

Abū al-Faḍl Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (1217-1270/1803-1853) nuanced this assertion (*Rūḥ*):

The notion that “an account of the remembrance of Allah Most High taking place in monasteries, churches and synagogues after their legitimacy has been revoked is not demanded by the context [nor is it acceptable to reason]” holds no weight, because their having been abrogated [and being therefore soteriologically ineffectual] does not negate [those places of worship] remaining, thanks to the blessing of the remembrance of Allah that takes place therein (*lā yunāfi baqā’ahā bi-barakat dhikr Allāh ta’alā fihā*), although the meaning of the verse is general, [also encompassing] that which took place before their abrogation.

In addition to its specific meaning of “mosque” (*q.v.*), the word *masjid* is used in the Qur’ān to denote the place of worship of Sulaymān (Q 17:1, 7) (see AL-AQṢĀ MOSQUE). It is also used generically to mean a place of worship, as in Q 18:21 (*Those who prevailed in the argument over them said: “We shall indeed build a masjid over them (i.e., their tombs);”* see PEOPLE OF THE CAVE); 2:114 (*And who does greater evil than he who denies access to Allah’s places of worship (masājid)..?*) and Q 72:18: *Places of worship (masājid) are for Allah alone, so do not pray to anyone other than Allah.*

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**See also:** ABROGATION; ALLIANCE AND TREATY; AL-AQṢĀ MOSQUE; BLESSINGS; CHILDREN OF ISRĀ’ĪL; CHRISTIANITY; CRITERION; HIJRA; IDOLS AND IDOLATRY; MAKKA; MOSQUE; PEOPLE OF THE BOOK; PEOPLE OF THE CAVE; PLEDGE; PRAYER; REMEMBRANCE AND REMINDER OF ALLAH; AL-ŠĀBI‘UN; VICTORY.

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## CITY

### BALAD, QARYA, MADĪNA

This article comprises the following sections: (i) Definitions and Usage; (ii) Synonymity and Differences in Usage of *qarya*, *balad*, and *madīna*; (iii) Allegorical Usage of *balad* and *balda*; (iv) Cities are Warned; (v) Bibliography.

### Definitions and Usage

In pre-modern times, rather than size, it was the presence of a boundary wall which defined a city as distinct from the surrounding open territory. This distinction is the most prominent characteristic of the definition of city in *al-Ayn*, the oldest Arabic lexicon compiled by Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khalīl al-Farāhīdī (100-175/718-791). Al-Farāhīdī defines *balad*, one of the four nouns used for city in the Qur’ān, as “a portion of earth bounded by certain limits (*mastahīz*), be it inhabited (*‘āmirin*) or uninhabited (*ghayra ‘āmirin*), empty (*khālīn*) or populated (*maskūnin*); a portion thereof is called *balda*; its plural is *bilād* (*sub b-l-d*). Later lexicographers did not keep the distinction between *balad* and *balda* and denote the city with both nouns (Ibn Sīdā; Fayyūmī; Fayrūzabādī), or they consider *balad* to “refer to [large] geographical regions, like al-‘Irāq or al-Shām, and *al-balda* to be the name for a specific part of it, like al-Baṣra [within the territory of Iraq] and Dimashq [within the region of al-Shām] (Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān*, ḥarf al-dāl, faṣl al-bā’ al-muwaḥḥada, stem *b-l-d*). The desert is also called *balad* because it is the home of the wild animals; and a grave (*al-qabr*) is also called *balad* because it is the dwelling place of the dead (Rāghīb). The trilateral root *b-l-d* is used nineteen times in the Qur’ān: fourteen times as *balad* (Q

2:126; 3:196; 7:57, 58; 14:35; 16:7; 35:9; 40:4; 50:36; 89:8, 11; 90:1, 2; 95:3) and five times as *balda* (Q 25:49; 27:91; 34:15; 43:11; 50:11), both refer to a city as well as land (‘Abd al-Bāqī).

