

ISLAMICJERUSALEM THE FIRST *QIBLAH*

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Introduction

Islamicjerusalem has a unique significance for Muslims. Besides the importance of the Night Journey, which took place from Makkah to Islamicjerusalem, Muslims oriented themselves toward Islamicjerusalem in prayers at the early stage of Islam before they started to face Makkah instead. This daily practice for Muslims strengthened the connection between them and that region and gave it the title of “The first *Qiblah*”.

Some researchers have different opinions regarding the time Muslims started to face Islamicjerusalem as to whether this was from the first prayers, after the Night Journey or after the Migration to Madīnah. The main aim of this article is to investigate the title given to Islamicjerusalem: “The first *Qiblah*”. To do this, the researcher will first study the concept behind having a *Qiblah* at the first place and the relation between that and the faced object or direction. The different accounts regarding the start of facing Islamicjerusalem are also examined.

The Concept of *Qiblah* in Islam

There is a consensus agreement (*Ijmā'*) amongst Muslim scholars that Muslims must face a certain direction as they perform their daily prayers. This direction is named the “*Qiblah*”¹. Moreover, there is no disagreement amongst Muslims that the direction of the *Qiblah* is al-Ḥarām Mosque in Makkah² (Sābiq 1998: (1)95). It is stated very clearly in the Qur'an that Muslims should turn their

faces to that site in prayers (Qur'an 2:144, 2:149-150). In addition, there are three other verses in the Qur'an that explain further the concept of *Qiblah*. These verses are all found in the second chapter of the Qur'an '*al-Baqrah*', which means that these verses are considered *Madani*³ verses (Darwazah 2000: (6)123-124). The three verses are 2:115, 2:144 and 2:177:

ولله المشرق والمغرب فأينما تولوا فثم وجه الله إن الله وسع علِيم

[2:115] To Allah belongs the East and the West. So wherever you [might] turn, there is the Face of Allah. Indeed, Allah is All-Encompassing, and All-Knowing.

قد نرى تقلب وجهك في السماء فلنولينك قبلة ترضاها فول وجهك شطر المسجد الحرام وحيث ما كنتم فولوا وجوهكم شطره وإن الذين أوتوا الكتب ليعلمون أنه الحق من ربهم وما الله بغفل عما يعملون

[2:144] We have certainly seen the turning of your face, [O Muhammad], toward the heaven, and We will surely turn you to a Qiblah with which you will be pleased. So turn your face [i.e., yourself] toward al-Harām Mosque. And wherever you [believers] are, turn your faces [i.e., yourselves] toward it [in prayer]. Indeed, those who have been given the Scripture [i.e., the Jews and the Christians] well know that it is the truth from their Lord. And Allah not unaware of what they do.

ليس البر أن تولوا وجوهكم قبل المشرق والمغرب ولكن البر من آمن بالله واليوم الآخر والملائكة والكتب والنبيين وءاتى المال على حبه ذوى القربى واليتيمى والمسكين وابن السبيل والسائلين وفي الرقاب وأقام الصلوة وءاتى الزكوة والموفون بعهدهم إذا عهدوا والصبرين في البأساء والضراء وحين البأس أولئك الذين صدقوا وأولئك هم المتقون

[2:177] It is not righteousness that you turn your faces toward the East or the West; but righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, and the Messengers; and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakāh; [those who] fulfil their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and those who are the righteous.

These verses might appear contradictory; the first one states that Muslims can turn their faces, in prayer, to any direction, whereas the second orders the Muslims to face one certain direction that is Makkah. The third verse on the other hand raises the point that it is not the direction to be faced but rather that the fundamentals of faith are to be adhered to (to believe in God, the last day, and other things). In order to understand what seems to be a contradiction, the researcher will first apply the methodology of understanding the Qur'an by the Qur'an which is used by scholars of Tafsīr, and then explore the different commentaries on these verses with a study of the Reason of Revelation for these verses. This will be followed by looking for further explanations of these verses from the Prophet traditions. Finally, the researcher will present his understanding and conclusions on the matter.

The Question of Abrogation (*Naskh*)

First of all, it is important to know if any of these verses are abrogated. To do so, one should know two things; firstly, the time of the revelation of these verses, and secondly, the evidence of the abrogation if it exists. Verse 144 was undoubtedly revealed when the *Qiblah* was changed some time after the migration (*Hijrah*). The exact times of revelation of the other two verses 115, 177 in Madīnah are not known. Building on that, the arguments of abrogation should be studied. Some scholars of Tafsīr mention an opinion narrated from Ibn 'Abbās that verse 115 is abrogated by verse 144 (al-Qurṭubī 1998: (1)79, Ibn Kathīr 2000a: (1)347, Al-Naysābūrī 1995:24). Regardless of the authenticity of this narration, the researcher rejects it for two reasons; firstly, this opinion has no evidence to support it. Secondly, to be true, it would mean that before the revelation of verse 144, which was in Madīnah, Muslims were free to pray in any direction, which indeed, contradicts many *Aḥādīth* which indicate that Muslims were obliged to face Islamicjerusalem before that time and even before the migration to Madīnah; this will be discussed later. One of these *Aḥādīth* in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (1996:170): *Allah's Messenger offered the Ṣalāt (prayer) facing Bayt al-Maqdis for sixteen or seventeen months [while in Madīnah]...*

Yet the two verses preceding verse 144 above show that Muslims were asked to turn their faces from their previous *Qiblah* to a new *Qiblah* (Qur'an 2:142): "The fools among people will say: What has turned them away from their *Qiblah* which they used to face" and (Qur'an 2:143): "And We (God) did not make the *Qiblah* which you used to face except that ...". This means that they were not free before that to face any direction. This is very strong evidence to support the assertion that there is no abrogation related to these two verses. The reason for this opinion, the researcher argues, is the mix between the abrogation of the verse and the abrogation of the rule 'Hukum'. Verse 144 did indeed abrogate the *Hukum* of the *Qiblah* which was Islamic Jerusalem to be al-Ḥarām Mosque; this is called the abrogation of Sunnah by the Qur'an and has nothing to do with verse 115⁴. The same could be said of verse 177. Muslims were not given the choice to pray in any direction they wished at any time and the assumption of abrogation is also not true.

