

ISLAMICJERUSALEM AND THE FIRST QUR'ĀNIC PROPHECY: A STUDY OF THE FIRST VERSES IN CHAPTER 30 'AL-RŪM'

ABDALLAH MA'ROUF OMAR

Introduction

In the year 614 CE, the Persian army dramatically invaded the lands of the Byzantine Empire, marking a significant change in the world at that time to the extent that the Byzantine Empire had almost collapsed when most of its lands fell under Persian control. This event was mentioned in the Qur'ān in Chapter 30, given the Byzantine Arabic name '*al-Rūm*'. This not only marks a historical event, namely the defeat of the Byzantines, it also marks the first prophecy in the Qur'ān, arguing that the Byzantines would be victorious in a specific time. This study compares the Qur'ānic text and the historical events that took place at that time, and examines their importance in the history of IslamicJerusalem and its significance in the history of Islam.

The verses

One of the chief events discussed in chapter 30 of the Qur'ān is the defeat of the Byzantines by the Persians. According to many exegetes and scholars of the Qur'ānic sciences, this is mentioned in the first five verses of this chapter. The verses are:

(1) Alif Lām Mīm, (2) the Rūm have been defeated, (3) in Adnā al-Arḍ, and after their defeat they will gain victory, (4) within a few years. To God belongs the whole decision before and after, and on that day the believers will rejoice, (5) by the victory (granted by) God, He grants victory to whomever he wills, and he is the Almighty, the Merciful. (Qur'ān 30:1-5)

The author argues that mentioning the defeat of the Byzantines in the Qur'ān shows how important it was considered by Muslims in relation to the region where the clash took place. This is also important in defining the relationship between the Prophet Muhammad and Islamic Jerusalem, which afterwards resulted in the *Fatḥ*; because of this, these verses should be subject to analysis.

Place of revelation

Most Qur'ānic scholars such as al-Suyūfī (d. 911 AH / 1505 CE) (n.d: (pt.1) 10) and al-Zarqānī (d. 1367 AH / 1947 CE) (1998: (1) 168) agree that this is a Makkan chapter.² The only verse that is not in agreement is verse 17.³

The presence of the separate letters at the beginning shows clearly that it was revealed in Makkah. According to many Qur'ānic scholars such as al-Qaṭṭān (d. 1420 AH / 1999 CE) (2000: 63) and al-Zarqānī (1998: (1) 167), all the chapters that start with separate letters, such as *Alif Lām Mīm* أ ل م, are considered Makkan except Chapters 2 (*al-Baqarab*) and 3 (*Āl Imrān*).⁴ However, it should be mentioned that knowing whether a chapter is Makkan or Madanian helps in understanding the reasons and the time of revelation, since it is related to a historical event.

The Qirā'ah (recitation)⁵ and the reason for revelation

The majority of exegetes connected chapter 30 with the war between the Persians and the Byzantines and, in particular, the Persian conquest of al-Shām including Islamic Jerusalem. When dealing with the reasons for the revelation of this chapter, it may be noticed, however, that there is much disagreement among scholars in identifying the exact times of the event for which the verses were revealed. Although most scholars do relate these verses to the war between the Persians and the Byzantines, their greatest disagreement is on the time and the circumstances of the war.

One of the principal causes for this disagreement is in the *Qirā'ah* (way of recitation) of the verses, especially the words غلبت (gh-l-b-t) and سيغلبون (s-y-gh-l-b-ū-n). The pronunciation of these two can change according to the vowels, which can completely change the meaning. Most scholars recite these two words *Ghulibat* (defeated) and *Sayaghlībūn* (will gain victory); this is the main *Qirā'ah* of these two words as it has been narrated in all the ten major *Qirā'āt* sources. For example, Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 883 AH / 1478 CE) in his book *al-Nashr* (n.d: (2) 345) notes all the disagreements among the ten *Qirā'āt* in every single chapter of the Qur'ān, and when he explains chapter 30 he mentions that the disagreement among the ten *Qirā'āt* starts from verse 10. This means that all of them agree on the *Qirā'ah* of the first 9 verses as they are mentioned. In addition, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH / 922 CE) argues in his *Tafsīr* (1999: (10) 162) that:

In our opinion, the accurate *Qirā'ah*, other than which nothing is accepted, is 'Alif Lām Mīm, **Ghulibat al-Rūm**, this is due to the consensus of the most authentic *Qurra'* on it⁷.

The other *Qirā'ah* mentioned by some of the narrators is to recite the two words as *Ghalabat* (gained victory) and *Sayughlabūn* (will be defeated). It is clear that this way of reciting the two words gives an opposite meaning to the verses, since this shows that the Byzantines had gained victory over the Persians, and that they would be defeated in a few years.

According to Ibn 'Aṭīyyah (d. 546 AH / 1151 CE) (2001: (4) 327), a number of the companions of Prophet Muhammad such as 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40 AH / 661 CE), Ibn 'Umar (d. 73 AH / 692 CE), Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (d. 74 AH / 693 CE), and the *Tābi'ūn* (successors of the companions) such as Mu'āwiyah Ibn Qurrah (d. 113 AH / 731 CE), recited the two words *Ghalabat* and *Sayughlabūn*. Al-Alūsī (1994: (11) 21) adds to them as do Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68 AH / 688 CE) and al-Ḥasan (d. 110 AH / 728 CE). In addition, Al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH / 892 CE) states that Naṣr Ibn 'Alī (d. 250 AH / 864 CE) recited this verse as *Ghalabat* (see al-Tirmidhī 2000: (2) 815). The author doubts these accounts since the ten most authentic *Qirā'āt* are in general narrated from most of

these names in the opposite way, namely, as *Ghulibat* and *Sayaghlībūn*.

This disagreement reflects the issue of the relationship between this chapter and the events that took place between the Byzantines and the Persians in Islamic Jerusalem and the region around it; some of the sources mention that these verses were revealed after the Persians defeated the Byzantines in al-Shām. Al-Wāḥidī (d. 468 AH / 1076 CE) says in his book *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (n.d: 194-195):

The exegetes said: Chosroes sent an army to the Byzantines, and he commanded a person named Shahrīran, he attacked the Byzantines along with the Persian army, gained victory over them, destroyed their cities and cut their olives.... This news arrived to the Prophet and his companions in Makkah, which was hard on them, since the Prophet disliked that the illiterate [meaning that they did not have any revealed scripture] Zoroastrians would gain victory over the Byzantines who were among the People of the Scripture. The disbelievers in Makkah became happy and gloated over the companions of the Prophet's sadness saying: "You are people of a scripture and the Christians are the same, and we are illiterate, our illiterate brothers in Persia gained victory over your brothers. Therefore, if you fight us we will gain victory over you". So God revealed "*Alif Lām Mīm... The verses*"... Narrated by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī: The Byzantines gained victory over the Persians in the day of Badr, so the believers rejoiced in the victory of the Byzantines over the Persians⁸.

This statement by al-Wāḥidī summarises the narrations that are noted by many of the exegetes; also, al-Ṭabarī mentions many narrations of the story behind the revelation of these verses (see al-Ṭabarī 1999: (10) 162-167). A comprehensive study of the exegetical literature of this chapter has been done by Nadia El Cheikh (1998: 358-363). The author argues that, after reviewing the various literatures on the reasons for the revelation of this chapter, it can be summarised by two main opinions:

The first opinion that of al-Wāḥidī in his *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, discussed above. This opinion also occurs in *Lubāb al-Nuqūl* by al-Suyūṭī (n.d: 338-339), and in many other *Tafsīr* sources such as al-Biqā'ī

(d. 885 AH / 1480 CE) (1995: (5) 583), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH / 1373 CE) (1994: (3) 560-561), al-Rāzī (d. 604 AH / 1208 CE) (1990: (13) 84), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH / 1201 CE) (1987: (6) 186-187), al-Alūsī (1994: (11) 20), al-Shawkānī (d. 1250 AH / 1835 CE) (2000: 1356-1357), al-Suyūṭī (2000: (5) 289-290), and al-Marāghī (d. 1964 CE) (1974: (7) 27)⁹. Al-Suyūṭī also mentions the second opinion, narrating it from al-Tirmidhī. This (2000: (2) 815) states:

Narrated by Abū Sa'īd: On the Day of Badr¹⁰, the Byzantines gained victory over the Persians, and the believers rejoiced in this. The verses: "*Alif Lām Mīm, Ghalabat al-Rūm* [the Byzantines gained victory]" were revealed, to the verse: "and on that day the believers will rejoice." He [al-Tirmidhī] said: the believers rejoiced in the victory of the Byzantines over the Persians. He [al-Tirmidhī] said: This is a sound *ḥadīth*, but it is strange from this side, this is how Naṣr Ibn 'Alī recited: "*Ghalabat al-Rūm*"¹¹.

