

# THE NAMES OF ISLAMIC JERUSALEM IN THE PROPHETIC PERIOD

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## Introduction

Locations and places are initially given names by their first inhabitants. However, these names are sometimes changed entirely to completely new ones, at other times they are partially changed, and sometimes they are reduced to specific sites or expanded to cover larger areas. This has been the case for many places throughout time, and now many of these terms and names no longer represent the ancient locations. For example, take the area of al-Sham two millennia ago; Syria has been very much reduced in size, Jordan is an area completely different from the area it formerly represented, and Palestine has been given new borders that have taken areas from one side and added areas to another. These changes cause much confusion and many contradictions, especially with the passing of centuries, and with new generations coming up. The very same confusions are also encountered with cities and provinces, especially when cities have been completely ruined and rebuilt, borders changed and names altered. This has certainly been the case with one of the most ancient cities in the world: Jerusalem. During the last two millennia it has been destroyed and rebuilt many times, and its borders changed. Moreover, its name has been changed repeatedly, for instance, Aelia, Bayt al-Maqdis, *al-Quds*, and others.

Indeed, this has been the case from the dawn of time; the city and its vicinity have attracted many nations who have dealt with it differently and renamed it. It is said that its most ancient names were 'Ur *Shalim* and *Yabūs* (Smith nd, v.1:251, 266; al-Ḥilū 1999:88,563; al-Ḥousainī 1969: 30-35; Shurrāb 1994: 33,34), followed by many more. By the eve of the first Muslim take-over (*Fath*), and five hundred years prior to that, the city was known as Aelia Capitolina and the surrounding area as Aelia (Ibn Khaldūn 1999: v.1 198; Wilkinson 1990: 88; Smith nd, v.1:271; Le Strange 1970:96). Aelia continued to be the name used for some time under Muslim rule. However, Arabs before and after Islam were also using other names and, with the rise of Islam, new terminologies that the city was a central part of were introduced in the Qur'an. These included Land of *Barakab* and the Holy Land, along with other terminologies narrated in Prophet Muhammad's tradition, which Muslims throughout their history have used, as well as other names introduced in later centuries.

This paper looks at the usages of these names and the introduction of new ones from before the start of Islam till the last days of Prophet Muhammad. This period includes the Prophetic period both in Makkah and Madinah. Moreover, before discussing the names used during this period, the pre-Islamic period in Arabia is briefly examined, to give a better understanding of how the Arabs would have referred to this area before and during the early years of Islam.

A central historical issue that has to be understood is how people in a particular time, place and culture use a certain terminology, as these sometimes change. In Arabic poetry, for instance, does not give a precise account of the usage of the name in a particular period. The reason for this is because Arabic poetry follows a number of rules such as rhyming and having a constant letter at the end of every verse throughout the poem. There are many cases where this is so, and a poet might use an unfamiliar and unused name because this fits the requirement of the poetry. Therefore, in most cases poetry would only be used to support an argument rather than present one. Historical accounts which have

been written years later have a similar problem, as sometimes the name used maybe the wording of the author rather than that used in the period discussed. Moreover, authentic Ḥadīth traditions are much more reliable as they very likely use precise wordings as they are passed down through meticulous chains of narrations. Thus this paper mainly concentrates on authentic narrations and sometimes on sound narrations. This paper would thus perform textual analysis of these accounts to see which names were used and might they have referred to.

Tracing the usage and development of these names, and understanding what exactly they refer to, gives a better understanding of when and why they have changed, as well as understanding the simultaneous usage of a name in different connotations. Since some accounts actually refer to more than the city and its mosque; many actually refer to the region of which the mosque and the city are only a part. What makes this period especially important is the religious connotation and the direct link to the Prophet of Islam in this very early period.

The primary sources for this paper are the Arabic literature from those early periods, and literature that discussed these periods. These include Qur'anic verses, *Aḥādīth*, poetry both *Jahily* (pre-Muslim) and Muslim, and historical accounts, amongst others.

Before commencing on the discussion, a linguistic foreword is needed regarding the terms and names to be investigated. *Aelia*: some try to prove that this means the house of the Lord or claim it is the name of one of the sons of Sam, son of Noah, (al-Ḥamawī nd, v.1:348-9; Maḥmūd 1979:21,24), however most of these arguments are baseless as it was a Latin name given by Hadrian in 135 CE (al-Ḥilū 1999:91). As for the name *Bayt al-Maqdis*; this can be read as *Bayt al-Maqdis* or *Bayt al-Muqaddas*. It consists of two words, the first *Bayt* literally means a house. It is used in the Qur'an on its own to refer to the Ka'bah with the definite article *al*, *al-Bayt* (Qur'an 2:125,127,158; 106:3; etc). It is also in the form *Baytī* (My [God's] House) (Qur'an 2:125; 22:26; etc). Not only this, it was also used in reference to houses (Qur'an 2:189; 3:149; 15:23

etc), palaces (Qur'an 12:23; 17:93, etc), mosques (Qur'an 24:36), webs (Qur'an 29:41) and others. As for *al-Maqdis* or *al-Muqaddas*, both come from the root q-d-s which carries many meanings: holy, pure and blessed. However, the first is a noun and the second is an adjective. Thus literally it means "the Holy House" or "the House of Holiness", especially when the definite article *al-* is used before the name. The name Bayt al-Maqdis or *Bayt al-Muqaddas* does not necessarily have this literal meaning, as it is common in that region to use *Bayt* for names, for example *Bayt Lahm* (Bethlehem) is not translated literally into "house of meat"<sup>1</sup>. This type of composite name has been popular from the time of the Canaanites in the region.

### The Pre-Muslim Period in Arabia

The city just before the advent of Islam in Arabia was under Byzantine control and its name was Aelia Capitolina. This was the case for nearly five hundred years from 135CE. The city had however a province or a region, comprising numerous cities, towns and villages, known as Aelia (Wilkinson 1990: 88; Jones 1987: 96), with its centre or capital the walled city "Aelia Capitolina". The Arabs before Islam had a fair knowledge of the area in general and of the city in particular, due to their trade links with the whole area of al-Sham. This was so for the Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula. Many Arab tribes however were living in the area of al-Sham, in addition to their kingdom there – tribes such as the Gassanides. These would have had even a better knowledge of the area than those who came for business and then returned to their homes in Arabia. Add to this the fact that many of them were Christian and were known as the Christianised Arabs, and they therefore would have had more links with Aelia for religious purposes, unlike the pagans of Arabia who would have been there only for business. The question arises: did Arabs during that period and in earlier periods use the Byzantine names or did they have an Arabised version of the Byzantine names or even their own Arabic names? Unfortunately, there is very little literature on

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<sup>1</sup> In Aramaic *Lahm* refers to food and not necessarily meat as is in Arabic (al-Ḥilū 1999:138-9)

what Arabs called it before Islam, because there is hardly any written material from that period. Nonetheless, Arabs of that period excelled in another form which *has* reached us, namely, Arabic poetry, which has survived throughout the ages by memorisation. In the early Muslim eras the poems were recorded. Though there are many poems, only a few verses refer to the city and mention different names for it.

