity and is no longer admissible as evidence.²² The position of Ibn 'Abbas is straightforward and has a number of *hadiths* in support of the position that the Prophet saw his Lord during the *Mi'raj*. Ibn 'Abbas is reported to have said: "As for us, the children of Bani Hashim, we say that Muhammad has seen his Lord twice," a statement he supports with various narrations of *hadith* and statements by companions. This is the position taken by the majority of Muslim scholars.²³

Hadiths Describing the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj*

Hadith collections include a number of narratives of the event with

some clear differences present among the various reports, on the basis of which a number of conflicting conclusions have emerged. In order to represent the most widely accepted narration of the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* we will use the *hadith* appearing in *Sahih al-Bukhari* as the foundation and then indicate differences from other reports. The decision to use al-Bukhari is due to the fact that it is the most widely accepted collection of *hadith* and is recognized, at least among Sunni scholars, as containing the most authentic narrations of prophetic reports. In doing so we are only attempting to narrow the field and deal with a manageable set of reports, not to exclude or discount others. The following *hadith* describing the events of the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* appears in *Sahih al-Bukhari*:

Anas ibn Malik said that the Messenger of Allah said: "The Buraq was brought to me. It was a white animal somewhat taller than a donkey, but smaller than a mule. Its step covered a distance equal to the range of its vision. I mounted it and rode until I was brought to Jerusalem. Then I tied it to the ring which the prophets use. Then I entered the mosque and prayed two *rak'ats* there. I came out and Jibril brought me a vessel of milk and a vessel of wine. I chose the milk and Jibril said, "You have chosen the *fitra*."

Then he went up with me to the first heaven. Jibril asked for it to be opened and a voice said, 'Who is it?' He replied, "Jibril." The voice replied, "Who is with you?" He replied, "Muhammad." It said, "Was he sent for?" He replied, "He was sent for," and the door opened for us. I found Adam who welcomed me and prayed for me. Then we went up to the second heaven and Jibril asked for it to be opened. A voice said, "Who is it?" He replied, "Jibril." It said, "Who is with you?" He replied "Muhammad." It said, "Was he sent for?" He replied, "He was," and the door was opened for us. There I found my cousins, 'Isa ibn Maryam and Yahya ibn Zakariyya. They welcomed me and prayed for me. Then we went up to the third heaven and the same thing happened. It was opened for me and there was Yusuf. He had been given half of all beauty. He welcomed me and prayed for me. Then we went up to the fourth heaven and the same thing happened. I found Idris, and he welcomed me and prayed for me. Allah said, "We raised him up to a high place." (Ch. 19, V. 56) Then we went up to the fifth heaven and the same thing happened. There was Harun who welcomed me and prayed for me. Then we went up to the sixth heaven and the same thing happened. There I found Musa who welcomed me and prayed for me. Then we went up to the seventh heaven and the same thing happened. There I found Ibrahim leaning against the Frequented House (Al-Bayt al-Ma'mur). Every day, seventy thousand angels enter into it and do not emerge.

Then he took me to the Lote-tree of the Furthest Limit whose leaves are like the ears of elephants and whose fruits are like earthenware vessels. When a command from Allah covers it, what is covered undergoes a change, which no creature is capable of describing due to its sublime beauty. Then Allah revealed to me what He revealed and He made fifty prayers every day and night obligatory for me. I came down to Musa and he asked, "What did your Lord make obligatory for your people?" I replied, "Fifty prayers." He said, "Go back to your Lord and ask Him to lighten it. Your community will never be able to do it. I have tested the Banu Isra'il and know by experience." So I went back to my Lord and said, "My Lord, lighten it for my community!" So He deducted five prayers. I went back to Musa and said, "He deducted five for me." He said, "Your community will not be able to do that, so go back and ask Him to lighten it."

I kept going back and forth between my Lord and Musa until Allah said, "Muhammad, they are five prayers every day and night. Each prayer counts as ten, so that makes fifty prayers. Whoever intends to do something good, and then does not do it, a good action will be written for him. If he does it, then ten will be written for him. Whoever intends to do something bad and does not do it, nothing will be written against him. If he does it, then one bad action will be recorded." Then I went down to Musa and told him about that. He said, "Go back to your Lord and ask Him to lighten it." The Messenger of Allah said, "I have gone back to my Lord so often that I am ashamed before him."²⁴

In his work, *al-Siraj al-Wahhaaj fi Haqaiq al-Isra' wa Al-Mi'raj*, Abu Ishaq Al-Nu'mani al-Shaafi'i narrates a total of 14 *hadith* on the subject, each slightly different from the others. Taken together, they constitute a well-authenticated collection on the subject. Abi Ishaq also mentions at the end of his work the presence of two complete and extensive *hadith* collections on the subject, one by al-Hafidh 'Abd al-Ghani al-Maqdisi and the second by al-Shaykh Sulayman bin Suliman al-Bussti entitled, *Shifa' al-Sudur*.²⁵ Ibn Katheer also narrates a number of *hadith* relating to these events that differ from the one cited above and add more details. The *hadith* related from Anas ibn Malik by Ibn Katheer (cited by Abi Ishaq as well) has the following additions in the beginning:

We (the Prophet -peace and blessings upon him- and Jibril) ended up in al-Bayt al-Muqaddas and Jibril offered me three containers [in another version of the hadith it says only two containers, and another mentions four], one with milk, one with water and one with wine, and I drank the milk, and Jibril said you have chosen the *fitra*. ... Then Adam and the rest of the prophets after him were

sent forth and he (peace and blessings upon him) led them in prayers on that night."²⁶

The above *hadith* is taken from Ibn Katheer's commentary on the first verse of chapter 17. It seems that the *hadith* originating with Anas ibn Malik has a number of variants resulting from different chains of transmission, as we can see from the two mentioned above. The Bukhari *hadith* takes precedence over that used by Ibn Katheer since one comes from a *muhadith* while the other is from a commentary on the Qur'an. Since the *Muhadith* is concerned with establishing the authenticity of the *hadith* his narration has higher consideration than all others. However, if the *hadith* of Ibn Katheer is also found to be authentic, then it is admissible as evidence and may not be rejected as a description of what took place in the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj*. The addition in Ibn Katheer's *hadith* does offer another important element, the gathering of all the prophets for a meeting and a group prayer led by Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). It is this aspect that is often cited as providing evidence of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him) having received the trust of the land of Bayt al-Maqdis from all the earlier prophets.

Upon examining the text of the *hadith* cited above, it seems that we are dealing with two distinct parts: one being the Prophet's own narrative of what took place and the other someone else's report: "Then Adam and the rest of the prophets after him were sent forth and he (peace and blessings upon him) lead them in prayers on that night". In al-Bukhari's *hadith* we see an immediate transition from the drinks test to a meeting with Adam in the first heaven and other prophets in the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh heaven, with each time a prayer being offered by the resident of the particular level visited. It might be that this prayer was confused with the initial stage of the *Isra'* and a collective prayer was included in the first stage of the episode.

In the second major *hadith* collection, *Sahih Muslim*, the *hadith* concerning the *Isra'* has the prophet reaching Bayt al-Maqdis, "entering the mosque and praying two rak'ats then going out."²⁷ In terms of *hadith* collection, *Sahih Muslim* is ranked high, but has slightly less authority, for purposes of legal judgments, than *Saahih al-Bukhari*. However, a *hadith* ranked as authentic and meeting the criteria of both Bukhari and Muslim has much higher authority as evidence than either of them individually. Thus, from *Sahih Muslim* we derive an authentic *hadith* that shows the Prophet praying in Bayt al-Maqdis which does not appear in *al-Bukhari's* collection. Another reference to this prayer is found in al-Qadi Mujeer al-Deen al-Hanbali's, *al-'Uns al-Jalil bi Tareekh al-Quds wa al-Khaleel*, where he quotes another *hadith* which goes farther than the one cited by Ibn Katheer. There the Prophet is reported to have said:

When I entered the mosque (al-Aqsa) I found the prophets and

messengers had assembled there for me, having emerged from their graves. They were sitting in rows awaiting my arrival and they greeted me. I said, 'O Jibril who are they?' He said, 'they are your brothers, the prophets and messengers. Quraysh claims that Allah has partners, the Christians claim that He has a son, so ask these prophets does Allah have any associates?' Then he (Jibril) read "And ask all other prophets whom We sent before you if We have ever appointed any other gods to be worshiped beside the Beneficent."(al-Zukhruf 43, Verse 45) Then Jibril assembled them for prayers and advanced me and I led them in a two rak'at (prostration) prayer.²⁸

In Mujir al-Deen's account, we see all the prophets being "assembled" for an important encounter with Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) who is being guided by Jibril and called upon to ask them if "Allah has any associates." Jibril answers the question with a verse from the Qur'an, which is understood to have been revealed in the al-Aqsa mosque in al-Quds on the occasion of the *Isra'*. At the end the *hadith* cited by Mujir al-Deen, we find another marked difference with al-Bukhari's narration for the Prophet is seen leading all the prophets in prayer and being advanced to this role by none other than Jibril himself. The significance of this for the Muslim understanding of the events of the *Isra'* and the status of Bayt al-Maqdis is obvious.

Leading all the prophets in prayer meant that the Prophet's role was not limited to being the designated leader of the Muslim community, for he was also chosen to lead all the prophets in prayer, thus confirming his high rank. It seems from the *hadith* that all the prophets agreed to be led in prayer by the Prophet Muhammad, for they were all gathered there for his sake. In general, leading others in prayer is often a sign of the spiritual rank of the one assigned the role, as indicated in this case by the Prophet being forwarded by Jibril. Also, we may understand this to mean that the role of the Prophet Muhammad is to abrogate the revelations of earlier prophets and claims by their followers to continuity of mission for the prophets accepting to pray behind him is a clear act of submission to the new reality represented by him.

The Prophet's prayer in Bayt al-Maqdis and at the al-Aqsa mosque is central to Muslim spiritual affinity and connection to the location. Al-Aqsa stands apart from all other mosques, for it is the location where their Prophet led his predecessors in prayer, and the spot from which his ascension to the heavens began. The two factors have combined to produce a lasting imprint on the hearts and minds of all Muslims without exception. One possible meaning for the prayers in which he led all the other prophets might be a transfer of title to Bayt al-Maqdis and the al-Aqsa mosque, not in a real material sense, but in a spiritual sense to the last Prophet and what he represents. In such a case, the title of owner

is held by the last vicegerent on earth who is given authority to rule, by the permission of Allah, over the sacred territories in Mecca and Bayt al-Maqdis. According to Islamic understanding, real title to and true ownership of any and all parts of this earth (and the entire universe for that matter) belong to Allah and He has the say on what is to be done with them. Therefore, a spiritual title to a sacred site held by a community is always subject to Allah's continued approval of the holding of a given title and allowing it to be asserted. It is therefore possible for a spiritual title to be held by a community, but not allowed to be continuously asserted, for a purpose that Allah alone knows.

Further, praying behind the Prophet is an indication, for Muslims at least, that the earlier prophets were surrendering to the last vicegerent and accepting to be his followers, for the prayer has the highest rank in terms of agreeing to follow someone more than a worldly position. Prayer is a relationship of man to Allah and accepting to follow someone in the expression of that relationship is a far more important undertaking than any worldly protocol.

Al-Imam al-Nawawi, a Shafi'i scholar, in response to the question whether it is firmly established that the Prophet did actually lead all the prophets in prayer, remarked: "Yes, it is firmly established that the Prophet did lead all the prophets (may Allah's blessings be upon them all) in prayers on the night of *Isra'* in Bayt al-Maqdis. It is possible that this took place before his ascension to the heavens, and it is also possible that it took place after his descending from the heavens."²⁹ In al-Nawawi's mind the prayer in Bayt al-Maqdis is thus firmly established, but its precise timing is open to dispute. In addition, whether it took place before or after the ascension will affect the question of precisely what the prayers consisted of. As can be seen from the long *hadith* in al-Bukhari, the prayers of Islam were prescribed in the heavens, and thus if the Prophet led all prophets in prayers before the ascension then some other kind of prayer must have taken place. For Imam al-Nawawi, the prayers were obligatory before the *Isra'*, given clear evidence in the Qur'an calling on the Prophet to remain awake during the night for prayers.³⁰ However, the word 'prayer' in Arabic (*Salat*) has a specific and a general meaning: the former is a set of motions and actions mandated by the Shari'a and the latter encompasses every form of worship and supplication to God without any clearly defined characteristics. If the prayer led by the Prophet took place before the ascension, it would have been of the general kind, and if after, of the specific kind.

In addition to al-Nawawi, al-Imam al-Suyuti in his, *al-Ayat al-Kubra fi Sharh Qissat al-Isra'*, maintains that the prayer actually took place when the Prophet descended from the heavens to Bayt al-Maqdis. Al-Suyuti argues that when the Prophet first came to Bayt al-Maqdis his intention was to attend to the purpose of his coming, namely to enter into the Divine presence; in this context the prayer can be seen as delaying the encounter.

Also, the Prophet is seen asking Jibril in each level of the heavens about the prophet who was meeting him; if he had already prayed with prophets in Bayt al-Maqdis, he would have had no need to inquire, for they would already have been known to him. It might be that they were so numerous at the prayer gathering in Bayt al-Maqdis that it was impossible for him to recall all of them. However, it seems that the main prophets mentioned in the *hadith* would have been in close proximity to the prophet during the prayers. For al-Suyuti, the most likely narration is the one that places the prayers at the end of the episode, not the beginning, appropriately so considering that the Prophet had been summoned to a meeting with Allah and anything else would have served as a distraction from the purpose of the journey. After the meeting with Allah and being recognized as the slave of Allah, the Prophet returned to earth to take his place as a leader of all prophets; he was caused to lead them in prayer by Jibril, who only fulfills Allah's commands. It was His intention for the Prophet to be the Imam of all earlier prophets.

The *hadiths* cited above, in addition to a number of Qur'anic verses, establish the veracity of the *Isra' and Mi'raj* episode. In addition to chapter 17 in the Qur'an, chapter 53 is largely dedicated to this episode and all the explicit and implicit significance it ascertains. Commentators on the Qur'an have maintained that chapter 53 encompasses the complete meaning of submission to Allah, based upon the comprehension of what is revealed to mankind through the agency of the Prophet. The unifying theme of chapter 53 is the contrast between following the revelation of God and basing one's life on mere supposition.

The *Isra' and Mi'raj* event was a defining moment for those who believed and those who had weakness in their hearts. When the Prophet told the people of Mecca about what had happened to him the night before, they mocked him and called him names. A number of those who believed in his message committed apostasy because they could not bring themselves to accept this miracle. On the other hand, Abu Bakr, when confronted by the leaders of the Quraysh about what the Prophet had said, proclaimed: "If he said it, I believe it." Abu Bakr after this event came to be known by al-Siddiq, a name that means one who confirms the truth, which means that the first Caliph had earned his well-known title from the *Isra'* episode as well.

In the *hadith*, the Prophet had the honor of leading all the previous prophets in prayer. For the prophets to pray behind the final messenger signifies on their part the recognition of his role as an abrogator of rights that had been accorded by them to their respective communities. In a famous *hadith*, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) told 'Umar, that "if Musa were alive today, he would have no choice but to follow that which I brought forth." It is in this abrogation of earlier prophetic dispensations that the significance of the congregational prayer in al-Quds lies. Furthermore, this prayer happened as part of the Prophet's journey,

which included the *Mi'raj*, and an encounter with God. The prayer of the Prophet also stands in fulfillment of verse 81 of chapter three, which states:

When Allah made His covenant with the prophets, (He said): "Here are the scriptures and the wisdom which I have given you. And afterwards there will come to you a messenger, confirming that which you possess. You shall believe in him, and shall help him." He said: "Will you affirm this and accept the burden I have laid on you in this matter?" They answered: "We will affirm it." He said: "Then bear witness; I will bear witness with you." (*Al-Imran* 3, verse 81)

The verse above constitutes a foundation of belief, for it conveys the fact that every prophet has foretold his followers the future coming of the last Prophet, Muhammad and asked them to believe in and support him. For Muslims, Islam represents the final revelation, and Allah in the Qur'an says that He does not accept any other path to him except al-Islam, and all the prophets, as seen in the verse above, have accepted the covenant from Allah. All the prophets praying behind Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is a further amplification of the covenant and proof that the only acceptable path to Allah henceforth would be Islam.

Thus the episode of the *Isra'* with the Prophet's prayer in Bayt al-Maqdis, his meeting with all the prophets, his ascension to the heavens and his encounter with Allah, are all monumental events which have had a profound impact on the consciousness of Muslims. The effect of the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* is far reaching and provides a rich connection to the first prophet, i.e. the first human, Adam, mediated by all the prophets who proclaimed the same principle, to glorify the One and Only God. The details of the *Mi'raj* provide a view of the unseen world, paradise, hellfire and the heavens, together with all they contain. It might be observed that the details concerning Bayt al-Maqdis are few by comparison. This is true, but does not lessen the significance of those details for the sacred status of Bayt al-Maqdis and al-Aqsa.

Chapter Four

Islam, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), and Claims on Bayt al-Maqdis

The Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) plays a central role in events related to Al-Quds (Jerusalem) according to all three religions that invoke him, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Much is known in the West concerning both Judaism and Christianity and their connection to Ibrahim (Abraham) but Islam's claims are often ignored, if not altogether dismissed. Notwithstanding the politically correct contemporary dialogue of the "Abrahamic Faiths," Islam's relations to the Prophet Ibrahim are always looked upon as lacking in authenticity and having no foundation of their own. Instead of tracing the various debates by outsiders which attempt to deny and completely dismiss any real connection of Islam with prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), we will present Islam's view of a significant historical figure who continues to influence contemporary political discourse.¹

What are Muslim views of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him)? Who was he and what are Islam's relations to him? What do the Qur'an and *hadith* say about him, and what relevance does he have to the study of Bayt al-Maqdis from an Islamic perspective? In contemporary public discourse, one can see frequent reference being made to Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and God's promise of the "Holy Land" to him and his descendants as a way to justify present day political conditions, a problematic approach to both history and theology. It is often the case that scriptures are employed to provide some form of legitimacy to an otherwise temporal human instinct such as greed, and not in pursuit of salvation. When this happens, God seems to be always on the side of the victor after the victory has been achieved and is against the losing side before the loss has taken place; otherwise, the victor cannot wear the robe of salvation.

After the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj*, the second foundation asserted for Muslim rights over Bayt al-Maqdis is the spiritual connection between Islam and the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him). Bayt al-Maqdis played a major role in the life of the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and

his descendants, among them being many prophets including Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him-PBBH thereafter), a direct descendant of Ibrahim through his son 'Isma'il (peace be upon them both). Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) through the *Isra'* (night journey) to al-Quds, linked or reunited the two sacred locations that were associated with Ibrahim and his descendants, i.e. Mecca and al-Quds. In addition, the ascension of the prophet in the *Mi'raj* from al-Quds to the heavens is but another dimension of this connection which extends beyond the earthly plane. It would have been possible for the ascension to the heavens to start directly from Mecca, but it was not the case; rather it was al-Quds that served as the point of departure for prophet Muhammad (PBBH), thusly connecting the two locations identified with the Ibrahamic prophetic cycle.

Muslims hold the belief that in following Prophet Muhammad (PBBH) they are also adhering to the same message brought forth by Ibrahim (PBBH), the declaration of the oneness of God i.e. monotheism. Thus, Islam is the perfection and culmination of this monotheism, which according to Muslim views had been corrupted through the ages, until the Prophet Muhammad (PBBH) re-established it on a firm and permanent foundation. The question is not so much whether a man by the name of Ibrahim (PBBH) actually existed but rather what can be known of him some four thousand years later. What is to be made of the episodes related to Ibrahim (PBBH) appearing in the Qur'an and their departure from the established narratives of the bible? Who was the subject of the sacrifice and what significance does it hold for those concerned? And, finally, who may fulfill God's promise made to Ibrahim (PBBH)?

Physical evidence relating to Ibrahim (PBBH) is very limited, consisting of little more than a number of graves in the city of al-Khalil (Hebron) which are believed by Muslims and Jews alike to contain the remains of Ibrahim and his family, a mention in old Egyptian writings, and references in religious books. Some maintain that religious books are nothing more than a collection of mythical stories produced by humans to assert their claims over all others. While allowing for the reasoning upon which this position is based, I deal here only with the texts and the materials as they are and what they claim to be fact, for it is these that have significance for the adherents of the religions in question.

Ibrahim in the Qur'an

The Islamic view of Ibrahim (PBBH) can be traced directly to a number of Qur'anic chapters that explore various episodes of his life and mission. In these episodes, the Qur'an deals with a similar set of subjects and issues as found in the biblical text but with recorded differences. For Muslims, Ibrahim (PBBH) is not only a prophet mentioned in the Qur'an, but one of the greatest of all prophets. The following is a list of the chapters and

verses mentioning the prophet Ibrahim (PBBH):

Chapter 2	verses 124-127, 130, 132, 133, 135, 136, 140, 285, 260.
Chapter 3	verses 33, 35, 67, 68, 84, 95, 97
Chapter 4	verses 54, 125, 163
Chapter 6	verses 74, 75, 83, 151
Chapter 9	verses 70, 114
Chapter 11	verses 69, 74-76
Chapter 12	verses 6, 38
Chapter 14	verse 14
Chapter 15	verse 15
Chapter 16	verses 120, 123
Chapter 19	verses 41, 46, 58
Chapter 21	verses 51, 60, 62, 69
Chapter 22	verses 26, 43, 78
Chapter 26	verse 69
Chapter 29	verses 16, 31
Chapter 33	verse 7
Chapter 37	verses 83, 104, 109
Chapter 38	verse 45
Chapter 42	verse 13
Chapter 43	verse 26
Chapter 51	verse 24
Chapter 53	verse 37
Chapter 57	verse 26
Chapter 60	verse 4
Chapter 87	verse 19

In these chapters and verses the Qur'an affirms the existence of a person named Ibrahim (PBBH) who lived before Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (PBBH), but the Qur'anic text gives no exact date. What the Qur'an gives us is his name and possibly his father's, which has been subject to various interpretations and understandings. We find in verse 74 of chapter 6 "Azar" as a name for Ibrahim's father, but a number of alternative readings and interpretations of this name have been made in order to reconcile it with lineages appearing in earlier historical sources.

"(Remember) when Abraham said to his father Azar: "Do you take idols for gods? Assuredly, I see you and your people in manifest error." (C. 6, V. 74) In biblical accounts, Ibrahim's (PBBH) father is named Tarih, not Azar. The Qur'anic name of Azar does not appear in any earlier source and there is no *hadith* text to explain this name and its etymology. The most common approach of Qur'anic commentators is to explain the Qur'anic Azar as a title or nickname for Ibrahim's father while accepting Tarih as his proper name.² Why the need was felt to reconcile the Qur'anic and the biblical accounts of the name is not entirely clear. However, the

text of the Qur'an itself makes it possible to reconcile both accounts since the verse is open to multiple interpretations, one being that Azar is a title and not a proper name. The fact that Muslims gave credence to biblical accounts to an extent that made it possible for them to allow for alternative understandings of their own scripture is an indication of the openness of the early Islamic scholars and their readiness to embrace earlier traditions. Others, though, might find in this a clear sign of heavy borrowing from those traditions and when possible using different names to mask that borrowing. Such a notion may be considered but it leaves open the question of why the name should have been changed, a change that does not provide any theological benefits. If someone wanted to change the narrative of Ibrahim (PBBH) and to increase his identification with Islam, erasing or limiting the mentioning of Ishaq (PBBH) in the Qur'an would have been a much better way to do so than providing a different name for his father.

As to the meaning of Azar a number of possibilities have also been offered. These range from the name of an idol identified with worshiper's Tarih, to being an expression of wrong doing or, perhaps the most appealing explanation of its meaning, an expression of power, victory and assistance. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Najjar argues for the last because Ibrahim, (PBBH) who is a prophet to Muslims, would maintain a sublime character even as he attempted to discourage his own father from idol worshipping. Meanings other than power, etc., would indicate a form of disrespect toward one's parents, a highly unacceptable mode of behavior in Islam, especially in the case of a prophet.³

In Islamic sources Ibrahim's lineage is traced back to Nuh (Noah), who likewise is a prophet in Islam, and he is separated from him by a total of nine names on the family tree. If we take the references to Nuh's age in the Torah and the Qur'an which assign him a life span of 950 years, it is very possible that Ibrahim lived during Nuh's last years, which is said to be a period of 60 years.⁴ Our only sources for this are of course the relevant texts.

The narrative of the Qur'an makes it clear that Ibrahim's father was engaged in idol worship and was known to be a maker of idols. It appears that at a young age, Ibrahim (PBBH) became disenchanted with the religious practices of his father and the people in the city, an issue that led to confrontation. This centered on Ibrahim's decision to confront the people in the city by destroying all their idols except the largest one, which he left standing in the temple. The ensuing discussion between Ibrahim (PBBH) and the townspeople centered on the statues being taken as gods while they were incapable of protecting themselves; they lacked the ability of speech and no benefit could come from them. Mocked and defeated by Ibrahim's (PBBH) sharp prophetic logic, the townspeople decided to get rid of him by throwing him in the fire but God intervened in His creation and miraculously saved him from the fire.⁵

This is the first episode in Ibrahim's (PBBH) life documented by the Qur'an. We find Ibrahim (PBBH) in his early years searching for answers and attempting to locate God through his immediate experience, as evidenced by the Qur'anic text, which was impacted by various forms of worship. In the Qur'an we find Ibrahim's (PBBH) name appearing in 25 chapters and 63 verses, with some more detailed than others, and one whole chapter bearing his name as a title. The Qur'anic treatment of Ibrahim is very positive and presents him as an inquisitive, brave and resolute young boy and in his later years as a wise, humble and merciful man.