This opinion is mentioned by al-Zuḥaylī (2001: (3) 1983).¹² The author argues that al-Zuḥaylī's opinion is very controversial since he agrees with those scholars who state that the term used in the chapter is *Gulibat*. Yet he states the same story of Badr (which depends on the *Ghalabat* recitation) as being the reason for revealing this chapter. The author argues that al-Zuḥaylī's opinion can only be understood if he means that the statement of the Qur'ān came about on that occasion in order to let the Muslims know that the Byzantines would be defeated in the future. The Qur'ān, on this occasion, expresses the defeat in the past as a confirmation that it will happen; in other words, as if it has already happened, and on that day the Muslims should really rejoice. The author argues, on the one hand, that the construction of al-Zuḥaylī's argument is not acceptable. It is inaccurate to claim that the Muslims heard the news of the Byzantines' victory over the Persians, when the Qur'ān, at the same time, says that the Byzantines were defeated. On the other hand, even if the author's understanding of al-Zuḥaylī's argument was right, the argument still cannot be accepted, since it takes the meaning too far away from the actual text, which is clear: it speaks about an event that historically happened in reality. It speaks about the event, its place, and its time. Therefore, changing the sequence of the Qur'ānic text without clear evidence is unacceptable.

However, the author argues that the opinion that depends on the story of the Battle of Badr is problematic; it actually contradicts the first issue that all the scholars of *Tafsīr* and the Qur'ānic Sciences are agreed upon, namely, that this chapter is Makkan. Their only disagreement was on one verse of this chapter, namely verse 17, not these verses, as the author clarified earlier.

Its being a Makkan chapter excludes the possibility of considering the story that al-Tirmidhī mentions as being the reason for the revelation of the chapter. At the same time, al-Tirmidhī also notes other narrations stating that this chapter was revealed in relation to the victory of the Byzantines over the Persians without mentioning the Battle of Badr (see al-Tirmidhī, 2000 (2) 815-817). This shows that to consider the story of Badr as the reason for revelation is not acceptable. It reflects on the recitation of the verse, that is, to recite the verse as *Ghulibat* not as *Ghalabat*. The author finds it very strange that al-Tirmidhī also mentions the same narration of Badr, i.e. the narration of *Ghalabat*, in another chapter of his *Sunan*, namely, *Kitāb al-Qirā'āt* (The Book of Ways of Recitations of the Qur'ān). This recitation is not acceptable in any of the ten most authentic *Qurrā'*, as was mentioned earlier.

The place of the victory of the Persians (*Adnā al-Ard*)

The Qur'ān identifies the place where the Persians defeated the Byzantines as being *Adnā al-Ard*, the term *al-Ard* meaning 'the land'. However, there are different meanings of the term *Adnā*, depending on the understanding of its root in the Arabic language. Ibn Manzūr (d. 711 AH / 1312 CE) mentions two different roots for the same term, the first one is *Dana'a* (meaning 'lower') (1999: (4) 415-416), and the second is *Danā* (meaning 'closer') (1999: (4) 419-420).

The author notes that Ibn Manzūr used a term from the Qur'ān identical to the one in Chapter 30 as an example of the first meaning; this example was in verse 61 of chapter 2 of the Qur'ān (Are you exchanging the better for the lower?).¹³ The term used in this verse is *Adnā* meaning the lower. Interestingly, Ibn Manzūr

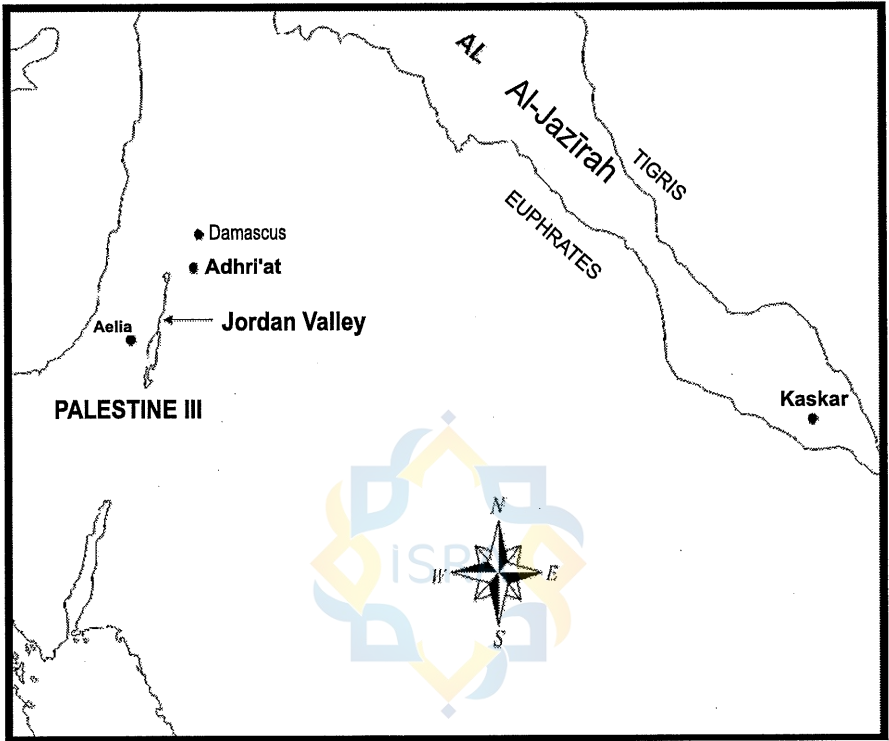
used the same verse as an example of the other meaning also; he says (1999 (4) 415):

Al-Zajjāj said: the meaning of the verse (Are you exchanging the better for the lower) without a *hamzah*¹⁴ is closer, and the meaning of 'closer' is 'less value'.

This shows that the term *Adnā* in the verse can be used for both meanings, i.e. 'closer' and 'lower', but it must be noted that Ibn Manẓūr quotes al-Zajjāj, in that the term 'closer' in the above-mentioned verse means 'less value'. However, the author argues that the terminology 'less value' is closer to the term 'lower' than the term 'closer'. It seems that Ibn Manẓūr's own opinion was different from al-Zajjāj's, i.e. that the term *Adnā* here means 'lower'. It should be noted that Ibn Manẓūr did not state the opinion of 'closer' in this example as being his own opinion, but as a narration from another scholar.

The majority of the exegetes, from the two schools of *Tafsīr*, state that the meaning of *Adnā al-Arḍ* in this verse is 'The closest of the land' (see for example: al-Ṭabarī (1999: (10) 167), al-Biqā'ī (1995: (5) 583) and Ibn al-Jawzī (1987: (6) 288)). However, they disagree on deciding which land is closer to what. Some scholars such as al-Shawkānī (2000: 1357) and al-Qurṭubī (1998: (14) 6) do not specify a place but mention different opinions of which there are mainly three: Adhri'āt¹⁵, al-Jazīrah¹⁶, Kaskar¹⁷ (this name is mentioned only by al-Qurṭubī), and Jordan and Palestine (see Map 1).

Al-Ṭabarī (1999: (10) 162-167) notes different opinions but all generalise with al-Shām or sometimes *Aṭraf* (the limits) of al-Shām. Ibn 'Aṭīyah (2001: (4) 327) notes two opinions: Jordan and al-Jazīrah. Others such as Ibn al-Jawzī (1987: (6) 288) and al-Qāsimī (2003: (7) 588) decide that the place is *Aṭraf* al-Shām, and both Ibn Kathīr (1994: (3) 562) and al-Alūsī (1994: (11) 19) state that it is Adhri'āt, whereas al-Zuhaylī (2001: (3) 1983) specifies al-Jazīrah between Iraq and al-Shām as being the place. Al-Marāghī (1964: (7) 28) specifies clearly that the place was between Jordan and Palestine.



Map 1: Locations of the different opinions of scholars on *Adnā al-Ard*

An Egyptian geologist, Zaghlūl al-Najjār, has done some very interesting research on the issue depending on the word *Adnā*. He argues that the terminology *Adnā al-Ard* in this verse means ‘the lowest part of the Earth’ which, in his opinion, specifies the place as the Jordan valley between today’s Jordan and Palestine, depending on the fact that the Jordan valley is the lowest part of the Earth¹⁸.