One of these names was mentioned in a verse by one of the most famous Arab poets ever, namely, 'Imr'u al-Qays (d. 545 CE [80 BH]). In his famous poem he says ('Imr'u al-Qays 1998:300):

كما شَبَّرَقَ الْوِلْدَانُ نُوبَ الْمَقْدِسِ

They caught up with him  
taking his legs and flesh

فَادْرَكْتَهُ يَاخُذْنَ بِالسَّاقِ وَالنَّسَا

Similar to how the children snatched  
the garment of the *Maqdisi*

Here he refers firstly to how the dogs caught up with the wild bull, snatching and tearing his legs and flesh; he then contrasts this scenario with the children snatching and tearing the garment of a Christian priest from Bayt al-Maqdis for blessing,<sup>2</sup> as the children welcome him. The verse's last word *maqdisi* (Jerusalemite) clearly refers to the word it comes from, Bayt al-Maqdis. Though this title *Maqdisi* cannot be used for names such as Aelia or *UrSalim*, it can be used for other terms such as *al-Quds* and *al-Quds al-Sharif*. However, these names were introduced many generations later, and the term *Maqdisi* is not derived from *al-Quds*<sup>3</sup> but rather from *al-Maqdis*. This only points to the name Bayt al-Maqdis which indicates that it had been in existence for Arabs well before Islam.

It is also argued that *Maqdisi* here refers to a Christian priest from Bayt al-Maqdis (Ibid). Therefore, if this understanding is accepted, then the priest was coming from the city and not to the site of al-Aqsa Mosque which can also be referred to as Bayt al-Maqdis. The holiest site for Christians within the city is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and not the site of al-Aqsa Mosque. Moreover,

<sup>2</sup> Al-Hamawī (nd, v.5:166); al-Ṣaghani (nd:164); Al-Zamakhshari (nd:369); Ibn Manẓūr (1999, v.6:169); Maḥmūd (1979: 110).

<sup>3</sup> The word *Qudsi* is derived from *al-Quds*.

some may argue that Bayt al-Maqdis was equivalent to the region of Aelia<sup>4</sup>, and that this priest was actually coming from another important site to Christianity within Aelia such as Bethlehem. This could be possible, but there is no evidence to support such an argument at this stage and during this time. Therefore it will be taken to mean the city and its close vicinity, and not the region or the Mosque, as it has no relevance here.

Another poet whose poetry lives on is Al-A'shā, who died at the start of the Prophetic mission in Makkah. In this line of poetry he says (Al-A'shā 2003:200):

عَمَانَ فِحْمَصَ فَأُورِي شِلْمَ	وَقَدْ طُفْتُ لِلْمَالِ آفَاقَهُ
And I have gone round the horizons of money	Amman then Homs then UriShalim

In this verse of poetry he refers to three cities in that region, Amman, Homs and UriShalim. He names the city of Jerusalem, *UriShalim*, one of its ancient names. It is said that this name was first used by the Canaanites, Ur to mean city and Shalim is the God of the Canaanites. It is first documented in the Egyptian Execration Texts in the nineteenth century BC, and continued to be used in the texts of 'Amarnah in the fourteenth century BC, then in the Old Testament (al-Housaini 1969: 30-34). This name was not contemporary with Al-A'shā, especially after the name Aelia was enforced five hundred years earlier; rather it had been superseded by other names. However, it seems that al-A'shā used it because of the restrictions on the words being used within a certain rhyme. Also this word had to finish with a letter "*Meem*" for the *Qafiyah* (ending of every verse), which neither Bayt al-Maqdis nor Aelia ended with. Still, the use of this word gives us an indication that Arabs were aware of the other names for the city, even ancient ones. This is what allowed a poet such as al-A'shā to pick and choose to suit his style.

<sup>4</sup> The region of Aelia, however, may have fluctuated and has no religious connotations.

Not much literature has been passed down from the pre-Muslim period concerning the names of Aelia, and only two verses of poetry have survived from that period. And, as is shown in the next section, early Islamic traditions imply that pagan Arabs in Makkah before and during the rise of Islam knew the city of Aelia well. This is clearly evident after the Prophet had told them about his Night Journey to al-Aqsa Mosque, and they asked him for precise details of what he had seen. The name used in their discussion was mainly Bayt al-Maqdis as well as Aelia; the next section goes into this in more detail.

Thus it seems that, in the pre-Muslim period, the Arabs predominantly used the Arabic terminology Bayt al-Maqdis, as well as its Latin name Aelia. They were also aware of other names the city had over previous generations.

The question that arises here, though, is how long have they used these names for? UriSalim or UriShalim was used by the Canaanites before the nineteenth century BC (al-Hilū 1999:88); Aelia would not have been used before 135 CE, when Hadrian introduced it, and therefore it would have been used after 135CE. But as regards the name Bayt al-Maqdis, it is not clear when this was first introduced. What is clear is that Arabs had been using it well before Islam. It could have been introduced by ancient Arabs as their own name for this place. Or it could have been introduced by the first builder of the mosque in the city, the name thus having a divine origin. Similar to the Ka'bah, it was called *al-Bayt* (the House) (Qur'an 2:158, 3:96-97, 22:26, 106:3) and, to distinguish them, al-Aqsa was named *al-Bayt al-Muqadas* (the Holy House). Or it might have no root in Arabic and have its origin in other Semitic languages such as Aramaic and Hebrew (al-Hilū 1999:442). But these are mere speculations and none can be confirmed for certain.