The Qur'an mentions that Ibrahim (PBBH) and his son-in-law the prophet Lot left the lands of their forefathers and migrated to the Bayt al-Maqdis. We are not given any specifics as to the exact place to which they migrated; the Qur'an uses an all-encompassing reference to the area "which We have blessed for all people." What is implied in this verse is that the land was blessed before their arrival, which is in conformity with the prophetic report concerning the first and second houses of worship placed on earth by God, Mecca and Bayt al-Maqdis, and "between them some 40 years."⁶ The Qur'an does not make specific mention of the blessed land being promised to Ibrahim (PBBH) and his descendants; rather our understanding of the promise comes from his appointment as a leader of mankind, which we will explore in the next section. This is one of many points that run counter to the claim that the contents of the Qur'an were copied from earlier scriptures; had this been the case, then an important and defining promise would most certainly have been carefully copied. Contrary to this, we find no mention of this promise for the Muslims nor for anyone else. Important to us in this episode of Ibrahim's life is simply the fact that he migrated from Iraq to the land known today as Palestine:

And We rescued him and Lot and directed them to the land which We have blessed for all peoples. (Q 21: 71)

Allah's Covenant with Ibrahim (PBBH)

A number of issues arise in connection with God's covenant with the Prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) in the Qur'an, its centrality to Islam and the importance or relevance, if any, remaining today. God's covenant with the prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) is accepted by all three religions but its meaning and the scope of its application are a subject of contestation. We turn therefore to the Qur'anic view of the covenant made by God with the Prophet Ibrahim (PBBH). Chapter two of the Qur'an, the longest, mentions the appointment of the prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) as an imam to all of mankind, alludes to commandments given to him, and establishes his direct connection to Muslims:

And (remember) when his Lord tried Abraham with certain words (commandments), and he fulfilled them. He said "I have appointed you a leader of mankind." Abraham asked "And of my descendants?" He answered, "My covenant does not extend to the transgressors." And we made the House (the Holy Ka'ba at Mecca) a place of assembly for mankind and a place of safety, (saying): "Adopt the place where Abraham stood, as a place of worship." And We imposed a duty upon Abraham and Ishmael to purify Our house for those who walk around and those who meditate in it, and those who bow down and prostrate. And when Abraham prayed: "Make this city a city of peace and bestow fruits upon its people, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day", He answered: "As for those who disbelieve, I shall leave them in contentment for a while, then I shall compel them to the punishment of the Fire, and that is the worst abode. And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the house, (they prayed): "Our Lord! Accept from us (this act); You are indeed the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. O our Lord! Make us submitters to You! And raise from among our offspring a community which will be submitters to You. Show us our ways of worship, and relent towards us. You are indeed the Forgiving, the Merciful. Our Lord! And raise up among them a Messenger who shall recite Your revelations to them and teach them the Scriptures and the wisdom, and purify them (or make them grow). You are the Powerful, the Wise. Who but a foolish man would renounce the faith of Abraham? We chose him in the world, and in the Hereafter he is among the righteous. When his Lord said to him, "Surrender!" He responded, "I have surrendered to the Lord of the Worlds. Abraham enjoined the same upon his children, and so did Jacob: "O my children, Allah has chosen for you the true faith (of Islam), so do not die except in the faith (of Islam)." Or were you present when death came to Jacob? He said to his sons, "What will you worship when I am gone? The answered: "We shall worship your God and the God of your forefathers Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac: the one (true) God. To Him we are submitted. (Q 2: 124-133)

In the first section of verse 124, we are informed that Ibrahim (PBBH) was tried by Allah with certain "words" and that he "fulfilled" or "completed them." Furthermore, the first verse quoted above establishes the appointment of the prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) as a leader of all mankind. In Muslim understanding, a prophet may be sent specifically to his own nation, thus having a limited mission, while others are appointed, like Nuh, Ibrahim and Muhammad (PBBA), for all of humanity. Through Ibrahim's appointment as a leader of mankind every human being, hypothetically

speaking, may have a spiritual affinity with him as his is a universal undertaking. The verse uses the term al-Naas (mankind), which in the Qur'an is a general mode of address, encompassing everyone belonging to the human race. The Qur'an has many distinct modes of address for various groups, and al-Naas is used with a universal sense with some minor exceptions related to the early period of the prophet Muhammad in Mecca, a period not including the verse under consideration. What is implied with the use of al-Naas is therefore the encompassing nature of the appointment of the prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) as reflected in the contemporary world by the claim of affiliation with him made by Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

The question raised by Ibrahim (PBBH) about his descendants is answered with a withholding of the covenant from "the transgressors." What we may understand from this is that the covenant is not racial or based on a blood line, but rather upon upholding the "words" given to Ibrahim (PBBH). Muslims, in following what was revealed to prophet Muhammad (PBBH), understand their relationship to Ibrahim (PBBH) as based upon upholding the exact words given to him by Allah, but in the most recent articulation as vouched for in the Qur'an. The appointment of Ibrahim as a leader of mankind is not founded on any racial or blood classification, even though the prophets come from his lineage. One element among many used for erroneous differentiation among humans is that seen in the external identification of race and color, an approach which the Qur'an condemns as conducive to oppression and injustice. It would be contrary to the totality of the Qur'anic meaning to have Ibrahim's mission and covenant defined in narrow racial terms, for it would then lose its significance as being directed to all mankind. It is precisely this mistaken understanding of Ibrahim's covenant that rests at the center of the question of Palestine and Bayt al-Maqdis, for one group lays claim to him based on narrow racial arguments at the expense of all others, who also have connections with him based on race and blood, but base their claims exclusively on spiritual affinity with him.

Spiritual affinity with Ibrahim (PBBH) is one of the bases for Muslim claims to Bayt al-Maqdis and Palestine; all other forms of "rights" have no bearing beyond the material. Race and racism are materialist criteria and at the crudest level a form of idolatry, for the racist sees himself/herself to be better than others and worships himself rather than the Creator who fashioned but him and all others. It is Ibrahim's spiritual path and submission to God that are the basis of affinity, and everything else is a deviation from it. For the Muslims, Prophet Muhammad (PBBH) is the last messenger to be sent from Allah and his message is the last to mankind. Prophets who are sent to mankind in their own period act in this world as the vicegerents of Allah, and the followers of the prophets, as long as they remain true to the revelation given to them, may act in the same capacity on the earth. In the Qur'an Allah speaks about the Prophet Muhammad

(PBBH) and his followers as the most deserving to be associated with the Prophet Ibrahim (PBBH):

Surely, those of mankind who have the best claim to Ibrahim are those who followed him, and this Prophet, and those who are with him; and Allah is the Protecting Friend of all believers. (Q 3: 68).

Thus, the Muslim claim to following the path of the Prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) is not based on a blood line, but on following what he practiced, Islam: submission to Allah. The covenant that was made with Ibrahim (PBBH) and his descendants is the basis that the modern Zionist uses to lay claim to the land of Palestine, a claim which is rejected by Muslims. The Qur'an rejects the notion that only one branch of the family of the Prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) is to inherit the covenant and then use it to claim Palestine. Furthermore, for Muslims blood relation is not a sufficient criterion to lay claim upon the land in Palestine or any part of the world; it must be accompanied first and foremost by adherence to Ibrahim's path. According to Muslim understanding, Prophet Muhammad (PBBH) is the final messenger, and it is he and his followers who are on the path of submission to Allah in following the last revelation, al-Qur'an.

Interestingly enough, considering the covenant from the biblical point of view also yields a similar conclusion since the "promised land" is given to Ibrahim and his descendants who are not limited to Jews but also include Arabs and all those who follow his path. The biblical text also recognizes that Ibrahim's mission was to all mankind, which opens the same possibilities that Islam does, for every human being to have a portion of the covenant. The covenant is not a racial one; it is a spiritual covenant, one focused on following the path of Ibrahim (PBBH), submission to God. Muslims have an affinity with Ibrahim (PBBH) and consider him a prophet of Islam, and therefore the covenant applies to them if they adhere to its meaning.

The Subject of Sacrifice

One of the well-known episodes in human history is the attempted sacrifice by Ibrahim (PBBH) of his only son. The story begins with prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) who sees in a dream that he is to sacrifice his only son, and after consultation with his son begins to work toward its fulfillment. This episode, even though it occurred some thousands of years ago, is still generating interests, debates and controversies. It is one of the most difficult episodes appearing in the scriptures of the three religions for it involves the sacrifice of a young innocent human life by none other than the father himself. Sacrificing an animal is in itself a difficult undertaking, but the taking of a son's life by his own father in response to a divine command is an enormous burden given to Ibrahim (PBBH). The Qur'an

mentions the sacrifice episode and provides a narrative of it in chapter 37, verses 101-112:

So we gave him tidings of a gentle son. And when (his son) was old enough to walk with him, (Abraham) said: "O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you, so look, what think you?" He said: "O my father! Do that which you are commanded. Allah willing, you shall find me of the steadfast." Then, when they had both surrendered to Allah, and he had flung him down upon his face. We called unto him: "O Abraham! You have already fulfilled the vision. Lo! thus do We reward the doers of good. That was verily a clear test (trial). Then we ransomed him with a tremendous sacrifice. And We left for him among the later folk (the salutation): Peace be unto Abraham! Thus do We reward the doers of good. Surely he is one of Our believing slaves. And We gave him tidings of the birth of Isaac, a Prophet of the righteous.

These verses do not name the son to be sacrificed, the only defining character being "when (his son) was old enough to walk with him." The absence of a specific name in the Qur'anic text makes the verse open to two possibilities, either Isma'il or Ishaq (Isaac). For Muslims, the sacrifice episode is another element put forth in support of their spiritual connection with Ibrahim (PBBH). According to some Muslim sources Isma'il (PBBH) was to become the subject of the sacrifice and its location was the valley of Mecca.⁷ The episode occurred when Ibrahim's son had reached an age when it was possible for him to go places with his father, and Isma'il (PBBH) had been taken with his mother, Hajar, to the valley of Mecca at a young age at a time when he was his father's only son. The story of the sacrifice thus cements the spiritual linkages with the prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) and also provides a direct and unbroken connection with its location. The sacrifice occurred in the valley of Mecca, involving Ibrahim and Isma'il, both of whom are credited with the construction of the Ka'ba, the holiest of all sites.

However, a number of other Muslim sources identify the subject of the sacrifice as Ishaq and the location as Bayt al-Maqdis, not Mecca.⁸ These sources are considered to lie within the mainstream of Islamic thought and are not viewed as any less important even though they do not make a mention of Isma'il (PBBH), who is the ancestor of the Prophet Muhammad (PBBH). If anything, the presence of diverse opinions and the acceptance of either Ishaq or Isma'il by Muslims point to the lack of racialized understandings of the sacrifice episode, treating it first and foremost as a spiritual message to mankind. In either case, the links established between the Muslims and the prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) are very strongly held and constitute a foundational element of the belief system.

The majority belief that Isma'il and not Ishaq (peace be upon them both)

was the subject of the sacrifice is based on a contextual understanding of the relevant verses in the Qur'an. The verses cited above are followed by verse 112, in which Ibrahim (PBBH) is given "tidings of the birth of Isaac," which might indicate that he was born after the episode. However, the Qur'an is not a linear book; the order of events described is not necessarily chronological, an issue that causes many to criticize the Qur'an for an alleged lack of coherence, while for scholars of exegesis the ordering of events is one of the particulars that separate the Qur'an from all other books. The identity of the subject of the sacrifice may nonetheless be inferred from the context of the Qur'an and verses related to both Isma'il and Ishaq (peace upon both).

While I was working on this chapter Professor Cesar Adib Majul handed to me after prayers on Friday March 22, 2002, a "pioneering and modest essay" entitled, "The Intended Sacrifice and its Relations to the Hajj," which deals with the issue at hand. Professor Majul focuses on the Qur'an as a sole source for identifying the "intended" subject of the sacrifice. In reading the Qur'an we find "Isma'il (PBBH) is mentioned twelve times and Ishaq (PBBH) a total of seventeen times." However, according to Professor Majul "both names appear together in six verses (2:133; 2:136; 2:140; 3:84; 4:163; and 14:39)." When we examine these six verses we find that "Isma'il's name always precedes that of Ishaq," which if taken "in terms of literary adab," maintains Professor Majul, would imply "that Isma'il is the older brother."

Professor Majul argues further, that both Isma'il and Ishaq share a set of common "qualities" in the Qur'an and these are the following: "They both worship the same God (2:133). Neither one was a Jew or Christian (1:140). Both were inspired by Allah (4:136), were prophets (19:49 and 19:54), and recipients of Revelation (2:136 and 3:84). Both were of the righteous (saliheen, 21:72; 21:86; and 37:112)." Not all the qualities are shared since the Qur'an "explicitly" assigns Ishaq the attributes of "blessed by Allah (37: 113) and a bondsman of Allah (38:45)." Also, the Qur'an gives Isma'il certain distinctive qualities including that "it is revealed that he was a Messenger (19:54), one among those preferred by Allah to other creatures (6:86) and among the chosen (38:48)." Furthermore, we find two other qualities assigned to Isma'il, "he is a keeper of his promise (Saadiq, 19:54)" and, most importantly for our discussion, he "was of the steadfast (Saabireen, 21:85) or patient."⁹

In the Qur'anic narrative of the sacrifice (37: 100-112) we find the son answering his father, "Allah willing, you shall find me of the steadfast," which is the same quality assigned to Isma'il in chapter 21 verse 85, while no such attribute is given to Ishaq. If we take the order in which Isma'il and Ishaq are mentioned in the Qur'an and the qualities they shared or differed in, a very sound argument can be made that Isma'il was the subject of sacrifice, without considering any external sources. In making this argument on behalf of Isma'il (PBBH), we are only attempting to

provide a context for Muslim affinity to Prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) through his son, the subject of the sacrifice, which is often ignored in discussion of the episode in biblical and Western sources. Despite all this, Muslim attachment to Ibrahim (PBBH) would be no less if the subject of the sacrifice were Ishaq (PBBH) for in Islamic sources he too is a prophet, a son of a prophet, a cousin of a prophet, and a father of a prophet.

The Hajj and its Links to Ibrahim (PBBH)

Hajj, the Pilgrimage to Mecca, is a physical and spiritual act of affirmation of the path of Ibrahim (PBBH), and everyone who performs it does so with the clear understanding of the deep rooted connection with this ancient prophet. As mentioned earlier, the Qur'an speaks of both Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace upon both) as being responsible for the reconstruction of the Ka'ba and upon its completion the call was made to all mankind to come to the site to perform the rights of pilgrimage. In reality, Muslim performance of the Hajj is in a way a declaration of their connection with Ibrahim (PBBH) and of bringing to life his exaltation of the oneness of God a few thousand years earlier. The Muslim rites of Hajj, according to Islamic belief, are the same as those practiced by the prophet Ibrahim, Isma'il (peace be upon both) and their followers in their time. Muslims believe that they are the real and true inheritors of the prophet Ibrahim's message, which is nothing other than submission to the One and Only God, Allah.

The Hajj retraces the footsteps of Ibrahim (PBBH) and his wife Hajar (may God be pleased with her) as she searched the valley of Mecca for water to provide for her thirsty child. In some respects, Muslims who perform the Hajj partake in the agonies of Hajar (may God be pleased with her) and Isma'il and the pleasures of receiving Allah's bounty in the valley. Qur'anic narrative speaks of Ibrahim taking Hajar and her son to the valley of Mecca, which was at the time uninhabited, and leaving them there with some dates and water.

A long and a detailed *hadith* from Sahih al-Bukhari provides an account of the life of Hajar and her son Isma'il and how the latter came to be related to the Arabs through the process of marriage:

Narrated by Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him): The first lady to use a girdle was the mother of Ishmael. She used a girdle so that she might hide her tracks from Sarah. Abraham brought her and her son Ishmael while she was suckling him, to a place near the Ka'ba under a tree on the spot of Zam-Zam, at the highest place in the mosque. During those days there was nobody in Mecca, nor was there any water. So he made them sit over there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates, and a small water-skin containing some water, and set out homeward.

Ishmael's mother followed him saying, "O Abraham! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is not a person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (to enjoy)?" She repeated that to him many times but he did not look back at her. Then she asked him, "Has Allah ordered you to do so?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Then He will not neglect us," and returned while Abraham proceeded onwards, and on reaching the Thaniya where they could not see him, he faced the Ka'ba, and raising both hands, invoked Allah saying the following prayers: "Our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley near Your sacred house, in order, Our Lord, that they establish the Prayer. So put in the hearts of some men kindness towards them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks."

Ishmael's mother went on suckling Ishmael and drinking from the water (she had). When the water in the water-skin had all been used up, she became thirsty and her child also became thirsty. She started looking at him (i.e. Ishmael) tossing in agony; she left him, for she could not endure looking at him, and found out that the mountain of `Arafa was the nearest mountain to her on that land. She stood on it and started looking at the valley keenly so that she might see somebody, but she could not see anybody. Then she descended from the Arafa and when she reached the valley, she tucked up her robe and ran in the valley like a person in distress and trouble, till she crossed the valley and reached the Marwa mountain where she stood and started looking, expecting to see somebody, but she could not see anybody. She repeated that (running between Safaa and Marwa) seven times.

The Prophet said, "This is the source of the tradition of the walking of people between them (i.e. Safa and Marwa). When she reached the Marwa (for the last time) she heard a voice and she asked herself to be quiet and listened attentively. She heard the voice again and said, 'O, (whoever you may be)! You have made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me?' And behold! She saw an angel at the place of Zam-zam, digging the earth with his feet (or his wing), till water flowed from that place. She started to make something like a basin around it, using her hands in this way, and started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, and the water was flowing out after she had scooped some of it." The Prophet added, "May Allah bestow mercy on Ishmael's mother! Had she left Zam-zam (flow without trying to control it) (or had she not scooped from that water) (to fill her water-skin), Zamzam would have been a stream flowing on the surface of the earth." The Prophet further added, "Then she drank (water) and suckled her child. The angel said to her, 'Don't be afraid of being neglected, for this is the House of Allah which

will be built by this boy and his father, and Allah never neglects His people.' The House (i.e. Ka'ba) at that time was on a high place resembling a hillock, and when torrents came, they flowed to its right and left. She lived in that way till some people from the tribe of Jurhum or a family from Jurhum passed by her and her child as they (i.e. the Jurhum people) were coming through the way of Kadaa'. They landed in the lower part of Mecca where they saw a bird that had the habit of flying around water and not leaving it. They said, 'This bird must be flying around water, though we know that there is no water in this valley.' They sent one or two messengers who discovered the source of water, and returned to inform them of the water. So they all came (towards the water." The Prophet added, "Ishmael's mother was sitting near the water. They asked her, 'Do you allow us to stay with you?' She replied, 'Yes, but you will have no right to possess the water.' They agreed to that." The Prophet further said, "Ishmael's mother was pleased with the whole situation as she used to love to enjoy the company of people. So, they settled there, and later on they sent for their families who came and settled with them so that some families became permanent residents there. The child (i.e. Ishmael) grew up and learnt Arabic from them and (his virtues) caused them to love and admire him as he grew up, and when he reached the age of puberty they made him marry a woman from amongst them. After Ishmael's mother died, Abraham came after Ishmael's marriage in order to see his family that he had left before, but he did not find Ishmael there. When asked about Ishmael's wife about him, she replied, 'He has gone in search of our livelihood.' Then he asked her about their way of living and their condition, and she replied, 'We are living in misery; we are living in hardship and destitution,' complaining to him. He said, 'When your husband return, convey my salutation to him and tell him to change the threshold of the gate (of his house).' When Ishmael came, he seemed to have felt something unusual, so he asked his wife, 'Has anyone visited us?' She replied, 'Yes, an old man of so-and-so description came and asked me about you and I informed him, and asked about our state of living, and I told him that we were living in hardship and poverty.' On that Ishmael said, 'Did he advise you anything?' She replied, 'Yes, he told me to convey his salutation to you and to tell you to change the threshold of your gate.' Ishmael said, 'It was my father, and he has ordered me to divorce you. Go back to your family.' So, Ishmael divorced her and married another woman from amongst them (i.e. Jurhum). Then Abraham stayed away from them for a period as long as Allah wished and called on them again but did not find Ishmael. So he came to Ishmael's wife and asked her

about Ishmael. She said, 'He has gone in search of our livelihood.' Abraham asked her, 'How are you getting on?' Asking her about their sustenance and living. She replied, 'We are prosperous and well-off (i.e. we having everything in abundance).' Then she thanked Allah. Abraham said, 'What kind of food do you eat?' She said, 'Meat.' He said, 'What do you drink?' She said, 'Water.' He said, 'O Allah! Bless their meat and water.' The Prophet added, "At that time they did not have grain, and if they had grain, he would have also invoked Allah to bless it." The Prophet added, "If somebody has only these two things as his sustenance his health and disposition will be badly affected, unless he lives in Mecca." The Prophet added, "Then Abraham said to Ishmael's wife, 'When your husband comes, give my regards to him and tell him that he should keep firm the threshold of his gate.' When Ishmael came back, he asked his wife, 'Did anyone call on you?' She replied, 'Yes, a good-looking old man came to me,' so she praised him and added. 'He asked about you and I informed him, and he asked about our livelihood and I told him that we were in a good condition.' Ishmael asked her, 'Did he give you any piece of advice?' She said, 'Yes, he told me to give his regards to you and ordered that you should keep firm the threshold of your gates.' On that Ishmael said, 'It was my father, and you are the threshold (of the gate). He ordered me to keep you with me.' Then Abraham stayed away from them for a period as long as Allah wished, and called on them afterwards. He saw Ishmael under a tree near Zam-zam, sharpening his arrows. When he saw Abraham, he rose up to welcome him (and they greeted each other as a father does with his son or as a son does with his father). Abraham said, 'O Ishmael! Allah has given me an order.' Ishmael said, 'Do what your Lord has ordered you to do.' Abraham asked, 'Will you help me?' Ishmael said, 'I will help you.' Abraham said, 'Allah has ordered me to build a house here,' pointing to a hillock higher than the land surrounding it. The Prophet added "Then they raised the foundations of the House (i.e. the Ka'ba). Ishmael brought the stones and Abraham was building, and when the walls became high Ishmael brought this stone and put it for Abraham who stood over it and carried on building, while Ishmael was handing him the stones, and both of them were saying: 'O our Lord! Accept (this service) from us, Verily, You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.' The Prophet added, "Then both of them went on building and going round the Ka'ba saying: 'O our Lord! Accept (this service) from us, Verily, You are the All-Hearing, the All-knowing.'"269 (2:127)¹⁰

From the above *hadith* we can see that Isma'il was moved with his mother

to the valley of Mecca, and after some time a group of Arabs came and took residence next to them at the spring of Zamzam, which is still running today. The narrative speaks of Isma'il (PBBH) marrying into the Arabs of the tribe of Jurhum. There is no reference to the origin of this tribe Jurhum or whether it was indigenous to the area, and no mention of it appears in the Qur'an. From the hadith we are also informed that Ibrahim (PBBH) visited the area a number of times before and after the death of Hajar (may God be pleased with her), and on two of these visits he encountered Isma'il's wife. On the occasion of the third visit, Ibrahim (PBBH) informed his son that God had commanded him to build a house of worship, the Ka'ba, and Isma'il, the *hadith* states, was eager to help in this project. Both managed to finish the building of the Ka'ba and then Ibrahim (PBBH) was commanded to call people to the House of Allah in order to perform the Hajj.

The rites of Hajj are based on the monumental events associated with the stories of Ibrahim and Hajar on the one hand, and Ibrahim and Isma'il on the other. Since the time of Ibrahim millions, if not by now billions, of people have made their way to the barren valley of Mecca seeking nothing more than to retrace the footsteps of Ibrahim, Hajar and Isma'il in the hope of drawing closer to Allah through these acts of obedience. Muslims from the time of Ibrahim (PBBH) until the present have been engaged in acting out one of the oldest stories in human history, a story which in the mind of the believer is like no other for it is absolutely real.

At the conclusion of the rites of Hajj Muslims have a feast that includes the offering of an animal in sacrifice, which for the believer is an act replicating God's offering of an animal to Ibrahim (PBBH) in place of his own son and a sign of reward for being a patient servant. Thus, the Muslim's sacrifice re-affirms the episode between Ibrahim and his son, which is central to Islamic understanding of the relationship of man to the Creator, Who has the ultimate power over all affairs. The episode of sacrifice is seen as an ultimate example of surrender to the will of Allah by both father and son. Furthermore, the Qur'anic text indicates that neither father nor son had any hesitation, resentment or anger because of the command for this sacrifice to take place.

Even though the above represents the consensus of Muslim scholars, recently a thought provoking alternative has been put forward by Professor Cesar Adib Majul in his unpublished paper, "The Intended Sacrifice and Its Relations to the Hajj," which he has kindly shared with me. Professor Majul argues correctly that the verses of the sacrifice in the Qur'an speak of Ibrahim (PBBH) having "seen a dream" but it does not mention Allah by name, nor does it specify that Allah commanded him to sacrifice his son. For Professor Majul, the dream is not the same as an explicit command, even though in Islamic understanding a prophet's dream is a form of revelation. On the surface, it seems that Allah is commanding His prophet to sacrifice an innocent life, a little boy at that, which is a problem

when examined in light of the totality of the Qur'an prohibiting the killing of the innocent and especially children. To reconcile this apparent contradiction, Professor Majul argues that Ibrahim's interpretation of the dream was incorrect and Allah intervened to rescue Isma'il (PBBH) from being sacrificed and offering an animal in his place. In this way Allah would not be seen as commanding something that He prohibits explicitly in the Qur'an.

While this is a possibility, it actually raises a far more complicated question regarding the status of the prophets: whether it is possible for them to commit an error and also whether they have the ability to engage in Ijtihad (exerting all rational efforts to reach a legal opinion concerning an issue). These two matters are serious and need far more elaboration than is possible in the scope of this chapter. However, we can say that the first point as well as the second has been debated in the past and a number of opinions are registered, but the dominant of them indicate that prophets are protected from error and ijthad for them is not a possibility since they are constantly in reception of revelation.¹¹ What Professor Majul raises is a very important and original point which deserves to be examined more closely, for it provides a departure from the consensus present among Christians, Jews and Muslims in relation to the episode of the sacrifice and its origin as a direct command from God.

Muslim affinity with Ibrahim (PBBH) extends to the physical aspect for in following his spiritual path each male believer is obligated by Islamic law to be circumcised. Islamic sources speak of Ibrahim (PBBH) being commanded to perform a circumcision on himself at an advanced age, which he did. In being circumcised, all Muslim males are declaring their steadfast on the ancient path of the Ibrahim (PBBH). Whether all Muslims are conscious of this when the procedure is undertaken on them is not important; what is relevant is that it is still maintained and seen as an obligation even by non-practicing Muslims. The Muslims maintain that they are the true inheritors of the Abrahamic tradition not because of lineage, which can be established, but because of loyalty to his beliefs and practices. The verse below from the Qur'an best explains Islamic and Muslim connections to Ibrahim:

Surely, those of mankind who have the best claim to Ibrahim are those who followed him, and this Prophet, and those who are with him; and Allah is the Protecting Friend of all believers. (Q 3: 68).

To conclude, the prophet Ibrahim (PBBH) is central to Islam and its followers. Ibrahim's mission was connected to three locations; Iraq, Palestine, and the Hijaz (Mecca is located in the Hijaz), and two of them have well established and recognizable sacred sites. In and around Palestine we find Bayt al-Maqdis (the Sacred or Holy Land) and at its center sits al-Aqsa mosque, a site sacred from the earliest of times and

very much connected to Ibrahim (PBBH) and his descendants. The area of the Hijaz also includes two sacred sites and one of them is also connected to Ibrahim (PBBH), the Ka'ba, while the city of Medina gained its status after prophet Muhammad's (PBBH) migration to it.

When Muslims speak of their affinity to Ibrahim (PBBH) and following of his path, they are also making a link with the sacred sites he was identified with and frequented for the purpose of worship. Thus a Muslim views Bayt al-Maqdis, the city of al-Quds, and the al-Aqsa mosque as his common spiritual inheritance from the prophet Ibrahim, which is reaffirmed through the message and revelation of the last prophet of Islam, the prophet Muhammad. When a Muslim believes in the message of the prophet Muhammad he/she is also explicitly laying claim to all the earlier prophets and the sacred sites identified with them. Since the relationship is one that is based on a belief system to which belief in the veracity of all the earlier prophets is central, to Muslims they all are a reflection of the same message with a common origin, God. The sacred sites are a means designated for a particular spiritual and temporal purpose and it is God who called mankind at every juncture in human history to attend to them. Muslims view their role as one of providing service and protection to these sites and in the mission of the prophet Muhammad it was once again possible to connect two locations that were identified with the prophet Ibrahim under the banner of the most recent followers of his path, Islam. It is in this context that Muslims put forward claims to Bayt al-Maqdis based on their affinity with the prophet Ibrahim.