It is noted that the Chronicon Paschale (1989: 156) and Theophanes (1997: 430-432) do not specifically mention such a battle between the Byzantines and the Persians in that area in particular. They only note the Persian conquest of the whole region at that time without mentioning specific battles. This makes the site of any battle that took place in that region hard to decide. It is even harder to prove that there was a specific battle in this land, or even that IslamicJerusalem was the region meant in

Chapter 30 of the Qur'ān, since there are no historical accounts that specify IslamicJerusalem in particular.

However, as has been mentioned historically, the Persians actually did attack Edessa and all the areas around it first; then they started moving south (see Theophanes 1997: 418-421). This all began in the year 604 CE i.e. before the Prophethood of Muhammad. The war between the Persians and the Byzantines was still taking place during the beginning of Muhammad's Prophethood and throughout the Makkan period of his Prophethood. At the same time, it is noted that chapter 30 of the Qur'ān was the first revelation to mention this war. This indicates that the revelation of these verses, commenting on the defeat of the Byzantines at this stage in particular, means that this event, i.e. the defeat of the Byzantines in Adnā al-Arḍ, was considered important. This is since the Qur'ān, from a Muslim perspective, does not comment on small events that had no spectacular effect on Muslims' lives.

The author argues that this understanding of the sequence of the events shows that the reason for the revelation of these verses was not merely to note the defeat of the Byzantines, but was also because of the importance of this defeat for the Muslims. This effect cannot be fully understood unless it is related to IslamicJerusalem as being the most important part of that region (al-Shām) to the Muslims.

Therefore, it seems that the Persian victory was considered very important due to the significance of the region where it occurred. The spiritual importance of IslamicJerusalem to the Christians led to mentioning this event in Christian sources. In addition, its importance to the Muslims led to substantial accounts of it in Muslim sources.

This raises a question about the real place where the events that the Qur'ān mentions took place. It is to be noted that Theophanes (1997: 430) mentions that Damascus was invaded by the Persians in 613 CE. This occurred before the invasion of IslamicJerusalem, which took place, according to both Theophanes (1997:431) and

the Chronicon Paschale (1989: 156) in 614 CE.¹⁹ However, there is no record in the Qur'ān about the occupation of Damascus. The majority of the exegetes specify regions and towns located south of Damascus, except for al-Jazīrah towards the north east of Damascus. By analysing the Persian movement from north to south, one can conclude that the battle mentioned by the majority of the Muslim scholars took place actually south of Damascus, i.e. after the year 613 CE.

The Qur'ān was revealed to comment on one specific battle that led to a dramatic change in the region. It is to be noted that the available Christian sources mention the Persian conquest of Islamic Jerusalem in particular as being of great importance. Although al-Jazīrah was considered an outstanding strategic region, yet the Qur'ānic interest in these events shows that the battle occurred in a place with a significant religious status. This can be noted also in the Christian sources that express high interest in the Persian invasion of Jerusalem more than in any other city or region. Thus, the author argues that this shows that al-Jazīrah was most likely not the place of interest mentioned in the Qur'ān. Also it would have been already conquered well before the revelation of these verses. Moreover, it is unlikely that the Qur'ān would have commented on a battle in al-Jazīrah region and left out a location that has much more religious importance, i.e. Islamic Jerusalem. It should be noted that the invasion of Islamic Jerusalem marked the most crucial point in the history of the Persian-Byzantine war according to the Christian sources.

The Persians occupied Egypt the following year (615 CE) according to Theophanes (1997: 432), which shows that the movement of the Persian army at that time was towards the south west. This leaves one possibility for the area of the battle mentioned in the Qur'ān: the area between Adhri'āt, the Jordan River and Palestine, i.e. towards the south west of al-Shām.

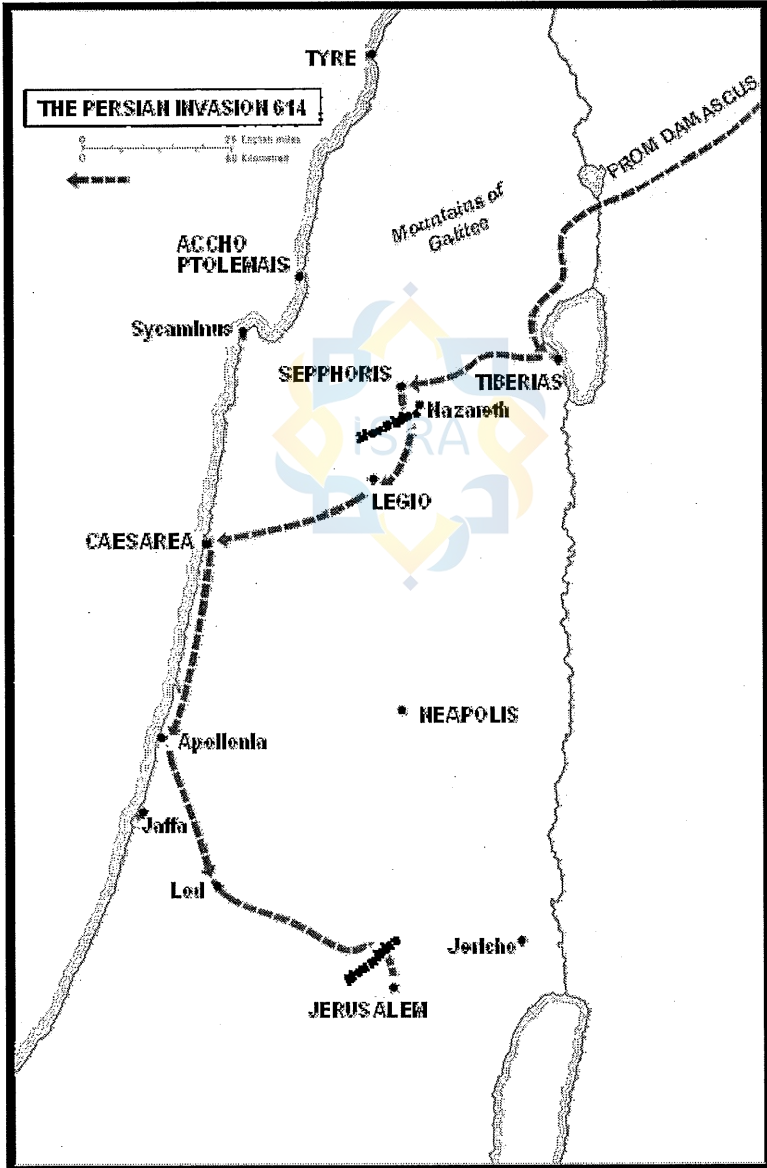
It should also be mentioned that there is no clear material evidence that the region of Adhri'āt, Jordan and Palestine was the place of the event that the Qur'ān mentions. Nevertheless, the only

element in giving preponderance to one of the opinions may be acceptable depending on the historical events that followed, i.e. the Persian occupation of Egypt, in addition to the status of IslamicJerusalem in Islam and its effect of giving importance to any events that took place within it to the extent of revealing verses from the Qur'ān to comment on these. Strategos mentions the route that the Persians took from al-Shām into IslamicJerusalem region; he says:

They seized all the land of Syria; they put to flight the Greek (Byzantine) detachments and forces, and sundry of them they captured, and thereafter began to enter with a swarming army and to capture every city and village. And they reached Palestine and its borders, and they arrived at Caesarea, which is the metropolis. But there they begged for a truce, and bowed their necks in submission. After that the enemy advanced to Sarapeon, and captured it, as well as all the seaboard cities together with their hamlets... Next they reached Judea; and came to a large and famous city, a Christian city, which is Jerusalem. (Conybear 1910: 503)

The movement of the army of the Persians was towards the south west. Strategos mentions that they entered Palestine after seizing Syria (al-Shām). It seems that by Palestine Strategos meant the region called at that time 'Palestine I' (Palestine Prima), which had almost the same boundaries as the Aelia region, as Khalid El-Awaisi clarifies (2007: 113). Although the region of 'Palestine II' (Palestine Secunda) (see Avi-Yonah 2002: 125) was on the route between Damascus and Palestine Prima through Adhri'āt, Strategos does not mean Palestine Secunda when he speaks about Palestine. He mentions Caesarea as being the first city and the metropolis of Palestine. Caesarea is located in Palestine Prima close to its north western borders with Palestine Secunda. This shows that he is speaking mainly about Palestine Prima, i.e. the region of Aelia. The author argues that, according to the description of Strategos, the Persians took over Damascus; they then marched on the known route to the south and passed through Adhri'āt, and then they marched towards the south west along the al-Yarmūk River down to the northern part of the Jordan valley. Arriving at Caesarea they were unable to take it. Therefore, they moved south and took the whole seaboard with