General or specific *Hukum*

The second point to be examined is whether either of the verses is the general case while the other is related to one that is specific. This needs a study of the reason for revelation (*Asbab al-Nuzul*) of these verses. According to scholars of jurisprudence, facing al-Ḥarām Mosque is a must though there are exceptions (Sabeq 1998: (1)95-97). Muslims can pray while not facing the direction of *Qiblah* in some cases: for example, when being afraid or when not being able to determine the right direction. Not only that, it is mentioned in an authentic tradition narrated by al-Bukhārī that the Prophet used to pray while riding a horse or camel in the direction in which it was moving⁵ (Bukhārī 1996:297):

Narrated Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh: the Prophet (PBUH) used to offer the *Nawāfil* (optional – non-obligatory) prayers, while riding, facing a direction other than that of the *Qiblah*.

The Ḥadīth shows that this applies to the optional prayer. However, scholars argue that this also applies to obligatory prayer in a case of not being able to face the *Qiblah* direction⁶. Both Al-Qurtubī (1998: (1)77) and Al-Naysābūrī (1994:24) argue that verse

115 was revealed for this case, saying that this is the opinion of Ibn 'Umar.

This indicates that verse 144 is the general case and verse 115 is related to exceptions in which the prayer will be accepted even though it was not prayed in the right direction. This also applies to praying in a time of fear or when someone is ill and not able to face the *Qiblah*. If this verse did not exist, then Muslims would have to face the *Qiblah* in all situations, which would be a burden for those who cannot fulfil this condition.

Al-Alūsī (1994: (1)364) seems to agree with the previous arguments. He further argues that verse 115 is an introduction to the change of the *Qiblah* and an indication that Allah does not exist in a specific direction and that all directions belong to him. The researcher argues that this is an important concept that must have been well established before the change of the *Qiblah*. Indeed, those who believe that God can only be worshipped in a specific direction will not accept turning their faces to another, and hence the argument of al-Alūsī could be a valid one, especially in the case of the Jews.

The same is stated by Abu Ḥibbān al-Andalusī (d. 745 A.H.) who argues (2001: (1)531) that this verse 115 is a clear response to those who think that Allah exists in a specific direction; he explains that if Allah was in a certain direction then facing that direction would be prioritised over all other directions, which is not the case since this verse clarifies that all directions belong to Allah. He also argues (2001: (1)530) that this verse 115 is related to the one before it which says (Qur'an 2:114):

[114] And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in places for the worship of Allah, His name should be celebrated? Whose zeal is (in fact) to ruin them? It was not fitting that such should themselves enter them except in fear. For them there is nothing but disgrace in this world, and in the world to come, an exceeding torment.

Abu Ḥibbān clarifies by saying that the meaning is that one is still able to pray to God even if one was forced or forbidden from praying in places of worship since “*To God belongs the East and the West*”, and one can face the *Qiblah* in any place. This is explained further in a Prophetic tradition that states (Bukhārī 1996:151):

The earth has been made for me (and for my followers) a place for offering *Ṣalāt* (prayer) and a thing to purify (perform *Tayammum*), therefore anyone of my followers can offer *Ṣalāt* (prayer) wherever he is, at the time of *Ṣalāt* (prayer).

Thus the above argument can be accepted since verse 144 has a very clear-cut meaning ‘*Muḥkamah*’, and no one can say that facing al-Ḥarām Mosque is not a must. This is also repeated in other verses (Qur’an 2:144, 149-150), to be discussed later.

Qiblah and Righteousness

Having discussed the first two verses, it now becomes easier to understand the third one (2:177): “*It is not righteousness that you turn your faces toward the East or the West; but it is righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day ...*” If this verse had been discussed prior to the previous analysis, the same questions would have been and would be asked: How “*It is not righteousness that you turn your faces toward East or West*” when Muslims have to face a certain direction? Again, one should remember that this verse was revealed in Madīnah, where there is no doubt that Muslims were obliged to face a specific direction.

The same previous argument applies here: although Muslims have to face a certain direction, still the wisdom behind it is related not only to the direction but also to the belief. If one does not believe in Allah then surely one would not obey the order of facing a specific direction. Ibn Kathīr (2000a:478) argues that this verse was revealed to clarify the wisdom behind the command to Muslims to change the *Qiblah* which is obedience to God, adhering to His commands, facing wherever He commands facing, and implementing whatever He legislates. Ibn Kathīr further argues (2000a:478): “Facing the east or the west does not necessitate righteousness or obedience, unless it is legislated by God⁷”.

Another argument on the third verse 177 is presented by al-Andalusī (2001: (2)3) who relates this verse to the one preceding it, which reads: "...And indeed, those who differ over the book are in extreme dissension" (Qur'an 2:176). This verse is talking about the people of the book who disagreed amongst themselves. Al-Andalusī (2001: (2)3) argues that verse 177 is a response to them that their disagreement on the *Qiblah* is not the principal problem; their belief, as verse 176 argues, is the problem that they should think about before discussing which direction to face. This argument was also mentioned by both al-Baghawī (2002: (1)124) and al-Baydawī (1988: (1)101).

The previous discussions show that these three verses are not contradictory; they however complement one another and each one views a different part of the concept of the *Qiblah*.

The Concept of *Ahl al-Qiblah* (the nation of the *Qiblah*)

The concept of *Qiblah* in Islam plays a big role in the unity of Muslims and helps them to have a central point of reference. Al-Sha'rāwī argues (1991: (1)543) that facing the *Qiblah* means no more than uniting Muslims to pray in one direction as a symbolic reference to their common aims.

