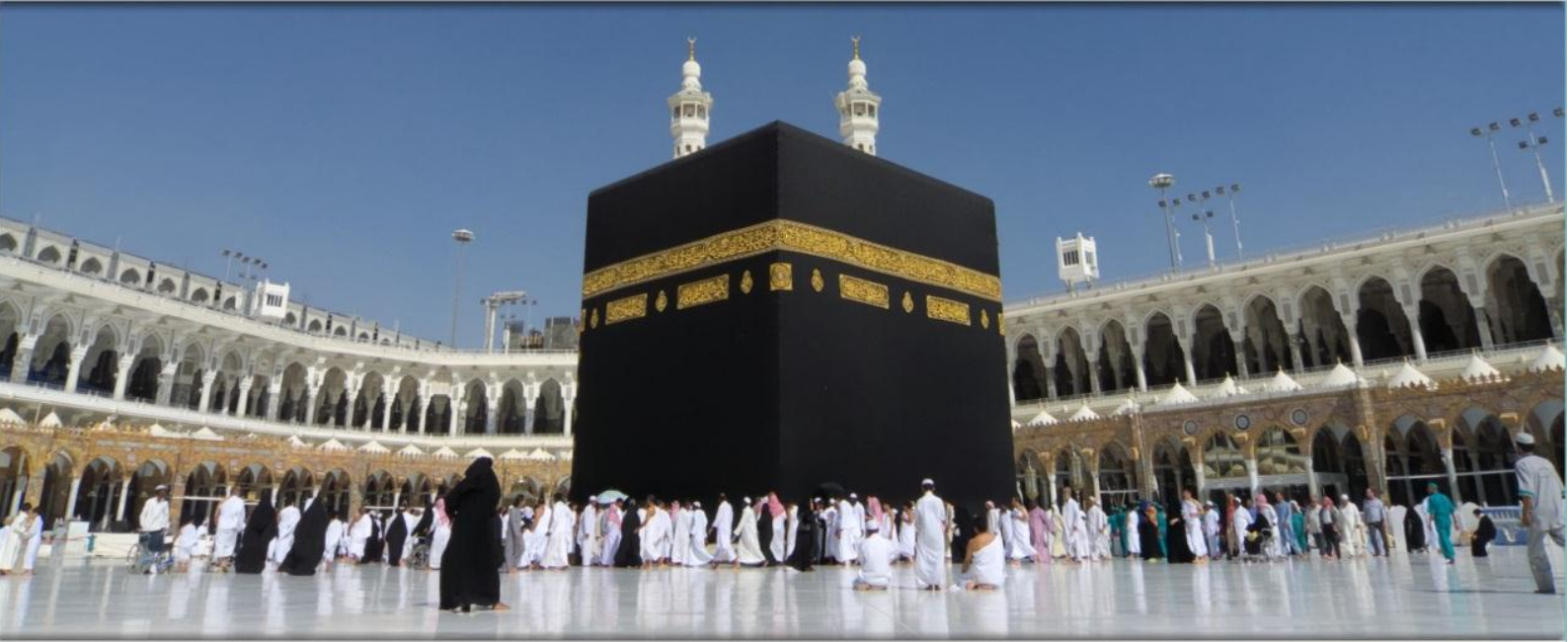


E-BOOK

DESCRIPTION OF THE HOLY LAND AND ITS NAMES



Maḥmūd Ibn Aḥmad al Dosary (PhD)

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INTRODUCTION

Verily all praise is for Allah, we praise Him, seek His help and forgiveness, and we seek refuge in Allah from the evil of ourselves and from the sinfulness of our actions. Whosoever Allah guides, then none can misguide him, and whosoever Allah misguides, there can be no guide for him. I testify that there is no deity except Allah alone and I testify that Muḥammad is His servant and messenger.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims (in submission to Him)” Surat ‘Āli ‘Imrān (Family of Imrān), verse 102.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.” Surat An-Nisā' (The Women), verse 1.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾



“O you who have believed, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice. He will then amend for you your deeds and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly gained a signal victory” Surat Al-'Aḥzāb (The Combined Forces), verses 70 – 71.

Certainly the best of speeches is the Book of Allah and the finest guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. The most evil affair is a newly invented matter in religion and every newly invented matter is innovation (*bid'a*), and every innovation is misguidance and all misguidance is in the Hellfire.