Arsūf. After that, they headed directly towards the city of Jerusalem and reached it from the north west or the west as the following map (2) clarifies:



Map (2): The route of the Persian invasion towards the walled city of Jerusalem in 614 CE. Source: based on Avi-Yonah (1976: 264)

According to this analysis, the defeat of the Byzantines occurred in either Adhri'āt or the northern part of the Jordan valley; the Persians were then free to move towards the seaboard and thence to the city of Jerusalem. However, the author argues that this cannot be accepted, since Strategos mentions that the Persians were faced with strong resistance in Caesarea, to the extent that they "begged for a truce, and bowed their necks in submission" (Conybear 1910: 503). In other words, the Byzantines at Caesarea defeated the Persians. Yet the Qur'ānic expression shows that the Persians were at the top of their victory after defeating the Byzantines in the battle that the Qur'ān mentions. This means that the opinion that the area mentioned in the Qur'ān as *Adnā al-Ard* was Adhri'āt is not accurate.

As the author mentioned earlier, according to al-Najjār, the Qur'ānic expression *Adnā al-Ard* means 'the lowest part of earth', which indicates that the defeat of the Byzantines occurred near the Dead Sea, in or close to the city of Jericho, which is located to the north east of the city of Jerusalem. However, according to the description of Strategos, the Persians did not attack Jericho first or even come from the east, they arrived from the western side of Jerusalem. Moreover, it seems that Jericho was not of interest to the Persians at all. Strategos mentions that when the Persians arrived at the city of Jerusalem and before besieging it, they negotiated with the Patriarch Zachariah of Jerusalem to reach a treaty; yet when leaders of the city received news of the negotiations they refused these and prevented the Patriarch from surrendering the city. Therefore, the Patriarch sent a man named Abba Modestus, who was the Superior of the monastery of St. Theodosius, to Jericho, ordering him to lead the Byzantine troops there and attack the Persians. This shows that Jericho at that time was not occupied by the Persians and that Byzantine troops were present (see Conybear 1910: 504-506). The question remains: why does the Qur'ān mention the terminology *Adnā al-Ard* in this context?

The author argues that the only one to mention a specific incident that could be considered the final engagement between the

Persians and the Byzantines, before the Persians took full control of the Islamic Jerusalem region, is Strategos. He mentions that Abba Modestus went to Jericho and led the Byzantine troops while the Patriarch in Jerusalem informed the Persians of the refusal of the treaty offer. Therefore, the Persians sent an army towards Jericho and attacked the Byzantines. The Byzantine army fled when they saw the great army of the Persians. The leader, Abba Modestus, was surrounded by the Persian army but was able to escape to Jericho, and the Persians then attacked the city of Jerusalem (Conybear 1910: 506).²⁰

This event marked the final collapse of Byzantine power in Islamic Jerusalem. It led to the Persians taking total control over Islamic Jerusalem and the city of Jerusalem. Strategos describes the impact of this event on the people of the city of Jerusalem; he says:

But the inhabitants of the city [Jerusalem] began to grieve when they learned of the flight of the Greeks [Byzantines], and there was found from no quarter any aid for them. Then the Persians perceived that God had forsaken the Christians, and that they had no helper. (Conybear 1910: 506)

Depending on this, the author concludes that the event noted in the Qur'ān, i.e. the defeat of the Byzantines, would be the above-mentioned event that took place between Jericho and Jerusalem. Thus, this area is most likely the one mentioned in the Qur'ān as *Adnā al-Ard*. For further clarification, the author refers again to the Qur'anic expression *Adnā* which, as already mentioned, means both 'the closest' and 'the lowest'.

As has been noted, when the accounts of the exegetes were studied, most of them settled on only one meaning for *Adnā*, namely, 'closest', and depended on this in claiming that Adhri'āt is the place described in the Qur'ān as *Adnā al-Ard* based on the claim that it was the closest to the Arab Peninsula within al-Shām. The author argues that this may not be true, since most of the region beyond Adhri'āt, towards the south, is considered as part of al-Shām including al-Balqā' (see al-Ḥamawī: (3) 354). Thus, he

argues that Adhri'āt may not be considered the closest place in al-Shām to the Arab Peninsula.

Also, this opinion ignores the fact that the word *Adnā* has another strong meaning, namely 'lowest' which, if applied, does not comply with Adhri'āt but can be applied to the region near Jericho. This leads to the conclusion that the region mentioned in the Qur'ān as the place where the Persians defeated the Byzantines was, most likely, somewhere between Jericho and Jerusalem, and most likely a low place within the Jordan Valley. This is because it is the closest to IslamicJerusalem, which was invaded on or shortly after that event, and can be considered the closest region within al-Shām to the Arab Peninsula; it is also considered the lowest region on Earth, which makes it ideal to apply the Qur'ānic expression of *Adnā al-Arḍ* to both its meanings. In addition, it is the place that witnessed the final Byzantine defeat by the Persians before they took full control over the whole region of IslamicJerusalem, as the account of Strategos, the only eyewitness account that survives today, mentions.

The dates of the events mentioned in Chapter 30 of the Qur'ān

The issue of the time between the defeat and the victory of the Byzantines has been a very important one in *Tafsīr* sources, since Chapter 30 has always been, according to the Muslims, considered one of the miracles of the Qur'ān in being a prophecy and in uncovering future events.

The author notes that most of the exegetes who speak about this chapter deal with it as a comprehensive example of a Qur'ānic prophecy that took place in reality during the life-time of the Prophet Muhammad and was seen by all the people in the Arab Peninsula²¹. The core of the study of this example is the Qur'ānic expression *في بضع سنين* “*Fī Bid'i Sinīn*” (in a few years); the key word in this expression is the Arabic word *Bid'*, explained below.

According to al-Fayrūz'ābādī (d. 817 AH / 1414 CE) (1991: (3) 10), the *Bid'* is an expression that means the amount between multipliers of the number ten, i.e. any amount from 1 up to less than 10, even 9.99, can be called *Bid'*. Ibn Manẓūr (1999: (1) 426-427) agrees with al-Fayrūz'ābādī and adds many accounts by other scholars who also agree with this opinion, except for one weak opinion which is mentioned without naming the scholar who said it; here it is stated that the *Bid'* is between Three and Nine. The author argues that this opinion is weak as can be understood from the way Ibn Manẓūr mentions it. He mentions it in a way that weakens the argument where he says: "it was said that the *Bid'* is between Three and Nine" (Ibn Manẓūr 1999: (1) 426). This shows this to be a single weak opinion; the *ahādīth* of al-Tirmidhī also strengthen al-Fayrūz'ābādī's opinion.²² Thus, the author argues that the Qur'ān points that the Byzantines would defeat the Persians within a period of less than ten years.

According to Theophanes (1997: 431) and the Chronicon Paschale (1989: 156), the Walled City of Jerusalem was conquered by the Persians in the year 614 CE, the invasion of the region taking place at the same time. The Chronicon Paschale notes that this invasion occurred "about the month of June" (Chronicon Paschale 1989: 156). Mango and Scott justify the Chronicon Paschale's opinion as being the time when the news reached Constantinople (Theophanes 1997: 431). However, Strategos mentions in detail the duration of the Persian siege of the city and the date when the city fell; he says:

The beginning of the struggle of the Persians with the Christians of Jerusalem was on the 15th April, in the second indiction, in the fourth year of the Emperor Heraclius. They spent twenty days in the struggle. And they shot from their ballistas with such violence, that on the twenty-first day they broke down the city wall. (Conybear 1910: 506)

This means that the fall of the city took place on 6th May 614 CE. This is equivalent to 18th *Rajab*²³ 9 BH (the 5th year after the Prophethood of Muhammad). The last engagement that Strategos mentions, which marked the final collapse of the Byzantine forces

in IslamicJerusalem, took place just before the siege of the walled city of Jerusalem, i.e. around 15th April 614 (27th *Jumādā al-Tāniyah* 9 BH) . It is clear that this was in a very early stage of the second stage of Islam, i.e. when Islam became public. The declaration of Muhammad's Prophethood publicly, after three years of secret work in Makkah, took place in the 3rd year, as can be found in many *sīrah* sources, such as Ibn Hishām (d. 218 AH / 833 CE) (2005: (pt.1) 184). The author argues that this gives authenticity to the story of the reason for the revelation of Chapter 30, especially concerning the bet between Abū Bakr and the Polytheists in Makkah. It would not be logical to argue that this story occurred at the beginning of the Prophethood of Muhammad since his call to the people took place secretly at that time. Moreover, the author maintains that this reveals an early interest in this region by the Qur'ān, and thus by the Prophet Muhammad; this argument will follow.