Throughout history there has never been a time in which Muslim scholars have had disagreements on this issue; it has always been a matter of consensus. This issue became an essential part of the identity for the people who belong to this religion, and hence a terminology like '*Ahl al-Qiblah*' was developed. The following Ḥadīth laid the foundation for this concept. The Prophet showed how important the role of the *Qiblah* was to the unity of Muslims by giving the Protection of God and His Messenger to all people praying in that direction (Bukhārī 1996:169):

Narrated Anas ibn Mālik: Allāh's Messenger Pbuḥ said: "Whoever offers the *Ṣalāt* (prayer) like us and faces our *Qiblah* [Ka'bah at Makkah during *Ṣalāt*] and eats our slaughtered animals, is a Muslim and is under Allāh's and His Messenger's Protection. So do not betray Allāh by betraying those who are in His Protection."

The researcher argues that this Ḥadīth shows very clearly the role of the *Qiblah* in the foundation of the Muslim Ummah which started to be formed strongly after the Migration. This role grew in strength with building the mosques in the direction of the *Qiblah*.

Is the Direction of Qiblah fixed?

Muslims believe that Islam was in complete form just before the death of the Prophet as is stated in one of the final verses revealed (Qur'an 5:3). This indicates that all commands including the *Qiblah* are unchangeable. However, before the revelation of this verse, the direction of the *Qiblah* had been changed once. The change was from al-Aqsa Mosque in Islamic Jerusalem to al-Ḥarām Mosque in Makkah. This is a strong indication that the *Qiblah* is not associated with a specific place but is in the concept itself. Here comes the uniqueness of the concept of *Qiblah* in Islam. The people of the book were surprised, as the Qur'an states, when Muslims changed their *Qiblah*: *"the fools amongst people will say: What has turned them away from the Qiblah to which they were used? Say: To Allah belongs the East and the West: He guides whom He wills to a straight path"* (Qur'an 2:142). This change, for the people of Madīnah, was not a slight change; it was almost 180 degrees from Islamic Jerusalem in the North to Makkah in the South.

Moreover, after the death of Prophet Mohammad the Ka'bah was rebuilt various times and a central part of it, the Black Stone, was moved to another location in al-Bahrain for two decades (Bakdāsh 2004:30-32)⁸. This didn't cause any alteration or change to the direction of prayer⁹.

The First *Qiblah* of Muslims

It is widely held among Muslims that Islamic Jerusalem was their *Qiblah* before Makkah and hence, they use the term "the first *Qiblah*" to refer to Islamic Jerusalem. However, the use of this term, which is very common in Muslim literature, does not only imply that Islamic Jerusalem was the *Qiblah* before Makkah, but also that there was no other *Qiblah* before it and this could also mean that Prophet Muhammad faced it even before the migration from Makkah.

The exact time when Muslims started facing Islamicjerusalem has long been a subject of dispute among many researchers and scholars (Jabareen 2006:58). Looking to different books of Tafsīr, Ḥadīth, history, and Sīrah will only add to the confusion a number of different and contradictory opinions regarding the first direction and orientation of the prayers of early Muslims. The researcher has collected all the different opinions and listed them in the following table:

Period Opinion		In Makkah		In Madīnah	
		before the Night Journey	after the Night Journey	before the change	after the change
First group	1	Islamicjerusalem	Islamicjerusalem	Islamicjerusalem	Makkah
	2	Islamicjerusalem Ka'bah in between	Islamicjerusalem Ka'bah in between	Islamicjerusalem	Makkah
Second Group	1	The Ka'bah	Islamicjerusalem	Islamicjerusalem	Makkah
	2	The Ka'bah	The Ka'bah	Islamicjerusalem	Makkah
	3	The Ka'bah	Islamicjerusalem Ka'bah in between	Islamicjerusalem	Makkah

Table 1: the different opinions regarding the first *Qiblah*

There is no doubt that the Prophet used to face Islamicjerusalem in his early prayers in Madīnah and that the change in direction towards the Ka'bah happened while he was there (Ibn Sayyed al-Nās 1986: (1)307). The disagreements and contradictions among scholars are usually concerned with the *Qiblah* in Makkah before the migration.

The Reason for having different opinions:

Before discussing the different opinions presented in table 1 above, the researcher will try to understand the reasons for these differing opinions. As mentioned before, the concept of *Qiblah* is mainly related to the unity of the Muslim nation which started to be formed in Madīnah after establishing the first Muslim community there, which was not the case in Makkah for many reasons; mostly the small number of Muslims in Makkah and the hardships they were facing. Hence, it seems that the concept of *Qiblah* in Makkah was not well established, nor were many other issues, which were to be established later in Madīnah after the migration. This could be a reason why there is no clear picture about the *Qiblah* in Makkah. In fact, the Qur'an does not say anything about the *Qiblah* in Makkah; all the verses that talk about the *Qiblah* are found in the second chapter of the Qur'an which was revealed in Madīnah. The concept of *Qiblah* was established, in its complete form, after the revelation of the verses in which there was a mention to the previous *Qiblah* and the reason for facing it. It could be argued then that the revelation of the verses was a turning point on the issue of the *Qiblah*.

The different arguments presented in table 1 above could be divided into two groups: the first group argues that Islamic Jerusalem was the first *Qiblah* of Muslims in Makkah whereas the other one says that the *Qiblah* was initially the Ka'bah. Within the first group there are two different opinions; the first one states that Islamic Jerusalem was the *Qiblah* from the start of the prayer until the change of the *Qiblah* in Madīnah (Ibn Sayyed al-Nās 1986: (1)309). The second one suggests that the Prophet used to face Islamic Jerusalem while the Ka'bah was in between from the first days of Islam until he migrated to Madīnah where he faced Islamic Jerusalem until the *Qiblah* was changed to the Ka'bah (Ibn Kathīr 2000b:93, Ibn Sayyed al-Nās 1986: (1)309,313).