Chapter Five

Tamim bin Aws al-Daari and the Early Muslim Presence in Bayt al-Maqdis

The question of who were the early inhabitants of Bayt al-Maqdis continues to be the subject of controversy and debate.¹ While it is a relevant question deserving of critical attention, the main focus of this work is to document Muslim reverence to Bayt al-Maqdis; a detailed tracing of early history thus falls outside the scope of our research. More relevant is an exploration of the coming of Islam to the area, the identity of the early converts, and how they came to be Muslims. These questions are best answered by embarking on an examination of one of the early converts to Islam, Tamim bin Aws al-Daari, who traveled from Bayt al-Maqdis to meet the Prophet and embraced the new religion almost nine years before the arrival of any Muslim army in Bilad al-Sham.

Tamim al-Daari is important for a number of reasons; First, his lineage can be traced back to a tribe that inhabited the lands around Bayt al-Maqdis for at least three thousand years prior to the coming of Islam. Second, together with a group representing the regional tribal grouping in the area of modern day Palestine and Jordan, he came to meet the Prophet and embraced Islam in the city of Medina in the 9th year of the Hijra (Islamic Calendar), almost ten years before any Muslim army set foot in Bayt al-Maqdis. Third, Tamim was a Christian Arab, who embraced Islam by going to Medina, and thereby provides clear evidence that Arabs outside the Arabian Peninsula were already converting to the new religion, which counters the long held view in the West that Islam was spread by way of the sword. Fourth, Tamim also was the recipient of a territorial deed of trust (*waqf*) from the Prophet, which continues to exist uncontested today in the city of al-Khalil (Hebron) in modern day Palestine and constitutes one of the largest *waqf* properties in the area.

Our study of Tamim al-Daari will in addition help us know more about the early inhabitants of the land of Bayt al-Maqdis, and its surroundings, together with the process of transformation that occurred in the area before and after the advent of Islam. What is unique about Tamim al-Daari is the

fact that his descendants are still living and many have well documented family trees going back at least 1,400 years.

Who is Tamim al-Daari?

The full name is recorded in the Arabic sources as:

Tamim bin Aws bin Haaritha bin al-Daar bin Haan' ibn Habib bin Numaara bin Maalik bin 'Udi (known as Lakhm) bin Haarith bin Mura bin 'Udud bin Zayd bin Yashjub bin 'Ureeb bin Zayd bin Kahlaan bin Saba'.²

This lineage is found with minor spelling variations in all the well established books of *'Ansab*, an important branch of traditional Islamic studies dedicated to the tracing and authentication of lineages which plays a major role in the science of Isnad (chains of transmission) in turn one of the foundations for hadith transmission. It is not therefore surprising that the lineage of a person like Tamim, a companion of the Prophet should be preserved in Islamic sources.

The lineage given above has a number of elements calling for further discussion. One of the keys to Tamim's lineage can be found in the last name listed, Saba', a name that indicates a Yemeni origin, since it refers to a historical people affiliated with a part of that region. The term also appears as the title of chapter 34 of the Qur'an, which speaks of the episode of Sulayman with the queen of Saba'.³ Although, the name Saba' is identified with Yemen, it is uncertain whether this group of people originated in Yemen, or made their way there from elsewhere and then left again around 3000 B.C. A number of established findings indicate that the tribe Saba' came from the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula, made their way south to Yemen and then moved back north at a later date.⁴ This view is based on tracing the roots of the Arabic speaking people which are related to two ancestors of the Arabs, Qahtaan and 'Adnaan, the first of whom is identified with the development of the southern tribes and the second is recognized as the origin of the northern tribes.

The Arabs who are descendants of Qahtaan are considered by scholars of lineages to have constituted the original Arabs, while those descended from 'Adnaan are those who adopted Arabic and thus became Arab. 'Adnaan is directly related to Isma'il (PBBH), Prophet Ibrahim's son, who is his ancestor. This may explain how relations to the original Arabs began i.e. by intermarriage with them. For Isma'il moved from the land of Canaan to live in the city of Mecca, where he married an Arab, thus founding a new lineage going through his grandson 'Adnaan, who most likely spoke Arabic, his mother's tongue.⁵

The second name that we need to pause at is 'Udayy, known as Lakhm, from whom descended a large tribe known to have settled in

Palestine and the surrounding areas. Lakhm is not a proper name but nick name or an epithet given to 'Udayy which came to be used for those descended from his lineage. The sources maintain that the name comes from a Qahtaani Arab tribe that settled in the area known as Bilad al-Sham (Fertile Crescent) and Iraq.⁶ In what period did these tribes settle there?

Research points to waves of tribal migration moving out from Yemen and pushing northward and settling the areas known as Bilad al-Sham and Iraq. On their movement northward they stopped and inhabited locations throughout the Arabian Peninsula, giving birth to tribal affiliations on a regional level. A similar case can be seen in the westward migration of the Turkic tribes which began from the western part of China and ended at the coastline of Anatolia, a journey covering some 3000 miles if not more. While we can find records of migration from south to the north, some maintain that some of the southern Yemeni tribes originated in the north and then migrated south, which makes them the early inhabitant in the areas of Bayt al-Maqdis and its surroundings.⁷

The earliest wave of Yemeni migration northward is recorded around 3,500-3000 B.C., and the areas of settlement included modern day Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Archeological research and discoveries provide ample evidence for this Yemeni migration and settlement. This should not be taken to imply that the contemporary Arabs in all these areas of the Middle East are the direct descendants of these ancient tribes; in a long process of ethnic mixing additional groups became incorporated into the modern Arab nation we know today. As previously remarked, Arabs are divided into those of original Arab stock and those who at various times adopted the Arabic tongue and became known as Arab. An Arab today, to a large extent, means a person who speaks the language and the term does not imply any racial classification. The Arabs, according to Arab historians, are divided into one group called *al-Arab al-'Ariba* (original Arabs), who are the original Arabs, and a second group named *al-'Arab al-Musta'riba* (those who became Arabized), i.e. those who embraced the Arabic language and the customs of the Arab people.

Tamim belongs to the first group, *al-'Arab al-'Ariba* (original Arabs), which possibly emerged from Yemen in approximately 3,500-3000 B.C. An important sub-group of these tribes is that known as Lakhm and descending from one of the ancestors of Tamim, 'Udayy. Archeological and historical accounts shows the Lakhm tribe to have settled in areas of *Bilad al-Sham* with a heavy concentration in Palestine and in particular the areas between Nablus and Ramallah, southward to Gaza and the eastern parts of the Sinai desert, the city of al-Khalil and the surrounding villages, and the Jordan Valley, including the area of Tabuk. In addition, we find some members of the tribe appearing in parts of Syria and at least in one battle fighting on the side of Queen Zanubia of Tadmur against the Byzantine army around 253-268 CE.

In his most famous book, *Jamiharat Ansab al-'Arab*, Ibn Hazm writes the following about Tamim's tribe Lakhm:

The abode of Lakhm is in al-Sham, between Egypt and al-Sham to the environs of al-'Areesh. Their entry to al-Sham a long time is indicated by reports about their activities in the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic periods mentioned by the historians. And it is said that the group that lifted Yusuf (peace be upon him) from the well was Maalik bin Zu'ar bin Aayub bin 'Aeefa bin Madyan bin Ibrahim (peace be upon him), and it is said that he (Maalik) had 24 children, and they all belonged to the tribe of Lakhm through Zu'ar bin Hujur bin Jazeela bin Lakhm. The strongest of opinions on the whereabouts of the well of Yusuf is that it is located near the village of 'Arraba in the vicinity of Jenin in Palestine.⁸

In another account, the episode of the People of the Cave mentioned in the Qur'an is said to refer to a group from the tribe of Lakhm, followers of the Christian faith, who were oppressed by the Romans at the time and they sought refuge in the cave.⁹ The episode is said to have occurred in the Jordan Valley. It is very likely that the group in question belonged to the Lakhm tribe who did embrace Christianity at an early stage of its propagation before the Romans were reconciled to the new faith. At the dawn of Islam, it is well established that the people of Bilad al-Sham were followers of Christianity, including Tamim al-Daari's Lakhm tribe.

Thus, from the evidence available to us we can ascertain that Tamim belonged to the larger Lakhm tribe inhabiting the areas known at the time as Bilad al-Sham, which was of a Yemeni Arab origin. If we take the dating of the Yemeni Arab migration to the area around 3,500-3,000 BC to be accurate, we can say that Tamim's tribe has a history of some 5,000 years in the area of Bilad al-Sham, of which Bayt al-Maqdis was but a small part.

Tamim and The Lakhm Delegation Arrives at Medina

It is certain that Tamim and a number of representatives from the tribe did travel in the year 9 Hijri to Medina where they met the Prophet and embraced the new religion, Islam. There is, in addition, an authenticated report of Tamim coming to Mecca and meeting the Prophet and embracing Islam at an even earlier stage. In the science of Usul (Islamic principles of jurisprudence) whenever we are faced with two conflicting accounts the first step is to attempt to find a way to reconcile between both of them if possible. In the case of Tamim, such reconciliation is possible if we say that Tamim first came to Mecca, where he met the Prophet, then went back to Palestine and returned with a larger delegation representing the various parts of the regional Lakhm tribe. If such were the case, it would

be similar to that of the people of Medina who embraced Islam on a visit to Mecca before the migration of the Muslims to their city. Nevertheless, the second report is more reliable due to the presence of a large number of people in the group; the events related to it are recorded in a speech given by the prophet on the occasion.

Accounts of the delegation to Medina differ on the number of people taking part in it. One group of scholars says there were only six, and another puts the number at ten. We find some discrepancy concerning the names of members of the delegation. In his book, *Tamim bin Aws al-Daari*, Muhammad Muhammad Hasan Shuraab lists the following four accounts concerning the delegation and the names of it:

The ten according to Ibn Sa'd:

1. Tamim bin Aws
2. Nu'aim bin Aws
3. Yazid bin Qays
4. Al-Fakih bin al-Nu'maan
5. Jublat bin Maalik
6. Abu Hind bin Zarr
7. Al-Tayyb bin Zarr
8. Haani' bin Habeeb
9. 'Aziz bin Maalik - Mura bin Malik (these two names are possibly 'Urwat or Marwaan)
10. Wahb bin Malik"¹⁰

"The ten according to Ibn 'Asakir:

1. Tamim bin Aws
2. Nu'aim bin Aws
3. Yazid bin Qays
4. Al-Faakih bin al-Nu'maan
5. Jublat bin Maalik
6. Abu Hind bin Zarr
7. Al-Tayyb bin Zarr
8. Haani' bin Habeeb
9. 'Uzayr bin Maalik - Mura bin Maalik (these two names are possibly 'Urwat or Marwaan)
10. Wahb bin Maalik"¹¹

"The ten according to Ibn Hajar

1. Tamim bin Aws
2. Nu'aim bin Aws
3. Yazid bin Qays
4. Al-Faakih bin al-Nu'maan
5. Jublat bin Maalik
6. Abu Hind bin Zarr

7. Al-fiayyib bin Zarr
8. Haani' bin Habeeb
9. Haani' bin Habeeb
 - Mura bin Maalik
 - 'Urwat bin Maalik
 - Qays bin Maalik
10. [depends on who is not included in the 9th spot]¹²

As can be seen, the three accounts are in agreement, with the exception of the ninth name on the list. For Ibn Sa'd it is Aziz bin Maalik while Ibn 'Asakir has him as 'Uzayr. Ibn Hajar's list differs with respect to the 9th and 10th names. The variation between Ibn Sa'd and Ibn 'Asakir is very minor, resulting from the misplacement of the dot on the last letter of the name listed and a change of the short diacritical markings on the first from a *fatha* to *damma*. However, Muhammad Shuraab maintains that the actual name of the 9th member of the delegation is either Mura or 'Urwat bin Maalik since he could not find in all the listing of the companions of the Prophet anyone having the name 'Aziz or 'Uzayr and belonging to Bani al-Daar, the tribe of Tamim. He completely rejects the name 'Aziz or 'Uzayr and argues that the most likely name is some type of variation on the second name Mura. Ibn Hajar uses the name 'Urwa bin Maalik al-Daari in reference to a person whose name the Prophet changed to 'Abd al-Rahman.¹³ If we take this into consideration, this will make the number possibly eleven rather than ten since 'Abd al-Rahman does not appear in any other listing.

Two other accounts list the members of the delegation as six or possibly eight in number:

The account of them being six:

1. Tamim bin Aws
2. Nu'aim bin Aws
3. Yazid bin Qays
 - Yazid bin Rifaa'a bin Nu'maan
4. Abu Hind
5. Al-fiayyib
6. Rifaa'a bin Al-Nu'maan
 - Al-Faakih bin al-Nu'maan¹⁴

The following list of eight appears in Sirat ibn Hishaam:

1. 'Utaarid bin Haajib bin Zuraara bin 'Udus al-Tamimi
2. Al-Aqra' bin Haabis al-Tamimi
3. Al-Zibruqaan bin Badr al-Tamimi
4. 'Amr, bin al-Ahtam
5. Al-Habhaab bin Yazid

6. Nu'aym bin Yazid
7. Qays bin al-Haarith
8. Qays bin 'Aasim¹⁵

The name of Tamim does not appear in this list, even though all the other accounts place him at the beginning of their list. However, Ibn Hishaam does mention Tamim in another section of his *Sira*, which lists the names of the Daaryyun who came to meet the Prophet, as follows:

1. Tamim bin Aws
2. Nu'aim bin Qays
3. Yazid bin Qays
4. 'Arafa bin Maalik (whom the Prophet named 'Abdu'l-Rahman)
5. Murraan bin Maalik
6. Faakih bin Nu'maan
7. Jabala b. Maalik
8. Abu Hind bin Barr
9. Al-fiayyib bin Barr.¹⁶

This account of the delegation speaks of only one branch of the tribe, the Banu Numaara, and not the others. However, in the first listing he provides, Ibn Hishaam mentions that the delegation consisted of representatives from the following tribes: Banu al-Daar, Banu Haani', Banu Habeeb, Banu Numaara, and Banu Lakhm. It is possible that the Banu Numaara were leading the delegation and that for this reason their name alone was used in Ibn Hishaam's narrative of the visit. By contrast, in his earlier account he enumerated the names of all the tribes that came to Medina. It is also possible that more than one delegation came from the area at the same time, accounting for the divergence in the names used by Ibn Hisham.

It can also be seen that the second group of names listed by Ibn Hishaam does not at all correspond to the lists contained in the four other accounts. It is possible that Ibn Hishaam used the full names of delegation members, while others used the known nickname or epithet of each one of them.

Ibn Hishaam covers in detail the visit of the delegation and cites the speeches given and the poetry recited by various of its members and the Prophet's response to them. It would be difficult to discount the list provided by Ibn Hishaam in view of all the details he provides. We can hypothesize that the actual delegation was made up of ten people and that two additional names were unintentionally left out by Ibn Hishaam, and other authors found chains of transmission that places those two in the delegation. Among all of the members of the delegation, it is Tamim who is most frequently mentioned and accorded the greatest significance, which makes his absence from Ibn Hishaam the more troubling. Therefore, if we

say that Ibn Hishaam did use the exact names and titles of each member of the delegation, unintentional omission may be the best explanation for this obvious gap in the narrative of Ibn Hishaam. In the process of authentication of texts in Islamic sciences, when we are confronted with differing accounts, one coming from a historian and another is that of a *muhaddith*, that of the *muhaddith* takes precedent over others in reference to accuracy.¹⁷ An earlier account that is narrated by a *Muhaddith* is to be considered more reliable than others narrated by a later *muhaddith* or a historian.

We can conclude that a sizable delegation made up of somewhere between six and ten members from the area of Palestine and belonging to a set of related tribes visited the Prophet in the city of Medina and embraced Islam at his hands. The delegation spoke Arabic, as our examination of the complete account of the visit will make clear. Indeed, their command of Arabic was at a high level, which suggests an Arabic lineage of long standing. The area and the people represented by the delegation adhered to the Christian faith, and Tamim was considered a scholar in the Christian scripture.

Arabic was the native language for the indigenous people who lived in the land we know today as Palestine, which is an important fact that refutes contemporary pro-Israeli views on the area and its Arab inhabitants, which claims the Arabs have arrived at a much later date and some place it in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Not only this argument is lacking in soundness but the early Hebrews Palestine spoke the language of the Canaanites, the dominant group and the ancestors of present day Palestinians. Think how absurd the argument is whereby all around Palestine the area is inhabited by Arab speaking people whose history can be readily documented then we get into a small piece of land in the middle and we say know they actually don't belong and they are foreigners in their own land. To add insult to injury, a group hailing initially from Europe asserts that they are the indigenous owners of this land promised alone by God. If they are the indigenous people of the land then would they need a promise to grant them a deed to that which already belongs to them!

Early Conversion to Islam of Bayt al-Maqdis Inhabitants

The Banu Numaara delegation was the first sign of organized conversion occurring in the lands of Bayt al-Maqdis, and it points to an early Islamic influence upon the population of the area. It should not be seen as a particularly remarkable for the area had been located on Meccan trade routes for centuries before the coming of Islam to have early conversion and contacts. Similarly, the ancient city of Gaza was known by the Meccans in general and the Haashimite clan of the Prophet to be the resting place of the head of the clan, Haashim, who, according to Islamic

sources, died and was buried in the area while traveling in a caravan.¹⁸ The city of Gaza is known by locals as the "Gaza of Haashim," the attribution being seen by local people as an honor.

The Banu Numaara delegation played an important role in the early narrative of the coming of Islam to Bayt al-Maqdis. The large number of people in the delegation points to a broad representation of various parts of the tribe and indicates a significant level of acceptance of Islam among the local population, or at least a lack of hostility and accommodation. It is said that the Arabs were awaiting the outcome of the war between the Muslims and the tribe of Quraysh and once the battle of Mecca determined the outcome, many regional tribes sent their delegations to Mecca and Medina to meet the Prophet and declare their allegiance to the new order. Indeed, the 9th year of Hijra came to be known as the Year of Delegations, a clear reference to the numerous representatives from various parts of the Peninsula, Yemen, south east of present day Iraq, and Bilad al-Sham, who came to meet the Prophet and embrace Islam at his hand.

The delegation consisting of some six or ten individuals entered Medina to meet the Prophet and they called out to him in a loud voice from outside his residence. Ibn Hishaam narrates the following:

Then the delegation of Arabs came to the Prophet. There came to him 'Utaarid bin Haajib bin Zuraara bin 'Udus al-Tamimi, from among the nobles of Bani Tamim including al-Aqra' bin Haabis and al-Zibriqaan bin Badr, one of Bani Sa'd, and 'Amr bin al-Ahtam Abed al-Habhaab bin Zayd. Also, in the delegation of Bani Tamim were Nu'aym bin Yazid and Qays bin al-Haarith and Qays bin 'Asim, brother of ibn Sa'd with a great delegation from Bani Tamim. With them was 'Uyayna bin Hisin bin Hudhayfa bin Badr al-Fazaari.

Al-Aqra' and 'Uyayna had already been with the Messenger at the conquest of Mecca, Hunayn and al-Taa'if, and when the delegation came they were among them. When the Bani Tamim delegation entered the Mosque, they called out to the Prophet from behind his living quarters: 'O Muhammad come out to us!' This loud manner of calling annoyed the Prophet, and he came out to meet them, and they said: O Muhammad, we came to compete with you in boasting, so would you give permission to our poet and *khateeb* [to address you].¹⁹

The sources indicate that Qur'an 49, al-Hujuraat (Private Quarters), was revealed in part concerning the delegation of Banu Numaara who addressed the prophet in a loud manner from outside his home.²⁰ Chapter 49 of the

Qur'an is concerned with the general theme of manners and modes of conduct relating to the Prophet and also one's parents. The chapter is often used to provide general guidelines for the raising of children and commentaries on the subject often begin with a basic understanding of its verses.

Aside from addressing the impoliteness of the Banu Numaara, chapter 49 provides clear Qur'anic evidence for a delegation arrival to Medina and its meeting with the Prophet, in his mosque. This evidence is categorical and beyond doubt. The only possible doubt relates to whether the delegation referred to in this chapter was that led by the Ban, Numaara. Works dealing with the occasions for revelation as well as commentaries on the Qur'an are, however, all in agreement that it was the Banu Numaara delegation addressed in this chapter; these sources also include the exact dialogue which took place between them and the Prophet (PBBH). For the prophet (PBBH) responded in the affirmative to their request that their poet and orator be allowed to address him:

He said: I grant permission to your *khateeb* so let him speak. Then 'Utaarid bin Haajib stood up and said:

'All praise belongs to Allah for His favor unto us and He is worthy to be praised, who has made us kings, extended to us great wealth wherewith we are generous, and has made us the strongest people of the East and the greatest of them in numbers, and the best equipped, so who among mankind is our equal? Are we not the princes of the people and their superiors? He who would compete with us let him enumerate what we have enumerated. If we wished we could say more, but we are too modest to say much of what He has given us and we are well known for that. I say this that you may bring forward the like and anything better.' Then he sat down."²¹

After listening to the delegation's orator, the Prophet (PBBH) directed one of the Companions to answer this speech. The Prophet (PBBH) said to Thaabit bin Qays bin al-Shammaas, the brother of Bani al-Haarith ibn al-Khazraj, 'Arise and respond to the man's speech!' Thaabit rose and said:

'All praise belongs to Allah, Who created the heavens and earth, and established His rule therein, and His knowledge encompassed His throne, and nothing exists but by His bounty. By His power, He Who made us kings, and chose the best of His creation as a Prophet, and honored him with lineage, made him the most truthful in speech, and favored him with good repute, and sent down to him His book, and entrusted him with it above all that

He had created. He was Allah's choice from the worlds. Then He summoned men to believe in Allah's apostle and the emigrants from his people and his kinsmen believed in the Prophet of Allah, the most noble of men in reputation, the highest in dignity and the best in deeds. The first creatures to answer and respond to Allah when the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) called them were ourselves. We are Allah's helpers and the ministers of His Prophet and we will fight men until they believe in Allah; and he who believes in Allah and His messenger has protected his life and property from us; and who disbelieves we will fight him for the sake of Allah unceasingly, and killing him will be a small matter to us. These are my words and I ask Allah's pardon for myself, and the believers both men and women. Peace upon you.²²

The contrast between the two orators is clear. The Banu Numaara orator focused on the deeds and honor of his tribe, as opposed to Thaabit bin Qays bin al-Shammaas, whose speech departed from the traditional Arab norm of being centered around the tribe, and instead exalted Allah and the Prophet. One can see a difference in the worldview presented by each of the speakers. This shift that must be accounted for in any serious study of the Prophet who came to a society heavily centered on the tribe and all its functions but was able to move them to embrace a universal identity, even at times at the expense of tribal interest. After the orators finished the delegation wanted to have its poet dual with the prophet's poet. So after listening to the prophet's orator, the delegation said, 'Give permission to our poet to speak.' He did so, and al-Zibriqaan got up and said:

We are the nobles, no tribe is our equal.
From us the kings are born and in our midst monasteries are built.

How many tribes have we plundered,
For excellence in glory is to be sought after.

In time of dearth we feed our meat to the hungry.
When no rain cloud could be seen.

You can see chiefs coming to us from every land,
And we feed them lavishly.

We slaughter fat-humped young camels as a matter of course;
Guests when they come are satisfied with food.

You will see whenever we challenge a tribe's superiority

They yield and become as a head that is cut off.

He who challenges us we know the result:
His people withdraw and the news about it is heard.

We forbid others but none forbid us.
Thus, at the moment of boosting, we are justly exalted in pride.²³

It is a well-established Arab custom for having versus of poetry in large gatherings in moments of both happiness and sorrow, and each tribe has at least one individual standing ready to serve in this capacity. One of the most valuable treasures left to us from the pre-Islamic era consists of the poetry recited in the environs of Mecca in the Market of 'Uakaaz. Next to the Qur'an and the *hadithi*, this poetry serves as a source and a guide for Arab grammarians. In addition to being a source for grammar, Arabic poetry has served as a historical record of major dynasties, events and battles of both the pre and post Islamic periods.

After the Banu Numaara poet finished delivering his poem, the Prophet (PBBH) called for his poet Hassaan ibn Thaabit to answer in verse. However, it seems that Hassaan was absent from the gathering at the time and the Messenger of Allah (PBBH) sent someone to summon him to come and answer the Banu Numaara's poet:

Hassaan said: 'As I went to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) I was saying:

We protected the Messenger of Allah when he dwelt among us
Whether someone of *Ma'add* liked it or not.

We protected him when he dwelt among our houses
With our swords against every evil and transgressing person.

In a unique house whose glory and wealth
Is in *Jaabiyat'l-Jaulaan* among the non Arab speaking people

Is glory aught but ancient lordship and generosity
The dignity of kings and the bearing of great burdens?

When I reached the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) and the tribal poet had said what he said, I made allusions to what he had said on the same pattern.

When al-Zibriqaan had finished the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said to Hassaan, 'Get up and answer the man,' and Hassaan arose and said:

The leaders of Fihr and their brothers
Have shown a way of life to be followed.

Everyone whose heart is devout
And does all manner of good approves of them.

Such a people when they fight injure their enemies
Or gain the advantage of their adherents which they seek.

Such is their nature-no recent habit.
Verily, know that in creatures the worst of characteristics is
innovation.

If there are men who surpass those who come after them
Then they would be behind the last of them.

Men do not repair what their hands have destroyed in fighting,
Nor destroy what they have repaired.

If they compete with others they take the lead.
If weighed against men famous for liberality they send down the
scale.

Chaste men whose chastity is mentioned in revelation,
Undeified, no impurity can injure them.

Not mean with their wealth towards the sojourner
And no stain of covetousness touches them.

When we attack a tribe we do not go softly to them
Like a calf running to the wild cow.

We rise up when the claws of war reach us
When good-for-naught are humbled by its nails.

They do not boast when they overcome the enemy,
And if they are beaten they are not weak nor despairing.

In battle when death is at hand
They are like lions in Yemen with crooked claws.

Take what you can get if they are enraged
And seek not what they have forbidden.

To fight them is to meet poison and bane
So do not antagonize them.

How noble the people who have the Messenger of Allah with
them
When sects and parties differ!

My heart sings their praises
And aided in its beloved task by an eloquent and ready tongue,

For they are the best of all creatures
In matters grave and easy.”

‘When Hassaan had ended al-Aqra’ said: ‘By my father, this man has been given, his orator and his poet are better than ours and their voices are sweeter than ours.’ In the end they accepted Islam and the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) gave them valuable gifts.”²⁴

Nothing is recorded of what took place after this initial interaction but sources indicate that the whole delegation embraced the new religion at the hands of the Prophet. (PBBH) Similarly, nothing is recorded concerning what was said by the Prophet (PBBH) to the delegation. Nevertheless, the impact of the delegation was significant enough to warrant a general call for all the believers to assemble in the Prophet’s mosque where a sermon was given. The content of the sermon is based, according to *Sahih Muslim*, on what Tamim himself said to the Prophet.