The author argues that, in order to confirm that IslamicJerusalem is the region meant by the verses of Chapter 30 of the Qur'ān, one should check the date of the other events in the verses, i.e. the Byzantine victory over the Persians. The Qur'ān notes that this victory would occur in less than 10 years, as was discussed earlier while studying the meaning of the expression *Bid'*.

IslamicJerusalem was regained by the Byzantines between 626 and 627 CE (Theophanes 1997: 457) (Chronicon Paschale 1989: 168-169).²⁴ This means that it took place 12 or 13 years after the Persian conquest of the region. Does this mean that the Qur'ān is mistaken, or that the regaining of IslamicJerusalem by the Byzantines is not what the Qur'ān means by defeating the Persians?

Almost all the exegetes writing on Chapter 30 of the Qur'ān describe it as a prophecy fulfilled within the time specified by the Qur'ān. This can also be found in the books of *sīrah* and *ḥadīth*, as was mentioned earlier. This means that Muslim scholars generally had a specific understanding of the Prophecy in these verses,

which led them to believe that it would be fulfilled within a period of less than 10 years.

Claiming that the victory of the Byzantines, which is mentioned in these verses, means the restoring of Islamic Jerusalem is not accurate. The Byzantines regained control over Islamic Jerusalem in a longer period than the *Bid' Sinin* specified in the Qur'an. Thus, there must be either another meaning for this victory, or it could be meant to be in a place other than Islamic Jerusalem.

When studying the history of the period between 610 and 627 CE, one finds there were three major stages in the history of the war between the Byzantines and the Persians at that time. First, the fall of Islamic Jerusalem to the Persians in 614 CE, which marked one of the biggest losses of the Byzantine Empire due to the spiritual status of Islamic Jerusalem for the Christians.²⁵ Second, the first battle that took place between the Persians and the Byzantines in which the Byzantines gained the victory; in other words, the first victory of the Byzantines over the Persians. Third, the restoration of Islamic Jerusalem by the Byzantines in 626 CE, which remarked their final victory.

Norman Baynes (d. 1961 CE) (1904: 701) did a thorough research on the first campaign of Heraclius against the Persians, and compared the different historical accounts on this issue such as those of Theophanes, the *Chronicon Paschale*, and other Greek sources. In his research, he concludes that the first victory of Heraclius over the Persians was in a battle that took place on 7th February 623 CE²⁶ (28th *Rajab* 1 AH). This was the first major victory of the Byzantines over the Persians, and was preceded by many arrangements and steps taken by Heraclius throughout the year 622 CE²⁷. However, the author argues that it is more likely that this battle took place in 624 CE, not 623 CE; Baynes built his argument on the fact that historical sources mention that this battle took place 15 days after there was a moon eclipse in the area where the battle took place. This battle took place in the region of Armenia as Theophanes clarifies (1997: 436-437). According to historical sources that Baynes studied, the lunar eclipse took place

on 15th January 623 CE. However, according to NASA, there was no lunar eclipse in that region between 28th July 622 CE and 17th July 623 CE.²⁸ The closest two lunar eclipses that took place in that region in January were on 1st February 622 CE, and on 11th January 624 CE.

The author argues that the more likely date for the moon eclipse studied by Baynes occurred on 11th January 624 CE (12th *Rajab* 2 AH).²⁹ This means that the battle would have been more likely to have taken place on 26th January 624 CE (27th *Rajab* 2 AH). However, with regard to the place of this battle, i.e. the region of Armenia, which is very far from the Arab Peninsula, and is located towards the north east of al-Shām, some might claim that this may not be considered the first major victory since it happened far away from Arab lands and especially from IslamicJerusalem. To be able to discover whether this event is the one meant in the Qur'ān, the Muslim historical narrations at the time of this victory will be discussed.

Numerous Muslim scholars mention important accounts concerning the time of the victory of the Byzantines; many of the exegetes, such as al-Qurṭubī (1998: (14) 5) and al-Ṭabarī (1999: (10)163), mention two main ones: one states that the victory of the Byzantines took place at the same time as the Battle of Badr in the year 2 AH (624 CE). The other states that this victory took place after the *al-Hudaybiyah* Truce between the Prophet and the Polytheists of Makkah in year 6 AH (628 CE). Al-Alūsī of the *al-Ra'y* School notes the same accounts, but it seems that he prefers the Badr's account, whereas al-Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī, also of *al-Ra'y* school, do not show any interest in this issue.

Al-Tirmidhī notes two narrations of a *ḥadīth* that specifies the day of Badr, i.e. 17th *Ramaḍān* 2 AH / 15th March 624 CE, clearly as being when the Byzantines defeated the Persians (2000: (2) 815-816). These two are the only narrations that most scholars depend on in favouring Badr. There are no accounts or *ahādīth* mentioning al-Hudaybiyah.

When speaking about this incident, Al-Tirmidhī cites just three narrations, only one of which is considered authentic according to al-Albānī (2002: (3) 299-300). Yet this one does not mention Badr in the *ḥadīth*, not even the period between the defeat and the victory of the Byzantines.³⁰ There are two other narrations that al-Albānī considers *Ḥasan* (sound),³¹ one of which specifies the day of Badr as being the time of the victory of the Byzantine. Al-Albānī (2002: (3) 299) argues that the status of this narration can be considered *Ṣaḥīḥ Liḡhayriḥ* (can be considered authentic when linked to other more authentic narrations). Yet the author argues that this narration is actually not *Ḥasan* but is weak.³² The other narration mentions that the victory of the Byzantines took place in the seventh year after the defeat of the Byzantines, i.e. in the year 2 BH (620-621 CE). This narration is considered *Ḥasan*, according to al-Tirmidhī himself and to al-Albānī (2002: (3) 300-301). The author argues that there is a problem in considering the victory as having happened in the 7th year, i.e. in the year 621 CE (2 BH) as there are no records of any battles or campaigns that the Byzantines launched against the Persians. Considering this narration as *Ḥasan* means that there is a higher risk of mistakes in its text. As it is not supported by historical events, then it could be argued that the number 7 in this narration is most likely mistaken by one or more of its narrators.

With regard to the other opinion, namely al-Ḥudaybiyah, the author argues that the ones who support it actually depend on the story of the message from Prophet Muhammad to Heraclius, sent to him after al-Ḥudaybiyah while Heraclius was in Aelia (see Ibn Kathīr 1994: (3) 565). However, the author argues that it seems that this opinion either confuses the victory of the Byzantines with the visit of Heraclius to Islamic Jerusalem after the Byzantine re-conquest of the region, or that the scholars who mention this opinion depended on the Byzantines' re-conquest of the region disregarding the Persian conquest of the region years before.

The author argues that, if the period mentioned in the Qur'ān, less than 10 years, were to be counted backwards from the time of the visit of Heraclius to Islamic Jerusalem, it would be found that the

defeat of the Byzantines should have taken place, according to this counting, at most in the year 5 BH, i.e. 617-618 CE. Yet this is unacceptable since IslamicJerusalem and the whole region of al-Shām had already been under Persian rule from 614.

One might claim that the defeat of the Byzantines mentioned in the Qur'ān may have taken place in a different location other than IslamicJerusalem (as this reverse counting suggests). Yet this is also unacceptable, since both Theophanes and the Chronicon Paschale mention the events of these two years, i.e. 617-618 CE, in which no major battles were being fought between the Byzantines and the Persians around either IslamicJerusalem, al-Shām or any other region then. The Byzantines were very busy at that time in fighting another nation, namely the 'Avars'³³ (see Theophanes 1997: 433-434).

This indicates that the victory of the Byzantines, mentioned in the Qur'ān, was not the re-conquest of IslamicJerusalem, which took place at the time of the al-Hudaybiyah treaty in 626 CE. It was another major victory that may have marked the beginning of the victories of the Byzantines over the Persians until being crowned by the re-conquest of IslamicJerusalem.