In one of the most desolate and arid places of Earth, in a rocky and stony land surrounded everywhere by the desert, with no plantations and no water; a place that lacks everything that gives life and prosperity, Allah chose Mecca The Honoured to become His safe Sanctuary, the heart and capital of the World, the unique city on the face of the planet that acquired sanctity by a divine order and a Lordly decree to shine radiantly over all cities.

The will of Allah Most High chose for Mecca this barren land in spite of His power, exalted be He, to make it a gorgeous verdant garden with luxuriant vegetation, full of flowers, warbling birds and babbling streams. He made it a sign of His power and a miracle; Allah Most High said:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا ءَامِنًا وَيُتَخَطَّفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ

“Have they not seen that We made (Mecca) a safe Sanctuary, while people are being taken away all around them?” Surat al-'Ankabūt (The Spider): 67.

And Allah Most High said:

أَوَلَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا ءَامِنًا يُجِبِي إِلَيْهِ ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رِزْقًا مِّن لَّدُنَّا



“Have We not established for them a safe Sanctuary to which are brought the fruits of all things as provision from Us?” Surat Al-Qaṣaṣ (The Stories): 57.

Mecca the Honoured is particular compared to all other cities on the planet; cities and lands are favoured, according to human habits, for their resources and the wealth Allah bestowed upon them; some lands are preferred thanks to their mineral resources, some for their oil resources, other for their agriculture or water or any other material perishable assets.

But the criterion of differentiation of the Holy Land that singles it out is not a material one: religion is the basis of its distinction from all other lands and countries; it is the Holy Land of Allah, on it lies the Honourable Ka‘ba, the sacred and glorified places, it is the qibla (direction) of the Muslims, in it takes place the greatest gathering of people on Earth to worship Allah Most High by accomplishing the Ḥajj and ‘Umra.

For this reason, Mecca holds a great and elevated status in the hearts of all the Muslims of the planet; a station stemming from this religious eminence bestowed by Allah. There is no doubt that what distinguishes a nation from another, what raises one above others is the scale of the exaltation of its sanctity, its bond to its History, its persistence in sticking to its authenticity and its development from its past towards its present and future. This is why ancient and modern Muslims have granted the Holy Land a great interest, dedicated to it volumes and devoted to it their times.

It is with my deep love for the Holy Land and my firm belief in the greatness of our religion and our convictions that I decided to write this book which I entitled “The Holy Land: Description – Names – Virtues – Specificities – Rules” for it to become a comprehensive reference; hoping it to be pleasant to read; I gathered in it what is related to the Holy Land as descriptions, virtues, specificities and rules linked to it. This book came into being with the help of Allah Most High, combining the splendour of sight, ease of reading and the charm of writing on this great and deep subject.

Our Lord creates what He wills and He chooses:

It is according to the perfection of His power, His wisdom and knowledge that Allah Most High prefers, distinguishes, specifies and chooses



between His creatures. Allah has His preference between angels, prophets and human beings. He preferred some periods of times above others as He preferred some places above others; for instance He preferred the Firdaws amongst all the Heavens.

If you gaze at Creation you would see this divine choice and grant indicating His lordliness, exalted be He, His oneness and the perfection of His wisdom, knowledge and power; He is Allah, there is no god but Him and no one creates as He creates, no one chooses as He chooses, no one directs all things as He does. These choices and arrangements noticed in this World are amongst the greatest signs of His lordliness and the most obvious evidence of His oneness and of the characteristics of His perfection and the sincerity of His messengers.¹

No one creates as He creates, no one chooses as He chooses and no one directs all things as He does; Allah Most High said:

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ

“And your Lord creates what He wills and He chooses” Surat Al-Qaṣaṣ (The Stories): 68.

Amongst the places that received this grace and greatness is Mecca the Honoured, the land of the Revelation and the cradle of the message where lays a house for which the hearts and souls are craving, is it not the Ancient House.²

Amongst the signs of its preference: Allah Most High informed us that Mecca is the Mother of Cities; all the cities are linked to it, they are its followers, it is their central axis and origin. Therefore, there cannot be any city equivalent to it; it is similar to the Fātiḥa: the Prophet (s) said of it that it was the Mother of the Qur’ān; this is why it is second to none in all the divine books.³

¹ Zād al-ma’ād, Ibn al-Qayyim (42/1).

