

Likewise, al-Rāzī explains the sequence of Q 95:4 (*Indeed We created human being on the best conformation*) and Q 95:7 (*What, then, can give the lie to you [O Prophet], about the Reward and the Punishment?*) as extrapolating an argument from apportioned creation to the existence of an apportioning Creator, and ultimately to the Resurrection and Reckoning (see JUDGMENT). An apportioned creation suggests a greater purpose, which is to worship Allah (Q 56:51); those who heed this imperative receive due reward, and the heedless too receive their recompense. “His saying, *then He fashioned you into a [complete] man (sawwāka rajulan)* (Q 18:37) indicates that man has been created with intelligence and all the characteristics required to be held accountable. Given all of this, is it reasonable to believe that Allah Most High will leave you to your affairs without any accountability?” (Rāzī, *sub* Q 18:37).

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See also: AGRICULTURE; ALLAH MOST HIGH; ARTERIES AND VEINS; BEAUTIFUL NAMES OF ALLAH; BODY; DIVINE DECREE; EARTH; FRUITS; HEREAFTER; JUDGMENT; LIFE; LIFE OF THIS WORLD; MOON; PARABLES OF THE QURʾĀN; PLANTS AND VEGETATION; QURʾĀN AND SCIENCE; RESURRECTION; REWARD AND PUNISHMENT; SUN; SUSTENANCE; TAWHĪD; WATER.

NASEER AHMAD
 MUZAFFAR IQBAL

Apostle

See PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS

Appointed Place and Time

See PROMISES AND THREATS

ʿAql

See INTELLECT

AL-AQSA MOSQUE

AL-MASJID AL-AQṢĀ

This article comprises the following sections: i. Definition and Usage; ii. Early History; iii. Geography; iv. Qurʾānic verses about al-Aqsa Mosque and its Environs; v. Hadiths on the Merits and Rulings related to al-Aqsa Mosque; vi. Bibliography.

Definition and Usage

Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā (*lit.* “the Farthest Mosque”), the first *qibla* (direction of prayer) (*q.v.*), the second *masjid* (*lit.* place of prostration (see MOSQUE)) ever built and the third holiest site in Islam, is in the Old City of Jerusalem. It is directly mentioned twice in the Qurʾān: by name in the opening verse of Sūrat al-Isrāʾ (Q 17): *Glory be to Him who carried His slave by night from the Inviolable Mosque (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām) to the Farthest Mosque (al-Masjid al-Aqṣā), whose precincts We have blessed, to show him some of Our signs. Indeed, He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing*; and as a direct referent in Q 17:7 regarding the Children of Isrāʾīl (*q.v.*): *and when the promise of your next transgression comes to be fulfilled, they will disgrace you utterly and enter the Temple (al-masjid) as they entered it the first time, and utterly destroy whatever they come upon*. In addition, exegetical sources enumerate certain other verses said to refer to al-Aqsa Mosque or its environs (see below).

The many appellations of al-Aqsa Mosque in early sources include Masjid İlyāʾ, al-Bayt al-maqdis, al-Bayt al-Muqaddas, Bayt al-Quds, and others, “the abundance of names testifying to the nobility of the named” (al-Zarkashī, *Iʿlām*, p. 277-278) (see THE NAME, THE NAMING, THE NAMED). Various explanations are offered for the name “al-Masjid al-Aqṣā”. These include: (i) “because of its distance from Makka (*q.v.*), as it was the farthest mosque on earth from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām (see KAʿBA), and was venerated through pilgrimage” (Zamakhsharī and Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 17:1); (ii) “because of its remoteness from impurities” (Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, qawluh bāb faḍl al-ṣalāt fī masjid Makka wal-Madīna); or (iii) according to al-ʿIrāqī (725-806/1325-1404), “because it was in the foreknowledge of Allah Most High that soon the mosque in Madina (*q.v.*) would be built, which would be a

shorter distance from the mosque at Makka, and the Masjid al-Bayt al-Muqaddas would then become the farthest (*al-aqsā*) [of the three]” (*Tarḥ al-tathrib*, wa ṣalāt fi-l-masjid al-Ḥarām aḥlāl min miʿat al-ṣalāt fi-mā siwāh). Ibn ʿĀshūr (1296-1393/1879-1972) notes that “al-Masjid al-Aqsā” is a specifically Qurʾānic name, for before Islam the Arabs did not use it as a proper name (*ʿalam*) for the site (*sub* Q 17:1).