It seems that during this first encounter Tamim spoke to the Prophet (PBBH) and informed him of the phenomena of *al-Jassaasa* (the beast or worm), which appeared to a group of travelers from Palestine and conveyed to them information about the signs of the end of time. Upon hearing this, the Prophet (PBBH) called the people to prayer and stood up and gave a speech concerning the phenomena that Tamim had spoken to him about. The Prophet (PBBH) informed people that what had been revealed to him was in conformity with what Tamim had said and he therefore wanted to make everyone aware of the matter. This is the only recorded instance of a *hadith* starting with the words of someone else narrated by the Prophet who thus becomes the second link in the chain of transmissions. This is a unique virtue and honor for Tamim.²⁵ The complete *Hadith* appears in the following manner in *Sahih Muslim*:

Chapter 22 : THE HADITH PERTAINING TO THE SPY OF THE
DAJJAL

Book 41, Number 7028:

Amir b. Sharahil Sha’bi Sha’b Hamdan reported that he asked

Fatima, daughter of Qays and sister of ad-Dahhak b. Qays, who was the first amongst the emigrant women: Narrate to me a hadith which you had heard directly from Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and there is no extra link in between them. She said: Very well, if you like, I am prepared to do that, and he said to her: Well, do it and narrate that to me. She said: I married the son of Mughira and he was a chosen young man of Quraish at that time, but he fell as a martyr in the first Jihad (fighting) on the side of Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him). When I became a widow, 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Auf, one amongst the group of the Companions of Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him), sent me the proposal of marriage. Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) also sent me such a message for his freed slave Usama b. Zaid. And it had been conveyed to me that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) had said (about Usama): He who loves me should also love Usama. When Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) talked to me (about this matter), I said: My affairs are in your hand. You may marry me to anyone whom you like. He said: You better shift now to the house of Umm Sharik, and Umm Sharik was a rich lady from amongst the Anqir. She spent generously for the cause of Allah and entertained guests very hospitably. I said: Well, I will do as you like. He said: Do not do that for Umm Sharik is a woman who is very frequently visited by guests and I do not like that your head may be uncovered or the cloth may be removed from your shank and the strangers may catch sight of them which you abhor. You better shift to the house of your cousin 'Abdullah b. 'Amr b. Umm Maktum and he is a person of the Bani Fihir branch of the Quraish, and he belonged to that tribe. So I shifted to that house, and when my period of waiting was over, I heard the voice of an announcer making an announcement that the prayer would be observed in the mosque (where) congregational prayer (is observed). So I set out towards that mosque and observed prayer along with Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and I was in the row of the women which was near the row of men. When Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) had finished his prayer, he sat on the pulpit smiling and said: Every worshipper should keep sitting at his place. He then said: Do you know why I had asked you to assemble? They said: Allah and His Messenger know best. He said: By Allah. I have not made you assemble for exhortation or for a warning, but I have detained you here, for Tamim Daari, a Christian, who came and accepted Islam, told me something, which agrees with what I was-telling you about the Dajjal. He narrated to me that he had sailed in a ship along with thirty men of Bani Lakhm and Bani Judham and had been tossed by waves in the ocean for a

month. Then these (waves) took them (near) the land within the ocean (island) at the time of sunset. They sat in a small side-boat and entered that Island. There was a beast with long thick hair (and because of these) they could not distinguish his face from his back. They said: Woe to you, who can you be? Thereupon it said: I am al-Jassaasa. They said: What is al-Jassaasa? And it said: O people, go to this person in the monastery as he is very much eager to know about you. He (the narrator) said: When it named a person for us we were afraid of it lest it should be a Devil. Then we hurriedly went on till we came to that monastery and found a well-built person there with his hands tied to his neck and having iron shackles between his two legs up to the ankles. We said: Woe be upon thee, who are you? And he said: You would soon come to know about me. But tell me who are you. We said: We are people from Arabia and we embarked upon a boat but the sea-waves had been driving us for one month and they brought us near this island. We got into the side-boats and entered this island and here a beast met us with profusely thick hair and because of the thickness of his hair his face could not be distinguished from his back. We said: Woe be to thee, who are you? It said: I am al- Jassaasa. We said: What is al-Jassaasa? And it said: You go to this very person in the monastery for he is eagerly waiting for you to know about you. So we came to you in hot haste fearing that might be the Devil. He (that chained person) said: Tell me about the date-palm trees of Baisan. We said: About what aspect of theirs do you seek information? He said: I ask you whether these trees bear fruit or not. We said: Yes Thereupon he said: I think these would not bear fruits. He said: Inform me about the lake of Tabariyya? We said: Which aspect of it do you want to know? He said: Is there water in it? We said: There is abundance of water in it. Thereupon he said: I think it would soon become dry. He again said: Inform me about the spring of Zughar. They said: Which aspect of it you want to know? He (the chained person) said: Is there water in it and does it irrigate (the land)? We said to him: Yes, there is abundance of water in it and the inhabitants (of Medina) irrigate (land) with the help of it, He said: Inform me about the unlettered Prophet; what has he done? We said: He has come out from Mecca and has settled in Yathrib (Medina). He said: Do the Arabs fight against him? We said: Yes. He said: How did he deal with him? We informed him that he had overcome those in his neighborhood and they had submitted themselves before him. Thereupon he said to us: Has it actually happened? We said: Yes. Thereupon he said: If it is so that is better for them that they should show obedience to him. I am going to tell you about myself. I am Dajjal and would be soon permitted to get out

and so I shall get out and travel in the land, and will not spare any town where I would not stay for forty nights except Mecca and Medina as these two (places) are prohibited (areas) for me and I would not make an attempt to enter any one of these two. An angel with a sword in his hand would confront me and would bar my way and there would be angels to guard every passage leading to it; then Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) striking the pulpit with the help of the end of his staff said : This implies Taiba meaning Medina. Have I not told you an account (of the Dajjal) like this? 'The people said: Yes, and this account narrated by Tamim Daari was liked by me for it corroborates the account which I gave to you in regard to him (Dajjal) at Medina and Mecca. Behold he (Dajjal) is in the Syrian sea (Mediterranean) or the Yemen sea (Arabian sea). Nay, on the contrary, he is in the east, he is in the east, he is in the east, and he pointed with his hand towards the east. I (Fatima bint Qays) said: 'I preserved it in my mind (this narration from Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him)).'²⁶

This long and detailed *hadith* is one among a selection appearing in Sahih Muslim focusing on end of time signs. What concerns us, however, is the fact that Tamim serves as its source, which is significant. For Tamim was from Bayt al-Maqdis and the signs mentioned in the *hadith* make reference to these areas, thus making yet another early link with the area and indicate likewise knowledge among people of Medina of Palestine's general geography during the Prophetic period. The *hadith* from Tamim is rather long and detailed with respect to the particular signs of the end of time, and the fact that the Prophet (PBBH) himself delivered a complete sermon on it, with so many people in attendance, places its high on the rank of authenticity.

The records do not indicate what happened with the delegation after its eventful encounter with the Prophet (PBBH). We do know, however, that Tamim decided to stay in Medina and did not return with the rest of the delegation. He fought together with the Prophet at the battle of Tabuk, as did some of his brothers. It is not certain whether his brothers had stayed on with him in Medina or came back with others once the Prophet (PBBH) began to organize for a military campaign in the lands inhabited by Banu Numaara. We are certain that on the way back from the battle of Tabuk Tamim and his brothers asked the Prophet (PBBH) to grant them a *waqf* (religious endowment) in the area of Palestine, which he did. The nature of this *waqf* and how it came into being are our next topic of concern.

Tamim al-Daari's Waqf in al-Khalil

The importance of Tamim al-Daari for the study of Islamic consciousness toward Bayt al-Maqdis cannot be overstated, for it contains all the needed elements to provide a complete and contextualized picture. For in him we have a journey to a spiritual path, a meeting with the Prophet (PBBH), and an assignment of a land trust or *waqf*, which is at the center of a most enduring conflict of claims. Who owns the land of al-Khalil and what constitute ownership? Muslims answer the question in part by pointing to Tamim al-Daari and the deed entrusted to him by the Prophet as a clear proof of ownership, for it was a trust given to an indigenous inhabitant of the area, not to a conquering army.

One of the largest *waqf* properties established in Bayt al-Maqdis was that set up in the time of 'Umar in the city of al-Khalil²⁷ and granted to Tamim al-Daari (d. 40 Hijr→, 661 CE), who was originally from Bayt al-Maqdis. Tamim was granted the land of al-Khalil and its surrounding villages by the Prophet on the way back from the battle of Tabuk, which is on the south west boarder of Palestine. It is reported that the Prophet asked 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib to write the grant of properties in Palestine near the city of al-Khalil to Tamim and his descendants. This Ali did on a piece of leather cut from his own shoe. The text says:

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful and Compassionate. This is what Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, has granted for Tamim al-Daari and his brothers: Hebron, al-Martum, Bayt, 'Aynun, Bayt Ibrahim, and what is in it is to be a commonly shared [property] among them. I established and surrendered this to them, and for their descendants, and whosoever harms them, Allah will harm him back. Witnessed by 'Atiq ibn abi Quhaafa, 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab, 'Uthmaan ibn 'Affaan, and 'Ali ibn abi Taalib wrote and witnessed.²⁸

The text exists in a number of slightly different versions; the one cited is the most accurate and agreed upon by the majority of Muslim scholars. The document was preserved for a long period of time and was in fact the last document written during the period of the Prophet. A large number of Muslim travelers, scholars, amirs, and caliphs made their way to the city of al-Khalil for no other reason than to view the document and seek some form of blessings from reading and touching it in person. Thus the Abbassid Caliph Al-Mustanjid (d.556 Hijri) visited the *waqf*, saw the text, which was in the hands of the family, and then he copied the document and adding the following to its beginning: "All praise is due to Allah, this is a copy of the *kitaab* (book, document or letter) of the Prophet of Allah, which was written for Tamim al-Daari and his brothers in the ninth year of the Hijra (migration) after the Battle of Tabuk and on his way back [to Medina]; and it was written on a piece of leather from the shoe of the Commander of the Believers 'Ali and in his handwriting. I have copied it

as he wrote it, may Allah be pleased with him."²⁹

Tamim was thus a Christian from Palestine who came to Medina and embraced Islam at the time of the Prophet, which makes him one of the Companions. While the *waqf* given to him is not in the city of al-Quds, it deserves our attention because it marks the first property to be granted by the Prophet (PBBH) in the lands of Bayt al-Maqdis. Furthermore, Tamim was a Christian from the land of Palestine, which means that the grant of land was to a member of the indigenous population of Palestine at the time, a fact that escapes many who study the history of *waqf* properties in the area, as well as the history of Islam in Palestine. This should not be taken to mean that the Prophet (PBBH) did not have the authority to grant a property to anyone of his choice; it simply points to a historical fact relating to the Tamimi *waqf*. To those who argue that Islam was imposed upon the area, Tamim al-Daari, his family and countless others, offer an indisputable refutation.

At a later time, around the sixth century Hijri, an attempt by local rulers was made to take possession of the *waqf* from the descendants of Tamim al-Daari. The matter was taken up by Abu Haatim al-Harwi, the judge at the time in al-Quds, who ruled in favor of resting control of the property from those owners. As evidence, the Daari descendants presented the written text to the judge, who stated that this "document is not binding because the Prophet granted to Tamim that which he did not own."³⁰ The judge based his opinion on the premise that the granting of the property to Tamim took place prior to Muslim control over Palestine and, thus it did not amount to a legally binding deed of ownership.

Al-Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, who was on a visit to al-Quds at the time, being asked for a *fatwa* on the issue, ruled in favor of Tamim al-Daari's descendants and considered the judge to be an unbeliever. Al-Ghazali premised his binding *fatwa* on a *hadith* from the Prophet stating: Thaubaan reported that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) said: Allah drew the ends of the world near one another for my sake. And I have seen its eastern and western ends. And the dominion of my *Umma* would reach those ends which have been drawn near to me and I have been granted the red and the white treasures..."³¹ Al-Ghazali maintained that this *hadith* indicates Allah's granting rights of ownership over any portion of the earth to His Prophet and, thus the assignation of lands in Palestine to Tamim al-Daari was a valid transfer of ownership. The ruler accepted al-Ghazali's ruling and agreed to leave the *waqf* intact and in the possession of Tamim al-Daari's descendants.³²

Tamim al-Daari's *Waqf* is still in existence, although some parts of it have been usurped by the Zionists and settlements built on them. The descendants of Tamim have lived in the city of al-Khalil and over the generations contributed to the maintenance of the graves of Prophet Ibrahim and his family (peace be upon them all). Over the years, Muslims made their way to al-Khalil to visit the graves and to spend time in the

blessed lands of Palestine. The Tamim *waqf* provided lodging and food for many a traveler coming to the city for visitation or retreat. Unfortunately, the rights of Palestinian Muslims in the Ibrahim Mosque, which houses the graves, have been curtailed under the occupation, and more than half of the mosque has been taken over by and converted into a Synagogue. Attacks upon the Ibrahim Mosque and Muslims started immediately after al-Khalil city came under Zionist occupation and continue to the present.

The original document written by 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib faded and no longer exists, but we do have the actual copy written by al-Mustanjid preserved in al-Daari's *waqf* office in al-Khalil, which constitutes a lasting testimony to the earlier written document. A key element in this *waqf* is that it pre-dates the Islamic control of Palestine by at least nine or ten years, since the actual arrival of Muslims (as a state and army) to the area did not come about until 16-18 Hijri with the taking of the city of Jerusalem by the Caliph 'Umar. For followers of Islam, that event is yet another proof of the prophecy of Muhammad (PBBH), who not only foretold Muslim control of the land of Palestine, but also granted a specific *waqf* to people from the area some nine or ten years before the arrival there of Muslim armies. It should be borne in mind that the area at the time was under the control of the Byzantines, one of the major powers of the time. What is relevant is that Tamim and his brothers did consider asking for the city of Jerusalem, but opted not to do so for fear that the city being under Byzantine control would prematurely become a focus of struggle. Hence, they narrowed down their request to al-Khalil and its surroundings, an area they inhabited with their tribe and of whose terrain they had knowledge.

After the death of the Prophet (PBBH) Tamim remained in Medina, engaged in teaching and learning. Tamim was a learned Christian who had the knowledge of the People of the Book and hence his entering into Islam was an educated decision, not an impulsive one. He left the land of Christianity, Palestine under Byzantine rule, and came to Medina to meet the new Prophet (PBBH), a journey of discovery and affirmation of what he considered to be the prophecies he read as a Christian. He was an Arab and all the sources indicate that he did speak and read Arabic, which suggests that Arabic speaking tribes already inhabited the area of Palestine, for the most part. The central authority being Byzantine had not led to a change in the local language spoken; rather the tribes retained their native tongue, while possibly adopting a second language-Greek-in order to communicate with the administrative structure, not possibly dissimilar today to Iraq under US occupation, Arabic is still the language but people learn English to communicate with the Americans.

Chapter Six

Consciousness of Bayt al-Maqdis and its Historical Continuity

In the previous chapter we examined the significance of Tamim al-Daari for the establishment of Muslim rights and claims over Bayt al-Maqdis, which includes present day Palestine. We will now turn to the fourth foundation for those rights and claims, namely the Islamic control of the land and continuity of Muslim political and economic control over a span of fourteen centuries, interrupted only by the Crusaders for some 190 years. Muslim control should not imply some type of foreign invasion or occupation; rather it was first and foremost a readiness to link-up with the Arabs emerging from the Hijaz against the Byzantine Empire at a critical juncture in the emerging conflict arising from Muslim assertiveness in the region. In addition, the existing pre-Islamic relations and tribal relations facilitated a rather easy transition into Islam both as a religion as well as an extension of existing Arab governance norms, the early Muslim rule was Arab-centric.

Palestine came under Muslim rule and for a long period remained part of the over-all Muslim world. It is true that Palestine was not a separate or independent state at any time before to the 20th century, but this does not amount to the absence of a political, economic and social system in which the population invested and which it considered it to be its legitimate representatives. The modern nation-state structure is a recent development, and human history cannot retrospectively be held hostage to the dictates of modern nationalism, especially when those dictates serve the interests of those invoking them. The existence or non-existence of a nation state cannot be the measuring stick used for assessing claims to a land.

In this chapter we focus on the chronology of the Muslim arrival to Bayt al-Maqdis and the subsequent continuity of control and governance. With the exception of the Crusader interlude, Muslims ruled this land from the time of the second Caliph 'Umar down to the last Islamic dynasty, the

Ottomans who lost Palestine during the First World War. Its people never contested the legitimacy of rule exercised by Muslim ruler in Palestine, even if the nature of the rule was sometimes oppressive. The fact that the ruler was Muslim and applied Islamic law was sufficient enough for him to be considered legitimate. Our concern will then be not with the manner by which a given ruler or dynasty came to rule over Bayt al-Maqdis but only with the dates they ruled and important developments taking place during their reigns.

We begin with the conquest of Bayt al-Maqdis by the Muslim army in the time of the second Caliph 'Umar, and an examination of the treaty signed on the occasion of Jerusalem's peaceful surrender. We will then embark on a brief chronology of the various dynasties that had Bayt al-Maqdis as part of their possessions and effectively administered its affairs. The last dynasty, the Ottomans, will be given greater attention, because of the important developments in Bayt al-Maqdis which occurred during their reign.

The Muslim Conquest of Bayt al-Maqdis

Muslims came to Bayt al-Maqdis during the reign of the Caliph 'Umar bin al-Khattaab, when armies commanded by Abu 'Ubaydah bin al-Jarraah succeeded in defeating the Byzantine armies in a series of battles, the biggest of which was al-Yarmuk, opening the door for the complete conquest of Bilad al-Sham. After the victory at al-Yarmuk, Abu 'Ubaydah consulted his commanders about the next step in their campaign, and they advised him to send a messenger to 'Umar bin al-Khattaab to seek his opinion on the subject. Al-Waaqidi says the following about this consultation:

"Mu'aadh b. Jabal said: Write to the Commander of the Believers 'Umar bin al-Khattaab and wherever he commands you to march, then march and seek assistance from Allah. Abu 'Ubaydah said: you have given the right opinion O Mu'aadh. ... He wrote a letter to 'Umar informing him that he intended to march to either al-Quds or al-Qaysaariya and that he will await his command as to what to do. He gave the letter to 'Urfujah bin Naassih al-Nakha'i and commanded him to travel to Medina. He went on his way until he reached the city and gave the letter to 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). 'Umar read the letter to the Muslims and sought their consultation on the matter. 'Ali b. Abi Taalib (may Allah be pleased with him) said: O Commander of the Believers, command your companion to march to al-Quds and let them approach it and fight its people, for this is the best course and a most important concern. If you conquer al-Quds then direct his army to al-Qaysaariya for it will be conquered after it, insha'Allah, the Exalted. This is what the Prophet of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) conveyed to me.

'Umar said: You have said the truth O Abu al-Hasan, and he wrote to Abu 'Ubaydah. ... From the servant of Allah 'Umar bin al-Khattaab to his subordinate in al-Sham, Abu 'Ubaydah: I praise Allah, other than Whom there is no God, and I offer peace and blessings upon His Prophet. The letter which you sent seeking consultation as to what should be your next direction in the military campaign has arrived. The cousin of the Prophet of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) has advised that the march should be to al-Quds for Allah, the Exalted, the Glorified will enable to conquer it, and peace be upon you."¹

On receiving the letter from 'Umar, Abu 'Ubaydah gave a banner to Khalid ibn al-Walid with 5,000 horsemen and directed him to march on al-Quds. He also gave Yazid ibn abi Sufyaan a banner with another 5,000 troops and ordered him to march on al-Quds. He then handed a banner to Shurahbil ibn Hasna with 5,000 horsemen from the people of Yemen and ordered him to march on al-Quds but to avoid mixing his troops with the forces dispatched earlier. A fourth banner was given to al-Murqaal b. Hashim b. 'Utba b. Abi Waqaas with yet another 5,000 men for him to march to al-Quds without mixing with the earlier detachments. Fifth, sixth and seventh banners with 5,000 men each, were given to al-Musayyib ibn Najja al-Fazaari, Qays b. Hubayra al-Muraadi, 'Urwa b. Muhahlil b. Zayd al-Khil respectively.² Abu 'Ubaydah thus sent a total of seven different detachments to al-Quds, each with 5,000 men, making a total of 35,000 troops.

In the 15th, 16th, or 17th year of the Hijra the Muslims were able to enter al-Quds upon the conclusion of a treaty surrender by the Christian inhabitants of the city.³ The Caliph 'Umar came from Medina to al-Quds to conclude the treaty with the Christian Patriarch, Sophronius, and accepted the keys to the city from him. The treaty came to be known as *al-Uhda al-'Umaria* (the Covenant of 'Umar), which regulated the relationship between the new Muslim rulers and the Arab Christian inhabitants.

Muslim accounts of 'Umar being the one who concluded the treaty with the Christians in al-Quds have been questioned by some Western scholars. One of the main pieces of evidence cited is a divergent account that appears in Imam Ahmad ibn Jabir al-Balaadhuri's, *Futuh al-Buldaan*. Al-Balaadhuri's first account of the surrender of the city is similar to that appearing in al-Tabari, but the second report differs in identifying the person directly involved in concluding the treaty. A number of writers have taken this second report and built their case upon it, although al-Balaadhuri mentions the dominant opinion among Muslim historians first and then uses the passive form ("it is said") to introduce a second account. Al-Balaadhuri says in the second account: the status of which he leaves open.

"A different account has been reported regarding the conquest

of Ilia' (Jerusalem). The report in question is the following: "Al-Qaasim ibn Sallaam has informed me from 'Abdallah b. Saalih from al-Laith ibn Sa'd, from Yazid ibn abi Habeeb that 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab, who was then in al-Jaabiya, sent Khaalid ibn Thaabit al-Fahmi at the head of an army to Bayt al-Maqdis. He fought with the inhabitants, and they agreed to pay a tax on what lay within their fortification, and accepted that whatever was outside should belong to the Muslims. 'Umar came and permitted that and then returned to al-Medina."⁴

There is also a third account appearing in al-Balaadhuri, and it is in accordance with the first. The second account does not differ greatly from the first or the third since all three speak of 'Umar coming to the area and agreeing to the conclusion of a treaty of surrender. The slight difference in the account has led to the questioning of whether 'Umar himself has negotiated the treaty, accepted the surrender, and whether there was participation by others in the process of the conclusion of the treaty, this being the main issue. The motive behind these questionings is to demonstrate that al-Quds was not treated in any special way by the early community and that no account mentions the Prophet's (peace and blessings upon him) companions having any role in the fighting and the surrender of the city. Even if we take the second report to be the only valid account, which is not, we must still conclude that 'Umar approved the treaty and then went to visit the city, a fact that is well established. Lastly, al-Balaadhuri placed the report second, which is an indication that he ranked it after the first, which is to be taken as reflecting his position on the subject, for he does not mention either agreement or disagreement with the second report. Also, the introduction of the second account with the passive form of reporting is an indication of its weakness in al-Balaadhuri's opinion, since the active is mostly reserved for agreed on, strong or dominant opinions.

The text of the surrender and 'Umar's granting of protection to the inhabitants is as follows:

"In the name of Allah, All Compassionate and Most Merciful. This is what the servant of Allah the Commander of the Believers 'Umar granted to the inhabitants of Elia by way of protection. He granted them protection of their lives, property, churches, crosses, the sick and the healthy of the city, including every sect and group. Further, their places of worship will neither be used for residential purposes nor destroyed nor their attached properties shall be confiscated. Neither their crosses of gold and silver, pelf and wealth shall be reduced, nor will they be forced to change their religion, nor will they be harmed in any possible manner, nor shall any Jew live and remain with them. It is incumbent

upon the people of Elia to pay as much *jizya* as the inhabitants of other cities [of Syria] in order to turn out the Byzantines and the robbers. The Byzantines leaving Elia shall enjoy protection of life and property till they enter the territory of the Byzantine government. Those who desire to stay on, are allowed to do so provided they pay the *jizya* equal to the amount paid by the other inhabitants of Elia. Further, those among the people of Elia, who desire to accompany the Byzantines along with their wealth and leaving their churches, their crosses will remain safe till they enter the area of Byzantine government. Before the arrival of this humble self, the peasants present may remain in Elia by paying *jizya* equal to the amount paid by other persons. Those desiring to go with the Byzantine are allowed to do so. Those who want to return to their respective rural areas along with their family and children are also allowed to do so and the revenue shall not be charged from them till the next harvest time. Whatever has been covenanted in the document is hereby witnessed by Almighty Allah and His Messenger, Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him), his lieutenants and the Muslims on condition that the people of Elia remain regular in the payment of *jizya*.⁵

Four of the companions, Khaalid bin al-Walid, 'Amr bin al-'As, 'Abd al-Rahman bin 'Auf, and Mu'aawiat bin Abi Sufyaan, signed the documents as witnesses. The Christians of the city wrote a letter to 'Umar, which included the conditions they accepted in return for security.

This is a letter to the servant of Allah, 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab, the Commander of the Faithful, from the Christians of the city of Ilia' (Jerusalem). When you advanced against us, we requested from you security for ourselves, our families, our wealth, and those from our creed. We accept as conditions incumbent upon us that we would not establish in our city or its surroundings a new church, a monastery, a bishopric, or a monastic cell. We will not separate any part of the city laying within the Muslims' districts. We will not prevent any of the Muslims from alighting at any of our churches at night or day. Further, we will keep their doors wide open for passersby and the travelers. In addition, we will host travelers from among the Muslims for three nights, and feed them. We will not hide in our churches or in our houses a spy and we will not conceal any treachery towards the Muslims. We will not teach our children the Qur'an. We will not make open display of *Shirk*, nor invite anyone to it, and nor prohibit anyone from our relatives from entering Islam, if he wants to.

We will show respect towards the Muslims and rise for them in

our assemblies, if they wish to sit. We will not imitate them in anything pertaining to their dress, headgear, turbans, shoes, or the manner of parting the hair. We will not speak in the manner that they speak, and we will not take their patronymics. We will not ride on a saddle. We will not carry swords, nor acquire any other kinds of weapon, or carry them with us. We will not engrave our rings in Arabic. We will not sell alcohol. We will cut the front part of our hair, maintain our clothing wherever we are, and tie belts around our waist. We will not display our crosses on our churches. We will not display our crosses and books in any of the streets of the Muslims and their markets. We will not strike our bells in our churches except lightly, and we will not raise our voices at funerals. We will not take slaves from among those who were divided as spoils of war for the Muslims, and we will not build houses taller than theirs.

We will not harm any of the Muslims. We accept all this as a condition upon ourselves and the people of our creed, and we accept security in exchange for it. If we violate any of the conditions which we have undertaken towards you then there is no covenant for us. Then it will be permissible for you to treat us as you treat the people of obstinacy and discord.⁶

After the conclusion of this treaty, it is recorded that the caliph 'Umar inquired about the rock which the Prophet (pbuh) had described during the *Isra'* and upon finding it covered with garbage, he embarked on cleaning it with about 4,000 of the Muslims to make it appropriate for prayers. After it was made pure, the caliph 'Umar asked Bilaal to call the *Adhan* for the prayer. Bilaal, who had called the prayers for the Prophet (pbuh) and had abstained from doing so after his death, agreed to call it again on this occasion, and when he did everyone among the companions was in tears.⁷ Al-Quds must therefore have been a special place for Bilaal to agree to call the prayer for the first time since the death of the Prophet (pbuh). It should be noted that in Islamic sources Bilaal was the first to give the *Adhan* (call to prayer) when Mecca was liberated, the first to call it in Medina and also had the honor of calling it when the Muslims entered the sacred ground of al-Aqsa mosque.