² See: Bayt Allah al-ḥarām al-Ka’ba, Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd Allah Shabbāla p. 7.

³ Zād al-ma’ād, (49 – 50/1).



Importance of the subject and method:

The importance of this book lies in its own nature: a comprehensive study of the Holy Land and what is relevant as history, virtues, specificities and rules based on sharia-authenticated sources approved by the standards of well-versed and eminent people in jurisprudence; regardless of what became famous concerning the Holy Land such as false ḥadīths, false events or false information linked to it. Therefore, the method of this book is based on the method of the people of ḥadīth whereas authenticity of information is the fundamental condition for being quoted in the text. This is the guideline followed, based on the prevailing opinion in Islamic jurisprudence: presenting evidence from the Qur'ān and the Sunna, sometimes with the addition of companions' statements and reasoning, evidence of the consensus if there is one, and quoting rules, wisdoms and benefits derived from said evidence. I avoided delving into too many details (except for important matters) or mentioning contradictions in order to ward off boredom, to make prevailing opinions more clear in the minds and to make the book easier and more comfortable for the dear reader.

This book is intended for all categories of Muslims ranging from the diligent student assiduous in the quest of knowledge to the uninitiated reader considering the easiness of the method, the fluency of the style and the distance taken from blameworthy controversy or sterile arguments.

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Section I:

Description of the Holy Land

Description:

The Holy Land is Mecca the Honoured⁴ or the Meccan Sanctuary. The expression “the Sanctuary” (al-Ḥaram) stands for the Sanctuary of Mecca which is the Sanctuary of Allah and the Sanctuary of His Prophet (s). *Al-Ḥaram* is similar to *al-Ḥarām*. The Sanctuary of Mecca is also designated as *al-muḥarram* (the Sacred, the Holy, or the Inviolable).⁵

The Holy Land may be designated as the Sacred Mosque; Ibn al-Qayyim (m) said: The Sacred Mosque stands for three things in the Book of Allah Most High: the House itself (the Ka‘ba), the Mosque surrounding it and the whole Sanctuary.⁶

The boundaries of the Sanctuary:

The first to define the boundaries of the Ḥaram was Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl (p), the friend of Allah, following the indications of Jibrīl (p). Ibrāhīm (p) put stone markers for them.⁷ The Prophet (s) renewed them the Year of the Conquest of Mecca. Ibn ‘Abbās (r2) narrated: **The Year of the Victory, the**

⁴ In the past, the Sanctuary (Ḥaram) encompassed Mecca; today some parts of the city are located outside the Sanctuary because of urban expansion.

⁵ See: *Lisān al-‘Arab*, (95/4), *Tahdhīb al-‘asmā’ wa al-lughāt*, (88/3), *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, p. 1411, *Mukhtār as-ṣiḥāḥ*, p. 56.

⁶ *Aḥkām ahl adh-dhimma*, (400/1).

⁷ See: *al-Maghāzī*, al-Wāqidi (270/2), *Muthīr al-‘azm as-sākin ilā ashraf al-‘amākin*, Ibn al-Jawzī (187/1), *Shifā’ al-gharām bi akhbār al-balad al-ḥarām*, al-Fāsī (86/1).



Messenger of Allah (s) sent Tamīm Ibn Asad al-Khuzā'ī to renew the boundaries of the Ḥaram.⁸

Therefore, the boundaries of the Ḥaram are inspired by revelation and there is no place for reason or interpretation. These markers came to define properly what is inside the Ḥaram and what is not.

The princes and governors continued to renew the markers from all sides as needed until the number of flags surrounding the Ḥaram reached almost a thousand. The outline of the Meccan Ḥaram is 127 km and it covers an area of 550.300 square kilometres.⁹

The boundaries of the Ḥaram today:

Ancient boundaries of the Ḥaram were mentioned by historians and scholars over the passing centuries¹⁰, underlining their unfailing care and attention for this honoured place. Nowadays clear markers have been set up to indicate the limits of the Ḥaram without any possibility of confusion or error considering the rules of jurisprudence linked to the entering of this holy place; the most important ones are located¹¹:

1. On the road to **Medina**; at-Tan'īm: 6.5 km.
2. On the highway to **Jeddah**: 22 km.
3. On the new road to **al-Lith**: 17 km.
4. On the road to **Ṭā'if as-Sayl**: 12.850 km.
5. On the road to **Ṭā'if al-Hadā**: 15.5 km.