## Prophetic Period

Two main terms are used during the prophetic period, Aelia and Bayt al-Maqdis. However there are verses in the Qur'an that introduce other names, these relate either to the regions of the Land of *Barakah* and the Holy Land or to specific sites. This

section pauses on milestone in the life of the Prophet that are related to Bayt al-Maqdis. The main focus is on the terminologies used in the *Sunnah* or Ḥadīth of the Prophet for this area. There are many books of Ḥadīth – authentic, sound, weak or fabricated. Those in the first two categories will be discussed in this paper, the others due to their inaccuracy will be neglected. As for the Qur'anic verses, the main aim is to note the time they introduced the new terminologies within the life of the Prophet. However, this is a period of twenty-three years, and sometimes the *Aḥādīth* were said during or directly after the event or sometimes a while later. They are in chronological order as far as can be ascertained.

The Prophet used the term Bayt al-Maqdis in different connotations. There were times when he mentioned the word Bayt al-Maqdis to refer to al-Aqsa Mosque; then again he sometimes used the word to refer to the city and sometimes beyond to cover the region. However at times it is very difficult to decide on one or the other, as the narrations do not give a precise indication and the term could sometimes mean both or carry all three meanings.

### First connection

The first connection of the Prophet with the area of Aelia is said to be soon after his Prophethood. The second revelation to the Prophet was a command for him and the believers to pray (Qur'an 73), and to pray there has to be a direction in which the worshipper prays. It is known that the first *Qiblah* (direction of prayer) was Bayt al-Maqdis, though there is nothing to show when exactly the Prophet and his companions started to face it in their prayers. Ibn Kathīr states that Ibn 'Abbās and the majority of scholars agree that it was Bayt al-Maqdis from the start with the *Ka'bah* in front, and when the Prophet moved to Madinah he could not pray towards both so was commanded to pray towards Bayt al-Maqdis (Ibn Kathīr 1997 v.1:178). There is a Ḥadīth to this effect in *Musnad Aḥmad* which suggests that Bayt al-Maqdis was the *Qiblah* right from the start. The Ḥadīth states: "the Prophet used to pray when he was in Makkah, to Bayt al-Maqdis and the *Ka'bah* was in between and after he migrated to Madinah he continued to



do so for sixteen months..." (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.3:310). In this Ḥadīth the name mentioned is **Bayt al-Maqdis**, but it is not the wording of the Prophet. It is a report by Ibn 'Abbās on that incident. It could thus be the name used in Makkah or when Ibn 'Abbās said this narration in Madinah. It is stated here as there is a possibility that it was the term used in Makkah.

The use of the word Bayt al-Maqdis in this case applies to the direction of the Rock of Bayt al-Maqdis, not the Rock itself. As is the case with the *Ka'bah*, when Muslims are praying they must face the *Ḥaram* (the sacred district around Makkah), and when they are in Makkah they must face *al-Ḥarām* Mosque, and when they are in *al-Ḥarām* Mosque, they must face the *Ka'bah*. It is narrated that the Prophet said: "The *Bayt* (Ka'bah) is the direction of the people in the Mosque, the Mosque is the direction of those in the *Ḥaram*, and the *Ḥaram* is the direction of those east and west around the globe from my nation" (Ibn Kathīr 1997, v.1:180; al-Bayhaqī nd, v.2:12; al-Azraqī 2002, v.2:21). Thus when it is said that the Prophet was praying towards Bayt al-Maqdis, it means that he was praying towards the area of Bayt al-Maqdis or its walled city.<sup>5</sup> This is further supported by the fact some *Aḥādīth* state that the Prophet was praying towards al-Sham (al-Bukhārī 2000, v.1:85; Muslim 2000, v.1:212; al-Nasā'ī 2000, v.1:121). Therefore for someone far away it is more in the direction rather than to the Mosque, or the city. This means that the companions of Prophet Muhammad used to sometimes refer to Bayt al-Maqdis by using the term al-Sham. It is very clear that al-Sham here refers to Bayt al-Maqdis and its *Aknāf* (area around it) of which al-Sham is a part (al-Qazqī 2003:45).

However, this is not the only narration that mentions Bayt al-Maqdis in the early Makkan period; there are other narrations.

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<sup>5</sup> The same can be said for *Bayt al-Maqdis*, that when they were praying towards al-Aqsa they must face al-Sham, in al-Sham they must face *Bayt al-Maqdis*, in *Bayt al-Maqdis* they must face the Mosque, and if inside the al-Aqsa Mosque they must face the top of the Rock.

One amongst many tells of Tamīm al-Dārī and his brother who were Christian Arabs from al-Sham, and of their visit to the Prophet. When they went to him, they were quite certain that the Muslims would conquer al-Sham, so they asked the Prophet for an endowment of some lands. The Prophet granted their request, and they started to discuss which lands they wanted. Tamīm suggested that they ask for Bayt al-Maqdis and its *Kuwar* (Ibn 'Asākir 1995, v.11: 64-65; al-Qalqashandī 1987, v.13:125-27). *Kuwar* is the plural of *Kura* which is a district or a province with many villages (sometimes as many as three hundred) and a chief town or city amongst them (al-Ḥamawī nd, v.1:54). What is implied here is that Bayt al-Maqdis has many districts and each district has many villages and its own chief town or city. But Abū Hind, Tamīm's brother, said, "I don't think we will be able to get it", so Tamīm then suggested *Bayt Jibrīn* and its *Kura* (district) (Ibn 'Asākir 1995, v.11: 64-65; al-Qalqashandī 1987, v.13:125-27). Here he mentioned *Kura* in the singular, which means a chief town or city with many villages.<sup>6</sup> They finally agreed on some villages: Hebron, *Bayt 'Aynūn*, *al-Martum* and *Bayt Ibrahim*. The Prophet documented this down and it was witnessed by 'Abbās Ibn 'Abd al-Muṭalib, Jahm Ibn Qays and Sharḥabīl Ibn Ḥasanah. This gives an indication of when this would have happened, i.e. before the year five of Prophethood ~8BH/615CE. Because Sharḥabīl Ibn Ḥasanah migrated to Abyssinia that year and did not return until later on after the migration to Madinah (Shurrāb). The narration continued: after the Prophet had given them the endowment he told them to come back after they heard that he had migrated. So they returned after he had migrated to Madinah, and he decreed a renewal of their endowment with the same lands but with different witnesses (Ibn 'Asākir 1995, v.11: 64-65; al-Qalqashandī 1987, v.13:125-27). This narration is not very authentic; there are many narrations on when Tamīm and his brother came to the Prophet, some of them claiming that they would have come after the raid of Tabuk, but this might have been the second time they returned.