The other three terms used for city in the Qurʾān are:

- *qarya*, from the root *q-r-y*, which carries the meaning of “being united, collected (*ijtimāʿ*)”, and it denotes a place where people come together to live (Ibn Fāris). The noun *qarya* can either refer to a settlement where people live together or to dwellers of that location, as in *and ask the city* (Q 12:82), which means ask the inhabitants of the city (Rāghib). *Qarya* and *balad* are interchangeably used for cities (*mudun*) (Ibn Manzūr) to denote any settlement where buildings are found or a place of residence (*qarāran*), regardless of its size (Zabīdī). *Qarya* and its plural *qurā* appear fifty-seven times in the Qurʾān (‘Abd al-Bāqī);
- *madīna* is used fourteen times and its plural *al-madāʿin* appears three times (Q 7:111; 26:36, 53), the latter always in connection with Firʿawn’s magicians; it is explained as referring to cities in Upper Egypt (*Ṣaʿīd Miṣr*) (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). *Madīna* has two plurals: “*mudun*” and “*madāʿin*”. Some linguists consider the “*mīm*” in *madīna* to be an additional letter and the noun is thus said to have been derived from *d-y-n*, but most consider it to be from the root *m-d-n* on the pattern of *faʿīla* (Rāghib; Ibn Manzūr; Fayrūzabādī);
- *miṣr*, from the root *m-ṣ-r*, meaning “a partition or barrier between two things” (Jawharī; Ibn Sīdā; Fayrūzabādī); it is defined as “any walled city (*baladīn mamṣūr*), that is bounded [territory]; *maṣartu maṣran* means founding of a city (Rāghib). It is used four times (Q 10:87; 12:21, 99; 43:51) as the proper name for Egypt, and once (Q 2:61) as *miṣran*, which, when read according to the standard Uthmānī codex, means “any big city”, but some Qurʾān Readers read it without the final *-n*, thus making it the same as the other four usages referring to Egypt (see READINGS OF THE QURʾĀN). According to the first reading, Q 2:61—which responds to the demand of the Children of Isrāʾīl (*q.v.*) for the produce of the earth—means *go down to a big city, and you will have what you ask for*; whereas according to the second reading, it means *go to Egypt and you will find what you ask for*. In his detailed discussion on the readings, Abū Jaʿfar ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-ca.922) rejects the second reading on contextual grounds.

### Synonymity and Differences in Usage of *qarya*, *balad*, and *madīna*

- The singular indefinite form of *qarya* is used in many verses for a city where the majority of the population is unbelievers and their fate is perdition (*cf.* Q 6:123; 7:4, 94; 10:98; 15:4; 17:16, 58; 18:77; 21:6, 11, 95; 22:45; 25:51; 26:208; 28:58; 34:34; 43:23; 47:13; 65:8).
- *Qarya* and *madīna* are sometimes used interchangeably, as in:
  - Q 18:77, *until when they came to the people of a city (ahlā qaryatim), they asked its people for food, but they refused to offer them hospitality. And they found therein a wall about to collapse*;
  - Q 18:82, where the noun *al-madīna* is used to denote the same city *and as for the wall it belonged to two orphan boys in the city (fī-l-madīna)*;
  - Q 36:13, *and present to them a parable of the people of the city (aṣḥāb al-qarya), where aṣḥāb al-qarya*” refers to the disbelieving population of Anṭākiya (Antioch) to whom Allah Most High sent Messengers (Samarqandī; Bayḍāwī; Wāḥidī; Samʿanī; Rāzī); and
  - Q 36:20, *and there came from the farthest end of the city (min aqṣā-l-madīna) a man*, which refers to the same city.
- *balad* is most often used generically to refer to a city; its plural *al-bilād*, refers to lands or regions outside cities (*cf.* Q 3:196; 50:36; 89:11). All four usages where it appears with the definite article (*al-balad*; Q 14:35; 90:1, 2; 95:3) refer to Makka (*q.v.*) by the consensus of the exegetes (*cf.* *Tafsīrs* of Mujaḥhid; Ṭabarī; Samʿanī; Samarqandī, *Baḥr*). It is the title of Q 90, *Sūrat al-Balad*.
- A delicate difference in the usage appears in the supplication of Prophet Ibrāhīm, upon him peace (*q.v.*), where the indefinite accusative form is used in Q 2:126, *My Lord, make this a secure city (baladan āminan)*” whereas in his second supplication (Q 14:35), *My Lord, make this (hādihā-l-balada) city secure*”, the noun is used in the definite form, indicating that “Ibrāhīm had already finished building the Kaʿba (Samarqandī).

### Usages of *Qarya*

*Qarya* refers to:

- Makka, as in “*And Allah presents an example: a city which was safe and secure*” (Q 16:112 *cf.* 47:13); and “*Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people*” (Q 4:75; *cf.* Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*;