The second group argues that the Ka'bah is the first *Qiblah*. Within this group there are three different opinions; the first one states that the Ka'bah was the *Qiblah* from the start of the prayer to the

Night Journey where it was changed to be Islamicjerusalem. Al-Ṭabarī (1999: (2)7) mentions an opinion from Ibn Jurayj that says:

The Prophet prayed at first in the direction of the Ka‘bah then he was directed to Islamicjerusalem to which the Anṣār, in Madīnah, prayed three years before the Hijrah and the Prophet prayed sixteen months and then God directed him back to the Ka‘bah.

In this narration Ibn Jurayj argues that the change to Islamicjerusalem was at the time of the Night Journey three years before migration. Al-Qardāwī also argues (1997:8) that facing Islamicjerusalem started after the Night Journey. The second opinion states that the *Qiblah* remains to be the Ka‘bah in Makkah and changed to Islamicjerusalem after the migration (al-Zamakhsharī 1995:199). The same is argued by some Orientalists and Israeli writers: Jabareen (2006:58) says that many Israeli researchers, such as Yetzhaq Ḥassūn, claim that the Prophet started facing Islamicjerusalem in Madinah in order to attract Jews to convert to Islam. The third opinion suggests that the Prophet used to face the Ka‘bah until the Night Journey and after that he faced Islamicjerusalem with the Ka‘bah in between.

***Qiblah* before the Night Journey**

It is important first to note that although prayers, as the second pillar of Islam, which is to be performed five times a day, was only obliged in this number during the Night Journey which took place eighteen months before Hijrah i.e. 620 CE (al-Būṭī 2004:108, Ibn Ḥabbān 2000:83-86). Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims used to pray well before that: from the beginning of the Prophethood precisely. Indeed, as Khalid El-Awaisi argues (2007b:88), the second revelation to the Prophet was a command for him and Muslims to pray (Qur’an 73:1-5):

[1] O you who wraps himself [in clothing], [2] Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little, [3] Half of it, or subtract from it a little, [4] Or add to it; and recite the Qur’an with measured recitation. [5] Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word [Revelation].

El-Awaisi (2007b:88) adds that there should be a direction to pray towards. Ibn Ḥajr is quoted as saying (Al-Mubārakfūrī 1997:74): “There is no doubt that Prophet Muhammad and his companions

used to offer prayer before the Night Journey.” Moreover, Ibn Hishām (2005: (1)184) narrates that the companions used to hide from their people in the *Sbi‘āb*¹⁰ to offer prayers in the first years of Islam as they were persecuted if found. There are many historical accounts that talk about the Prophet and his companions praying in these early years, some of which are discussed below.

It is worth noting that the five prayers were prescribed during the Ascension (Mi‘rāj) and that the Prophet Muhammad led all the Prophets in prayer before the Ascension (Nor 2006:183) which is more evidence that prayers were prescribed before the Night Journey.

It is now important to know what the orientation of the *Qiblah* in these prayers was. As noted in table 1, the first group claims that the *Qiblah* before the Night Journey was Islamic Jerusalem whereas the second group claims that it was the Ka‘bah.

Although there are some narrations, in the beginning of Islam, which state that the Prophet used to pray facing the Ka‘bah, near, in front, or close to it, Islamic Jerusalem could still be his *Qiblah*. One of these narrations, for example, states (Al-Ṭabarī 1987: (VI)81-82):

Muhammad b. 'Ubayd al-Muhāribī—Sa‘īd b. Khuthaym—Asad b. 'Abdah al-Baljī—Yahya b. 'Afīf— 'Afīf: During the Jāhiliyyah I came to Mecca and stayed with al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. When the sun came up and rose into the sky, while I was looking at the Ka‘bah a young man came up and gazed at the sky. **Then he turned to face the Ka‘bah** and stood facing it. Soon afterwards a youth came and stood on his right, and soon after that a woman came and stood behind them. The young man bowed, and the youth and woman bowed; then the young man stood erect, followed by the youth and the woman, and then the young man prostrated himself, and they did so with him. I said, “Abbas, this is a weighty matter.” “It is a weighty matter indeed,” he said. “Do you know who this is?” “No,” I said. “This is Muhammad b. 'Abdallah b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, my brother's son,” he said. “Do you know who this is with him?” “No,” I said. “This is 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, my brother's son,” he said. “Do you know who this

woman is who is behind them?” “No,” I said. “This is Khadijah bt. Khuwaylid, my nephew's wife,” he said. “My nephew has told me that his Lord, the Lord of Heaven, has commanded them to do what you see them doing. God's oath, I do not know any one on the face of the earth but these three who follow this religion.”

As this narration shows, Prophet Muhammad prayed facing the Ka'bah and it also shows that it was in the very early days of the Prophethood. Yet, it does not say that the Prophet's *Qiblah* was the Ka'bah. From this historical narration one can not conclude that the *Qiblah* was the Ka'bah as the Prophet could have faced Islamicjerusalem from the side where the Ka'bah was in front of him, and the man who saw the Prophet could not recognise that, taking into consideration that he was not a Muslim at that time. It could be one of the reasons why some scholars argue that the Prophet, before the Night Journey, used to face Islamicjerusalem with the Ka'bah in front of him as mentioned in an authentic Ḥadīth in Musnad Aḥmad¹¹ (Shākir 1995: (3)310):

Narrated by Ibn 'Abbās: the Prophet (PBUH) used to pray, while he was in Makkah, facing Bayt al-Maqdis while the Ka'bah was in front of him...

This opinion is also mentioned in many books of history, Sīrah, and Tafsīr. For example, Ibn Kathīr (2000b:112) mentioned this opinion and refers it also to Ibn 'Abbās. Al-Mubārakfūrī, however, comments on this by arguing that it contradicts an authentic Ḥadīth, in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, indicating that the Prophet prayed in al-Ḥaṭīm¹². The Ḥadīth states (al-Bukhārī 1996:735):

Narrated Abd Allah Ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aāṣ that he was asked of the worst thing which the disbelievers did to the Prophet. He said, “While the Prophet was praying in the Ḥijr of the Ka'bah, 'Uqba ibn Abī Mu'ait came and put his garment around the Prophet's neck ...”