<sup>6</sup> However his brother states "this is even bigger" which does not make much sense – one *Kura* bigger than many *Kuwar*!

There is another example, which is authentic, of another usage of the term Bayt al-Maqdis in the early Prophetic period, after ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb became Muslim (around 7BH/616CE). Al-Arqam Ibn ‘Abd-Manaf (d. 55AH/675CE) came to the Prophet and told him that he was leaving for Bayt al-Maqdis. Prophet Muhammad asked him the reason for going, was it for business? Al-Arqam replied no, he was going for worship; so the Prophet commanded him to stay put and pray in Makkah as the reward for the prayer was far more in Makkah (al-Ḥakim 1990, v.3: 576). The term used here is Bayt al-Maqdis, and is used twice in this narration. The first time when al-Arqam was narrating what happened would have been in Madinah, as he was narrating to his grandson. The second was part of the conversation between al-Arqam and Prophet Muhammad during the incident in Makkah. Thus this tradition also strengthens the arguments that the Arabs before Islam and in the early Prophetic period used the term Bayt al-Maqdis. Moreover, the term Bayt al-Maqdis here was understood by the Prophet to be the city, and not the Mosque. This is very clear in the Ḥadīth, when al-Arqam told the Prophet that he was going to Bayt al-Maqdis, the Prophet asked if this was for business. Therefore the Prophet thought that he was referring to the markets in Bayt al-Maqdis and not the Mosque, until al-Arqam explained that he wished to go to Bayt al-Maqdis to pray.

This was not the only term used by the Prophet –before the *hijra* (migration)– to describe this land and/or the areas around it or just parts of it. The Land of *Barakah* or *al-Ard al-lati Baraknā fiha* was introduced in the Qur’an in the early stage of Islam in Makkah well before the *hijra* to Madinah. Five verses refer to this area; one relates to the Mosque revealed in *al-Isrā’* (the Night Journey). The other four relate to the land, which were revealed before and after *al-Isrā’*. They refer to the Israelites’ inheritance (Qur’an 7:137), the route of the people of *Saba’* (Sheba) (Qur’an 34:18), Prophet Abraham’s migration (Qur’an 21:71) and Prophet Solomon’s travels and base (Qur’an 21:81).

There are many other verses revealed in Makkah that refer to parts of Islamic Jerusalem, such as chapter *al-Tim* (Qur’an 95), which was

one of the early revelations. According to many exegetes *al-Zaytūn* (the Olive) refers to Bayt al-Maqdis.<sup>7</sup> Following this, more verses were revealed about the stories of previous Prophets who dwelt in this land; the majority of the Prophetic stories were, in general, revealed in Makkah before the *hijra* to Madinah. Some of the verses, however, name and refer to specific sites within the region, as was the case with some of the sites referring to where Prophet Jesus and his Mother lived. There is a reference to some sites as *makanan sharqiyah* (an eastern place) (Qur'an 19:16), *makanan Qasiyah* (a faraway place) (19:22), *rabwatin thati qararin wa ma'in* (a high place with meadows and flowing springs) (23:50), and so on. One chapter that was revealed half way during the Makkan period was chapter Al-Rum (Qur'an 30). It was revealed following the Persian victory over the Romans (Byzantines) in the year 614CE in *Adna al-Ard* around the area of IslamicJerusalem and it predicts a forthcoming victory of the Byzantines over the Persians (Qur'an 30:1-4).

Other verses refer to events close to the hereafter, when the trumpet will sound. The Qur'an refers to the place where this is to happen as a *makanin Qarib* (a place nearby) (Qur'an 50:41). Many scholars of exegesis take it to be Bayt al-Maqdis and specifically the Rock of Bayt al-Maqdis (al-Ṭabarī 1999, v.11:438-9; al-Samarqandī 1997, v.4:383; al-Zamakhsharī 1997, v.3:323).

From this it is clear that well before the *al-Isrā'* a framework was in place; the Prophet talked to his companions about this blessed area, which had many Prophets dwelling there. The Prophet linked their hearts to it spiritually through these verses as well as physically through their direction of prayer on a daily basis both before and after *al-Isrā'*, from the early stages of Islam. Alongside the terms introduced in the Qur'an, there seems to be a consensus within the traditions from that period that the term used to refer to this area was Bayt al-Maqdis, and no other term is mentioned as having been used in that time. However, it could be argued that

<sup>7</sup> Al-Ṭabarī (1999, v.12:632-3); al-Zamakhsharī (1995, v.4:763); Ibn Kathīr (1997, v.4:452)

although there is no mention of other terms in the Muslim traditions, such terms could have been used or at least have been known to the Arabs at that time although they were not recorded. This is very clear in the poetry of al-A'shā mentioned above, who was contemporary to this time, when he used the name *UriShalim*. Others would have possibly used the name of the city that was then Aelia, but there is no record of this.

However, the link with Bayt al-Maqdis and the more frequent references to it were to be further emphasised through *al-Isrā'* and the following events in both Makkah and Madinah. There is therefore more literature on terms and names used then which can lead us to a better understanding of what names were used in the different periods of the life of Prophet Muhammad.

### **Al-Isrā' (the Night Journey)**

The Night Journey was a major milestone in the connection between Muslims and Bayt al-Maqdis. This journey produced countless narrations that relate the name used for this location at that time. Both the name of the area and the Mosque will be examined, since the journey was to Bayt al-Maqdis in general and the Mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis (al-Aqsa Mosque) in particular (Qur'an 17:1). This could cause some confusion as sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish whether it refers to the region around the city, the city itself, or to the mosque. Also sometimes the Ḥadīth is narrated by the Prophet in his own words, and other times it is paraphrased by a companion. Moreover, most of the narrations about *al-Isrā'* were narrated in Madinah by young companions, who passed them on to following generations, which means that the Prophet retold the incident and its details in Madinah after the *hijra*.<sup>8</sup>

In one of the most authentic and direct narrations, the Prophet narrated to his companions in Madinah what had happened on the

<sup>8</sup> This shows that during the later years in Madinah there was a clear emphasis on Islamic Jerusalem, this could be part of Prophet Muhammad's plan for this area.

night of *al-Isrā'*. He states "I was brought *al-Buraq*...and rode it until I got to Bayt al-Maqdis, then I tied it to the same ring which the Prophets tie into, then I entered the *masjid* where I prayed..." (Muslim 2000, v.1:82-3). In this Ḥadīth it is clear from the saying of the Prophet that he reached Bayt al-Maqdis the city, and then entered the Mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis. Thus it refers to two different entities (Shurrāb 1994:276). In another narration the Prophet states, "When we reached Bayt al-Maqdis, Gabriel pierced the rock and tied to it *al-Buraq*" (al-Tirmidhī 2000, v.2:795). This also implies that Prophet Muhammad was in Bayt al-Maqdis even before entering the Mosque. Therefore in these *Aḥādīth*, Bayt al-Maqdis is surely more than the Mosque.