⁸ Reported by Ibn Sa'd in *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (295/4). Ibn Ḥajar made its chain ḥasan (good) in *al-Iṣāba* (183/1).

⁹ See: *al-Ḥaram al-makkī ash-sharīf wa al-a'lām al-muḥīṭa bihi dirāsa tārikhiya wa maydaniya*, p. 165; *Makka al-mukarrama tārikh wa ma'ālim*, p. 34.

¹⁰ See: *Akhbār Makka*, al-Azraqī (131/2); *Akhbār Makka*, al-Fākihī (89/5).

¹¹ See: *al-Ḥaram al-makkī ash-sharīf wa al-a'lām al-muḥīṭa bihi dirāsa tārikhiya wa maydaniya*, p. 166-167; *Makka al-mukarrama tārikh wa ma'ālim*, p. 34; *Aḥkām al-Ḥaram al-Makkī ash-shar'īya*, p. 40.



Section II:

Names of the Holy Land

The Holy Land has plenty of famous names quoted in the Book, the Sunna and the Arabic language. Since ancient times the ulama took great care of them, which underlines its eminence and value. Some scholars gathered up to fifty names for the Holy Land; this particular attention reflects the honour of the Ḥaram. An-Nawawī (m) said: Know that the abundance of names is a sign of greatness, as Allah Most High has many names and His Messenger (s) also. We know no country with more names than Mecca and Medina, for they are the best places on Earth.¹² Amongst the names of the Holy Land are the following:

First: Mecca:

The most famous and more common of its names; it is quoted **once** in the Qur'ān, Allah Most High said:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي كَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ
أَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ

“And it is He who withheld their hands from you and your hands from them within the valley of Mecca after He caused you to overcome them.” Surat al-Faḥ (The Victory): 24.

¹² Tahdhīb al-'asmā' wa al-lughāt (332/3).



The ulama diverged on the cause of the denomination of Mecca; there are many opinions:

The first one: The city was named Mecca because **it wipes out (*tamukku*) those who perpetrate injustice inside it.** It is said: to break (*makka*) the pride of someone; and also: Mecca wipes out (*tamukku*) all sins.¹³

The second one: The name was given because of **the scarcity of water therein.** Ibn Sīda (m) said: The child sucks the milk with appetite (*makka* and *makmaka*) at his mother's breast; from this expression came the name Mecca, for its lack of water. People used to extract (*imtakka*) its water as deep as possible.¹⁴

The third one: The name was given as **it attracts people from afar.** It is also said: I sucked the marrow (*tamakkaktu*) from the bone.¹⁵

Secondly: Bakka:

One of its most famous names; it is quoted **once** in the Qur'ān, Allah Most High said:

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“Indeed, the first House (of worship) established for mankind was that at Bakka - blessed and a guidance for the worlds.” Surat 'Āli 'Imrān (Family of 'Imrān): 96.

The ulama diverged on the significance of “Bakka”; there are two opinions:

The first one: Mecca and Bakka have one same meaning, they are substitutes and both are names that designate the land, they are similar as the Arabs sometimes replace the “m” by a “b”: for instance *lāzib* and *lāzim* both mean necessary.¹⁶

¹³ See: *Jamhara al-lugha*, Ibn Durayd (166/1); *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, al-Khaṭṭābī (72/3).

¹⁴ *Al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ* (52/1). See: *Jamhara al-lugha*, (984/2); *Mu'jam mā ista'jam* (269/1).

¹⁵ See: *az-Zāhir*, al-'Anbārī (106/2); *al-'Azmina*, p. 43.

¹⁶ See: *al-Kanz al-lughawī*, Ibn as-Sakī, p. 14; *Jamhara al-lugha* (335/1); *az-Zāhir* (497/1).