This could be clarified more in the following Figure which shows that one cannot face Islamicjerusalem and the Ka'bah together when one is standing in the Ḥijr: Still, the Ḥadīth above does not say that the Prophet was facing the Ka'bah; it could indicate that he was praying in that place facing Islamicjerusalem¹³.

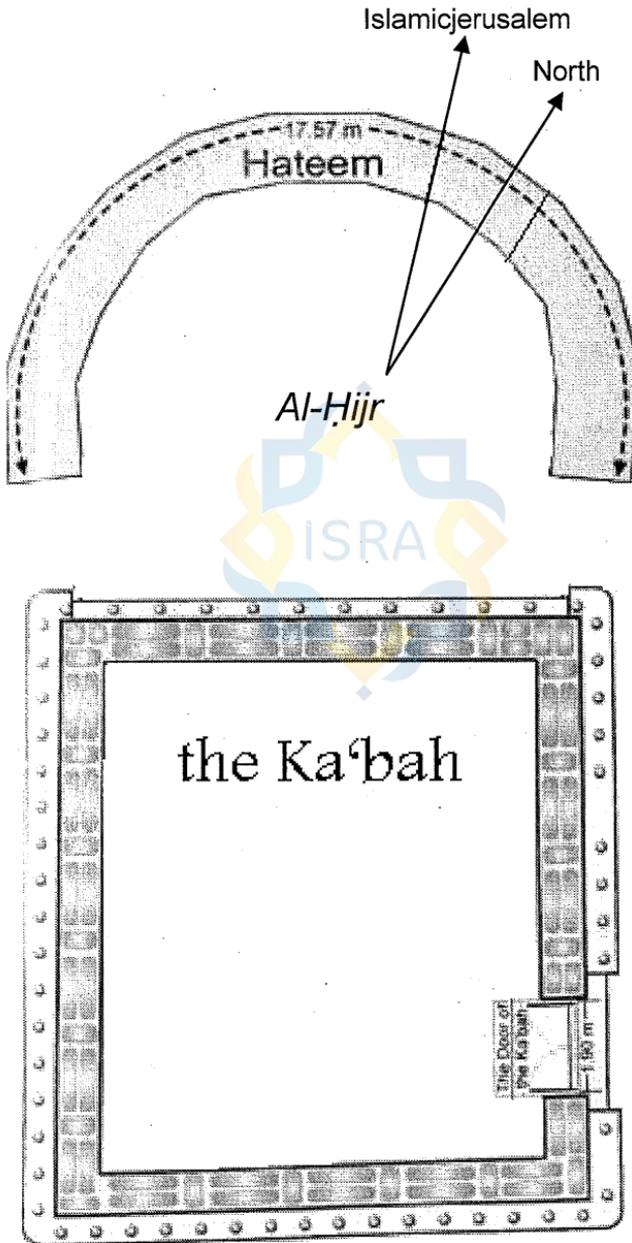


Figure 1: Praying inside the Hijr

This is because al-Ḥijr is considered part of the Ka'bah (al-Azraqī 2002: (1)310-311, 'Abd al-Ghanī 2001:46-47) and praying within it is considered like praying inside the Ka'bah. Within the Ka'bah one can face any direction, as is stated by the following authentic Ḥadīth in Musnad Aḥmad¹⁴ (Shākir 1995: (17)384):

'Āisha, the wife of the Prophet, said that she wanted to pray inside the Ka'bah and the Prophet held her hand and took her to the Ḥijr and said to her: "Pray in the Ḥijr if you want to enter the Ka'bah as it is part of it ..."

Moreover, one can only pray optional prayer inside both the Ka'bah and the Ḥijr as obligatory prayers cannot be prayed inside them (al-Zuḥaylī 1989: (1)763). Nevertheless, it is reasonable to ask that if Islamicjerusalem was the *Qiblah*, then why face it with the Ka'bah in between? And was it a must for Muslims to face both or was it only something preferable? There are no clear-cut answers for such questions indeed. It could be argued that the Prophet was keen to face both when possible, at least when he was praying near to the Ka'bah. Yet, this was not always true. There is more than one piece of evidence that shows clearly that the Prophet prayed before the Night Journey in more than one place in which facing Islamicjerusalem and the Ka'bah together was impossible. For example, the Prophet used to meet secretly with his companions in *Dār al-Arqam* (the house of al-Arqam) and pray there ('Abd al-Ghanī 2001:125). This place is on al-Ṣafa (Al-Mubārakfūrī 1997:89, 'Abd al-Ghanī 2001:125) where one cannot face Islamicjerusalem and the Ka'bah at the same time, one can only face one or the other, as figure 2 shows.

Another example is the Valley of Abū Ṭālib where Muslims were boycotted for three years, from the seventh year to the tenth year of Prophethood (al-Mubārakfūrī 1997:106). Muslims should have offered prayer at that place in which also the *Qiblah* had to be either Islamicjerusalem or the Ka'bah and not both as can be seen clearly in the figure below.