In some narrations, though, the name Aelia is used; it refers to the event when Prophet Muhammad was there when he was presented with two cups of drink. The Ḥadīth narrated by Abū Hurayrah states that the Prophet was presented at the night of *al-Isrā'* in Aelia with two cups (al-Bukhārī 2000, v.3:1161; Muslim 2000, v.2:880; al-Dārimī 1996, v.1:545). Although the name Aelia was used, this was not the wording of the Prophet, but an account by Abū Hurayrah of what happened that night. Thus Aelia was used by Abū Hurayrah who had probably paraphrased the Prophet's information in his own words when Sa'īd Ibn al-Musayyab heard him. In other narrations, more of this incident is mentioned: it is stated that the presentation of the cups of drink came after he had finished praying and left the Mosque (Muslim 2000, v.1: 82). The presentation of the cups, then, would not have been in the Mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis but rather in the city of Bayt al-Maqdis or its surroundings, within Aelia.

When Prophet Muhammad came back and told the tribe of *Quraysh* of his experience they rejected it. The Prophet narrated to the people of Madinah what had happened, as recorded by Jabir Ibn 'Abd Allah (d.78AH/697CE) and Abū Hurayrah (d.59AH/679CE). Jabir would have heard it in Madinah as he was a resident there and was only sixteen when the Prophet migrated; as for Abū Hurayrah he only became Muslim in the year 7AH in Madinah, therefore he heard it only in the last years of the life of

the Prophet. Jabir narrates that he heard the Prophet say (al-Bukhārī 2000, v.2: 956; Muslim 2000, v.1: 88):

لما كذبتني قريش قمت في الحجر فحلا الله لي بيت المقدس فطفقت أخبرهم عن آياته  
وأنا أنظر إليه

When *Quraysh* rejected what I said, I stood in *al-Hijir* (within the *al-Harām* Mosque in Makkah) and God Showed me Bayt al-Maqdis so I started telling them about its signs (*Ayatih*) while looking at it (*ilayh*)

In another narration by Abū Hurayrah, which apart from some minor differences is very similar, he states that the Prophet said (Muslim 2000, v.1: 88):

لقد رأيتني في الحجر وقريش تسألني عن مسراي فسألني عن أشياء من بيت المقدس لم  
أنتبهها فكربت كربة ما كربت مثله قط قال فرفعه الله لي أنظر إليه ما يسألوني عن شيء إلا  
أنبأهم به

I was in *al-Hijir* and the people of *Quraysh* were asking me about my *masrā* (the place of the *al-Isrā'*), so they asked me about things in Bayt al-Maqdis which I was unsure of, so I became very worried, then God raised it to me to look at (*farafa'uh Allah li andhur ilayh*), whatever they asked me about I told them of ...

So the question is what is the Prophet referring to when he mentions the term Bayt al-Maqdis? What was raised for him, the Mosque, the city or the region?

The context of this wording is of crucial importance, since this will explain further what Prophet Muhammad was referring to. On the night of *al-Isrā'* the site of al-Aqsa Mosque had been in ruins for centuries. The city of Aelia and most of al-Sham was no longer under Byzantine control: it had been under Persian control for over eight years. The Arabs of *Quraysh* used to come to this area as merchants on their yearly trip during the summer. These Arabs were pagans and used to worship idols, and thus would have had no interest in the site of al-Aqsa, but rather in the city's markets.

In these narrations of the Ḥadīth, Prophet Muhammad was recalling what happened after he came back from his journey, a

few years later in Madinah. The Prophet talks about when he returned from Bayt al-Maqdis and the idolaters of *Quraysh* did not believe him. They started to ask him about minute details, since some of them knew the area very well.

In the above narrations Prophet Muhammad used the term Bayt al-Maqdis, yet it is not clear what this referred to specifically. The various meanings it could have had are the mosque, the city, or the region. The text of the Ḥadīth refers to this term in a masculine tone. The Mosque is masculine, so is the region, but the city is feminine. Therefore the city could not be used at all; to have done so would have been ungrammatical. Had the city been meant, the following part of the text would have had to be feminine and would have read *ayatiha* and *ilayha* instead of *ayah* and *ilayh*, and for the second narration it would have read *farafa'aha* and *ilayha* instead of *farafa'uh* and *ilayh*. The city can thus be excluded. This is so if the word *madinat* (city), which is feminine, is added to the front of the name Bayt al-Maqdis. However, if the word *balad* (city), which is masculine, is added to the front of the name Bayt al-Maqdis, the word Bayt al-Maqdis becomes masculine. Consequently the name Bayt al-Maqdis is neutral and can be made feminine or masculine by the word which precedes it. Back to the same dilemma: was he referring to the Mosque, the city or the region?

A less authentic narration specifies that it is the Mosque that was elevated (al-Ṭabarānī nd, v.12:167-8; Ibn Abī Shaybah 1994, v.7:422-3, v.8:445; Ibn 'Asākir 1996, v.41:235). This says that Ibn 'Abbās heard the Prophet –also in Madinah– say that when he returned to Makkah from *al-Isrā'* and was certain the people would not believe him, Abū Jahil came to him and the Prophet told him what had happened. Then Abū Jahil went and gathered the people –of *Quraysh*– and asked the Prophet to tell them what he had told him. So the Prophet said:

إني أسري بي الليلة، قالوا: إلى أين؟ قال: إلى بيت المقدس قالوا إيليا؟ قال: نعم

I have been on *al-Isrā'* tonight, so they ask to where. He replies to Bayt al-Maqdis, They said Aelia, he replied: yes...



This narration gives us a better insight into their understanding. When he mentioned that he had been to Bayt al-Maqdis, they recognised it to be the same as Aelia. They then asked him to describe the site of the Mosque, specifically. This could have been because he would have probably recited to them the verse of *al-Isrā'* which mentions al-Aqsa Mosque, or mentioned to them that he had been inside the Mosque. So the Prophet adds:

قالوا: وتستطيع أن تنعت المسجد؟.... فحيء بالمسجد وأنا أنظر إليه

They said can you describe the Mosque?... the Mosque was brought while I was looking at it

This text is equivalent to the other two texts, mentioned earlier in which, instead of the Mosque, Bayt al-Maqdis is stated. This could mean that Bayt al-Maqdis there refers to the Mosque, as this Ḥadīth explicitly explains it, or it could mean the city or the region.