The Caliph 'Umar ordered a mosque to be built in front of the rock, and the mosque was constructed from wood with a capacity to hold some 3,000 worshippers. Many tend to place construction of the mosque at a later time, an assertion that is true with respect to the present building, but it was preceded by the mosque ordered by 'Umar. Another item that creates confusion is that some people think that the mosque in al-Quds known as 'Umar's mosque is the same as al-Aqsa or the Dome of the Rock. This is incorrect, for 'Umar's mosque is the one that stands next to the

church of the Holy Sepulche, which was built at the location where 'Umar and the companions knelt down and prayed. 'Umar had been invited to pray inside the Church but he declined to do so, stating that if he did pray inside, then future Muslims would claim the site as a mosque. Therefore, he went outside to perform his prayer, which became the location of his mosque. Bishop Arculf, a 700 CE Christian traveler in al-Quds describes the mosque built by 'Umar at al-Aqsa as follows:

“On the spot where the Temple once stood, near the eastern wall, the Saracens have now erected a square house of prayer, in rough manner by raising beams and planks upon some remains of old ruins; this is their place of worship, and it is said that it will hold about three thousand men.”⁸

'Umar's acceptance of the surrender of the city and the writing of the covenant transferred the political rights over the land to the Muslims. A number of Western writers have maintained that the surrender of al-Quds to 'Umar never occurred and that the account was a fictitious narrative authored by Muslims at a later time with the purpose of upgrading the status of the city in the eyes of the Muslims. The introduction of Isaac Hasson to Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Waasiti's book, *Fadaa'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas*, is a good example of such a theory (see pages 1-39).⁹

Similar arguments are put forward in chapters III and IV by Guy Le'Strange in his early work, *"Palestine under the Moslems,"* in 1890 (pp. 83-172). A contemporary and a more sophisticated rendition of the same thesis is that of Moshe Gil, *"A History of Palestine 634-1099,"* which is very rich in details and the use of Islamic, Jewish and Christian sources to reach the same conclusion. A recent book popular in the U.S., Karen Armstrong's *"Jerusalem, One City, Three Faiths,"* is more unequivocal in dismissing Muslim accounts, despite the author being more careful in her other works. Having not read any of the Arabic sources in the Arabic language gives a strong yet unwarranted discharge of the evidence. The principal arguments of all these writers can be reduced to the following:

1. The Muslims had no religious motivation for their Jihad movement, which was based purely on worldly considerations and a quest for economic gains.
2. The Muslims' attachment to Palestine was borrowed from Jews and Christians, and it has no basis in Islamic sources.
3. Islamic interest in al-Quds and al-Sham was developed first by the Umayyads to support their movement of the center of the Islamic state to Damascus and to cement their religious credentials.
4. The emergence of Islamic concern with to al-Quds can also be attributed to the Crusades, for after the liberation of the city by Salaah al-Deen, he used it as a means of re-imposing an Islamic

stamp upon the city.

5. The *Hadith* literature concerning al-Quds is either completely fabricated or its sources are Jewish, and in either case, it is to be rejected.
6. The Qur'an does not contain any direct reference to al-Quds by name in relations to the Muslims and the Prophet Muhammad being in the city.

In the Muslim sources cited above, 'Umar's visit and acceptance of the city's surrender is treated as a fact beyond all doubt, and *fiqh* collections base many rulings on the treaty signed with the Christian inhabitant of al-Quds. In addition, 'Umar in a legal ruling decided to leave the new lands as a *waqf* property for the benefit of all Muslims in perpetuity. This ruling included the lands of Iraq, Egypt, and Syria, and it is this legal ruling that constitutes current Muslim collective rights upon these lands. According to existing Islamic law all of Bayt al-Maqdis lands are therefore a *waqf* property for the benefit of all the Muslims, and according to 'Umar's ruling this status cannot be changed, revoked, negotiated away, or amended in such a way as to permit another people to lay legal claims upon it. Thus, the status of the land from a Shari'a perspective can only have two possibilities: either it is under Muslim rule and in conformity with 'Umar's *waqf* ruling; or it is in a state of occupation and in violation of the *waqf*. This does not mean that rule by Muslims cannot be unjust, which it obviously can, but the issue here is the status of the land itself, regardless of the quality of rule by Muslims. Also, the implication can be taken by some that this might mean that no other people or religious group can reside in the land, such would be a most inaccurate conclusion and Islamic history is ample evidence. The question is one of claims and title in a political and sovereign sense and not individuals rights to live and own private property as well as having freedom of religion; this is granted by the explicit Qur'anic text and no one has the legal authority to negate it. This is an issue of immense importance since it pertains to the contemporary dynamics governing the conflict and the fears arising from Muslims asserting their rightful claims to their own land, Palestine.

To take this point a little further, we can say that the Islamic nature of the land is an independent variable that is not contingent upon the quality of the Muslim ruler in any given period. Let us assume that a Muslim ruler agrees to give Palestine in its totality to a foreign power. This transfer does not change the nature of the land, for his action is in violation of Shari'a and his treaty to give the land away is not legally admissible even if by means of force it is affirmed.

The land itself has a *hukm qafli* (a categorical legal status) making it an Islamic territory, which is based on the evidence from the Qur'an, the *hadith*, and the consensus of generations of Muslim scholars, and is not subject to change even if the land is given by Muslim leaders to a foreign

power. Moreover, Muslims maintain that the land itself is independently in a state of Islam, for it is continuously receiving the blessings of Allah and is, therefore, subject to Allah's sovereignty in a more specific way. In Muslim understanding, Allah's sovereignty encompasses of course all of creation; however, He did single out this area for a specific designation and provided it as an inheritance among His prophets. Hence, the constant status of the land is Islamic, both spiritually and temporally; even when Islamic rule is absent from the temporal plane, the original state is unaltered. This raises another more important issue which has to do with whether the state of the land can be maintained by a non-Muslim power that is acting justly and the answer to this is that justice if manifested by anyone, in reality, would be an affirmation of divine purpose which would be sanctioned even if it is not Islamic. For Shari'a is but a road to justice and a guide to human well-being, while Muslims assert that their law is a perfected divine message they don't preclude others from contributing to a more just society, however they do demand for evidence if a claim is made.

The Chronology of Muslim Rule After 'Umar

Any study of al-Quds will fall short of doing justice to the city and the many people over the generations who have contributed to its richness and longevity. My efforts so far have primarily dealt with the early Islamic consciousness, presence, and history in al-Quds; I will now provide a brief chronology of Islamic history and rule over Bayt al-Maqdis. In the chronology, I will focus on the element of continuity of Islamic rule and some of the contributions made by a number of dynasties to building and renovations in Bayt al-Maqdis. The last period in the chronology will deal with Ottoman rule, and since the Ottomans were the last Islamic dynasty to have direct responsibility over the land and its people, we will provide a more extensive record of the Ottoman period. That period also has particular importance in the context of what is now taking place in Palestine.

As mentioned above, Muslim rule in Bayt al-Maqdis began with the second Caliph 'Umar who accepted the surrender of the area and appointed Yazid ibn Abi Sufyaan as its first governor. However, for military governance, Bayt al-Maqdis was divided into two regions, a northern sector headquartered in Ramla with 'Alqama bin Hakim as commander and a southern area headquartered in al-Quds and 'Alqama bin Mujzir as its commander.¹⁰ Building activities during this initial period were limited to the construction of al-Aqsa mosque during 'Umar's first visit. The sources lack details on the design, and materials used and the names of those involved in the actual construction, we are however certain that 'Umar ordered a mosque to be erected in the area in front of the rock.

The caliph 'Umar visited Bayt al-Maqdis a second time around 17 Hijri

(639 CE) and spent time there, but this was during a time of a massive plague that took the lives of many of the companions. It was the plague that took the lives of Abu 'Ubayda bin al-Jarraah, Dhiraar bin al-Azwar al-Kindi, Mu'aaz bin Jabal, Yazid bin Abi Sufyaan, Sharhabil bin Hassna, Al-Haarith bin Hishaam, Suhayl bin 'Amr, and 'Utba bin Suhayl among many others. The graves of these companions and others can be found presently in Palestine and in the Jordan Valley.¹¹

During the rule of 'Uthmaan (3rd Caliph), who became the Caliph after 'Umar was killed in 23 Hijri (643 CE), Bayt al-Maqdis was governed by Mu'aawia bin Abi Sufyaan. The early Islamic history of Bayt al-Maqdis is very much connected to Mu'aawia and the Ummayyad dynasty started by him after 'Uthmaan's murder in 35 Hijri (655 CE) and an intra-communal war with the Caliph 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib which lasted until 41 Hijri (661 CE). Upon 'Uthmaan's death, the people of Medina selected 'Ali as Caliph, but this selection was opposed by Mu'aawia and his followers in Syria because of 'Ali's alleged delay in avenging the blood of 'Uthmaan.¹² This conflict led to the split of the Muslim community into two major warring camps the results of which can still be felt today, i.e. the Sunni and Shi'a divide.

Through force and political machination Mu'aawia became a Caliph, controlling historical Syria, Iraq and Egypt and laying the foundations for the Umayyad dynastic rule. What is of concern to us is the Umayyad rule over Bayt al-Maqdis and the imprint it left on the city. Before ascending to the position of a Caliph, Mu'aawia had served as the governor of all of Syria, which included Bayt al-Maqdis, for about 20 years and he was thus very familiar with the area. After becoming the uncontested Caliph of the Muslims, Mu'aawia moved the center of the Caliphate to Damascus in Syria and during the period he spent considerable time in Bayt al-Maqdis.

The Umayyad imprint on Bayt al-Maqdis was left primarily by the fourth Caliph of the dynasty 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwaan, who came to power in 65 Hijri (684 CE) and ruled until 86 Hijri (705 CE). It was during 'Abd al-Malik's reign that the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa mosques were commissioned and completed. Work on the Dome of the Rock began in 66 Hijri (685 CE) and was completed in 72 Hijri (691 CE). A number of theories have been put forward in order to explain 'Abd al-Malik's motivation for building the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa mosque. One such theory asserts that 'Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock as a replacement for Mecca as a destination for the Muslims to perform Hajj away from Mecca which had revolted against the Umayyads and given allegiance to 'Abdallah bin al-Zubayr.¹³ However, 'Abdallah bin al-Zubayr's revolt was subdued in 73 Hijri (692 CE) less than a year after the completion of the work on the Dome of the Rock and before the commissioning of Al-Aqsa which was the location where 'Umar built the first mosque upon entering Jerusalem. In addition, there is no text or legal opinion giving credence to such a theory, for if Hajj were to be made to

the Dome of the Rock then a clear legal opinion would have been needed and the scholars of the time would have engaged in heated debates. Since no text exists that speaks of a Hajj being acceptable to al-Quds in place of Mecca, the theory must be rejected out of hand unless an explicit textual proof is provided.

A more likely reason for 'Abd al-Malik's construction project was to stamp the city with an imposing Islamic icon that dominates the view from all directions, a purpose accomplished with the Dome of the Rock. Prior to the construction, the dominant building in the skyline of Jerusalem would probably have been the beautiful churches dotting the landscape, but with the Dome of the Rock all other man made monuments came to function as a visual backdrop to it. Similarly, at the time of construction the majority of the population was still Christian, and the building of the Dome of the Rock was a way to affirm the position of the new religion as supreme in the land.

The Dome of the Rock was built over the rock, which Muslims believe to be the location where the Prophet offered prayers before ascending to the heavens. In addition, Muslims believe that it was the location where the Prophet David had his mosque as well as possibly the location of the second mosque placed on earth for worship. One idea dates the area to the beginning of human life on earth i.e. the period of Adam, who would have been given the immediate responsibility to establish a place of prayers. It is often assumed that mankind's descent into earth and away from paradise is the punishment, which is defensible but a more reflective view considers that the distance from the Divine is the only real torment for humans. If we consider this possibility, then the only and immediate response of Adam was not to begin looking for food and shelter but to seek a point of re-orientation toward the Divine in the new earthly abode and this is how both mosques in Mecca and Al-Quds are viewed in Islam.

Coming back to the construction by 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwaan, we find that the architecture of the Dome of the Rock stands as a masterpiece in design, form, color and function, with few parallels anywhere in the world. If the Dome of the Rock was intended as a stamp of Islam on the skyline of Jerusalem, the purpose was accomplished and is still being fulfilled some 1355 years after the fact.

In addition to these two mosques, 'Abd al-Malik embarked on building road systems linking various parts of Syria to Jerusalem and constructing the city of al-Ramla, which he considered as a possible center for his rule. Bayt al-Maqdis benefited greatly from the Umayyads locating their center of rule in greater Syria, for this close proximity contributed to the elevation of the importance of the area. From the time of Mu'aawia we can see the development of a special relationship with Bayt al-Maqdis in particular and more attention being given to the merits of the area. We can trace some of the early works on the merits of Bayt al-Maqdis and the collections of *hadith* extolling its spiritual status to this period. It was the

habit of many of the Umayyad Caliphs to spend a few months of the year in Bayt al-Maqdis, to the extent that 'Abd al-Malik was more frequently a resident of the city than of Damascus and he was known to use al-Aqsa's court yard as a venue for conducting the business of state.¹⁴

Toward the end of their rule the Umayyads became especially oppressive, and rebellions against them became the norm. One cannot underestimate the Umayyad contribution to the imprinting of an Islamic character upon Bayt al-Maqdis, but the internal divide within the house of Islam brought an end to their dynasty. The people in Bayt al-Maqdis joined in the rebellion against the last of the Umayyad Caliphs, Marwaan bin Muhammad, and supported the newly emerging 'Abbaasi dynasty, hailing from Iraq.

In 132 Hijri (750 CE), the 'Abbaasid dynasty was able to defeat the Umayyads and wrest from them control of all the territories previously held with the exception of Spain. The Abbaasids decided to move the center of the Caliphate once again to an area where they enjoyed wide popular support, Iraq, establishing Baghdad, a new city to serve as their seat of government. The fortunes of Bayt al-Maqdis during the Abbaasid rule were not good, for it suffered from prolonged periods of neglect and lack of financial support. Al-Aqsa mosque, during the reign of Abu Ja'far al-Mansur (136 Hijri, 754 CE), suffered from a strong earthquake and was badly in need of repairs but when the Caliph was approached for funding his response was "I have no money," and he ordered the removal of the gold and silver from the doors of the mosque in order to finance the reconstruction.

The reconstruction did not last long, for another earthquake damaged the mosque beyond repair and for a long period of time people abstained from praying in it until the Caliph Muhammad al-Mahdi visited Jerusalem and ordered its restoration.¹⁵ In the Abbaasid period the most extensive attention given to Bayt al-Maqdis was during the reigns of Haarun al-Rashid, and his sons Muhammad al-Amyyn and 'Abdallah al-Ma'mun, all of whom commissioned renovation projects in the area and attended to the needs of all the inhabitants including the Christian population. During this period of about 28 years, all three Caliphs visited Bayt al-Maqdis, ordered projects of renovation at al-Aqsa mosque and gave stipends to scholars teaching in Bayt al-Maqdis.

A noteworthy historical folly connected to the renovation of the Dome of the Rock occurred during the reign of 'Abdallah al-Ma'mun. It is reported that once the work was completed, some of the Caliph's trusted hands, being overzealous to emphasize their master's contributions to this important undertaking, embarked upon erasing the name of 'Abd al-Malik, who had originally commissioned the construction, from the plaque bearing his name and entering the name of al-Ma'mun in its place. However, they forgot to change the date at the bottom of the plaque which indicated that construction was finished in the year 72 Hijri (691 CE), i.e.,

some 120 years before al-Ma'mun's time.¹⁶

After the direct rule by the Umayyads and then the Abbaasids over Bayt al-Maqdis came to an end in 320 Hijri (661-932 CE), a number of regional powers took over the area beginning with the Tulunids, Ikhshidids, Fatimids and finally the Seljuks, who lost it to the Crusaders. The four regional powers paid nominal allegiance to the Abbaasid Caliph in Baghdad who ruled in name only but lacked any real power or influence. This period of nominal allegiance extended from around 265 to 492 Hijri (878 to 1099 CE) with Bayt al-Maqdis functioning as a center of competition for control of Syria on the one hand and Egypt on the other. Bayt al-Maqdis was a bridge between these two major centers of Islamic influence and concentrations of population.

Muslim rule over Bayt al-Maqdis was brought temporarily to an end by the Crusaders, who were able to wrest control of Jerusalem in 492 Hijri (1099 CE). For some 100 years, the Crusaders had a complete hold on Jerusalem and they managed to transform its Islamic character into a Christian one by means that included the takeover of al-Aqsa mosque and converting it into a church with other parts of the sanctuary transformed into housing units and stables. The Crusader period in the history of Bayt al-Maqdis was nothing more than one of a continuous bloodletting, lacking in any significant contribution to the sanctity of Jerusalem and its surroundings.

In 583 Hijri (1187 CE) Bayt al-Maqdis was brought back into the Islamic fold with the expulsion of the Crusaders from Jerusalem by Salah al-Deen al-Ayyubi who managed to liberate most of the Muslim lands in a 20 years campaign. The Ayyubid period was marked by a massive construction program in all of Bayt al-Maqdis, with special attention paid to Jerusalem. After defeating the Crusaders, Salah al-Deen moved rapidly to imprint Bayt al-Maqdis once again with an Islamic identity by such means as a massive building program of new schools, *waaf* properties, new mosques, water facilities, and a renovation of both Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock mosques.¹⁷ Salah al-Deen work in Al-Quds was continued by his sons and other members of the Ayyubid dynasty who treated Bayt al-Maqdis with a marked deference and paid attention to all of its needs. Many of the current Islamic sites in Al-Quds and Palestine in general go back to this important period of Ayyubid rule, which was marked by a sense of renewal of both the physical appearance of the land and its spiritual status.

History records that Salah al-Deen entered al-Quds on the 27th day of Rajab 583 Hijri (2nd of October 1187), which makes his entry into the city coincide with the date of the Prophet's night journey to the city. Sources indicate that he entered the area of al-Aqsa Mosque on Friday 4th of Sha'ban 583 Hijri (7th of October) and established the prayers after a cross which was on the top of the Mosque was taken down and the area cleaned.¹⁸

The Mamluks came to control Bayt al-Maqdis after the Ayyubids lost power in 647 Hijri (1249 CE). They inherited a well-established territory full of schools, Sufi lodges, *waqf* properties and a vibrant spiritual base. The Mamluks added to what existed in Bayt al-Maqdis and managed to renovate yet again the al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock mosques and added a number of smaller structures in the courtyard of the sanctuary.

The Ottomans: The Last Muslim Rulers of Bayt al-Maqdis

We turn now to the last of the Muslim dynasties to have ruled over Bayt al-Maqdis, the Ottomans. At this point we can begin to use the names current in the Ottoman period in reference to Bayt al-Maqdis, i.e. Palestine for the larger area, and al-Quds for the city.

The Ottomans represented the last cohesive Islamic political system to exercise direct control over Bayt al-Maqdis and it was during their final collapse that the land became occupied for the purpose of furthering the Zionist project. Another important element is that the Ottomans in their last days were contemporaries with the birth of Zionism and had significant interaction with it. The nature of this interaction is relevant from an Islamic perspective, and it lays the foundations for many of contemporary Muslim attitudes. The Ottoman position on the question of Palestine is of Islamic legal significance, since the Caliph at the time had the power to exercise control over the territory, and he did oppose the Zionist project. Our research is not concerned with Zionism as such and its development, but with Muslim consciousness of al-Quds and Palestine and how it has been affected due to the transformations and shifts of power that occurred in the last 100 years.

The Mamluk rule over Palestine lasted for some 300 years and ended in 922 Hijri (1516 CE) at the hands of Sultan Selim I, who was able to consolidate Ottoman power while expanding his realm rapidly to incorporate the lands of Bilad al-Sham. Sultan 'Uthmaan, who came from a *ghazi* (warrior) tradition, had founded the Ottoman dynasty approximately in 1300 CE in Western Anatolia. Sultan 'Uthmaan managed to establish the foundation for the Ottoman state, and upon his death in 1324, his second son Orkhan, was named by him as Sultan in preference to his older son, who did not object to this arrangement.¹⁹ The older son was appointed by Orkhan as the grand vizier for the state, the two men embarked together on laying the foundations for the Ottoman state. In a short period of time, the Ottomans were able both to subdue most of the Muslim lands and to push westward, capturing considerable territories in South East Europe.

Bayt al-Maqdis' encounter with the Ottomans was an affair that lasted some 400 years during which the area experienced both the splendor of Muslim power and the agony of defeat. During Sultan Selim's reign, the Ottoman forces were able to take possession of Palestine peacefully after a

military campaign in Syria in 922 Hijri (1516 CE), which saw the defeat of the Mamluk armies. The pinnacle of Ottoman power was attained during the periods of Mehmed II, and Sultan Suleyman al-Awal al-Qaanuni (Known in the West as Suliman the Magnificent). During the reign of Sultan Mehmed II, the Byzantine Empire ceased to exist, and in 1453, he captured the city of Constantinople and thereafter marched westward, completing the conquest of Serbia, Bosnia, and afterward Albania.²⁰ Sultan Suleyman directed his war efforts against Europe, captured Budapest in 1526, besieged Vienna in 1529, and on one occasion Ottoman troops reached Ratisbon in Central Germany. The Muslims at the time were the dominant world power and were far more advanced than their contemporaries.

The Ottomans acquired the leadership position of the Sunni Muslims and managed to create an extraordinarily well-structured state that was centrally controlled and possessed a formidable army. Ottoman military power played a major part in the stabilization and the expansion of the territories of the state. In the early stage, the Ottoman army consisted of members of the *ghazi* families who joined in the fighting for both spiritual reasons and war booty. With military success and the expansion of territories that came under Ottoman control, the thrust toward a professional military organization became the preferred policy for the state. The Janissaries, troops recruited from among the Christian provinces that had come under the control of the Ottomans or from slaves, became the organized military force. This force was extremely well trained and developed into one of the strongest parts of the state apparatus. The Ottomans spent considerably on the Janissaries, and each Sultan treated them as his personal force serving under his command.

As for Palestine (a name used by the Ottomans), the Ottomans incorporated the territory into their state and managed to control it until the last days of the dynasty. Entering the city of al-Quds, Sultan Selim first visited the graves of all the Prophets (peace be upon them all) buried in and around the city and many other sacred locations around al-Quds. Upon hearing the news of his victory, the elders and leaders from the surrounding cities came and presented Sultan Selim with the keys of their cities and castles, as a sign of recognition of his authority over their territories. The Sultan did not stay long in the city, but embarked quickly on a military expedition to Egypt. Before he left the city, the community celebrated the event with a feast that was held in the courtyard of the al-Aqsa mosque.²¹

A point worth mentioning is that the triumph of the Ottomans in the East coincided with the final collapse of Islamic rule and presence in Spain in 1492, resulting in an influx of large numbers of refugees, both Muslims and Jewish, who came to Ottoman territories seeking protection. The stream of refugees to Ottoman territories increased as the Christian Inquisition in Spain intensified and more people escaped its cruelty. Jews fleeing from the Christian Inquisition in Europe found a hospitable refuge

in Ottoman territories and were accorded a protected status in accordance with Islamic law. Many of the Jewish communities in North Africa²² and the Eastern Mediterranean trace their roots to this period of refugee settlements sanctioned by the Ottoman authorities. One neglected fact concerning the Inquisition is the omission of all mention of the large number of Muslims killed in this Christian campaign of persecution. In the West, the Inquisition is thought primarily to have been a question of Christians killing Jews in Spain, not killing Muslims as well. The expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Spain is a period that needs further attention and consideration since the contemporary discussions about Islam and Muslims in Europe is once again raising concerns and whether this will cause a similar response – or is it possible for history to be re-corrected. On the point of preserving existing religious communities, I would argue that Muslims over-all have a much better record than what we give them credit for and possibly we can begin to appreciate their contributions in this area.

After Sultan Selim's death, his son, Sultan Suleyman al-Qaanuni, inherited the throne. In Suleyman's reign, Palestine experienced a reinvigoration and a massive contribution to rebuilding the holy city and its surroundings. The present wall of al-Quds was rebuilt over five years (943-947 Hijri, 1536-1540 CE), buildings were renovated and a number of reservoirs were constructed to serve the local population and pilgrims traveling in the area. Al-Aqsa mosque experienced a facelift, which included the construction of new walls and the installation of new doors, like the door of Our Lady Maryam. Furthermore, the Dome of the Rock was re-built with new floors and the internal artwork on the dome was redone. The projects of Sultan Suleyman in Palestine cemented Ottoman credentials as leaders of the Sunni Muslim world and the protectors of the sacred places (they also had control of Mecca and Medina).

For example, in al-Quds, we find that Sultan Suleyman wife, Rukhsana, established a large *waqf* in the year 967 Hijri. This *waqf* consisted of "the Munif mosque, a big building that had a large kitchen to feed the poor and 55 rooms for the residence of the *daraawish* and the virtuous people, and a big market."²³ In addition, some 30 villages and farms were set aside to support this *waqf* and all the employees needed to run it.²⁴ Also, a school was set up by Sultan Suleyman in "Haarat al-Waad" in al-Quds to teach students from the city at the primary level of education.²⁵ Furthermore, Suleyman provided for the security of travelers on the road from Yaafa to al-Quds by employing the services of the Abi Ghoush tribesmen in return of fees they were permitted to collect from travelers.²⁶

The Dome of the Rock was further "renovated by Sultan Mehmet III (1597), Sultan Ahmed I (1603), and Sultan Mustafa I (1617)."²⁷ Another mosque inside the court yard area, Jaami' al-Hanaabilah, was also renovated by the Ottomans in 1611.²⁸ Building activities slowed down in al-Quds during the 17th century; nevertheless, repairs were ongoing and

a number of new drinking fountains established. In the area of repairs, the Mamluk "fountain inside the Haram known as Sabil Sha'laan was renovated in 1627, Qanaat al-Sabil was repaired in 1656 and 1666, while a new *sabil* was built by Hajj 'Abd al-Karim Churbaji in 1685.²⁹

Dr. K. J. Asali comments that by the end of the 16th century the "great majority of the population" in al-Quds "were Muslim natives of Jerusalem, i.e. Arabs." In addition, Asali states that "there was a small percentage of Muslims who chose to move to the Holy City from various Islamic and Arabic countries, such as North Africa, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Bosnia, India, Persia, and several countries of Central Asia."³⁰ As a matter of fact, one whole neighborhood in al-Quds was called al-Maghaariba, which refers to people from North Africa, i.e. present day Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. It was common for students from various regions of the Muslim world to stop in al-Quds and to engage in studying with some of the scholars teaching at al-Aqsa. An account of al-Quds appears in the *Siyaahatname* of the Turkish traveler, Evliya Çelebi, who visited the city in 1672, and described it as follows:

"Jerusalem has plenty of buildings. Its air is fresh and its water is sweet ...[governor] Zade Mehmet Pasha counted the inhabitants of the city. They numbered 46,000. The Pasha distributed the *Surra*³¹ to no less than one thousand men, mostly friends, and Sufis. ...Jerusalem has 43,000 vineyards, and every Jerusalemite lives in these vineyards two to three months a year.