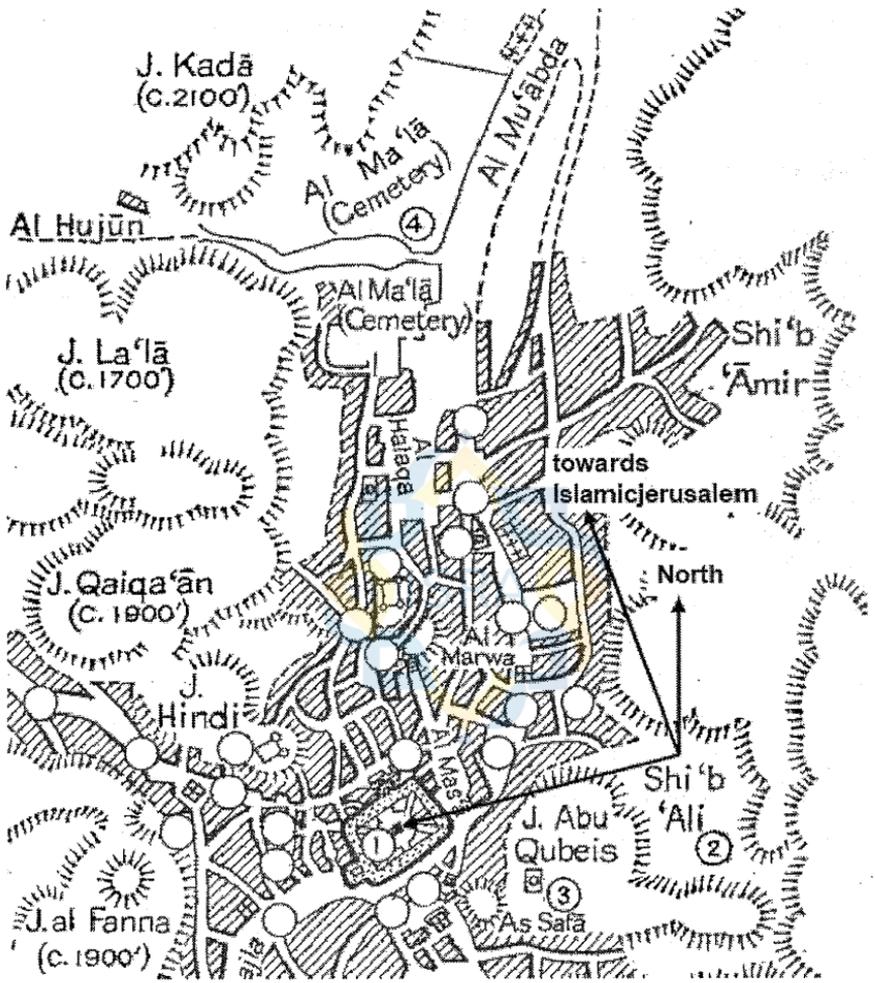


Figure 2: Praying in Shi'b Abū Tālib ('Ali)

Source: based on *Plan of Mecca* 1946¹⁵

(1) Ka'bah (2) Shi'b Abū Tālib (3) Al-Safa (4) al-Mu'alla Cemetery

The Prophet also visited al-Ṭā'if in the tenth year of Prophethood and his visit lasted ten days (al- Mubārakfūrī 1997:122) in which he could not have offered his prayers in both directions.

It is very clear though that it was not possible to always gather both locations in one orientation, and hence it is wrong to generalise that the *Qiblah* in the Makkan period was Islamic Jerusalem with the Ka'bah in between. This could be the

case only when one is at a certain angle in the south-east (SSE) direction of the Ka'bah facing it¹⁶.

Since there is no conclusive evidence to indicate a direction of prayer other than Islamicjerusalem before the Night Journey, the researcher suggests that the *Qiblah* was the same before and after the Night Journey. There is nothing to indicate that a change took place especially when one considers the debate and the reactions that happened after the change of the *Qiblah* in Madīnah. In addition, there are only historical accounts suggesting that the *Qiblah* was Makkah before the Night Journey, whereas there is an authentic Ḥadīth indicating it was Islamicjerusalem.

Qiblah in Abyssinia

In the fifth year of the Prophethood, i.e. before the Night Journey, twelve men and four women from the companions left Makkah for Abyssinia and they were followed later by eighty-three men and eighteen or seventeen women (al-Mubārakfūrī 1997:89-90). Those companions who stayed there for a long time should have offered prayer. Jabareen (2006:59) argues that it is well known that Muslims living in Abyssinia faced Islamicjerusalem as they emigrated to Abyssinia during the early Makkan period. Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (1998: (1)94-95) examines, from a juristic point of view, the legislature changed in the time of the Prophet which did not reach the people living far away from him. He gives an example of those companions who were in Abyssinia when the *Qiblah* was changed assuring that they continued to pray towards Islamicjerusalem after the change in Madīnah.

Qiblah within Al-Aqṣa Mosque

As mentioned earlier, Prophet Muhammad led the Prophets in prayer inside al-Aqṣa Mosque during the Night Journey. The researcher will examine this prayer to learn, if possible, the direction to which he prayed. There are two accounts about the place in which the Prophet prayed during that Night. The first one states that he prayed to the right of the rock (al-Maqdisī 1994:254). This narration, the researcher argues, does not help in knowing the

direction as it could mean that he prayed facing the rock itself or facing any other direction while still to the right of the rock.

The second narration found in Musnad Aḥmad (1995: (1)276-277) states that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was asked, by Ka‘b al-Aḥbār, to pray near the rock. ‘Umar refused and said that he preferred to pray in the same place where the Prophet had prayed (in the Night Journey). The narration indicates that ‘Umar then prayed in the front of the Mosque. This could indicate that the Prophet prayed facing Makkah; however, the researcher argues, even if the Prophet prayed in the direction of Makkah, this does not mean that it was the *Qiblah* as it could be argued that one could pray inside al-Aqṣa Mosque, at that time, in any direction. This is the same as praying inside the Ka‘bah where one can face any direction (al-Zuḥaylī 1989: (1)763).

***Qiblah* after the Night Journey**

After the Night Journey the link of Muslims with Islamic Jerusalem became stronger and facing it was much clearer. The ascension being from Islamic Jerusalem showed it to be the path to heaven. It was a message to Muslims that their prayers which are directed to Islamic Jerusalem go to heaven just like the way Prophet Muhammad went through. This becomes clearer when one knows that the five daily prayers were obliged during that Night. This may be one of the reasons why some scholars argue that the starting point of facing Islamic Jerusalem was after the Night Journey. However, as has been argued, there is no evidence that there was any change for the *Qiblah* at that time, and it is most likely that the *Qiblah* before the Night Journey was just the same as it was after it.