The second one: There is a difference between Mecca and Bakka; it is said that Bakka is the spot of the House and Mecca is the whole Sanctuary.¹⁷

The prevailing opinion is that Mecca and Bakka have the one same meaning; this is the view of most linguists.¹⁸

The ulama diverged on the cause of the denomination of Bakka; there are two opinions:

The first one: The name Bakka came from **the congestion of people in it;** the verb *bakka*, *yabukku*, *bakkatan* means to congest; **the people congested a place:** *tabākka*. The word ***al-bakbaka*** stands for congestion or crowdedness; ***bakbāk*** means a lot.¹⁹

Al-Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (m) said: Mecca was named Bakka as people are pushing (*yabukku*) each other during circumambulation (ṭawāf) because of the congestion.²⁰

Ibn Durayd (m) said: Mecca was named Bakka because of the congestion of people inside it.²¹

Ibn Jurayj (m) used to say: It was called Bakka for the congestion (*tabākk*) of people heading for the Ka'ba; the crowd was such that people used to tread on other people's toes.²²

Qatāda (m) said: Mecca was named Bakka as Allah crowded (*bakka*) it with people, so that women pray in front of men, something that does not happen in other countries.²³

The second one: The name Bakka was given as **Mecca breaks (*tabukku*) the necks of the powerful;** and therefore it breaks their pride.

Al-Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad (m) said: It was so named as it used to break (*tabukku*) the necks of the powerful who perpetrated an injustice there²⁴; ***al-bakk*** means to break a neck.²⁵

¹⁷ See: *Akhbār Makka*, al-Azraqī (280/1); *Tafsīr aṭ-Ṭabarī* (597/5); *Mu'jam mā ista'jam* (269/1).

¹⁸ See: *Mu'jam mā ista'jam* (269/1); *Lisān al-'Arab* (133/2).

¹⁹ See: *Jamhara al-lugha* (176, 74/1); *az-Zāhir* (106/2); *Maqāyys al-lugha*, Ibn Fāris (186/1).

²⁰ See: *al-'Ayn* (285/5).

²¹ *Jamhara al-lugha* (75/1). See: *az-Zāhir* (106/2).

²² *Akhbār Makka*, al-Azraqī (280/1). See: *Jamhara al-lugha* (378/1).

²³ *Al-Manāsik*, Ibn Abī 'Arūba, p. 29; *Tafsīr aṭ-Ṭabarī* (9/4); *ad-Durr al-manthūr* (266/2).

²⁴ *al-'Ayn* (285/5).

²⁵ See: *Jamhara al-lugha* (176/1); *Al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ* (345/3).



Thirdly: The Mother of Cities (Umm al-Qurā):

The name Umm al-Qurā appears **twice** in the Noble Qur'an; the word of Allah Most High:

وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مَبَارَكٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ
وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا

“And this is a blessed Scripture which We have revealed, confirming that which (was revealed) before it, that you may warn the Mother of Cities and those around it.” Surat Al-'An'ām (The Cattle): 92. And in the verse:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا

“And thus We have revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an that you may warn the Mother of Cities and those around it”. Surat ash-Shūrā (The Consultation): 7.

The ulama diverged on the cause of the denomination “The Mother of Cities”; there are three opinions:

The first one: The name was given **as the Earth was spread from beneath it**, but this view lacks evidence and it is backed by two weak ḥadīths.²⁶

The second one: The name was given **because the people of all surrounding cities are heading towards it**. Az-Zarkashī (m) said: Because the people of all surrounding cities resort to it for their religion and

²⁶ **The first ḥadīth:** Ibn Sābiṭ narrated: The Prophet (s) said: **The Earth was spread from Mecca and the Angels were circumambulating the House**. This ḥadīth is mursal (hurried) and reported by aṭ-Ṭabarānī in his tafsīr (199/1); and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his tafsīr (76/1), H. 316. Ibn Kathīr made its chain weak in his tafsīr (71/1). **The second ḥadīth:** Ibn 'Abbās (r2) narrated: The Messenger of Allah (s) said: **The first piece of land that was put on Earth was the spot of the House; then Earth was spread from it and the first mountain that Allah Most High put on Earth was Abū Qubays, from it were spread the mountains**. Reported by al-'Uqaylī in *aḍ-ḍu'afā'* (341/2); al-Albānī said it was weak in *ḍā'if al-Jāmi'* *aṣ-ṣaghīr*, p. 312, H. 2132.



worldly affairs; for the Ḥajj and 'Umra or for a visit; it is said: devotional rituals are accepted only if performed there.²⁷