To conclude on the narrations of *al-Isrā'*: the author can safely say that the Prophet, using the term Bayt al-Maqdis, referred mostly to the city, as was even understood by the people of *Quraysh*. However the last narration, if joined with other narrations, could mean the Mosque.<sup>9</sup>

### More verses after *al-Isrā'*

More verses relating to this area were revealed after *al-Isrā'* (al-Zuhrī 1988:37-42). One was the introduction of the name al-Aqsa Mosque to refer to the Mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis. There are other verses which tell, for example, the story of Prophet Joseph in *Gayabat al-Jub* (the bottom of the well) which he was thrown into within the vicinity of Bayt al-Maqdis. In the same story there is in addition a reference to Prophet Joseph's family dwelling: in *al-Badw* (the desert) (Qur'an 12:100), which was also in the vicinity of Bayt al-Maqdis.

<sup>9</sup> Verse 43:45 was revealed during the *al-Isrā'*, however it does not name or refer to any site.

These verses give different names of sites within Bayt al-Maqdis, mainly descriptions of the places. But they do not give the name Bayt al-Maqdis, and so are mentioned only briefly in this section.

### Change of Qiblah after the Hijra to Madinah

Following the migration from Makkah to Madinah, Prophet Muhammad and his companions continued to pray in the direction of Bayt al-Maqdis. However, sixteen months later Prophet Muhammad was commanded to change his *Qiblah* and face towards Makkah instead. This is mentioned in numerous *Aḥādīth*; in this section these are looked at to see what terminology was used after the migration to Madinah and whether it changed.

Most of the narrations on the change of the *Qiblah* were told by inhabitants of *Madinah* who usually used the term Bayt al-Maqdis. They were reporting on the actual event and not the sayings of the Prophet, so were using their own terminologies. Al-Bara' Ibn 'Azib (d. 71AH/690-1CE) is the main narrator for these *Aḥādīth*.<sup>10</sup> There are also narrators of *Aḥādīth* on the same topic, such as Anas Ibn Mālīk (d. 93AH/712CE) (Muslim 2000, v.1: 212; Abū Dawūd 2000, v.1: 178), 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68AH/687-8CE) (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.3:394), Mu'adh Ibn Jabal (d. 18AH/639CE) (Abū Dawūd 2000, v.1: 90) and 'Amarah Ibn 'Aws (Ibn Abī Shaybah 1994, v.1: 369). These all also use the term Bayt al-Maqdis in their narrations. However, Thuwaylah bint Aslam, when she is talking about her experience of the *Qiblah* change, uses the term Aelia (Ibn Ḥajar 1997, v.1:651). And 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Umar uses al-Sham<sup>11</sup> rather than Bayt al-Maqdis or Aelia to refer to the direction as opposed to the location.

After the change of *Qiblah* to Makkah, an issue was raised regarding the acceptance of the prayers of those who had died praying to Bayt al-Maqdis. The people asked the Prophet about

<sup>10</sup> Al-Bukhārī 2000, v.1: 12,884; Muslim 2000, v.1: 212; al-Nasā'ī 2000, v.1: 120

<sup>11</sup> Al-Bukhārī 2000, v.1: 85; al-Dārimī 1996, v.1: 298

this, using the term Bayt al-Maqdis.<sup>12</sup> This was followed by a revelation of a verse stating: "And God would never make your faith go to waste." (Qur'an 2:143)

It would thus seem that there was a continuation of the use of the term Bayt al-Maqdis, by the Prophet and his companions in the early phase in Madinah.

### The building of al-Aqsa Mosque

The building of al-Aqsa Mosque was first initiated forty years after the first construction of the *Ka'bah*, as is understood from the Ḥadīth of Abū Dhar.<sup>13</sup> This Ḥadīth was most probably narrated in Madinah, since Abū Dhar al-Ghafarī, Jundub Ibn Junada only accompanied the Prophet in Madinah after the migration. He became Muslim in Makkah; nevertheless he went directly back to his tribe and stayed there until after the Prophet had migrated to Madinah. Then *he* moved to Madinah. He would not thus have had the time to sit with the Prophet under extreme circumstances in Makkah, when the message of Islam was still in its infancy, to ask him about the buildings of the early mosque. This was more likely to have happened when he accompanied the Prophet in Madinah. The word used in this Ḥadīth was *al-Masjid al-Aqsa*, introduced after *al-Isrā'*, though one of the narrators Abū Mu'awiyah explains that *al-Masjid al-Aqsa* is Bayt al-Maqdis to bring it closer to the understanding of his contemporaries (Ibn Hanbal 1995, v.15:521).

The other Ḥadīth relates to Prophet Solomon and Bayt al-Maqdis. This Ḥadīth was narrated in Madinah, as 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Amr Ibn al-Āṣ became Muslim just before his father, before the conquest of Makkah in the year 8AH. This Ḥadīth might have been narrated at the time of the battle of Tabuk in the year 9AH. The Ḥadīth mentions that Prophet Solomon asked God for three

<sup>12</sup> Abū Dawūd 2000, v.2: 786; al-Dārimī 1996, v.1: 298; al-Ḥakīm 1990, v.2:295

<sup>13</sup> Al-Bukhārī 2000, v.2: 661, 676; Muslim 2000, v.1: 209-10; Ibn Mājah 2000: 111; al-Nasā'ī 2000, v.1: 112

things: two for himself and the third for the visitors of this Mosque without specifying a place (al-Hakim 1990, v.1:84, v.2:471; Ibn Hibān 1997, v.4:511-2). In some narrations it is noted that this is after Prophet Solomon had completed Bayt al-Maqdis (al-Nasā'ī 2000, v.1: 112; Ibn Mājah 2000:206). The narration of al-Nasā'ī, which is authentic, states (Ibn Ḥajar 1997, v.6: 494):

When Solomon son of David **built Bayt al-Maqdis**, he asked God for three things. He asked God for a great rule and he was granted it. And he asked God for a Kingdom that no one would have after him and he was granted it. And he asked God when he **completed the building of the Mosque**, that whosoever comes to it solely for the sake of praying in it, to be forgiven of all sin like the day he was born

But in the Ḥadīth the term used refers to a structure which is called Bayt al-Maqdis, and thus refers to something that can be built, in this case either a city or a Mosque. So Bayt al-Maqdis here cannot refer to the region as it is not something that can be built or constructed. Furthermore Bayt al-Maqdis in the beginning of the Ḥadīth refers to more than the Mosque. The wording at the start of the Ḥadīth states, "when Solomon built Bayt al-Maqdis", and at the end of the Ḥadīth the wording is "and he asked God when he completed building the *Masjid* (Mosque)". It is therefore talking about two entities, Bayt al-Maqdis and a mosque. However, the mosque is part of Bayt al-Maqdis as it is the third supplication. Accordingly it can be said that Bayt al-Maqdis here refers to the city which includes the mosque within it.