Moreover, there are some narrations which show that the *Qiblah* after the Night Journey and before the Hijrah was Islamic Jerusalem. For example, there is the story of al-Barā’ Ibn Ma‘rūr, one of the Prophet companions who came from Madīnah and became Muslim during the second pledge of ‘Aqabah (Ibn Hishām 2005: (2)27). It is narrated that this companion saw a dream signifying a message not to pray while turning his back to the Ka‘bah, which is the case in Madīnah when facing

Islamicjerusalem. When he told other Muslims they refused to do so and they told him that they could not pray to a *Qiblah* other than Islamicjerusalem, the *Qiblah* of the Prophet. He however started facing the opposite direction (Makkah) while other Muslims in Madīnah prayed in the direction of Islamicjerusalem. When he met the Prophet in Makkah he told him what he had done. The Prophet told him to be patient and he reverted to praying in the direction of Islamicjerusalem (Ibn Ḥabbān 2000:87-88, Ibn Hishām 2005: (2)27). The story shows that the *Qiblah* at that time, after the pledge of ‘Aqabah, was towards Islamicjerusalem.

***Qiblah* in Madīnah**

From the above discussion it is clear that the *Qiblah* in Madīnah before Migration was Islamicjerusalem. The story of al-Barā’ Ibn Ma’rūr mentioned above shows the insistence of his people to keep on praying in the direction of Islamicjerusalem (Ibn Ḥabbān 2000:87-88) which is one of the things they should have learned from companion Mus‘ab Ibn ‘Umayer, who was sent by the Prophet after the first pledge of the ‘Aqabah to teach people Islam and to lead them in prayer (Ibn Hishām 2005: (2)24). It is even mentioned that he used to lead them in prayer in the same place where the Prophet Mosque was built later on (‘Abd al-Ghanī 2003:39-41).

Moreover, there are some records which indicate that when the Prophet arrived Qubā’ (during migration from Makkah to Madīnah) he found the people there already having a Mosque built in the direction of Islamicjerusalem and he led them in prayer to the same direction (Ibn Shībah:23).

All this evidence strengthens the argument that the *Qiblah* in Makkah was Islamicjerusalem, since it is impossible that Muslims in Madīnah face Islamicjerusalem while the Prophet in Makkah is facing another direction. Therefore, the claim that the Prophet started facing Islamicjerusalem after Migration goes against various facts.

As for the *Qiblah* after the Migration, there is no disagreement that it was towards IslamicJerusalem. Actually the concept of *Qiblah* became clearer after the Migration mainly after establishing the Mosques in Madīnah in the direction of the *Qiblah* and having the first Muslim community. All the Islamic sources show with no disagreement that the *Qiblah* in Madīnah after the Hijrah continued to be IslamicJerusalem; they however disagree on the duration of facing IslamicJerusalem before the change took place.

It is mentioned in most of the sources of history and the Sīrah that the *Qiblah* of the Prophet Mosque when it was first built was IslamicJerusalem (Al-Mubārkfūrī :175, al-Ghazālī 1998:177, ‘Abd al-Ghanī 2003:39-41, ‘Alī 2000:21)¹⁷. All the books of Tafsīr agree that the *Qiblah* in Madīnah before the change was IslamicJerusalem. Moreover, Al-Qazqī (2003:35-60) collects about sixteen *Aḥādīth* that confirm the same point. This undoubtedly shows that the *Qiblah* in Madīnah was IslamicJerusalem before the change and that there was no disagreement in this regard.

***Qiblah* and other rituals**

It may be thought that the *Qiblah* is only related to praying; however, Muslims face it in various other actions. It is a common practice for Muslims to bury the dead in the direction of the *Qiblah*. Though the Qur’an does not say anything about that, the Prophetic tradition indicates that the dead are to be buried facing the *Qiblah*. The different schools of jurisprudence, such as the four main schools, agree that the burying in the direction of the *Qiblah* is part of the rituals for burying the dead. However, they disagree as to whether this is obligatory, as is argued by both the Shāfi‘ī and the Ḥanbalī schools, or is preferable (*Mandūb*), as is argued by both the Mālikī and the Ḥanafī schools (al-Zuḥaylī 1989: (2)1550). It is also considered that one of the traditions in sacrifice of animals is to face the *Qiblah* at the time of the slaughtering (al-Zuḥaylī 1989: (4)2772)¹⁸.

A question may be posed on the direction Muslims were buried while they prayed towards IslamicJerusalem: were they buried facing it? For example, those who died in Makkah before the

Hijrah, like Khadijah the wife of the Prophet, in which direction were they buried? The researcher finds it strange that no one has ever discussed this matter. One such source is Baqī' al-Gharqad (Ṭāhā and Bakrī 2004) which mentions details of Baqī' al-Gharqad and the companions who were buried there, but does not include anything about the direction of the burying, before the change of the *Qiblah*. One such occasion is when the authors of the above source recorded details on the burial of a companion by the name of As'ad Ibn Zorārā, in the ninth month of Hijrah, before the change of the *Qiblah*: there was no mention of the direction of the burying (Ṭāhā and Bakrī 2004:53).

If one goes to the grave of the Prophet's wife Khadijah, one would expect her to be buried in the direction of Islamic Jerusalem as it was the *Qiblah* at that time. However, her grave currently has no markings to indicate the direction, as can be seen in the following figure.