Although the city appears to be small it has 240 mihraabs [i.e. prayer niches], 7 schools for teaching hadith [traditions of the Prophet Muhammad], 10 for teaching the Qur'an, 40 madrasas, and zawiyas for 70 Sufi orders, the largest of which are those of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani, Ahmad al-Badawi, the Rifaa'i and Mevlevi orders. There are 6 khaans, 6 baths and 16 sabilis [fountains].

According to the record of the *muhtasib* there are 2,045 shops and several markets in Jerusalem. There are also two churches for the Armenians, three for the Greeks and two synagogues.

There are no buildings whatsoever around the fortress of Jerusalem, except for the suburb of David which consists of 40 houses. Except for the gardens, the vineyards and flower gardens all buildings are within the fortress. All quarters are Muslim. There are altogether one thousand fortress-like lofty palaces."³²

We can see from Çelebi's observations that the city was well established and inhabited by a large population. In addition, it can be ascertained from his comments regarding the vineyards that agricultural methods were highly developed, and many in the city and its surroundings engaged in cultivating the land. With 2,045 shops, it seems also that al-Quds served possibly as a major trade and commercial center for the region, linking

the coastal areas with the hinterland. Moreover, Çelebi's account includes some detailed material on the administrative governing structure of al-Quds. For example, he observes that in "1672 the Pasha of Jerusalem had 500 soldiers at his command and was the commandant of the pilgrims' caravan of Damascus."³³ From other accounts we know that al-Quds served as a major rest station on the way to Mecca for the pilgrimage, and to embark on the Hajj from the city is a praiseworthy act; this may explain the appointment of the governor of al-Quds to the command of the Damascus caravan.

An account by the British traveler Henry Maundrell, who journeyed to Palestine in 1696, corroborates some of Çelebi's descriptions of al-Quds, but he presents less favorable impressions of the Muslims he encountered. In part, his treatment as a Christian pilgrim might have impacted his description, his account of the trip, *A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem*, nevertheless serves as a source for information of conditions in parts of Palestine at the time. It is not suspicious that he was not particularly welcomed by the Muslims, given the long lasting imprint of the Crusaders on successive generations in the area.

"In one hour we approached the walls of the holy city; but we could not enter immediately, it being necessary first to send a messenger to acquaint the governor of our arrival, and to desire liberty of entrance, without which preceding ceremony no Frank dares come within the walls. We therefore passed along by the west side of the city, and coming to the corner above Bait-laham gate, made a stop there, in order to expect the return of our messenger. We had not waited above half an hour, when he brought us our permission and we entered accordingly at Bethlehem gate. It is required of all Franks, unless they happen to come in with some public minister, to dismount at the gate, to deliver their arms, and enter on foot; but we, coming in the company with the French consul, had the privilege to enter mounted and armed."³⁴

The above account contains significant details such as the process that had to be followed for entrance into the city, which shows that one had to go through the office of the governor. In addition, permission in writing may have been needed in order to enter the city. Further, this account illustrates the presence of a command structure for access to the city at its various gates. Also, the time needed for obtaining permission points to a level of efficiency in the conduct of such affairs, in complete contrast to the present conditions for entry into al-Quds by Muslims. The restrictions involved included Christian travelers dismounting from their animals and surrendering their arms which points possibly to the continued implementation of the rules governing Christians that had been established by the Caliph 'Umar or rules pertaining to post-Crusader regulations for

European travelers. However, it seems that these restrictions were being applied only to European Christians coming to visit al-Quds, not so to the local Christian Arab population. These and other measures were put in place after the Muslims defeated the Crusaders in al-Quds and its surroundings. What stands out is the special treatment accorded to the French consul in al-Quds, which enabled him and his company to enter the city "mounted and armed." After the Ottomans signed the capitulation of 1535 with the French, the Ottomans extended them certain privileges, including the right to have a resident consul in al-Quds not subject to the restrictions enshrined in *al-'Uhda al-'Umaria*.

From the early period of their control of Bilad al-Sham, the Ottomans treated Palestine as a special territory possessing a sacred character. In a preliminary study of the Ottoman *Muhimme defterleri*, Dr. 'Asali maintains that the Ottomans' "firmans and orders show the great attention given by authorities to the sanctuaries."³⁵ In addition, Dr. 'Asali discovered that the "wardens and other employees" hired by Ottomans to oversee the sanctuaries "had to be pious and reliable,"³⁶ which was one way of maintaining the high status of these sites. Every Ottoman ruler without exception made certain that al-Sham, in general, and al-Quds, in particular, received the attention and the favor of his administration. This attention manifested itself in a number of ways, but the most visible aspect was the yearly financial allowance (*Surra*) sent for distribution among the scholars, imams and the poor in al-Quds and other cities in Palestine. In addition, a number of Sultans established schools and Sufi lodges and set aside for them income derived from *waqf* properties. Ottoman *waqf* properties set aside by various Sultans in and around al-Quds became a prominent feature of religious life in Palestine, and at one point, supported a large number of families.

In governorate and judgeship appointments, the Ottomans often treated al-Quds and its surroundings areas as a separate *sanjak* (province), even though at times it was incorporated into other administrative units. The norm was the former arrangement, but the area was incorporated into the governorate of Muhammad b. Farrukh of Nablus in 1625-26, and that of Husain b. Hasan al-Ghazzawi in 1660.³⁷ The judge for al-Quds was appointed by the central authority and often was sent from the Porte, but local scholars and leaders were appointed for almost all other functions in the city. The use of local religious dignitaries for judgeships increased as the power of the central government diminished and the need to placate local communities became necessary for maintaining control. After the uprising of the *naqib al-ashraaf* in 1703, the Ottoman pursued the appointment of local leaders for higher leadership positions. The position of the Mufti of the city was held by some prominent families in al-Quds like the Dajaani and Abu 'I-Lutf families.³⁸ In 1717, a member of the Tuqaan family of Nablus, Salih Pasha Tuqaan was the governor of al-Quds, and another As'ad Bey Tuqaan served in the same capacity from

1788-1790. Another prominent family in Nablus, the Nimr family had several of its members serving in the capacity of governors of al-Quds: 'Umar (1717-1713), Mustafaa (1731-1733), 'Umar a second time (1733), Ismaa'il Agha (1760), and Ibrahim (1771).³⁹

The Ottomans' relationship to Palestine was always one of reverence, but domestic and global changes caused the eventual loss of this land first to Europeans and then their surrogates and partners, the Zionists. What we described above represents Palestine living in the shade of the Ottoman splendor. How and why matters changes are two important questions. To understand what happened in Palestine, we must comprehend the changes that occurred for the Ottomans themselves, since the central authority had experienced a slow process of decline, which in the end led to its disintegration. No power can exist forever for all must decline, and face an end, Muslim or otherwise.

The Period of Decline and the Loss of al-Quds

The decline of the Ottomans was a slow process with multifaceted causes that culminated in the eventual dissolution of the state and the occupation of its vast territories. While it is true historically to point out that external aggression is paramount in considering a nation's security, it is nevertheless the internal dynamics that thwart or contribute to the success of the external enemy. Those dynamics may result in creating appropriate conditions for the rise and expansion of external influences which in the long run causes the demise of the nation. This was the case with the Ottomans: conditions were created that enabled the Western countries to take control of vast stretches of Muslim territories. My intent is not to minimize the Western role in what took place in the Muslim world, but to point out that the collective body of the Muslim nation under the leadership of the Ottomans made it possible for the colonizing program to be successful. A failure to appreciate this factor would free the Muslims from their own collective responsibility, an approach lacking in honesty, courage and clarity.

Another general theory that traces the causes for the decline of empires asserts that they are similar to living organisms in that their survival is dependent on their continued expansion; the moment they stop expanding inner decline begins to take hold. The expansion of an empire will always lead to an expansion in resources spent to control the vast territories it controls, which would create an urge for still more expansion. Once the expansion stops, the need to look inward and consolidate the territories that have come under control places pressure upon the limited resources. In addition, the ending of expansion is a sign that the empire is growing weaker and is unable to maintain a forward power thrust. This sign of weakness is often coupled with an increase in rebellions among the populations that came under the control of the empire, but were not

assimilated in the process. While the Ottomans were not organized as an empire, it can be maintained that they did indeed go through this process; the end of their forward territorial march signaled the beginning of their inward looking stage, which saw increased pressure on the state resources and a rise in the instability amongst the varied populations they ruled. The internal pressure was further amplified with proliferation of corruption at all levels of government including many of the caliphs.

In general, every nation and power must come to lose its dominance in due time, this being one of the main constants in world history. Power cannot remain in the hands of some at the expense of all others; it must shift and change hands. The process of change and loss of power by one nation is primarily an internal one, not contingent upon external factors. Those external factors in the process of decline are to be viewed as symptoms of decline and not as ultimate causes. By way of analogy, when we see the human body beset by sicknesses of old age, we tend to assume that they are the cause of demise, whereas they are only outward indicators that the internal biological clock is running its course. Death is a reality in the human body and likewise in nations. Viewed from this perspective, the Ottomans from the beginning days of their rule were already on a slow path toward decline, which finally culminated in the collapse of 1924.

The causes of Ottoman decline are numerous and do require an independent study that would cover all the relevant historical documents. The Ottoman decline began visibly in the economic, military, political, and educational spheres, and was reflected on the battlefields beginning perhaps in the 17th century. The West was able to take advantage of the internal weaknesses and to mount a steady campaign which succeeded in eroding the power of the Ottomans. As a result Palestine and al-Quds were lost to a foreign occupation.

We turn now to the expansion of Western influence in the Ottoman territories, which led to the complete colonization of vast areas at the beginning of the 20th century. The door for Zionism was opened as a result of this process, which retains its relevance today. Ottoman decline intensified in the 18th century and resulted in large losses of territory. The rise of European power, due in part to industrial development, induced changes in the relationship between the Ottomans and Europe, which had an effect on Palestine and Bilad al-Sham. Those changes also had an impact on the Muslim worldview and how they perceived Europe. Sultan Selim VI, who came to power in the same year as the French revolution, even before becoming a ruler, "exhibited a keen interest in French culture, and exchanged letters with Louis XVI."⁴⁰ At this early stage, the Ottomans had positive relations with the French and treated them as allies in their war efforts against the Habsburgs in Central Europe, the main rival of the Ottomans in the Balkans.

In the opening years of the 18th century, al-Quds experienced an uprising which was led by naqib al-Ashraaf Muhammad b. Musstafa al-

Husaini, who managed to take control of the city for two years and expelled the Ottoman forces. The Ottomans recognized and appointed al-Husaini as a temporary governor for al-Quds, but this appointment did not last long and he expelled the governor of the city Jurji Muhammad Pasha, who had in the meantime been appointed wali (governor) of Damascus, marched on al-Quds with 2,000 Janissaries in 1705 and recaptured the city. The cause of the uprising was the heavy-handed policies of Jurji Pasha, who "imposed heavy taxes on townspeople and peasants alike, and resorted to cruel measures in collecting them."⁴¹ In 1707, the naqib, al-Husaini "was arrested and sent to Istanbul where he was executed."⁴²

The Russians' military defeat of the Ottomans and the subsequent conclusion of the treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarca in 1774 was a major blow followed by other similar losses on other fronts. In this treaty the Russians were able to acquire Ottoman territories in the Black Sea area as well as the right to be recognized as the protectors of the Eastern Orthodox Christians living in all parts of the Ottoman lands. Another treaty was signed with Austria in 1791 containing similar territorial concessions. We find that the Ottomans throughout the 18th century engaged in wars against the Russians, Austrians, Italians, Greeks, British, and French. In addition, we also find internal rebellions taking place in some of the Ottoman provinces, which resulted in periods of civil war causing loss of both lives and desperately needed resources.

Ottoman relations with Europe were multifaceted and changed depending on the era in question. It is well established that after the Ottomans suffered a number of military setbacks on the battlefield, they began in the nineteenth century C.E. to explore various avenues for the modernization of the army.⁴³ Germans were chosen for the task of modernizing and developing the Ottoman army in order to put it on par with the European armies. The enlisting of the Germans on the part of the Ottomans brought for the first time non-Muslim Europeans in the ranks of the Muslim soldiers in a position of superiority. Not only was the position of the Europeans considered to be superior, the Muslims themselves took on the mantle of inferiority. The European officers brought in to train the Ottoman army brought not only military expertise, but also all that which constitutes a European, from dress codes to mannerisms and from education to the all encompassing worldview.

Already at the time of Sultan Suleyman, the Ottomans "granted to Francis I, the privileges enshrined in the Capitulation of 1535,"⁴⁴ which provided that residing Europeans in the Ottoman territories would fall under the jurisdiction of their own consular courts. At the time, this tie was not seen as a sign of weakness, since the Ottomans were in a strong position and had developed very close relations with the French whom they treated as allies. This relationship changed after the French revolution, and a more hostile period began with an invasion of Egypt and parts of Syria by the French army in 1798. Originally however, this concession was seen

as a good will gesture toward the Ottoman's French allies and not a sign of humiliation and weakness, which it came to be later. The Capitulation of 1535 established a precedent that was used by other foreign communities to achieve comparable arrangements with the Ottomans. What resulted from these arrangements was the development of a community inside the Ottoman territories that had its security guaranteed by its allegiance to a foreign power. As time progressed, the concessions given to the French and other European powers evolved in the outer boundaries of the state into virtual occupations through European cooperation with corrupt local leaders. The ports of the Persian Gulf, the shores of Lebanon, and shores of Yemen came under the direct control of the Europeans.

Over the years, European merchants developed strong economic relations with the local Christian communities in some of the territories where they operated. The "contact with foreign merchants who enjoyed certain extra-territorial privileges was practically a Christian monopoly."⁴⁵ As the power of Europe increased so did the influence of these communities, who were favored by the Europeans and more trusted by them than the Muslims. Furthermore, with time foreign consular or commercial agents contrived to extend their own protected status and privileges to this class of Christian Ottoman subjects.⁴⁶ The Europeans put forward the claim that they need to intervene in the domestic affairs of the Ottomans out of concern for the safety and security of the local Christian population, a claim that continues to have resonance at the present juncture of Muslim-Western relations.⁴⁷ Whether or not the safety and security of the Christian community were indeed threatened is not our concern here. What was important was the claim of the West to be the representative and the protector of the Christian communities in the Ottoman state, which served as an avenue for furthering Western policy designs. The beginning of economic leverage and the accumulation of the Ottoman debt was facilitated by the protected Christian communities, who acted as middlemen for European interests. The extension of credit to the Ottomans facilitated the increased leverage that the Europeans were able to exercise in the internal affairs of the state, which was directed at maximizing the protection granted to their Christian clients.

European relations with the local Christian-Arab population date back to the period of the Crusades, when some small parts of the population sided with the Crusaders. Furthermore, during Napoleon's campaign into Egypt in 1798 and Palestine, some parts of the local Arab Christian population extended a helping hand to his army. In one case, when a small French force led by General Kleber was encircled near Nazareth, it was the native "Christian scouts who warned Napoleon of the plight of Kleber" and guided him to victory, which he celebrated together with the local Christian community in Nazareth.⁴⁸ In the city of ar-Ramlah, the local Christians welcomed Napoleon. By way of contrast the Druze community took a neutral stand during this campaign and did not

participate in the defense of the area with the Ottoman forces. After this period, the Ottomans introduced measures to deal with the changes and chaos that came about as a result of this invasion, but the challenges were far too many to overcome.

After the Napoleonic campaign, the Europeans continued to help in the development of the Christian communities in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, using them as intermediaries with the Ottoman state. It was a natural inclination for the Christians, over time, to begin to learn and adopt the ways of the Europeans, and in particular their languages, for obvious commercial needs. The development within the Ottoman state of a class of citizens that had direct benefits dealing with the Europeans and at a later stage saw themselves as European subjects living in the East. Some segments of the Christian community in Lebanon and Palestine were party to these developments.

This relationship with the Christians of the East was deepened with the opening of a number of missionary schools in the region. The Americans were the first to do so in 1820 and followed later by the French and the British. French, British and German educators were active in the Ottoman state before the opening of these schools, but their foundation represents a different stage in the European and American penetration into the East. The beginning and the acceleration of missionary work in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria took place in the period of Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Muhammad Ali, who governed the province for his father. Ibrahim's policies in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria made it possible for a large influx of missionaries to make their way into the area. These missionaries, led by the American Eli Smith and others, opened a number of schools in the area. The Lazarist Fathers re-opened the men's college at 'Aintura (Lebanon), and Eli Smith and his wife opened a school for the girls in Beirut.⁴⁹ In addition to opening schools, the Americans brought into Lebanon from Malta a printing press and immediately put it into use printing books and manuals for teaching (the first book to be printed at this press was a copy of the Bible in Arabic).

This missionary effort also coincided with the introduction by Ibrahim Pasha of a wide-ranging primary educational program for boys in Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria. The purpose of this educational system was to inculcate in the students a patriotic sense and to help in providing support for the political and ideological goals of Muhammad Ali and his sons. George Antonius describes the goal of this educational system in his book, *Arab Awakening*, as being "aimed deliberately at awakening Arab national consciousness among the pupils."⁵⁰ A French educational specialist, Dr. A. Clot, who was invited to help in setting the goals of this new system, guided Ibrahim's educational policies and those of his father in Egypt.⁵¹

The economic program went hand in hand with the educational program. The period of Muhammad 'Ali and his son witnessed a rapid

increase in the missionary project and the adoption of Western methods of education in Syria, Palestine and Lebanon. In a period of some twenty years, the number of missionary schools in Lebanon and Syria reached 30 with approximately 1000 students in attendance. "Their crowning work in the educational field came in 1866, when they founded the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut."⁵² By the 1860's, one can find a large number of missionary schools operated by Christians and Jews throughout the Ottoman state. The early students in these schools were Christians, but with time, the Muslim elite began to send its own children to these schools, for they saw the benefits that could come from a Western education. Most children of wealthy Muslim families were studying in these schools and learning the French, German, and English languages and becoming more knowledgeable of the history, literature and culture of the Europeans than of their own culture and history.

If we like to know the roots of the Arab and Muslim state of affairs we need to examine the educational system and what purposes it was set to serve; surely it was not carried out because of a deep sense of love to the culture and civilization! The primary reason is still resources, territory and domination. The Western powers of old and new sold to many people dreams of gold while at the same time selling the Muslim and Arab worlds to the highest bidder. Eastern Christians and Muslims are only tools for a larger engine fueled by divide and conquer but at the end of the day those living in the East are not real members of the civilized world and the most they can aspire to it is to be invited as honorary guests for one day and then go back home to the plantation.

The use or abuse of Eastern Christians is yet another aspect that calls for further attention but this work is limited and I fear would not be able to give it equal justice. However, broadly speaking the concern for the protection of Eastern Christian was and is motivated by pure economic interests and strategic consideration since the West remains vested in trade routes of old and oil in the modern period. Divide and conquer would always get the needed results and the current period is just a continuation of the same pattern.

The Loss of Palestine

The process for acquisition of Palestine did not begin with the First Conference of the World Zionist Organization in 1897; rather it evolved over a long period of time. The European penetration of Syria and Egypt prior to the actual takeover by the Zionists was an essential part of the process. If anything, the groundwork for the occupation was begun during the 18th and 19th centuries and culminated in the first part of the 20th century. Europe had a "Jewish Problem" and it saw Palestine or other parts of the Ottoman territory as the best option for solving its own crisis. Not only were Europeans seeking a solution; the Jews themselves were also exploring their options as they had already taken to nationalism.

James Bicheno in a book published in 1800 called for the British to use their influence with the Ottomans to return the Jews to Palestine.⁵³ Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer wrote a book in 1862 entitled *Derishat-Zion*, where he concluded that the only way to deal with anti-Semitism in Europe was through the establishment of a national home for the Jews that could exist anywhere but Palestine. As a matter of fact, Kalischer was able to establish L'Alliance Israélite Universelle, and through it he founded in 1870 the first Jewish agriculture school in Palestine, the Charles Netter School.⁵⁴ Moses Hess, another Jewish author, who wrote a book entitled, *Rome and Jerusalem*, called on France to establish Jewish settlements extending from the Suez Canal in Egypt to al-Quds and from Jordan to the Mediterranean.

Jewish activity in Palestine went through a number of European surrogates to lay the foundation for the state, the Germans, French, and British being the leading governments used for this purpose. As mentioned earlier, under the articles of the Capitulation, the Europeans enjoyed a protected status in Ottoman territories, the level of which increased because of the dependence of the Sultan and his government on European finances. The debt, which by the 19th century had reached very high levels, made it impossible for the Ottomans to assert complete control over considerable parts of their territories. It was during this period that Jewish influence in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt was able to undertake foundational work for the state. For example, German operations within the Ottoman territory made it possible for Jewish financiers and bankers to establish economic units servicing the Zionist colonial project. In 1870, the Anglo-Jewish Association was founded to facilitate the development of the Jews in the underdeveloped lands and Palestine was one of the territories where the Association had engaged in work with the local community. A similar German-Jewish association also was established in 1873 with the same idea in mind. In 1873, the Jews in al-Quds were purchasing lands and establishing the settlement of "Petah Tekivah," meaning "the gate of hope," and beginning to engage in the building of institutions. Other organizations and Jewish groups emerged during this period, all participating in foundational work for the future creation of a Jewish state. It is understood that ideological differences did exist among the various Jewish groups and that not all of them were in agreement on the methods to be employed; however, the goal of creating a Jewish state was agreed upon by the majority of the organized Zionist groups.

The Europeans had a Jewish problem and the way to solve it was to give a piece of the land of the "sick man of Europe," for them to settle and create a state. Also, the Jews had problems with Europe, because of both the rabid anti-Semitism and the threat of assimilation into the larger society, which were seen as causes for the need to develop an independent state of their own. These two problems may be viewed as contradictory, and they are, but both served as the main thrust for the creation of a state.

The fact that anti-Semitism that is endemic in Eastern Europe can hardly be argued, but also during this period, the level of assimilation underway in Western Europe was beginning to break down the boundaries and the historical structures of the Jewish community.⁵⁵ This was seen as a threat to the long-term survival of the Jews as a distinct community with its own traditions. The same can be said about the many debates that are taking place currently among various members of the Jewish community in the United States where the level of assimilation has reached crisis proportions according to some recent studies.

In the second part of the 18th century, the Jewish presence within the ranks of European residents of the Ottoman land increased, as did the commercial units operated by them. The Ottomans for their part did not stop this and often could not, since many of these units were registered as English, German, or French enterprises and protected by the various foreign representatives. On more than one occasion, we find foreign delegations protesting attempts by the Ottomans to restrict Zionist access to Ottoman territories and markets.

Under the above conditions Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid came to power at a time when the Ottomans were close to bankruptcy. Putting the house of 'Uthmaan in order was a huge challenge, which at the end proved to be insurmountable and ended with the dissolution of the state. Our evaluation of Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid's efforts, however, should be expanded to include a look at the condition of the Muslim society he inherited, and the role that various segments played in bringing about the eventual collapse of the house of 'Uthmaan. It is true that leaders can bring about change, but the success of their efforts depends upon the presence of a society capable and ready to respond to his call. The reign of Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II started in 1876 and lasted until 1908, when he was deposed from the throne by the Young Turks. His reign deserves careful study, for its consequences continue into the present.

At the outset, Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II represents the last Caliph to have exercised all the powers that are inherent in this position. He was the last to have unfettered executive powers over all the affairs of the Muslims living under his rule, including military, economic, political, and spiritual affairs. Even though a two year period of a constitutional form of government was permitted between 1876-1878; nevertheless, the final authority on all matters of state was vested with Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid. The constitutional phase came to end after the removal of the prime minister Midhat Pasha.

Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II embarked in 1876 on a program of change that centered, on the one hand, on modernizing his army, and on the other, on promoting the unity of the Muslim Ummah. 'Abd al-Hamid II was known for his piety, adherence to the Shari'a, and a keen interest in the preservation of Islam. The reforms included increased spending on Islamic educational institutions, which had been neglected by earlier Sultans;

the pursuing of close relations with the Arab provinces and bringing many Arabs into his palace as confidants; and surrounding himself with a number of able 'Ulama for the purpose of consultation. Furthermore, Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid conceived the project of the Syria-Hijaz railway to help in the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca, which was funded partly by the Ottomans and partly by donations from throughout the Muslim world. This project had a major impact upon the believers and earned the Sultan their high regard.⁵⁶

The reforms directed toward the Muslim population were important and significant, but many people were at work to prevent their success. It is true that Sultan 'Abd Hamid II did not end European intervention in the affairs of the Ottoman State, but it is questionable if it was possible at his time to uproot these influences. The Europeans were far too entrenched in the Muslim world for a Sultan driven by good intentions to remove them so easily. The dynamics within the Ottoman state and the many active attempts at seizing control of parts of its territories frustrated the Sultan's efforts. Everyone in the outer circle was working for the collapse and seeking a partner to facilitate the stealing of a piece of the Ottoman land. The British, French, Russians, Germans, Americans, Italians, Greeks and Armenians were all waiting and working hard for the destruction of the state.

'Abd al-Hamid knew what was taking place around him and attempted to slow down the bleeding of the Muslims and the possible loss of territories. If there is such a time as too late to be of any use, Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid's time was such. The forces (Arab Nationalists, Pan Turkaminsts, Freemasons, Greeks, Arminians, Donmes, etc.) in various parts of the society were in active collusion against the Caliphate, with each attempting to make a deal with the enemy camps. In Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz, we find forces working with the Europeans at the expense of the Ottomans and for the benefit of the few. Arab nationalism, the illegitimate child of Europe, was devoted in the first place to weakening the bonds between the Arab territories and the central authority, which would make it possible for the European penetration to occur unimpeded.