This takes the author back to the event that took place most likely in 624 CE, which marked the first Byzantine victory over the Persians. This battle, as the author mentioned earlier, took place most likely around 26th January 624 CE (27th Rajab 2 AH). The final battle that marked the collapse of the Byzantines near Jericho occurred, as the author clarified earlier, on or before 15th April 614 CE (27th Jamādā al-Thāniyah 9 BH). The period between the two incidents in the solar calendar is 9 years and almost 9 months, while in the lunar calendar it is 10 years and almost 1 month. It should be noted that the Qur'ān uses the term *sinīn* (years) not *a'wām* (years) in these verses. Both terminologies mean years, but it is noted that the Qur'ān sometimes uses the term *sanab* (year) and sometimes the term *'ām* (year). The author argues that, after a thorough study of the use of the terminologies *sanab* and *'ām* in the Qur'ān, it can be concluded that the Qur'ān uses the terminology

sanah to refer to the solar year, or to the calendar used by the non-Arabs, and uses the terminology *'am* to refer to the Arab lunar calendar.³⁴ This means that the Qur'ān most likely refers to solar years in calculating the time between the defeat and the victory of the Byzantines. This actually meets the Qur'ānic description of the period between the defeat and the victory of the Byzantines as being *Bid' sinīn*, i.e. less than 10 solar years. This could meet the time of the Battle of Badr, which occurred about 50 days after the battle between the Persians and the Byzantines.³⁵

Moreover, it should be noted that the Qur'ān describes the defeat of the Byzantines as *Ghulibat* not *Huzimat*, since the latter means full and final defeat, but the Qur'ānic expression means only a remarkable defeat that could be followed by a victory or more defeats. The Qur'ān describes the victory of the Byzantines as *Sayaghlībīn* not *Sayantaşirūn*; the latter is the word that marks the final victory, whereas the former means a remarkable but not a final victory.³⁶ Therefore, it seems that this chapter of the Qur'ān set the start of the significant event, i.e. the defeat of the Byzantines, the end, i.e. the victory of the Byzantines, and the impact and significance of this event for the Prophet Muhammad in the future. The Qur'ān is very detailed in describing the issue of the Byzantines' loss and their restoration of Islamic Jerusalem, which raises the question, why?

The significance of Chapter 30

All the details about Byzantine rule over Islamic Jerusalem, and its loss and restoration, show that either an early interest in Islamic Jerusalem was taken by the Prophet Muhammad or they were a direction from God for the Prophet.

The author argues that the study of this interest of the Prophet Muhammad in that region, at this early stage, should not be separated from the effect of the Qur'ān on Muhammad's life and actions. These verses that comment on the events that took place in Islamic Jerusalem, during this early stage of Islam, show that the Qur'ān drew the attention of the Prophet Muhammad to this

region. The reason for this is the issue that should be studied and clarified.

The author argues that the interest of the Qur'ān in mentioning the times of the conquests of Islamic Jerusalem, by the Persians, and then the victory of the Byzantines, shows that there might be a relation between these events and the Muslim *Fath* of Islamic Jerusalem. As far as dates and durations are concerned, it will be found that the Persians conquered Islamic Jerusalem in 614 CE, and the Byzantines gained their first victory over them more than nine years later in 624 CE. They then re-captured the walled city in 626 or 627 CE as was discussed earlier. This means that the time between the loss of the city of Jerusalem and the Byzantine re-conquest of it was about 13 years.

On the other hand, according to al-Tel (2003: 283), the Muslim *Fath* of the region started from 13 AH (634 CE), and they took over the walled city in 16 AH (637 CE), which means that this occurred about 13 to 14 years after the first victory of the Byzantines over the Persians. This shows another dimension to the interpretation of the Qur'ānic expression in chapter 30: “and on that day the believers will rejoice”; it gave them hope to be there in that region and gain victory over the Byzantines within almost the same period that it took the Byzantines to recover the region from the Persians. This is what is reflected in varying statements by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, such as the statement that Ibn Kathīr (1994: (3) 566) quotes:

Al-'Alā' Ibn al-Zubayr al-Kilābī narrated that his father said: I saw the Persians' victory over the Byzantines. Then I saw the Byzantines' victory over the Persians. Then I saw the Muslims' victory over the Persians and the Byzantines. All of that was within fifteen years.³⁷

This shows to what extent the event mentioned in chapter 30 of the Qur'ān was considered important and significant. The hope, which the expression “the believers will rejoice” gave to the Muslims, was very important, especially as they were suffering at the beginning of the public call to Islam.

Conclusion

The Qur'ān, on one hand, clearly states the time of a very important event with a strong relationship with Islamic Jerusalem, namely, the defeat of the Byzantines, which resulted in the loss of Islamic Jerusalem to the Persians. On the other hand, the Qur'ān gives a brief description of the place of this battle as being in *Adnā al-Ard*, between Jericho and the walled city of Jerusalem. Specifying the land that would witness this event indicated the importance of the region.

Being one of the earliest chapters revealed to Muhammad, and one of the first to be revealed after the end of the secret stage of his call to Islam, Chapter 30 can be considered very important evidence concerning the early interest of the Prophet Muhammad in that region. It was a challenge to his Prophethood at a time when the odds were not in his favour. It marks a new era that was about to start, marking a huge change that is symbolised in Islamic Jerusalem. This change took place in reality when the two main powers at that time fell for the new power that was raised in Arabia. This started from Islamic Jerusalem, from which the Muslims spread their power and put an end to the Persian and Byzantine Empires. The first Qur'ānic text that hinted of this change was related to Islamic Jerusalem.

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- 1 (1) ألم، (2) غلبت الروم، (3) في أدنى الأرض وهم من بعد غلبهم سيغلبون، (4) في بضع سنين، الله الأمر من قبل ومن بعد ويومئذ يفرح المؤمنون (5) بنصر الله، ينصر من يشاء وهو العزيز الرحيم.

Since the way of reciting these verses is very important as will follow, the author finds it useful to mention the whole transliteration of the verses as they are recited in Arabic:

(1) *Alif Lām Mīm*, (2) *Ghulibat al-Rūm*, (3) *Fī Adnā al-Arḍ, wa hum min ba'd ghalabihim sayaghlībūn*, (4) *Fī Bid' sinin, Lillāh al-Amr min qabl wa min ba'd, wa yawma'dīn bin yafrāh al-Mu'minin*, (5) *binasrillāh, Yanṣur man yashā' wa huwa al-'Azīz al-Rahīm*.

- 2 The Makkan chapters are the chapters of the Qur'ān that were revealed before the Prophet's migration to Madīnah, even if they were revealed outside Makkah. The chapters that were revealed after the migration are the Madanian chapters, even if they were revealed in Makkah; this is what al-Suyūṭī decides in his book al-Itqān (see al-Suyūṭī (n.d): (1) 9).
- 3 Al-Alūsī (d. 1270 AH / 1853 CE) narrated, in his book *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* (1994: (11) 18), that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 AH / 728 CE) mentions that only verse 17 of this chapter is Madanian. Yet al-Alūsī argues that this opinion of al-Ḥasan contradicts that of the majority of scholars, so it cannot be accepted. The author, however, argues that al-Ḥasan's opinion does not make any difference, since the core of this study concentrates only on the first five verses of this chapter.
- 4 Richard Bell (1939: (2) 392) claims that this chapter dates back to a later period, i.e. in Madīnah. He claims that the Qur'ānic expression "To God belongs the whole decision" is not used in the early stages of the Qur'ān, and it was thus used in Madīnah. However, the author argues that Bell depends in his claim on using the *Qirā'ah* (recitation) of "*Ghalabat al-Rūm*" (the Byzantines gained victory). He depends on this *Qirā'ah* to claim that this chapter was actually revealed later when the Byzantines gained victory over the Persians. However, this *Qirā'ah* in itself is inaccurate as the author will explain later. Therefore, this opinion cannot be accepted.
- 5 *Qirā'ah* is the way of reading and reciting the Qur'ān; there are ten standard ways of recitation.
- 6 The ten major *Qirā'āt* are the accepted ten ways of reciting the Qur'ān; all were narrated by ten main *Qurrā'* (scholars of the recitation of the Qur'ān) through authentic narrations from Prophet Muhammad. The ten *Qurrā'* are: 'Āṣim, Ibn 'Amr, al-Kisā'ī, Ḥamzah, Ibn 'Āmir, Ibn Kathīr, Nāfi', Abū Ja'far al-Madanī, Ya'qūb al-Ḥaḍramī, and Khalaf Ibn Hishām (see al-Qaṭṭān 2000: 173). The first seven of the above-mentioned *Qurrā'* are the most authentic, but many scholars mention the other three as accepted *Qirā'āt* since their narrations are authentic.
- 7 والصواب من القراءة في ذلك عندنا الذي لا يجوز غيره: (ألم * غلبت الروم) بضم الغين، لإجماع الحجة من القراءة عليه. قال المفسرون: بعث كسرى جيشاً إلى الروم واستعمل عليهم رجلاً يسمى شهريزان فسار إلى الروم بأهل فارس وظهر عليهم وحرب مدائنهم وقطع زيتونهم... وبلغ ذلك النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وأصحابه بمكة فشق ذلك عليهم وكان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يكره أن يظهر الأميون من أهل الجوس على أهل الكعب من الروم وفرح كفار مكة وشتموا فلقوا أصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقالوا: إنكم أهل كتاب والنصارى أهل كتاب ونحن أميون، وقد ظهر إخواننا من أهل فارس على إخوانكم من الروم، وإنكم إن قاتلتونا لنظهر عليكم. فأنزل الله تعالى (ألم غلبت الروم في أدنى الأرض) إلى آخر الآيات... عن أبي سعيد الخدري قال: لما كان يوم بدر ظهرت الروم على فارس فأعجب المؤمنون بظهور الروم على فارس.
- 8 These scholars are of the two major schools of *Tafsīr*, namely the *Ma'thūr* and the *Ra'y*.