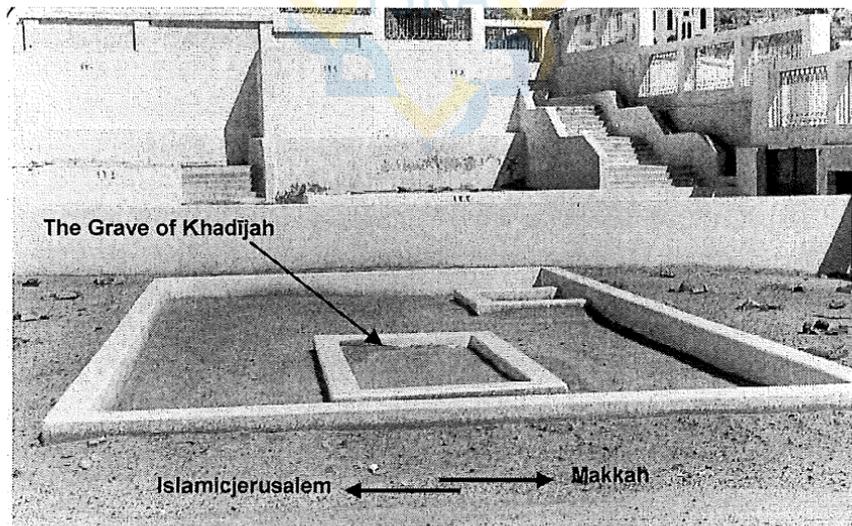


Figure 3: the Grave of Khadijah

Moreover, this grave is sited in the al-Mu'alla cemetery which is in the north of al-Ḥarām Mosque where the direction of Islamic Jerusalem is opposite to the direction of the Ka'bah as can be seen in figure 2. In addition, there is no record available within

the literature about this topic. Moreover, it would be very useful if one could know the direction in which the early Muslims were buried, such as those who died in Makkah, Abyssinia, and other places.

It is mentioned that al-Barā' Ibn Ma'rūr, whose story was mentioned earlier, left a will before he died in which he asked to be buried in the direction of the Ka'bah. He died one month before the arrival of the Prophet to Madīnah and he was buried as he asked and the Prophet prayed on him after he came (Ibn Ḥabbān 2000:106).

Conclusion:

This research shows that the *Qiblah* for Muslims is not only an orientation for their prayers but is also a well-established element in their belief and practice that has a significant role in forming their unity and identity.

It has been strongly concluded that Islamic Jerusalem was the first *Qiblah* for Muslims right from the early period of Islam. Based on the discussions conducted in this research and the study of different accounts and arguments the researcher has proved the inaccuracy of some accounts which state that Muslims started to face Islamic Jerusalem after the Migration to Madinah or after the Night Journey. He has also proved the inaccuracy of other accounts which indicate that the Prophet used to face Islamic Jerusalem with the Ka'bah in front of him all through the Makkan period.

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- 1 The word *Qiblah* "قبلة" in the Arabic language means a direction to be faced (Ibn Manẓūr (11)544-545). The *Qiblah* within Islamic literature is: "the direction in which Muslims are to offer their prayer" (Teaman 2006:519). In some books, like the Encyclopaedia of Islam (1986: (5)82), the word is written as 'Kibla' instead of '*Qiblah*' which is actually used in other books as well.
- 2 The Ka'bah is the *Qiblah* for those inside al-Ḥarām Mosque, the Mosque is the *Qiblah* of those who are in Makkah, and Makkah is the *Qiblah* of people elsewhere (al-Zuhaylī 1989: (1)757-758).
- 3 Madanī verses are those verses which were revealed within the ten years after the migration of the Prophet to Madīnah.
- 4 The abrogation of Sunnah by the Qur'an and the *Qiblah* being first obliged by Sunnah or by Qur'an are discussed by Raed Jabareen (2006).
- 5 The same applies to praying while in a car, train, plane or any other moving object.
- 6 It is worth mentioning that the Jews have almost the same principle. Mohammed al-Khateeb mentions the opinion of a Jewish scholar (Rabbi Joshua) who states that (al-Khateeb 1998:54-55): If [a man] was riding an ass [when the time of prayer is upon him] he should dismount [to say the Tefillah]. If he cannot dismount he should turn his face [toward Jerusalem] and if he cannot turn his face, he should direct his heart toward the Holy of Holies.
- 7 This concept in its essence resembles the concept of sacrificing animals in Islam. Muslims are asked on specific occasions to slaughter animals (as an offering) and to give it mostly to the poor, the main wisdom behind it is the obedience to God. This point is explicitly stated in the following verse (Qur'an 22:37): '*Its (animals') meat will not reach Allah, nor will its blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you.*'
- 8 This happened in 317 A.H. during the reign of the *Qarāmiṭa* (Bakdāsh 2004:30-32).
- 9 This argument clearly defends the misconception that Muslims worship the Black Stone. 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb clarified this clearly when he said: "No doubt, I know that you are a stone and can neither harm anyone nor benefit anyone. Had I not seen Allāh's Messenger (PBUH) kissing you I would not have kissed you." Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (1996:396)
- 10 A place in Makkah.
- 11 Aḥmad Shākir comments on this Ḥadīth by saying that its chain of narration is an authentic one (1995: (3)310).
- 12 Al-Ḥaḥīm is another name for the Ḥijr of the Ka'bah ('Abd al-Ghanī 2003:46). It is the inbuilt part of the Ka'bah.
- 13 This could be the reason why the Prophet was attacked at that place as the people would have been angry seeing someone praying by turning his back to the Ka'bah.
- 14 Shākir comments that it is an authentic Ḥadīth (1995: (17)384).
- 15 Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin http://lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/mecca_plan_1946.jpg
- 16 Moreover, Muslims were not just in Makkah, but many became Muslims and went to different places. Abu Dhar, for example, became Muslim and went back to Ghafar. He would not gather the *Qiblah* as he was north of Madīnah.
- 17 There are some other Mosques built in the direction of Islamic Jerusalem, such as Qubā' Mosque and Thū al-Qiblatayn (al-Qarḍāwī 1997:8).
- 18 There are other actions that some scholars argue it is recommended to do while facing the *Qiblah*, such as making ablution, reciting the Qur'an, sleeping and others (al-Zuhaylī 1989: (1)357).