With respect to Palestine, a number of decrees issued by the Porte in the time of 'Abdul Hamid directed to the preservation of the territorial integrity of the country and its Islamic character. In 1882, the Sultan issued a decree that restricted Jewish⁵⁷ immigration to Palestine, because the program for building a Jewish state was being carried out without state permission. Another decree later permitted the Jews to visit Palestine for religious reasons, but limited to three months the period they could remain in the country. The Jews at the time had economic leverage over the Ottomans and they were exercising their leverage in an attempt to win the Sultan's approval for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The World Zionist Organization, established in 1897, was a group that had its eyes on a piece of the Ottoman pie and worked to acquire it

through their machinations with the Young Turks on the one hand, and the British-Arab collusion on the other. The Zionist Jews attempted to purchase Palestine from the Ottoman Sultan and they sent him an offer in this regard. Herzl, the founder of World Zionist Organization, wrote in his diaries about this offer and Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid's response:

"In the evening Newlinsky returned from Yildiz Kiosk with a long face and bad news... The Sultan said: if Mr. Herzl is your friend, as you are mine, then advise him not to take another-step in the matter. I cannot sell [surrender] even a [single] foot of land, for it does not belong to me, but to my people. My people have won this empire by fighting for it with their blood and have fertilized it with their blood. We will again cover it with our blood before we allow it to be wrested away from us. The men of two regiments from Syria and Palestine let themselves be killed one by one at Plevna [against the Bulgars]. Not one of them yielded; they all gave their lives on that battlefield. The Turkish [Ottoman] empire belongs not to me, but to the Turkish [the] people. I cannot give away any of it away. Let the Jews save their billions. When my empire is partitioned, they may get Palestine for nothing. But only our corpse will be divided. I will not agree to vivisection."⁵⁸

The Sultan thus knew of Zionist plans for the establishment of a state in Palestine and he was keen to resisting such a project. Herzl commented on 'Abd al-Hamid's statement as follows:

"I was touched and shaken by the truly lofty words of the Sultan, although for the time being they dashed all my hopes. There is a tragic beauty in this fatalism which will bear death and dismemberment, yet will fight to the last breath, even if only through passive resistance."⁵⁹

Jewish-Zionist plans for Palestine were very much in motion throughout the duration of Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid's reign and a number of proposals were put-forth for his consideration and possible approval. As mentioned above, a number of Jewish-Zionist projects had been developed earlier in Palestine with the long-term view of a possible state in the distant future. In another entry in the Diaries, Herzl assures Dionys Rosenfeld, editor of the *Osmanische Post* of Constantinople, that "we shall bestow enormous benefits upon Turkey and confer big gifts upon the intermediaries if we obtain Palestine."⁶⁰ This assurance was to be conveyed to Izzet Bey, who was very close to the Sultan and did offer his help in the Zionist project.

The Sultan did not support the Zionist project and resisted any attempt directed at its implementation. Indeed, one of the key reasons for 'Abdul Hamid's removal from his office by the Young Turks was his continued

refusal to support the Zionist designs for Palestine, as can be seen from one of the last letters written by the exiled Caliph:

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful.

All praise be to Allah and the best of blessings and the most perfect of peace be upon our master Muhammad, the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds and upon his family and his companions and on those who follow them until the day of judgment.

I submit this petition to the shaykh of the exalted tariqa, the one who gives spirit and life to existence, to the master of all Shaykhs, Muhammad Effendi abu Shammat. I kiss your blessed hands and request that you pray for me.

After offering you my greetings and respects, I wish to set forth the following: I have received your letter dated 2 May last year, and I offer thanks and praise to Allah that you are in a state of constant good health. Through the assistance and grace of Allah I am engaged in the recitation of *awraad al-Shaadhilia* and *wadhifa of al-Shaadhilia* by day and night. I praise Allah for my ability to continue in this path. I submit to you, however that I remain constantly in need of your sincere and heartfelt prayers. After these preliminaries I wish to set before your eminence, who are well equipped to guide me and before all others possessed of sound mind and reason, as a historical trust, the following:

I abandoned the Islamic Caliphate for one reason and one reason only which I now set forth: Because I did not accept the establishment by the Jews of a national homeland in Palestine within the 'Ard al-Muqaddas. The leaders of the Ittihaad continuously exercised pressure and threats upon me, however I decisively refused to accept this proposal. In the end they promised to give me 150 million English pounds Sterling. This proposal too I rejected decisively and answered them as follows: Not only 150 million English pounds, even if you were to give me simply not even 150 million English pounds sterling but a whole world full of gold still I would definitely reject your proposal. For more than 30 years I have served the people of Islam and the ummah of Muhammad and I will not blacken the pages of the Muslims and of my forefathers and ancestors from among the sultans and the caliphs of the family of Uthman. Therefore, it is impossible that I should ever accept your proposal.

After I gave them this decisive answer they agreed amongst

themselves to depose me and they told me that they would send me to Salonica. And this proposal of theirs, I was obliged to accept. By Allah I have given and continue to give thanks to Allah. I did not accept a proposal that would have divided the lands of Islam and made Palestine a national home for the Jews. Thereafter, I continued to give thanks to Allah for the way I was able to conduct myself in this matter. This will be enough I hope to clarify my stance on the issue and I now close my letter. I again kiss your blessed hands and request you to accept my expression of deep respect, convey my greetings to the brothers and friends. Oh my eminent teacher I have gone on at length but actually I have been compelled to write matters concisely for your knowledge and for that of society at large.

Al-salaam 'alaykum wa Rahmat Allah wa Barakaatuh,
22 of Aylul, 1329 Hijri
Servant of the Muslims
'Abd al-Hamid ibn 'Abd al-Majid

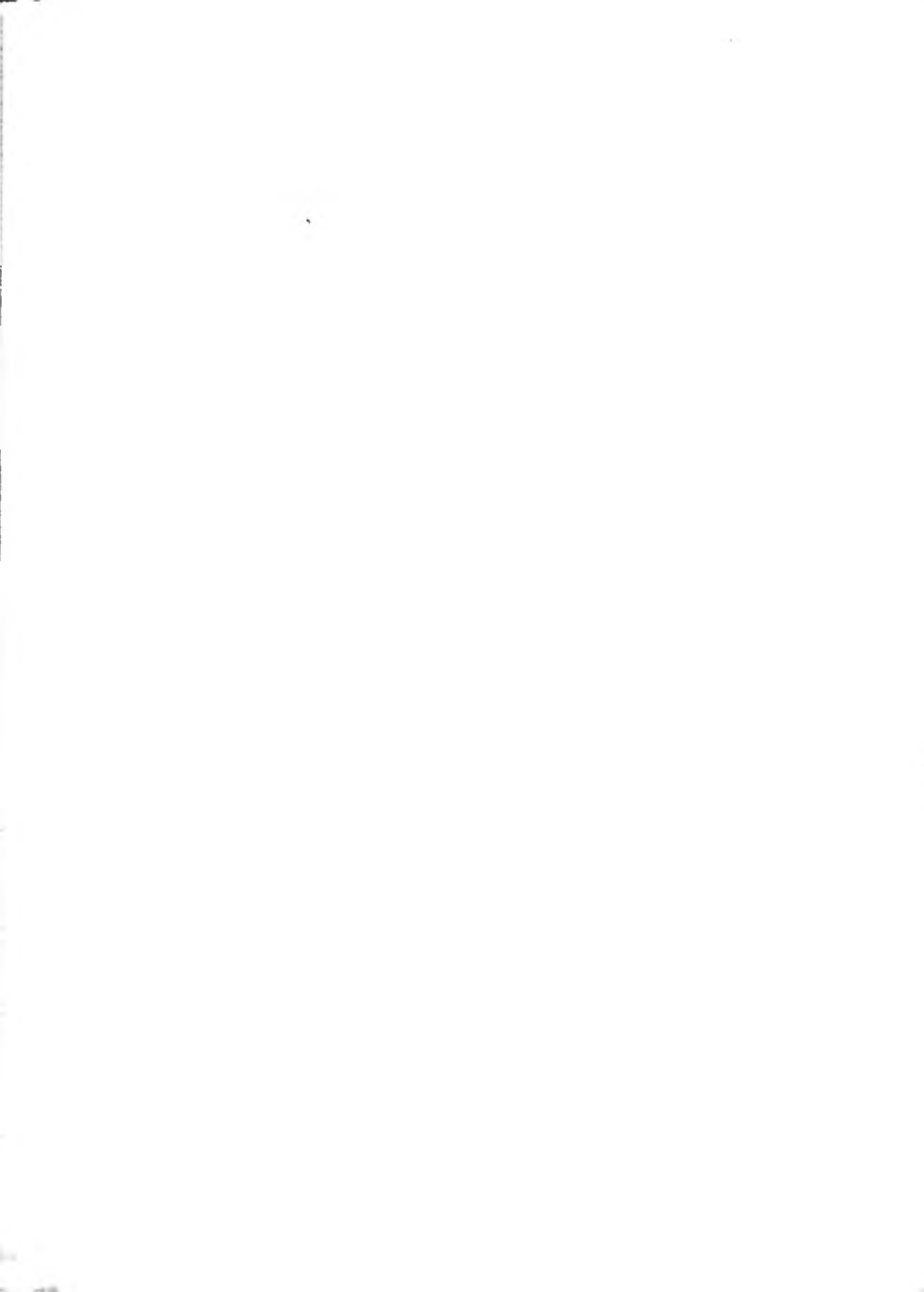
The above letter of 'Abd al-Hamid establishes without doubt that he viewed as the real cause behind his removal from the office of the caliph his refusal to grant the permission for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine under the auspices of the World Zionist Organization. What is also remarkable in this letter is the amount of money that the Zionists were willing to pay to 'Abd al-Hamid in return for his cooperation in their project. The sum that was offered was a great sum in those days and would have provided the Sultan with enough resources to stabilize the finances of the state.

Yet, 'Abd al-Hamid's sense of Ottoman and Islamic history and the grave consequences associated with such a step weighed heavily on him and compelled him to make a decision that was in line with Islamic law. Leaders' sense of who they are and what they represent is an important factor in the decision making process, and 'Abd al-Hamid was clear on who he was and what he represented in terms of the historical continuity of the house of 'Uthmaan and also what his actions would mean to future generations. In his response to Herzl earlier 'Abd al-Hamid understood the historical events that were unfolding all around him and foretold the success of Zionism when he said: "When my empire is divided, maybe they will get Palestine for nothing. But it is our corpse that can be shared out. I will not consent to being cut up while still alive." Not only did he foresee the dissolution of the Ottoman state, but also the actual gaining of Palestine by the Zionists for a low price or none at all.

'Abd al-Hamid was confronted with a choice: either he accepts the granting of Palestine to the Zionists and is paid for it or loses his throne. 'Abd al-Hamid chose to relinquish his throne instead of giving legal title

138 to the Zionist Jews over Palestine. Now some will point to the power of the Zionists at the time as the most important element to consider. There is however more to it. The Zionist Jews had achieved a considerable level of power and influence, but we also have to take into account all those Muslims who cooperated with and facilitated the Zionist enterprise. The Sultan could not be deposed by the Zionists directly, they needed a middleman to carry out their program. It is here that the Young Turks played their fateful role.

The removal of Sultan 'Abdul Hamid brought the Zionist program appreciably closer to being a reality in a matter of 12 years, Palestine was no longer ruled by a Muslim ruler. There thus came to an end the Islamic rule over Palestine that had started in the time of 'Umar and ended with the defeat of the Ottomans and the beginning of the British occupation. Important to conclude from this chapter is that Muslims had continuous control over the land in Bayt al-Maqdis, participated in its affairs at all levels, and supported the dynasties which ruled over the land from one generation to the next. Finally, the last dynasty to rule over Bayt al-Maqdis, that of the Ottomans, did not relinquish any of the inhabitants' rights to the land and refused to bargain it away for political and economic gains, a point which engenders respect for them from Muslims in the present age.



Notes

Chapter 1

- 1 Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*, The Free Press, 2001, p. 238.
- 2 For a more detailed discussion of the Bible and recent research in Archaeology I recommend reading Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman's book, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and The Origin of Its Sacred Texts*; Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel; The Silencing of Palestinian History*; Thomas L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel*; William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?*.
- 3 See Qur'an, C. 7:180, C. 17:110, C. 20:8, C. 59:24
- 4 See Qur'an C. 2:31
- 5 See Qur'an C. 7:71, C. 12:40, C. 53:23
- 6 Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Al-Maqasad al-Asna fi Sharh Asma' Allah al-Husna*, trans. By David Burrel and Nazih Daher, The Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, England, 1995, pp. 5-6.
- 7 *ibid.* p. 6
- 8 *ibid.* p. 6
- 9 *ibid.* p.7
- 10 *ibid.* pp. 7-8
- 11 *ibid.* p. 8
- 12 Muslims believe in the creation narrative but with marked differences with the Biblical account.
- 13 See Qur'an C. 2:31
- 14 Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Al-Maqasad al-Asna fi Sharh Asma' Allah al-Husna*, trans. By David Burrel and Nazih Daher, The Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, England, 1995, p. 8
- 15 Ibn Kathir, *Tasfir ibn Kathir*, Vol. I, Commentary on Chapter 2, Al-Baqara, Maktabat Al-Nur Al-'ilmia, Beirut, Lebanon, First Edition, 1991.
- 16 See Qur'an C. 68: 1
- 17 See Qur'an C. 96:1, and 3. The command 'read!' appears a total of three times in the Qur'an – two of which occur in the first verses revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). In actuality the first word to be revealed was the command 'read' – a

clear indication of the importance of knowledge acquisition, which was translated by the first Muslim community into a tremendous scholarly drive that resulted in the emergence of a distinct Islamic intellectual tradition. Also, the fact that Allah Himself began the revelation by a command involving knowledge pointed to a distinct divine importance associated with the field of education. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said that if I was not a prophet I would have chosen to be a teacher. Early Muslim civilization was vested in knowledge, sacred and otherwise, and it was the basis and the foundation of the society. I maintain that the decline present in parts of the Muslim world is due in large part to the decline and lack of attention given to education and knowledge in general with a particular lack of attention to the legal tradition. This subject is a dear one to me and does require a full treatment but I did feel the need to make these passing remarks on this verse.

18 See Qur'an C. 30:22

19 See Qur'an C. 14:4

20 A primary indicator of Islamization of a people has been the emergence of a new language, drawing on existing linguistic materials but bearing the stamp of Islam, examples being Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Malay, Swahili, Hausa, etc. In many parts of the world the arrival of Islam lead to the strengthening of the local languages as often attempts to translate Islamic text and the Qur'an in particular called for the engagement of the highest forms of language, a fact that is presently occurring in English speaking areas as translations of classical texts are undertaken.

21 A strong emphasis in learning other languages was present during the prophetic period and it is reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) encouraged his followers to learn languages including those of their enemies. It is reported that he employed translators to communicate with leaders of Persia and Byzantium.

22 Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din, *Ithaf Al-Akhsa bi-fada'l al-Masjid al-'Aqsa*, Al-Ummah Lil-Kitab, Cairo, 1982, pp.93-94.

The book has a number of conflicting manuscripts with three having the name Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti as being the author, while two attribute the book to Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad bin Shihab al-Suyuti, and some to Kamal al-Din Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Maqdisi. The copies that bear Jalal al-Din Suyuti's name are the ones found in the Library of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, one with the code number Tal'at 192, and the date of the writing is recorded as 875 Hijri (Islamic Calendar), and the second with the code number Tal'at 327 with the commentary about the author included in the text, which states the date to be 875 Hijri. The third copy with Jalal al-Din's name is found in Dar al-Kutub al-Misria with the code number Tarikh Tal'at 1827. One copy that has al-Maqdisi's name is available in Dar al-Kutub

in Egypt and has the code Tarikh no 279-F47. A number of sources have indicated the author of the book is Abu 'Abdallah Al-Suyuti; they include a copy that is preserved in al-Khazanah al-Zahiria in Damascus with the code no. 92, and another copy is owned by Ilias Sarkis. Dr. Ahmad Ramd Ahmad of 'Ain Shams University in Egypt concluded in his authentication and editing of the manuscripts before publishing the 1982 edition that the book was most likely written by Abu 'Abdallah al-Suyuti. He reached this conclusion after considering a number of sources and reviewing the various manuscripts. For a complete discussion of this issue read Dr. Ahmad's introduction to the 1982 edition of the book, pp. 15-43.

23 See Qur'an C. 2:30

24 Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din, *Ithaf Al-Akhisa bi-fada'l al-Masjid al-'Aqsa*, Al-Ummah Lil-Kitab, Cairo, 1982, pp.93-94.

25 Ibid. p. 93-94

26 See Mohammed Abdul Hameed Al-Khateeb, *Al-Quds: The Place of Jerusalem in Classical Judaic and Islamic Traditions*. Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd. London, 1998, p. 21.

27 ibid. p. 21

Genesis: 18-20: Then Melchizedek king of Salem [a] brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator [b] of heaven and earth. 20 And blessed be [c] God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

28 ibid p. 21

29 ibid. p. 23

30 Al-Zarkashi, Muhammad Badr al-Din b. 'Abdallah, *I'lam al-Sajid bi Ahkam al-Masajid*, pp. 193-195.

31 Hadith constitutes the second source of Islamic law and it consists of the authenticated statements, actions and consent of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

32 I know that some say that Arabs did not exist in the area before the coming of Islam and they associate the coming of Islam to that of the arrival of the Arabs to Palestine. In my view such ideas lack depth and point to the absence of real scholarly evidence to support this claim. I am not inclined to list names of individuals who forward such claims for the mere mentioning of their names is a sort of recognition of validity of an erroneous proposition, such mention would bestow respectability and they deserve none.

33 Genesis 37:25 As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

34 Imam Abu Al-Fida Ismail ibn Kathir, *Al-Sira Al-Nabawiyya*, Trans. By

- Trevor Le Gassick, Garner Publishing, England, 1998, vol. 2.
- 35 Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 585: Narrated Abu Dhar: I said, "O Allah's Apostle! Which mosque was first built on the surface of the earth?" He said, "Al-Masjid-ul-Haram (in Mecca)." I said, "Which was built next?" He replied "The mosque of Al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem)." I said, "What was the period of construction between the two?" He said, "Forty years." He added, "Wherever (you may be, and) the prayer time becomes due, perform the prayer there, for the best thing is to do so (i.e. to offer the prayers in time)."
- 36 Genesis 25:9 His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite.
- 37 Qur'an C.2:127 which reads, "And when Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundations of the House: Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing."
- 38 See Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din, *Ithaf Al-Akhsa bi-fada'l al-Masjid al-'Aqsa*, Al-Ummah Lil-Kitab, Cairo, 1982, pp.93-94.
- 39 See Qur'an C. 5:21
- 40 Qur'an 2: 142 The fools among the people will say: What has turned them from their qiblah which they had? Say: The East and the West belong only to Allah; He guides whom He likes to the right path. 2:144 Indeed We see the turning of your face to heaven, so We shall surely turn you to a qiblah which you shall like; turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque, and wherever you are, turn your face towards it, and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord; and Allah is not at all heedless of what they do.
- 41 Sahih Al-Bukhari: Volume 1, Book 2, Number 39
 Narrated Al-Bara' (bin 'Azib):
 When the Prophet came to Medina, he stayed first with his grandfathers or maternal uncles from Ansar. He offered his prayers facing Baitul-Maqdis (Jerusalem) for sixteen or seventeen months, but he wished that he could pray facing the Ka'ba (at Mecca). The first prayer which he offered facing the Ka'ba was the 'Asr prayer in the company of some people. Then one of those who had offered that prayer with him came out and passed by some people in a mosque who were bowing during their prayers (facing Jerusalem). He said addressing them, "By Allah, I testify that I have prayed with Allah's Apostle facing Mecca (Ka'ba)." Hearing that, those people changed their direction towards the Ka'ba immediately. Jews and the people of the scriptures used to be pleased to see the Prophet facing Jerusalem in prayers but when he changed his direction towards the Ka'ba, during the prayers, they disapproved of it.
 Al-Bara' added, "Before we changed our direction towards the Ka'ba (Mecca) in prayers, some Muslims had died or had been killed and we

did not know what to say about them (regarding their prayers.) Allah then revealed: And Allah would never make your faith (prayers) to be lost (i.e. the prayers of those Muslims were valid).’ “ (2:143).

- 42 Abu Ayman, Al-Qadi Mujir al-Din al-Hanbali, Al-'Uns al-Jalil bi Tarikh al-Quds wa al-Khalil, Maktabat al-Muhasib, Amman, Jordan, 1973, p.6
- 43 Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, Al-Maqasid al-Asna fi Sharh Asma Allah al-Husna, Translated by David B. Burrell and Naziah Daher, The Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, England, 1995, pp. 59-60
- 44 Qadi 'Iyad ibn Musa al-Yahsubi, *Muhammad, Messenger of Allah: Ash-Shifa of Qadi 'Iyad*, Translated by Aisha Abdarrahman Bewely. Medinah Press Granada, Spain in association with Islamic Book Trust Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1991, p. 131.
- 45 See Mohammed Abdul Hameed Al-Khateeb, Al-Quds: The Place of Jerusalem in Classical Judaic and Islamic Traditions. Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd. London, 1998, p. 23
- 46 ibid. 24
- 47 Farahallah Salah Deeb, *Mu'jam Ma'ani wa-Usul wa-Asma' al-Mudn wa-al-Qura' al-Falistineeh*, Dar al-Hamra, Beirut, Lebanon, 1991, p. 157, p. 235.

Chapter 2

- 1 Daniel Pipes, The Muslim Claim to Jerusalem, *Middle East Quarterly* September 2001. The full article available at www.danielpipes.org/article/84
- 2 Cyril Glasse', The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam has the following for Al-Buruq: The miraculous steed which the Angel Gabriel brought to the Prophet [peace and blessings be upon him] for the Mi'raj or Heavenly Ascent, also known as the Isra', or Night Journey. The root of the word is baraqa, which means to "glitter", especially of lightning. In India the Buruq is depicted as having the face of a woman and the tail of a peacock, but there is not basis for this in traditional accounts, in which the Buruq is described as a creature for riding, bigger than a donkey and smaller than a horse, of celestial origin. On the other hand, the iconography of the Buruq as seen through the India imagination, makes of it a fantastical creature, both human and animal, and thus extends its symbolism to that of being the synthesis of al creation which accompanies the Prophet [peace and blessings be upon him] to heaven.

The traditional account of the Night Journey says that the Buruq proceeded in flashes of speed; where its glance landed, the next bound brought it, and from this it can be seen that the Buruq is an embodiment of the intellect which, when it perceives an object in Being, or a spiritual reality, can immediately recognize its nature, or "knows" it, without a process of analysis and reason.

- 3 Cyril Glasse', *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* has the following for Rak'ah (lit. "a bowing", from the verb raka'a, "to bow"). One complete cycle of sacred words and gestures during ritual prayer (salah). It includes standing, bowing, prostration, and sitting. Each prayer is made up of several such cycles, or raka'at.
- 4 Fitra is an Arabic term referring to man's primal nature which each child is born into. The Islamic understanding is that man arrives into this world in a state of purity and not having an original sin.
- 5 Qadi 'Iyad ibn Musa al-Yahsubi, *Muhammad, Messenger of Allah: Ash-Shifa of Qadi 'Iyad*. Translated by Aisha Abdarrahman Bewley, Madinah Press, Granada, Spain in association with Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1991, pp. 91-92. Also it appears with minor differences in the collection of Sahih al-Bukhari, Prayers Chapter and hadith number 345.
- 6 For those interested in a research on the collection and preservation of the Qur'anic text I highly recommend M. M. Al-Azami book, *The History of the Qur'anic Text: from Revelation to Compilation*, UK Islamic Academy, 2003.
- 7 This example should not be taken to imply any sort of anthropomorphic understanding of God, which would be outside established Islamic theological principles. The example used here is for the sole purpose of approximation of meaning and not any real similarity between God and a man king, none exists.
- 8 In Ibn Katheer's *Life of the Prophet Muhammad* we are informed of the difficulty faced by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) upon his return to Mecca as he correctly felt that people will not believe what has transpired during the night. Ibn Katheer states: "He, however, became merely somber, quiet that is, and was fearful that if he started to tell his people what he had seen they would promptly disbelieved him.

And so at first he told them calmly that he had been to Jerusalem that night. That was when Abu Jahl, God damn him, saw the Messenger of God (SAAS), in the sacred mosque sitting in somber silence and spoke to him, asking, "Well, anything new?" He replied, "Yes." "What is it?" Abu Jahl asked. "I was taken this night to Jerusalem."

"To Jerusalem?"

"Yes."

Abu Jahl asked, "If I were to call your people over to you for you to tell them, would you say to them what you said to me?" "Yes, I would," he replied. Abu Jahl wanted to assemble Quraysh to hear that from him, and so too did the Messenger of God (SAAS) also want to gather them to tell them and so give them information. Abu Jahl then said, "Come, O tribe of Quraysh!" They gathered there from their assemblies. He then said, "Well, tell your people what

you told me." The Messenger of God (SAAS) related to them what he had seen, that he had gone to Jerusalem that night and prayed there. Amidst the clapping and whistling of disbelief and derision at this report, the news spread quickly over to Mecca.

People then went to Abu Bakr, God bless him, and told him that Muhammad (SAAS) was saying such-and-such a thing. He responded, "You are telling lies about him!" They replied, "No, we swear it, he is saying that." "Well," said Abu Bakr, "if he said that, he spoke the truth." He then went to the Messenger of God (SAAS) who was surrounded by the pagans of Mecca, and asked him about that. He told him of it all and Abu Bakr asked him to describe Jerusalem, so that the polytheists would hear him and recognize the veracity of what he had told them. In the sahih collection the account has it that it was the polytheists who asked the Messenger of God about that.

He said, "I then began telling them about His signs, and I became somewhat confused. And so God made Jerusalem clear to me until I could see it beyond 'Uqayl's house, and I described it to them.

He (Ibn Ishaq) went on, "In his description he was correct."

Ibn Ishaq recounted the information we gave earlier about him telling them of his having passed by their caravan and of having drunk their water. And so God provided proof for them and illuminated the straight path for them. Some did believe because of their conviction from God, while others disbelieved despite the proof they had. As God Almighty said, "And we only made the visions we have shown you as a test for the people. (Q 17:60) That is, they were a way of testing and trying them.

Ibn 'Abbas said, "These were visions perceived by the eye that were shown to the Messenger of God (SAAS)." This view, that of the majority of scholars both ancient and more recent, holds that the night journey was both a physical and a spiritual experience for the Messenger of God (SAAS). This is shown in the clear accounts of his making a journey and of his ascending on the ladder, and such-like. God therefore stated, "Glory be to Him who took his servant by night from the 'sacrosanct mosque' to the 'further mosque' whose precincts we have blessed, to show him our signs." (Q 17:1) Such evocation of glory would only occur for truly great and extraordinary signs. And this proves that it was by both body and spirit, and the word "servant" gives expression to both of these together.