Ibn Mājah named the section for this Ḥadīth as: "what is said about praying in the Mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis"; as for al-Nasā'ī he names the section: "the virtue of praying in al-Aqsa Mosque" (Ibn Mājah 2000:206; al-Nasā'ī 2000, v.1:112). So Ibn Mājah tries to distinguish between Bayt al-Maqdis and the mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis, as does al-Nasā'ī when he equates the mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis to al-Aqsa Mosque.

## Visit only three mosques

Prophet Muhammad told his followers that they could only set off for three mosques with the sole object of visiting; he named the *al-Ḥarām* Mosque in Makkah, his mosque in Madinah, and al-Aqsa Mosque in IslamicJerusalem. Al-Aqsa Mosque is the focal point of Bayt al-Maḳdis, and is referred to by various names in the *Aḥādīth* of *shadd al-Riḥāl* (setting off) to the three mosques. All these *Aḥādīth* were narrated in Madinah after the *hijra* (migration) for two reasons. The first is that except for a few most of the narrators would have only met the Prophet in Madinah after the *hijra*. The second reason is that the second mosque mentioned in the Ḥadīth, the mosque of the Prophet, was only built after the *hijra*, so surely these *Aḥādīth* could not have been said in Makkah.

In most of these *Aḥādīth* the mosque is referred to with the Qur'anic terminology *al-Masjid al-Aqsa* (al-Bukhārī 2000, v.1:223; Muslim 2000, v.1:548; al-Tirmidhī 2000, v.1:98), although some narrations use other terms. In the narration from Abū Hurayrah mentioned in Muslim (2000, v.1:567), it is said that the Prophet used the term *masjid Ilyā'* (Mosque of Aelia). This would have been said by the Prophet in the later years in Madinah as Abū Hurayrah became Muslim in the year 7AH/628CE. Therefore the Prophet used the term Aelia, the Byzantine name for the region, and was aware of it. Another name used to refer to al-Aqsa Mosque is *masjid Bayt al-Maḳdis* (Mosque of Bayt al-Maḳdis) (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.10:144). This is similar to *masjid Ilyā'*; in both cases the Mosque is associated with the name of a place, Aelia and Bayt al-Maḳdis. But could both these names be synonyms of the same name? This is also the case in two other narrations where the narrator equates both *masjid Ilyā'* and Bayt al-Maḳdis (Mālik 2000:36-7). Therefore it can be said that the mosque is part of Bayt al-Maḳdis also known as Aelia.

On the other hand, in two other narrations al-Aqsa Mosque is referred to as Bayt al-Maḳdis without the word *masjid* (Mosque) used beforehand (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.10:293). In these narrations Bayt al-Maḳdis most likely does not apply to the city or the region since the start of the Ḥadīth clearly refers to the three mosques: it

states, "only set off to three mosques" and then names them. Therefore in these two narrations Bayt al-Maqdis refers only to al-Aqsa Mosque. This is further supported by another Ḥadīth where the Prophet was saying farewell to a man and asked him where he was heading; he replied Bayt al-Maqdis. The Prophet replied saying that a prayer in this mosque –the Prophet's Mosque– is better than a thousand prayers in any other except *al-Ḥarām* Mosque (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.10:243). So the understanding of the Prophet, in this case, when the man told him he was heading for Bayt al-Maqdis, was that he was talking about the mosque – unless it was a passing comment about the city and its mosque.

From the above narrations it can be observed that al-Aqsa Mosque was referred to as Bayt al-Maqdis, something that we have already noticed in previous *Aḥādīth*. But it was referred to also as the mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis and the mosque of Aelia, which was more popular in these *Aḥādīth* than Bayt al-Maqdis alone.

### Abū Sufyān in Aelia

Following the peace treaty between *Quraysh* and the Muslims in the year 6AH/628CE, Prophet Muhammad started to write to world rulers inviting them to Islam. One of these rulers was the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, who had just reconquered Aelia from the Persians. When the letter reached him, he asked to meet someone from Arabia. Coincidentally Abū Sufyān (d.32AH/652-3CE), one of *Quraysh's* chief tribesmen, was nearby and was asked to come to Heraclius in Aelia. Abū Sufyān narrates the full story and it is narrated in many of the Books of Ḥadīth (al-Bukhārī 2000, v.1:4-6; Muslim 2000, v.2:772-3). He had a very good knowledge of the area of al-Sham as he was a tradesman and used to travel very frequently to the area. In the narration Abū Sufyān uses the Byzantine name Aelia, which he would have been well acquainted with, as well as with other names and terms, and would have most likely meant the city.

In the same narration Abū Sufyān states that Heraclius walked to Bayt al-Maqdis. Here Bayt al-Maqdis would in no way mean the mosque, as this was not holy to the Christians; rather he would be

walking to the most sacred site for Christianity within the walled city, namely, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Therefore in this case Bayt al-Maqdis would refer to the city of Aelia.