The third one: The name was given as **it is the greatest of all cities, it bears the House of Allah Most High.** Moreover, as tradition says, the king and his capital have pre-eminence; thus it was named *umm* as in Arabic *umm* is the mother and the mother has always priority.²⁸

Ibn al-Qayyim (m) said: Amongst the signs of its preference: Allah Most High informed us that Mecca is the Mother of Cities; all the cities are linked to it, they are its followers, it is their central axis and origin. Therefore, there cannot be any city equivalent to it; it is similar to the Fātiḥa: the Prophet (s) said of it that it was the Mother of the Qur'ān; this is why it is second to none in all the divine books.²⁹

Fourthly: The Sacred Mosque (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām):

This descriptive expression appears 15 times in the Noble Qur'ān³⁰; sometimes referring to the Holy Land (al-Balad al-Ḥarām). *Ḥarām* has the meaning of *muḥarram*: sacred, inviolable, as Allah Most High made it sacred and exalted it. Sometimes the expression “The Sacred Mosque (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām)” refers to the Honourable Ka'ba as the names of Mecca mingle metaphorically with the names of the Ka'ba.³¹

Ibn al-Qayyim (m) said: The Sacred Mosque stands for three things in the Book of Allah Most High: the House itself (the Ka'ba), the Mosque surrounding it and the whole Sanctuary.³² **Amongst the verses where the expression al-Masjid al-Ḥarām (the Sacred Mosque) designates the Holy Land (al-Balad al-Ḥarām):**

²⁷ *I'lām as-sājid bi-aḥkām al-masājid*, p. 79.

²⁸ See: *Muthīr al-'azm as-sākin ilā ashraf al-'amākin*, Ibn al-Jawzī (327/1); *Al-Qirā li-Qāṣid Umm al-Qurā*, Muḥibb ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭabarī, p. 651.

²⁹ *Zād al-ma'ād*, (49 – 50/1).

³⁰ The expression “the Sacred Mosque (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām)” is quoted in the following surats: al-Baqara (The Cow): 144, 149, 150, 191, 196, 217; al-Mā'ida (The Table Spread): 2; al-'Anfāl (The Spoils of War): 34; at-Tawba (The Repentance): 7, 19, 28; al-'Isrā' (The Night Journey): 1; al-Ḥajj (The Pilgrimage): 25; al-Faṭḥ (The Victory): 25, 27.

³¹ See: *Asmā' al-Ka'ba al-musharrafa fī ad-dars al-lughawī*, p. 13.

³² *Aḥkām ahl adh-dhimma*, (400/1).



- The word of Allah Most High:

لَتَدْخُلَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ءَامِنِينَ

“You shall indeed enter al-Masjid al-Harām, if Allah wills, in safety.”

Surat al-Fath (The Victory): 27.

- The word of Allah Most High:

ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ

“This is for those whose family is not present in the area of al-Masjid al-Harām.” Surat al-Baqara: 196.

The meaning: Enjoying the Hajj and ‘Umra in this case concerns foreigners; it does not suit for people of Mecca.³³

Fifthly: The City (al-Balad):

The expression al-Balad (the City) appears **three times** in the Noble Qur’an; Allah Most High said:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ ءَامِنًا

“And when Ibrāhīm said: My Lord, make this City secure” Surat Ibrāhīm: 35.

Allah Most High said:

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ (١) وَأَنْتَ حِلٌّ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ (٢)

“No, I swear by this City. And you are a dweller of this City” Surat al-Balad (The City): 1 – 2.

According to all the commentators (mufasssirūn) the City is Mecca the Honoured.³⁴

³³ See: *Tafsīr at-Ṭabarī* (255/2); *Tafsīr al-Baghawī* (488/4).

³⁴ See: *Tafsīr at-Ṭabarī* (193/3).