- 10 Meaning the day of the Battle of Badr between the Muslims and the Polytheists of Makkah. This battle took place in Badr, between Makkah and Madīnah, in the year 2 AH (624 CE), and it is considered the first big clash between the Muslims and the people of Makkah (see al-'Alī 2002: 218).
- 11 عن أبي سعيد قال لما كان يوم بدر ظهرت الروم على فارس فأعجب ذلك المؤمنين فزلت (ألم غلبت الروم) إلى قوله: (يفرح المؤمنون بنصر الله)، قال: ففرح المؤمنون بظهور الروم على فارس، قال: هذا حديث حسن غريب من هذا الوجه، كذا قرأ In fact, this narration is very problematic, al-Albānī (d. 1999 CE) (2002: (3) 299) considers as *Ṣaḥīḥ bimā ba'dab* (authentic by linking it to those after it). The narration coming after this one in al-Tirmidhī's book does not mention the battle of Badr at all, and it is considered authentic in itself as al-Albānī argues (2002: (3) 299-300). The meaning of the statement of al-Albānī "*Ṣaḥīḥ bimā ba'dab*" means that the first narration is *Ḥasan* (sound), but it can be considered authentic because it is similar to some extent to the authentic narration that follows it. The author argues that this is not true. It seems that al-Albānī built up his argument after he misread the text of the first narration. He read it as "...and the believers rejoiced in this, the verses: "*Alif Lam Mim, Ghulibat al-Rūm* (the Byzantines were defeated)". This is how this narration is mentioned in al-Albānī's above-mentioned book. There is a very big difference between *Ghulibat* and *Ghalabat*. The original narration in al-Tirmidhī's book says *Ghalabat*. The author consulted different copies of these sources and found the same result. It seems that al-Albānī misread this narration, and thus depended only on analysing the *Sanad* (chain of narrators), which does not reach authentic status, and did not analyse the *Matn* (text) of the narration. Had he analysed this text, he would have probably found it to be problematic since it is totally different from the authentic narration that follows. It is problematic also since it depends on a rejected *Qirā'ah* (recitation) of the word *غلبت*, as the author mentioned earlier, when studying the recitation of chapter *al-Rūm*. In addition, it contradicts the consensus of the scholars of the sciences of the Qur'ān, in that the first verses of chapter *al-Rūm* are considered Makkan, and were not re-revealed in Madīnah.
- 12 El-Cheikh (1998: 361) adds al-Zamakhsharī (d. 528 AH / 1134 CE) to the scholars who state that the recitation of this verse is *Ghalabat*. However, the author disagrees with el-Cheikh, since al-Zamakhsharī mentions the two opinions of the recitation *without* deciding which is accepted (see al-Zamakhsharī 1995: (3) 451-452).
- 13 (Atastabdilūn al-Ladhī huwa *Adnā* biladhī huwa *Kbayr*) (2: 61)
- 14 Means that it is *أدن* *Adnā* not *أدنا* *Adna'*, where (') refers to the *Hamzab* (ء) in Arabic.
- 15 Adhrī'āt is noted by al-Ḥamawī (d. 626 AH / 1229 CE) to be a town on the boundaries of al-Shām near Amman and al-Balqā' (which is in Jordan today) (1990: (1) 158). It is now well known as Dar'ā in Syria near the Jordanian-Syrian borders, as is mentioned in the Encyclopaedia of Islam (see Elisséeff 1986: (1) 194).
- 16 Al-Jazīrah was the common name for the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the north east of al-Shām (see al-Ḥamawī 1990: (2) 156).
- 17 Kaskar is a province in Southern Iraq, its capital was Wāṣiṭ between al-Kūfah and al-Baṣrah (see al-Ḥamawī 1990: (4) 523).

- 18 See 'Dr. Zaghlūl al-Najjār Official Website', date consulted: 26-6-2006,
http://www.elnaggarzr.com/Test_fre/Index.asp?Prv=2&Data=535&id=1
- 19 Strategos did not mention the year in his account of the Persian invasion of
 Islamic Jerusalem. He mentions the date and month. This could be due to his
 interest in registering the information that he thought was more important, i.e. the
 date and month, and how the invasion took place, assuming that the year of this
 event would have been known by the reader because of its importance.
- 20 Strategos does not mention the word "battle" when speaking about this event; yet
 he describes the scene of the field and mentions that Abba Modestus was trapped
 on a rock and besieged by the Persian soldiers. Yet he was able to survive this hard
 situation in a miraculous way and arrived at Jericho safely. This shows that there
 was an actual engagement between the Byzantine and the Persian forces. However,
 it seems that the weak spirit of the Byzantine army played a major role in their
 defeat in this battle. In addition, it should be noted that chapter 30 of the Qur'an
 does not clearly mention the term 'battle' also, which means that the defeat of the
 Byzantines, mentioned in the Qur'an, was closer to a flee than to an actual battle
 that needed an effort from the Persians.
- 21 The author will not name all the exegetes who mention this issue since most give
 almost the same account regarding the matter. There is a *ḥadīth* narration in al-
 Tirmidhī's *Sunan* where he mentions a whole story in which Abū Bakr has a bet
 with some persons in Makkah saying that the Byzantines will defeat the Persians
 within three (and in some narrations five) years, but when the Prophet knows
 about the bet, he asks Abū Bakr to make the bet higher and extend the duration to
 less than ten years. Abū Bakr wins the bet after the Byzantines defeat the Persians
 within the time limit that the Qur'an mentions (see al-Tirmidhī 2000: (2) 815-816).
 This narration is authentic according to al-Albānī (2000 A: 232) and can be found
 in almost all the *Tafsīr* sources that deal with this chapter, especially the *Ma'thūr*
 ones such as Ibn Kathīr (1994: (3) 561-562) and al-Ṭabarī (1999: (10) 163-166), and
 also in al-Qurṭubī (1998: (14) 3-5) of the *Ra'y* school. Yet some of the narrators
 mention that the duration was nine years, nonetheless; the author argues that the
 narration that mentions "less than ten years" is more authentic as al-Albānī stated
 earlier.
- 22 The opinion that Ibn Manẓūr mentions, on the *Bid'* being from 3 to 9, could have
 depended on a *ḥadīth* spoken of by al-Tirmidhī (2000: (2) 815) in which the Prophet
 Muhammad said to Abū Bakr after he bet one of the Polytheists on the Byzantines'
 victory over the Persians within a few years: "You should have been more careful
 Abū Bakr, since the *Bid'* is between 3 and up to 9" (ألا احتطت يا أبا بكر، فإن البضع ما بين (الثلاث إلى التسع
 The author argues that this narration is weak, as al-Albānī mentions
 (2000: (7) 363-366). However, another *ḥadīth* is mentioned also by al-Tirmidhī
 (2000: (2) 815-816) where Abū Bakr bets a Polytheist and makes the bet's duration
 5 years; when the five years have passed and the Byzantines have not gained a
 victory over the Persians Abū Bakr loses the bet and mentions this to the Prophet.
 The Prophet said: "Why did not you make the bet to under ten years" and one of
 the narrators of the *ḥadīth*, namely Sa'īd, comments: "The *Bid'* is what is under ten"
 ففعل أجل خمس سنين فلم يظهروا فذكروا ذلك للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال: ألا جعلته إلى دون قال: أراه العشر. قال)
 (سعيد). This narration is stronger than the previous one, and al-
 Albānī argues that it is authentic (2002: (3) 299-300). This makes the opinion of al-
 Fayrūz'ābādī more acceptable than the one mentioned by Ibn Manẓūr.