Also, if it had been a dream, the Quraysh polytheists would not have promptly expressed their disbelief and outrage. For that would not have been so important a matter. And so it shows that he did tell them that he had been taken on this night journey while awake, not

- asleep.”
- 9 Al-Imam Abi al-Fida' al-Hafiz ibn Katheer, *Tafseer al-Qur'an al-'Azim*. Maktabt al-Nur al-'ilmia Beirut, Lebanon, 1993, Volume 3, p. 448.
 - 10 Abu Bakr Muhammad bin 'Abdallah, Known as Ibn Al-'Arabi, *Ahkam al-Qur'an*. Dar Al-Jil, Beirut, Lebanon, 1980, Volume 3, p. 1582
 - 11 *ibid.* p. 1582
 - 12 *ibid.* p. 1582
 - 13 Qadi 'Iyad ibn Musa al-Yahsubi, Muhammad, Messenger of Allah: Ash-Shifa of Qadi 'Iyad. Translated by Aisha Abdarrahman Bewley, Madinah Press, Granada, Spain in association with Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1991, pp. 4-30.
 - 14 *ibid.* pp. 4-30
 - 15 Abu al-Ikhlās al-Hasan bin 'Ammar al-Shurunbulali, *Maraqi al-Falah Sharah Nur al-Idah wa Najat al-Arwah*. Dar al-Nu'man li al-'Ulum, Damascus, 1990, p. 274. See his discussion of the guardians that accompany each one of the believers. The number of guardians is subject to a difference of opinion, but he takes the position that each believer has five guardian angels.
 - 16 *Shama'l al-Tirmidhi*, with commentary of *Khass'il-e-Nabawi Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam* by Shaykhul Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakariya Kandihlawi, Translated by Muhammad Bin Abdur Rahman Ebrahim. See the chapter on the Names of Syyidina Rasulullah Sallallah 'Alayhi Wasallam, pp. 406-410.
 - 17 See Quran 3:144, Q 33:40, Q 47:2, Q 48:29
 - 18 Q 61:6
 - 19 Q 36:1
 - 20 Q 20:1
 - 21 Q 73:1
 - 22 Q 74:1
 - 23 Q 72:19
 - 24 Al-Shifa, pp. 121-127
 - 25 *ibid.* pp. 121-127
 - 26 Q 3: 96
 - 27 Al-Imam Badr al-Din Muhammad bin Bahadir al-Zarkashi, I'laam al-Sajid bi-Ahkam al-Masajid. Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmia, Beirut, Lebanon, 1995, p. 15.
 - 28 *ibid.* p. 15
 - 29 See Sirat Ibn Hisham for an expanded coverage of the Isra and Mi'raj episode.
 - 30 Ibn Katheer, The Life of The Prophet Muhammad. Translated by Professor Trevor Le Gassick, The Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization, Garnet Publishing, UK, 1998, volume 2, pp. 68-69
 - 31 Al-Imam Abd al-Rahman ibn Sh'ib bin Ali al-Nasai, *Tafseer al-Nasai*. Mu'sasat al-Kutub al-Thaqafia, Beirut, Lebanon, 1990, volume 1, pp. 642-647

- 32 Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan 'an Taiwil al-Qur'an*. Dar al-Qur'an al-Karim, Beirut, Lebanon, 1983, volume 1, p. 471.
- 33 Al-Imam Abi al-Fida' al-Hafiz Ibn Katheer, *Tafseer al-Qur'an al-'Azim*. Maktabat al-Nur al-'Ilmia, Beirut
- 34 Shaykh al-Islam Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*.
- 35 Abi al-Qasim Jar Allah Mahmud bin 'umar al-Zamakhari, *Al-Kashaf 'an Haqa'iq al-Tanzil wa 'Uyun al-Aqawil fi Wujuh al-Ta'wil*. Makrabat al-Mustafa al-Babi al-Halbi, Cairo, Egypt, 1996, volume 2, p. 436.
- 36 Abi al-Hasan Ali bin Ahmad al-Wahidi, *Al-Wajiz fi Tafseer al-Kitab al-'Aziz*. Dar al-Qalam wa Dar al-Shamia, Beirut, Lebanon, 1995, volume 2, p. 627.
- 37 Tafsir al-Imam Al-Nawawi.
- 38 Al-Imam Muhammad Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, *Mahasin al-Ta'wil*. Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1994, volume 4, p. 563
- 39 Al-Imam Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi, *Al-Nahr al-Madd min al-Bahr al-Muhit*. Dar al-Jil, Beirut, Lebanon, 1995, volume 3, p. 538.
- 40 Al-Imam Abdallah bin Ahmad al-Nasafi, *Tafseer al-Nasafi*. Dar al-Nafa'is, Beirut, Lebanon, volume 2, p. 443.
- 41 Al-Imam Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Juzai al-Kalbi, *Tafseer Ibn Juzai*. Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1983, p. 370.
- 42 Nasir al-Din Abi Sa'id Abdallah bin 'Umar bin Ahmad al-Shirazi al-Baydawi, *Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil*. Mu'sasat Sha'ban, Beirut, Lebanon, volume 3 p. 196.
- 43 Al-Imam Abi Abdallah Muhammad bin Ali Al-Balansi, *Tafseer Mubhamat al-Qur'an*. Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, Beirut, Lebanon, 1991, volume 2, p. 121.
- 44 Zakariya ibn Muhammad al-Ansari, *Fath al-Rahman bi Kashf ma al-Tabasa fi al-Qur'an*. Dar al-Qur'an al-Karim, Beirut, Lebanon, 1983, p. 318.
- 45 Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Tha'alibi, Al-Jawahir al-Hisan fi Tafseer al-Qur'an. Al-Mu'asasat al-Wataniat li al-Kitab, Beirut, Lebanon, 1985, volume 2, p. 456.
- 46 Al-Imam Al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Hasani al-Shirazi, *Taqrib al-Qur'an ila al-Azhan*. Mu'asasat al-Wafa', Beirut, Lebanon, 1980, volume 15, p. 14. Al-Shirazi is a Twelver Shia scholar and his commentary on the verse is in full agreement with that of Sunni commentators. Isaac Hasson in his work on Fada'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas of Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Wasiti argues in footnote 32, page 35 that "some groups of Shia do not see any merit to al-Aqsa mosque over any other masjids" In the footnote Hasson supports his assertion with a Shia tradition from Bihar al-Anwar Vol. 22, page 90. The quoted hadith according to Shia scholars is a weak and rejected tradition altogether and the dominant opinion for Shia

is the one which accords al-Aqsa mosque a meritorious status. The second tradition cited by Hasson does not provide any evidence either way and has no bearing on the question of Shia position on the sacred nature of al-Quds (Jerusalem). Hasson opinion, although not supported by clear and conclusive evidence, has currency among Zionists and often cite it to provide evidence of lack of an over-all unified Islamic position on the issue.

- 47 Al-Fadl ibn Hasan al-Tabarsi, *Majma' Al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. Matba'at al-'Irfan, Saida, Syria, 1983, volume 3, p. 395.
- 48 The term Bilad al-Sham or al-Sh'am appears in early Arabic geographical dictionaries. See Yaqt b. 'Abdallah al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, pp. 775-776. Also, see Abu 'Ubayd 'Abdallah b 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Bakri, *Mu'jam ma Aist'jam min Asma al-Bilad wa l-Mawad*, p. 773. The term used in these dictionaries is al-Sha'm, and the territory is defined from North to South extending from the Euphrates river to al-'Arish in the northern tip of Egypt, and from East to West from mountain Tai' in Iraq to the Roman See (i.e. the Mediterranean). A similar account appears in Ali b. Ja'far al-Shirazi, *Kitab al-Budan*.
- 49 Al-Suyuti, Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad bin Shihab al-Din, *Ithaf al-Akhssa bi Fadal'l al-Masjid al-'Aqsa*. Al-Hayah al-Misriyah, Al-Ammah li al-Kitab, 1982.
- 50 *ibid.* The hadith also occurs in Masnad al-Imam Ahmad and in Sunan Ibn Majah.
- 51 *ibid.* Also, see Al-Hakim wa Abu Na'im in the *al-Hulit*, and appeared in Muhammad 'Uthman Shabir's book, *Bait al-Maqdas wa ma Haulahu*.
- 52 Abi Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Muluk wa al-'Umam*, Known as *Tarikh al-Tabari*. Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmia, Beirut, Lebanon, 1997, volume 2, pp. 443-457.
- 53 Dr. Salah al-Khalidi, *Haqa'iq Qura'nia Hawla al-Qadhia al-Filistinia*. Manshurat al-Furqan, Al-Dar Al-Bida, Second edition, 1995, pp. 30-33.
- 54 Majid al-Din Muhammad bin Ya'qub al-Firuzabadi, *Al-Qamus al-Muhit*. Dar al-Jil, Beirut, Lebanon, volume 1, 298.
- 55 'Abbas Hasan, *Al-Nahw al-Wafi*. Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, Egypt, 1981, volume 1, pp. 51-56.
- 56 *ibid.* p. 54
- 57 See Q 94: 4
- 58 *Tafsir al-Zamakhshari*, volume 2, p. 436.
- 59 *Tafsir al-Tha'alibi*, volume 2, p. 456.
- 60 *Tafsir al-Andalusi*, volume 3, p. 538.
- 61 *Tafsir al-Balansi*, volume 2, p. 121.
- 62 *Tafsir al-Kalbi*, volume 3, p. 166.
- 63 *Tafsir al-Nawawi*, volume 1, p. 470.

- 64 Tafsir al-Qasimi, volume 4, p. 564.
- 65 See Khalidi, p. 30
- 66 *ibid.* p. 31
- 67 See Q 14: 34
- 68 See Ash-Shifa of Qadi 'Iyad, p. 161
- 69 *ibid.* p. 159
- 70 *ibid.* pp. 4-28
- 71 See Al-Zarkashi, p. 174
- 72 *ibid.* p. 174, see also al-Bukhari no. 623
- 73 See Ash-Shifa of Qadi 'Iyad, p. 95 "Anas said that the Messenger prayed with the Prophets in Jerusalem."
- 74 See Q 97: 1-5. The chapter is named al-Qadr in reference to one of the odd nights in the last ten days of Ramadan. The chapter reads: "We have indeed sent it (the Qur'an) down on the night of Qadr. 2. Would that you knew what the night of Qadr is like! 3. The night of Qadr is better than a thousand months. 4. On that night angels and the spirits come down by their Lord's leave, with His decree. 5. (That night is) Peace, until the rising of the dawn.
- 75 See Q 2:189-197, Q 3: 95-97
- 76 See Tafsir Ibn Kathir, volume 4, pp. 365-367.
- 77 See Al-Zarkashi, pp. 201-209; Al-Suyuti in Ithaf al-Akhssa pp. 137-153. Also, Al-Hafiz Abi Farj Abd al-Rahman bin Ahmad bin Rajab al-Baghdadi al-Dimashqi, Kitab Fada'il al-Sham. Dar al-Watan Li Nashir, Saudi Arabia, 1999, pp. 162-180.
- 78 *ibid.* pp. 201-209
- 79 Al-Suyuti in the Ithaf, pp. 137-141
- 80 Al-Zarkashi, p. 141
- 81 A devotional visit to Mecca outside the performance of Hajj. It can be done with Hajj and outside of it as well. All those performing Hajj undertake in 'Umra as well, however a large number of Muslims also undertake such a visit during the month of Ramadan because of an authenticated prophetic tradition that praises and places heavy reward for its performance during the month of fasting.
- 82 Al-Zarkashi, p. 141
- 83 Sahih al-Bukhari, number 620
- 84 See al-Zarkashi as the whole book is devoted to an exposition of the special status of Mecca, Medina and Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.
- 85 The blessedness of Bayt al-Maqdis is not negated by the crimes committed by the Zionist occupation nor was it stripped during the Crusades. The status of the land is constant since it is directly connected to the Divine as the source of the blessings.
- 86 Hamid Algar, Surat al-Fatiha: Foundation of the Qur'an. Islamic Publications International, Oneonta, N.Y., 1997, p. 31.

Chapter Three

- 1 See Qur'an 17:1
- 2 Abu al-Fida' al-Hafidh Ibn Katheer, *Tafseer al-Qur'an al-'Adheem*, Maktabat al-Nur al-'Ilmeea, Beirut, 1992. vol. 4, pp. 249-256
- 3 *ibid.* 251
- 4 Abi Ishaq Al-Nu'maani al-Shaafi'i, *al-Siraaj al-Wahaaj fi haqaaq al-Isra' wa Al-Mi'raj*. Appears in the edited work of Muhee al-Deen Tu'mee, *Taftreez al-Deebaj bi Haqaaq Al-Isra' wa Al-Mi'raj*. Daar wa Maktabat Al-Hilaal, Beirut, 1994. pp. 71-78
- 5 *ibid.* 68-69
- 6 Ibn Katheer, *Al-Seera al-Nabawiyya*, volume 2, p. 61
- 7 *ibid.* p. 61
- 8 Al-Imam Al-Suyuti, *Al-Ayat al-Kubra fi Shara Qissat al-Isra*. Muhee al-Deen Tu'mi, *Tatreez al-Dibaj bi Haqaaq Al-Isra' wa Al-Mi'raj*. Dar wa Maktabat Al-Hilaal, Beirut, 1994. p. 195
- 9 *ibid.* 195
- 10 For a reference to the Prophet's prayer prior to the Isra' see Qur'an 73:74
- 11 Abi Ishaq al-Nu'mani al-Shaafi'i p. 69
- 12 *ibid.* p. 69
- 13 *ibid.* p. 61
- 14 *ibid.* 61-62
- 15 See Qur'an chapter 14.
- 16 Al-Imam Al-Suyuti, p. 192
- 17 *ibid.* p. 192
- 18 Ibn Abbas, *Isra' wa al-Mi'raj*, in Muhee al-Deen Tu'mi edited volume, p. 22-24
- 19 Al-Imam Al-Suyuti, p 193
- 20 See Quran 17:60
- 21 See Qur'an 6: 103
- 22 Abi Ishaq al-Nu'mani al-Shaafi'i p. 74
- 23 *ibid.* p. 75
- 24 Qadi 'Iyad ibn Musa al-Yahsubi, pp. 91-92
- 25 Abi Ishaq al-Nu'mani al-Shaafi'i p. 107
- 26 Ibn Katheer, volume 3, p. 6
- 27 *Sahih Muslim*, number 411
- 28 Abu Ayman, *Al-Qadi Mujir al-Deen al-Hanbali, Al-'Uns al-Jalil bi Tareekh al-Quds wa al-Khaleel*, volume 1, p. 182
- 29 Abi Ishaq al-Nu'mani al-Shaafi'i p. 63
- 30 See Qur'an 73:1-4

Chapter Four

- 1 We will not discuss whether Ibrahim (Abraham) is a real historical figure or simply a myth manufactured by humans because in either case the fact remains that his impact is real and cannot be ignored.
- 2 See Tafseer Ibn Katheer, volume 2, p. 38 and Abd al-Wahaab al-Najjaar, *Qisas al-Anbyyaa'*, p. 106
- 3 *ibid.* p. 107
- 4 *ibid.* p. 110
- 5 See Qur'an 21:61-69
- 6 See the complete discussion of this Hadith in chapter two.
- 7 Al-Imam Abi Isma'il Ibn Katheer, *Qisas al-Anbyyaa'*, p. 164-165
- 8 *ibid.* p. 164
- 9 Professor Cesar Adib Majul, p. 3
- 10 Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 583
- 11 See Al-Imam Al-Juwayni, *Kitab al-Talkhees fi Usul al-Fiqh*, pp. 306-313

Chapter Five

- 1 For a brief overview of this debate read Jeffery L. Sheler, *Seeking Biblical Truth in the Earth*. U.S. News and World Report December 24, 2001, Vo. 131, Number 26.
- 2 Abi al-Hasan Ali bin Muhammad Al-Jazari, *Usud al-Ghaaba fi Ma'rifa al-Sahaaba*. Dar al-Ma'rifa, Beirut, Lebanon, 1997. Vol. 1, p. 247
- 3 See Qur'an 27: 22 and 34: 15
- 4 'Aqil, Nabih, *Tarikh al 'Arab al-Qadim wa 'asr al-Rasal*. Damascus, 1972. pp. 33-45.
- 5 *ibid.* p. 37
- 6 *ibid.* p. 33-45
- 7 *ibid.* p. 38
- 8 Ali Muhammad Ali bin Ahmad bin Sa'id Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi, *Jamharat Ansab al-'Arab*. Daar al-Ma'arif, Egypt, 1962. P. 424
- 9 Muhammad Muhammad Hasan Shuraab, *Tamim bin 'Aws al-Daari*. Series of 'Alam al-Muslimin, Daar al-Qalam, Damascus, 1990. p. 56.
- 10 Muhammad Muhammad Hasan Shuraab, *Tamim bin Aws al-Daari*. P. 95
- 11 *ibid.* p. 95
- 12 *ibid.* p. 96
- 13 *ibid.* p. 97
- 14 *ibid.* p. 96
- 15 Abd al-Maalik ibn Hishaam, *Al-Sira al-Nabawiyya*. Daar al-Khaeer, Damascus, Syria, 1992, vol. 4, pp. 157-158
- 16 *ibid.*, volume 3, p. 274
- 17 A muhaddith is a technical term for a Muslim scholar of hadith.

The scholar of hadith attempts to ascertain whether a particular statement attributed to the Prophet is actually his, which is done through an examination of the text and the chain of transmission. A hadith is deemed authentic and directly attributed to the Prophet if both the text and the chain are found to meet the criteria of a muhaddith. A Muslim historian, on the other hand, records all the information that comes his way without engaging in a clear process of authentication, which ranks historical book materials below that contained in the collections of hadith. However, some historians did authenticate their work and ranked the materials included according to its accuracy and when this is established then we may consider the source to be at a higher level of accuracy than otherwise would be warranted.

- 18 *ibid.*, volume 1.
- 19 Abd al-Maalik Ibn Hishaam, *Al-Sira al-Nabawiyya*, volume 4, p. 158
- 20 Aba al-Hasan Ali bin Ahmad al-Waahidi al-Niysaaburi. *Asbaab al-Nuzul*. Dar al-Kutb al-'ilmia, Bierut, Lebanon, 1991. p.220.
- 21 Abd al-Maalik ibn Hishaam, *Sirat ibn Hishaam*. vol. 4 , pp. 157-163
- 22 *ibid.*, volume 4, p. 159
- 23 *ibid.*, volume 4, p. 159
- 24 *ibid.*, volume 4, pp. 161-162
- 25 *ibid.*, volume 4, p. 162
- 26 Sahih Muslim, chapter on the signs of the hour.
- 27 Known to many in the west as Hebron, which is the name given to it by the present day Israeli occupation, although it is originally a Canaanite name.
- 28 Mujir al-Deen al-Hanbali, *Al-Unus al-Jalil fi Tarikh al-Quds wa al-Khalil*. Maktabt al-Muhtasib, Amman-Jordan, 1973. Vol. 2, p. 82
- 29 *ibid.*, volume 2, p.80
- 30 *ibid.*, volume 2, p. 82
- 31 Sahih Muslim, *Kitaab al-Fitan wa Ashrafl al-Saa'a*, number 6904
- 32 Mujir al-Deen al-Hanbali, *Al-Unus al-Jalil fi Tarikh al-Quds wa al-Khalil*. Maktabt al-Muhtasib, Amman-Jordan, 1973. Vol. 2, pp. 81-82

Chapter 6

- 1 Al-Waaqidi, Muhammad ibn 'Umar, *Futuh al-Shaam*, volume 1, p. 138
- 2 *ibid.*, volume 1, p. 138
- 3 Islamic sources do have a number of conflicting dates for Muslims entering the city of al-Quds. Al-Tabari in his history places it in the 15th year of the Hijra (v. 4, p. 158.), while Ahmad ibn Yahyaa al-Balaadhuri in his book, *Kitaab Futuh al-Buldaan*, says it was in the 17th year (p. 189). Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub al-Ya'qubi in his book, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, mentions that it was in the month of Rajab in the 16th year of Hijra, v. 2, p. 147. See also 'Ali ibn al-hasan Ibn

- 'Asaakir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Kabir*, p. 174.
- 4 Al-Balaadhuri, p. 189
 - 5 Abi Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Mul, k wa-al-'Umam*, v. 4, p.159. Also, the full text appears in 'Arif al-'Arif book, *al-Mufassal fi Tarikh al-Quds*, p. 97. A brief account appears in Ahmad Ibn A'tham al-Kufi's (d. 314 Hijr-, 926 CE) book, *al-Futuh*, pp. 224-229. See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Ahkaam Ahl al-dhima*, for a comprehensive discussion of the rules enumerated in the treaty concluded by 'Umar with the Christian community in al-Quds (Vo. II, pp. 657-893).
 - 6 Ibid., p. 159, and in 'Arif al-'Arif, *al-Mufassal fi Tarikh al-Quds*, p. 95
 - 7 Abu Ayman, al-Qadi Mujir al-Deen al-Hanbali, *al-'Uns al-Jalil bi Tarikh al-Quds wa al-Khalil*. V.1
 - 8 Appears in the edited work of Thomas Wright, *Early Travels in Palestine*, which contains nine accounts of early travels in Palestine with Bishop Arculf journey being the earliest coming in 700 CE, p. 2
 - 9 See also, M. J. Kister work, "You shall only set out for three Mosques," a study of an early tradition, in *Le Muséon*, LXXXII, 1969, pp. 173-196 and E. Sivan, "The Beginnings of the Fadaa'il al-Quds Literature," which appeared in *Israel Oriental Studies*, I, 1971, pp. 263-271. Both of them make the same arguments about 'Umar's visit and the taking of the city by the Muslims.
 - 10 'Arif al-'Arif, *Al-Mufasal fi Tarikh al-Quds*, p. 101
 - 11 *ibid.*, p. 101
 - 12 For a more detailed history of this period see volume 1, of Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, The University of Chicago Press. 1988
 - 13 'Arif al-'Arif, p. 108
 - 14 *ibid.*, p. 116
 - 15 *ibid.*, p. 120
 - 16 *ibid.*, p. 121
 - 17 *ibid.*, pp. 168-193
 - 18 Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim Mansur, *al-Quds al-Tarikh wa al-Mustaqbal*, p. 429. This book is a collection of papers presented in an international conference with the same title of the book, which was held in the University of Asyut in Egypt between October 29-30, 1996. The materials in this collection contain a wealth of information on the history of al-Quds and is a source for those seeking to understand Islamic and Arab attitudes and feelings toward the city.
 - 19 Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, v. 1, p.7
 - 20 *ibid.*, volume 1, pp. 7-20
 - 21 'Arif al-'Arif, p. 264
 - 22 Morocco, which was never ruled by the Ottomans, also served as a heaven for Jewish refugees from Spain.
 - 23 K. J. Asali, *Jerusalem Historical Documents*, volume 1, p. 125
 - 24 *ibid.*, p. 126
 - 25 'Arif al-'Arif, p. 266
 - 26 *ibid.*, p. 266

- 27 K. J. Asali, *Jerusalem in History*, p. 212
- 28 *ibid.*, p. 212
- 29 *ibid.*, p. 212
- 30 *ibid.*, pp. 213-214
- 31 The Surra is term used in reference to the financial support sent annually by the Ottoman state for distribution among scholars and the pious in the Haramayn and al-Quds.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 211
- 33 *ibid.*, p. 212
- 34 Appearing in the very good collection of Thomas Wright, *Early Travels in Palestine*, which includes a number of accounts of the area from 700 CE to 1697 CE. Henry Maundrell, *A Journey From Aleppo to Jerusalem*, is the last one included. The account above is on page 439 of the collection
- 35 K. J. Asali, *Jerusalem in History*, p. 212
- 36 *ibid.*, p. 212
- 37 *ibid.*, p. 213
- 38 *ibid.*, p. 213
- 39 *ibid.*, p. 216
- 40 A. L. Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria: Including Lebanon and Palestine*, p. 32
- 41 K. J. Asali, *Jerusalem in History*, p. 215. Also, see the 'Arif al-'Arif, *al-Mufasssal fi Tarikh al-Quds*, for a discussion of the causes and outcomes of the uprising.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 215
- 43 This view of the Ottomans regards the military superiority of Europe as the main cause for defeat on the battlefield, which is a wrong mode of analysis of what is the basis of victory and defeat of nations. Military equipment is only one dimension insufficient by itself to lead to victory of one group over another; rather it is the command structure, training and the level of cohesion present among the various sections of the fighting force that are decisive. A mistaken analysis of this will always lead to a state of paralysis and defeatism among society members and it ends up shaping the army's view of itself and the enemy on the field. Therefore, victory and defeat are more complex than a question of superior arms, otherwise how could one explain Islamic military history in the early periods? The Ottomans at this stage, as a society, were no longer in possession of the needed structures that can translate into military victories. War is not only the army; war is a total societal effort and requires cohesiveness in all the elements that make up a given society, i.e. military, economy, civil administration, legal structure, and ideology.
- 44 A. L. Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria: Including Lebanon and Palestine*, p.28
- 45 *ibid.*, p. 22
- 46 *ibid.*, p. 22
- 47 In the present context, an examination of US and European policies toward Sudan, Lebanon, and Palestine provide an example of this strategy.

- 48 *ibid.*, p. 38
- 49 George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, p. 36-37
- 50 George Antonius argument is made with the intent of locating an earlier birth for Arab Nationalism, the period of Muhammad 'Ali is advanced to meet this purpose. However, a major point to keep in mind is that Muhammad 'Ali himself was not Arab, he is of an Albanian origin, and hardly can be used to support Antonius thesis. We can find the goals more identified with Western educators at this early stage and thus are to be credited with the early birth of modern Arab nationalism.
- 51 *ibid.*, p. Antonius describes Clot as follows:
 "Dr. A. Clot, usually known as Clot bey, a French surgeon who rendered eminent services in the fields of public hygiene and of medical education in Egypt during Mehemd Ali's reign. He was genuinely devoted to his master and to the cause of national regeneration in Egypt; and one of his concerns in the higher schools which he directed was to inculcate a true sense of Arab national sentiment. cf. Douin, *loc. cit.*, p. 138."
- 52 *ibid.*, p. 43
- 53 Hassan Ali Hallak, *The Attitude of the Ottoman Empire Toward the Zionist Movement 1897-1909*, p.36.
- 54 *ibid.*, p. 36
- 55 See Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion*, for an expanded discussion on this subject.
- 56 Some maintain that the purpose of 'Abd al-Hamid in constructing this railway was purely a military and administrative, to help the Ottoman control the southern Arab provinces. This argument is forwarded to diminish the existence of any real and sincere religious feelings in the planning and thinking of Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid. This analysis is founded on a materialistic conception of causality for any human endeavor. Also, is it possible that two goals or purposes can exist at the same time and that a single causality might develop into a number of possibilities for benefit. In addition, over the years, the safety of the Hajj and those who undertook the trip from the North had been of major concern to all the previous Sultans without exceptions, and the railway was a way to solve a historical problem. A larger issue looms in here is attributing a sinister goal for every action taken by a none-western personality, who is pursuing projects to improve his state but seen as a threat to the external designs for the territory. Assuming that Sultan Abd al-Hamid wanted to help control his own state Southern Arab provinces, why is that a problem or an issue. It is a problem for someone who has designs for the same area and consider this a hostile move that might prevent them from further penetration into the area.
- 57 The restriction was undertaken after petitions from the local Palestinian community, which feared the loss of its own land to the Zionist project. The restriction was to prevent Palestine from becoming a Zionist state and was not carried out against Jews because their religion happened to be Jewish.

- 58 Trans. Harry Zohn, & edit. Raphael Patai, *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, Vol. 1, p.378. The above passage in the Diaries was translated from the German by Professor Algar in a 1968 article in the following manner:

"The Sultan said: if Mr. Herzl is your friend, as I am yours, then advise him to take no further step in the matter. I cannot surrender a single foot of land, for it belongs not to me, but to the people. My people has fought for and defended this land with its blood. We will cover it with our blood again before it is torn away from us. Two regiments from Syria and Palestine sacrificed themselves at the Battle of Plevna (against the Bulgars). Not a single man escaped; they all fell on the field of battle. The empire does not belong to me, but to the people. I cannot give any of it away. The Jews can keep their millions. When my empire is divided, maybe they will get Palestine for nothing. But it is our corpse that can be shared out. I will not consent to being cut up while still alive."

Algar's translation is closer to the original statement of Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid, and reflects his Islamic worldview. I decided to include the text of the official translation above for the readers' benefit and provided Algar's English rendition for the purpose of comparison.

- 59 *ibid.*, volume I, p. 379
60 *ibid.*, volume I, p. 344