Ibn ‘Abbās (r2) narrated: **Allah made this city sacred on the day He created the Earth and the heavens; so it is sacred by the sacredness conferred on it by Allah until the Day of Resurrection.**³⁵

The cause of the denomination “The City” (al-Balad): It is the heart (*ṣadr*, literally the chest) of the cities. Ibn al-Jawzī (m) said: **al-balad** (the city): the heart, the centre of cities; **al-balda** is the chest; if someone **taballada** it means that he put his hand on his chest confused and troubled.³⁶

Ibn Fāris (m) said: It is said: The camel put its chest (*balda*) on the ground when it kneels.³⁷ Az-Zamakhsharī (m) said: The camel put its *balda* – namely its chest – on the ground when it kneels.³⁸

Sixthly: The Secure City (al-Balad al-Amīn):

The expression appears **once** in the Qur’ān; Allah Most High said:

وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ

“By this secure City”; Surat at-Tīn: 3. It means that this City is safe from being attacked or invaded.³⁹ It is said: Its dwellers are in safety, may it be during Pre-Islamic time of ignorance (Jāhiliya) or after the dawn of Islam.⁴⁰ The commentators unanimously agreed that the Secure City here is Mecca the Honoured⁴¹. Moreover, this oath of Allah Most High underlines the grace and eminence of Mecca.

Al-Qazwīnī (m) said: Mecca is the Secure City, honoured and exalted by Allah Most High and characterized by His oath and the supplication of Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl (p):

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا

³⁵ Reported by al-Bukhārī (1164/3), H. 3017. Muslim (986/2), H. 1353.

³⁶ *Nuzha al-a’yun an-nawāzir fī ‘ilm al-wujūh wa an-naẓā’ir*, p. 201.

³⁷ *Maqāyys al-lughā* (1298).

³⁸ *Asās al-balāgha* (49/1).

³⁹ *Tafsīr at-Ṭabarī* (241/30).

⁴⁰ *Tafsīr al-Baghawī* (504/4).

⁴¹ See: *Tafsīr at-Ṭabarī* (242/30); *Tafsīr Ibn Abī Ḥātim* (3447/10).



“And when Ibrāhīm said: My Lord, make this a secure city” Surat al-Baqara: 126.

It is also **described as safe** in the word of Allah Most High:

أَوَلَمْ نُمْكِّنْ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا ءَامِنًا

“Have We not established for them a safe Sanctuary”; Surat Al-Qaṣaṣ (The Stories): 57. And the word of Allah Most High:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا ءَامِنًا

“Have they not seen that We made a safe sanctuary” Surat al-‘Ankabūt (The Spider): 67. **This means** a secure place.⁴² The security is the most important condition for well-being; the very first thing a dweller asks for is security, safety from hardship and fears; if one is safe in his home, he feels comfortable in his mind and he is able to enjoy the bliss he receives.⁴³

Security is amongst the greatest graces bestowed by Allah Most High to His creatures. Thanks to security civilizations are rising, societies are flourishing and people are blossoming. **It is a blessing of Allah Most High to His prophet Ibrāhīm (p) that he raised his consciousness to the importance of security:** He inspired him this great supplication: **at first:**

رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا ءَامِنًا

“My Lord, make this a secure city”; Surat al-Baqara (The Cow): 126. This supplication came before the city was built. Allah made security a pillar, a basis and a condition for the erection of this city and its existence. **At last:**

رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ ءَامِنًا

“My Lord, make this city secure”; Surat Ibrāhīm: 35. Ibrāhīm (p) asked Allah Most High to perpetuate the grace of security bestowed on this city.

Certainly Allah Most High fulfilled the supplication of Ibrāhīm (p), granting the Holy Land the blessing of security. For the greatness of this grace,

⁴² See: *at-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (11/32).

⁴³ *at-Taḥrīr wa at-tanwīr*, Ibn ‘Āshūr (317/25).



Allah exalted be He, reminded its people of it many times in the Noble Qur'an in order to value it and enjoy it.

Seventhly: al-Balda (the City):

Allah Most High said by the mouth of His noble Messenger (s):

إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْبَلَدَةِ الَّذِي حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ

(Say, O Muhammad), "I have only been commanded to worship the Lord of this City, Who made it sacred/forbidden and to whom (belongs) all things."

Surat an-Naml (The Ants): 91. Ath-Tha'labī (m) said: It means: Mecca, Allah made it a secure sanctuary, illicit bloodshed is not shed inside it, no one is unfairly treated there, its game is not to be hunted or disturbed and its vegetation is not to be cut.⁴⁴ **This view is the prevailing one.**⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Al-Kashf wa al-bayān (231/7).

⁴⁵ See: Tafsīr aṭ-Ṭabarī (91/26); Tafsīr Ibn Abī Ḥātim (2936/9).



هذا الكتاب منشور في