- ²³ *Rajab* is the 7th month in the lunar calendar.
- ²⁴ According to Wilkinson (1990: 102), the city of Jerusalem was restored by the Byzantines in 628 CE. Strategos does not specify the time between the Persian invasion and the Byzantines regaining the region. He notes some events that took place around the 15th year after the Persian occupation of the city of Jerusalem, and mentions that Emperor Heraclius entered the city in the 17th year after the Persian invasion of the city of Jerusalem. This means that the start of the movement towards re-taking the city of Jerusalem was in 629 CE, and Heraclius entered the city again in 631 CE after a peace treaty with the Persians. Theophanes also mentions a peace treaty and specifies the year 626 or 627 (it is unclear in his account) as being the time when the Persians in "Edessa, Palestine, Jerusalem, and other Roman towns" were allowed "to cross the Roman territory without harm", when they left for their own lands. Also, the *Chronicon Paschale* speaks about this peace treaty without mentioning Jerusalem clearly, but the *Chronicon Paschale* notes that this was in 626 CE. The author argues that Strategos' opinion on this issue might not be as accurate as his account of the Persian invasion of Islamic Jerusalem. This is because he was in the city of Jerusalem at the time of the Persian invasion, but was not present in the region as an eyewitness during the time of the peace treaty between the Persians and the Byzantines. The *Chronicon Paschale* was written in Constantinople, i.e. at the heart of the Byzantine capital where Heraclius was in the process of forming the peace treaty. Also, Theophanes depends in his opinions and accounts on various narrations and accounts, and this shows that more than one source agrees that the peace treaty took place during 626 or 627 CE. The author, therefore, will take the *Chronicon Paschale* and Theophanes' opinions into consideration rather than that of Strategos in this case. The author argues that Wilkinson may have confused the Byzantine conquest of the region with the visit of the Emperor Heraclius to the city of Jerusalem that took place in 628 CE (see Theophanes 1997: 458) (see *Chronicon Paschale* 1989: 182-188). This marked the crowning of the Byzantine victory.
- ²⁵ By studying the general biography and acts of Heraclius as has been mentioned by many historians, particularly the *Chronicon Paschale* in Constantinople, the author argues that it seems that Heraclius was religious and a practising Christian. In fact, the *Chronicon Paschale* notes this clearly when it describes Heraclius as "Our most pious emperor" (1989: 182). Also, Hitti (1951: 409) notes that Heraclius was "hailed deliverer of Christendom and cross to Jerusalem" after he regained power over the region, rebuilt the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and restored the Holy Cross to Jerusalem. This is also the general picture of Heraclius in the Muslim sources as El-Cheikh (1999: 7) argues.
- ²⁶ Baynes does not mention this date in particular, but he says that, according to the historical sources, the actual battle in which Heraclius gained his first ever major victory over the Persians took place 15 days after a moon eclipse on the 23rd January 623 CE. The author agrees with this date, although Theophanes mentions this battle as between 621 and 622 CE, not in 623 CE, and he does not specify the date of the battle. Yet this is not correct since it contradicts many other sources such as Whitby mentions in Appendix 4 of *Chronicon Paschale* (1989: 203-205), Whitby discusses this issue thoroughly also and finds that Theophanes made some mistakes in this period in particular and may have confused the dates.
- ²⁷ It is noted that the *Chronicon Paschale* does not fully describe these events as detailed as does Theophanes. The author argues that this might be since the writers

of the Chronicon Paschale were located in Constantinople and were more interested in the news of the royal family; they also might not have had a full picture of the events since the book ended at the year 628 CE. This means that the writers of this book were writing about recent events that took place far away from them, which may have affected their description. However, Theophanes wrote his account more than two hundred years after these events and depended on other sources, which justifies his detailed description and analysis of those events.

28 The dates, times, and types of the lunar eclipses in the 7th century are listed on NASA website. See 'NASA Javascript Lunar Eclipse Explorer for Asia', date consulted: 13-3-2008, <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/JLEX/JLEX-AS.html>

29 The author argues that it is unlikely that the eclipse mentioned in relation with the battle between the Byzantines and the Persians took place in February 622 CE. This is since it would have occurred before the Prophet Muhammad's migration to Madīnah, which contradicts the Muslim sources that show the huge reputation that this battle had in the Arab Peninsula. None of these sources say that this took place while the Prophet was in Makkah, but in Madīnah.

30 At the end of this narration, al-Tirmidhī adds a personal comment from one of the narrators, namely Sufyān, who says: "I heard that they [the Byzantines] defeated them [the Persians] on the day of Badr". The author argues that this is not a part of the *ḥadīth* but a personal comment from a narrator, who, as he does not specify a source, gives it little credibility.

31 Less authentic than the *Ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic).

32 The author mentioned and discussed this narration earlier in a footnote.

33 The Avars were a people of undetermined origin and language who, playing an important role in Eastern Europe (6th–9th century), built an empire in the area between the Adriatic and the Baltic Sea and between the Elbe and Dnieper Rivers (6th–8th century). (McHenry 1993: (1) 734)

34 The author studied all the verses in which the Qur'ān mentions the two terminologies (see 'Abd al-Bāqī 1996: 451 and 607). It is interesting to note that the Qur'ān mentions the terms *'Ām*, *'Āman*, *'Āmibim* and *'Āmayn* only nine times, the last time among them was in chapter 31. Whereas it mentions the terms *Sanab* سنة and *Sinīn* سنين nineteen times, the last time in chapter 30.

The author argues that, when analysing the Qur'ānic texts that mention the terms *'Ām* and *Sanab* and their derivatives, it can be noted that whenever the Qur'ān speaks of the year that it related directly to the Arabs or the Arab Peninsula, such as the time of pilgrimage, it uses the term *'Ām*. The Qur'ān uses the term *sanab* and its derivatives to refer to the non-Arab years, except in three cases: the story of Uzair (Qur'ān 2: 259) where the Qur'ān uses the term *'Ām* although that person was of the Children of Israel and not Arab, and it uses both terms *'Ām* and *Sanab* in one verse in the story of the Prophet Noah, who was Arab, when mentioning Noah's age:

And We sent Noah to his people and he stayed among them one thousand *Sanab* less fifty *'Ām* (29:14)

ولقد أرسلنا نوحاً إلى قومه فلبث فيهم ألف سنة إلا خمسين عاماً

Also, the Qur'ān uses a very interesting expression to refer to the sleeping time of *Ahl al-Kahf* (the young people who slept in a cave) in chapter 18:

And they stayed in their cave for Three Hundred *Sinin* and added by Nine (18:25)

ولبثوا في كهفهم ثلاثمائة سنين وازدادوا تسعاً

It is noted that every 300 solar years equal 309 lunar years. This clarifies why the Qur'an expresses the time as being *sinin* not *a'wām* as it was known among the Arabs at that time. The Qur'an never uses the term *sanab* or its derivatives to refer to the Arab years, but only to the solar year.

35 The news would have taken around that period to reach Arabia. From Arabia to al-Shām it was about one month's journey, to Armenia it would be more.

36 This difference between the terms *Ghalaba* غَلَبَ and *Intaşara* انتصر, and the terms *Ghuliba* غَلِبَ and *Huḡima* هُوِمَ can be understood when looking at the meanings of these terms in Arabic language dictionaries such as *Lisān al-'Arab* (see Ibn Manẓūr 1999: (10) 97-98, (14)160-161, and (15) 90-92)

37 العلاء بن الزبير الكلبي يحدث عن أبيه قال: رأيت غلبة فارس الروم، ثم رأيت غلبة الروم فارس، ثم رأيت غلبة المسلمين فارس. والروم، كل ذلك في خمس عشرة سنة. The fifteen years mentioned in this text are most likely an estimation, since al-Zubayr did not specify times. He only mentions that these events happened within this period without specifying exact dates. This means that he meant to estimate the period in order to show how close the events were to each other, not to specify the exact period.