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest site in Islam after al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in Makka and al-Masjid al-Nabawī (“the Prophet’s Mosque”) in Madina, both of which enjoy the legal status of being *ḥaram* (“Sacred,” “Inviolable”) (see SACRED PRECINCTS). That term is not, strictly speaking, applicable to al-Aqsa Mosque, even though in popular usage it is called *al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf*, or “the Noble Sanctuary” (for Makka being a *ḥaram*, see Bukhārī, Jazāʾ al-ṣayd, lā yuʿḍad shajar al-ḥaram; Muslim, Ḥajj, taḥrīm Makka wa ṣaydiḥā wa khalāḥā wa shajariḥā wa luqāṭatiḥā [...]; for the status of Madina as *ḥaram*, see Bukhārī, Faḍāʾil al-Madīna, ḥaram al-Madīna; Muslim, Ḥajj, faḍl al-Madīna).

Early History

The initial foundation of al-Aqsa Mosque is attributed to Prophet Ādam (*q.v.*), upon him peace, and subsequent reconstructions to other Prophets. The most authentic report on the matter is a hadith of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 32/652): “I asked the Messenger of Allah which *masjid* was first established on earth. He said, ‘*al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* [at Makka].’ ‘Then which?’ I asked. He said, ‘*al-Masjid al-Aqsā* [at Jerusalem].’ ‘How long was there between them?’ I asked. ‘Forty years,’ he replied. Then he said, ‘Wherever you find [yourself at the time of] prayer, pray; for that [place] is a *masjid* for you’” (Muslim, *Masājid wa mawāḍiʿ al-ṣalāt*; Bukhārī, *Aḥādīth al-anbiyāʾ*).

Commentaries on this hadith discuss this interval of forty years in relation to the Prophets associated with each of the two mosques. Prophet Ibrāhīm and his son Ismāʿīl constructed Masjid al-Ḥarām (see Q 2:127), while the Prophets Dāwūd and his son Sulaymān, upon them all peace, constructed the Aqsa Mosque, according to the hadith reports cited above. Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī (238-321/852-933) explains: “There are as many generations between them as Allah willed (meaning that He alone knows the exact number); for after Ibrāhīm came his son Ishāq; after [him], Ishāq’s son Yaʿqūb; after Yaʿqūb, his son Yūsuf; after Yūsuf, Mūsā; after Mūsā, Dāwūd; and other Prophets of Allah from their progeny as well as from outside their lineage, and thus the interval between

[the construction of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and that of al-Masjid al-Aqsā] is obviously far greater than forty years.” The query of Abū Dharr, Allah be well-pleased with him, is thus understood to concern not the interval between the construction of the two mosques but the interval between their founding—“since Ibrāhīm was not the founder of the Kaʿba, nor was Sulaymān that of al-Bayt al-Muqaddas; they rebuilt these mosques, the founders of which were others who lived long before them” (*Sharḥ mushkil al-āthār* 1:109). Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) and Ibn Ḥajar (773-852/1371-1449) likewise explain the hadith of Abū Dharr as indicating that Ibrāhīm and Sulaymān, upon them peace, reconstructed these mosques on older foundations. Ibn Ḥajar cites a narration claiming that the Kaʿba and al-Aqsa Mosque were both founded by Ādam, upon him peace: “When Ādam, upon him peace, completed the foundation of the Kaʿba, Allah Most High commanded him to travel to Bayt al-maqdis (i.e., Jerusalem) where he laid the foundation [of al-Masjid al-Aqsā] and worshipped in it” (*sub* Q 3:96; *Fath al-bārī*, qawluḥ bāb qawl Allāh taʿāla wa-ttakhadha Lāhu Ibrāhīma Khalīla).

Ibn Khaldūn (732-808/1332-1406) comments that *wuḍiʿa* in this hadith does not mean “building” (*bināʾ*); rather, it means consecration for worship (*ʿuyyina lil-ʿibāda*), and it is quite possible that the two mosques (he refers metonymically to “Bayt al-Muqaddas and Makka”) were consecrated within forty years of each other (*Tārīkh* 1:444). Muḥīr al-Dīn al-ʿUlaymī al-Ḥanbalī (860-928/1456-1522), the Chief Qāḍī of Jerusalem and celebrated chronicler of Jerusalem and Hebron, writes that there is not necessarily any inconsistency between the narrations about the construction of al-Aqsa Mosque, since it is possible that it was first founded by the angels, then built by Ādam, upon him peace, then by Sām (Shem) son of Nūḥ, then by Yaʿqūb son of Ishāq, then by Dāwūd and Sulaymān, upon them all peace; for these persons are separated by intervals of time lengthy enough to have potentially necessitated the building’s reconstruction (*Uns al-jalīl* 1:30).

In Rabīʿ I, 16/April 637, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the second Caliph, may Allah be well-pleased with him, arrived in Jerusalem—called *Iliyāʾ madīnat bayt al-maqdis* in Islamic sources (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* 1:603), reflecting the old Roman and Israelite names for the city—to accept its surrender from the people of Jerusalem, who had agreed to submit after six months of siege by the Muslim army commanded by Abū ʿUbayda b. al-Jarrāḥ (42