### After the Take-over of Makkah

A man came to the Prophet on the day he took-over Makkah in 8AH/630CE, and told him Prophet that he had vowed if God helped the Prophet and the believers to enter Makkah victorious he would pray in Bayt al-Maqdis (Abū Dawūd 2000, v.2:570; al-Sanʿanī nd: v.8, 395-6). The man used the name Bayt al-Maqdis when telling the Prophet about this. The Prophet replied just pray here; the man however insisted and the Prophet replied it's your business. In other narrations the Prophet told him to go and pray in it, telling him that had, however, he prayed here it would have compensated for every prayer in Bayt al-Maqdis (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.16:544). The Prophet also used the term Bayt al-Maqdis in the discussion. But they are referring to a place of prayer, so this could be al-Aqsa Mosque. Nevertheless it could have been referring to the city or the region, as al-Aqsa Mosque is its central part and its main mosque. As is the case with Makkah or Madinah; when a person states that he is going to pray in Makkah or Madinah; this means that he is going to pray within the area of Makkah or Madinah in general and in its main mosque in particular. This would be the case for Bayt al-Maqdis too, i.e. that it is the area in general and the mosque in particular as it is the place where reward is multiplied.<sup>14</sup>

### Tamīm al-Dārī

Tamīm al-Dārī was Christian, and it is said he came to the Prophet again from al-Sham. He was certain that the Prophet would take over his lands, and so asked him to write down an endowment of some villages in southern al-Sham. The Prophet recorded this for him, in the document known as the *waqf* of Tamīm (Endowment of Tamīm), naming some towns and villages such as Hebron, Bayt

<sup>14</sup> The mosque at that time was in ruins and it doesn't make sense that he was going to pray in it; however, this man's vow seems to have been based on its merits.

'*Aynūn*, *al-Marṭum* and others (See section on "First connections" also Shurāb 1990: 124-137).

## Al-Arḍ al-Muqadasah

In addition to the Qur'anic terminology "Land of *Barakah*" that would have been used by the Prophet in Makkah as well as in Madinah, a further term was introduced in the Qur'an and used by the Prophet, *al-Arḍ al-Muqadasah* (Holy Land). This would have occurred towards the end of the Prophet's life. This chapter (5: *al-Mā'idah*) was revealed in Madinah and was one of the last chapters to be revealed (al-Zarkashī 1998, v.1: 194). The term was also used by the Prophet on numerous occasions. There are a number of *Aḥādīth*, all of which seem to have taken place towards the end of his life in Madinah. One relates to the death of Prophet Moses in which Prophet Muhammad mentions that Prophet Moses asked God to bring him close to the Holy Land as he was about to die.<sup>15</sup> The Ḥadīth was narrated by Abū Hurayrah (d. 59AH/679CE) who only became Muslim in the year 7AH in Madinah as mentioned earlier, thus just a few years before the death of Prophet Muhammad.

Another Ḥadīth narrated by Samrah Ibn Jundub (d. 59AH/679CE), who would have been young when the Prophet passed away, says that Prophet Muhammad after asking them about their dreams said that he saw that two men came to him and took him to al-Arḍ al-Muqaddasah (al-Bukhārī 2000, v.1:259-60).

In another narration 'Abdallah Ibn Ḥawalāh (d.58AH/678CE), who was from amongst the Anṣar (helpers in Madinah), narrates that Prophet Muhammad sent them on an expedition and when they came back exhausted, the Prophet placed his hand on 'Abdallah's head and told him "when the Caliphate is in al-Arḍ al-Muqadasah then tribulations... are near" (Abū Dawūd 2000, v.2:435).

Another Ḥadīth narrated by Abū Dhar (d. 32AH/652-3CE), tells of when he was with the Prophet in Madinah; this would have

<sup>15</sup> Al-Bukhārī 2000, v.1:250; Muslim 2000, v.2:1014



been after the year 5AH when he settled in Madinah. He was asked by the Prophet what he would do if he had to leave Madinah and Makkah and he replied he would head to al-Arḍ al-Muqadasah (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.16:19).

Thus from all these narrations, it becomes clear that Prophet Muhammad used this term only in Madinah. However it is not clear if he only used it after its Qur'anic introduction or beforehand. But it is most likely that he used it after it was introduced by the Qur'an, since much of the narration indicates that it was towards the end of his life. Since he never used it in Makkah or even in his early years in Madinah, it may be taken to have been used by the Prophet after the Qur'anic revelation of the term.<sup>16</sup>

### Ḥadīth in Tabuk (Fath Bayt al-Maqdis)

The furthest northern expedition led by Prophet Muhammad was Tabuk –now in northern Saudi Arabia. During this expedition, and while he was in Tabuk in the year 9AH/630CE, 'Awf Ibn Mālik came to the Prophet's tent. The Prophet told him to count six incidents between then and the Day of Judgment. The first was the death of the Prophet, the second the *Fath* (conquest) of Bayt al-Maqdis, and he then named four other incidents (al-Bukhārī 2000, v.2:621; Ibn Mājah 2000:587). This is narrated in fourteen different narrations, all of which mention that the Prophet used the name Bayt al-Maqdis; however, in one narration aside from the other fourteen, the name mentioned was Aelia (al-Ṭabarānī nd, v.18:66). This will not be taken into consideration as it is a weaker narration, and was possibly the words of one of the narrators rather than those of the Prophet.

The *Fath* of Bayt al-Maqdis here refers to both the region and the city, which also includes the mosque. However the mosque at the time was in ruins, and thus it would not make sense to say that this second major incident would be the conquering of a ruined site.

<sup>16</sup> This again shows a clear emphasis on Islamic Jerusalem in the last days in Madinah.

This terminology *Fath* (conquest) would apply to cities and regions, and so it could apply to either or both. It is similar to talking about the *Fath* of Makkah; it does not mean taking over the mosque, rather it refers to the city and its region the *Haram*.

Also the context in which this was said is very important, as knowing it would help in understanding the circumstances. Prophet Muhammad had set out to fight the Byzantines; he reached Tabuk where he camped and this Ḥadīth was narrated. Soon after the Prophet got back to Madinah, he prepared another army – to be lead by 'Usamah ibn Zayd<sup>17</sup> – and then became very ill and later passed away; within six years of his death his companions conquered Bayt al-Maqdis. The Prophet thus knew that Bayt al-Maqdis would not be conquered during his lifetime as he explicitly states in the rest of the Ḥadīth mentioned above.

### Prophet Joshua marching to Bayt al-Maqdis

Prophet Muhammad talked about previous prophets, and said that some were related to Bayt al-Maqdis. One example was a Prophet for whom the sunset was delayed while he was conquering a town (al-Bukhārī 2000, v.2:607; Muslim 2000, v.2:758; Ibn Ḥanbal 2000, v.8:247-8). In these narrations the who and the where are unknown, but in another authentic narration the name of the prophet and the place are known. The Ḥadīth states that Prophet Muhammad said, "The Sun was not held for any human except Yousha' (Joshua) when he was marching towards Bayt al-Maqdis." (Ibn Ḥanbal 2000, v.8:275) The Prophet used the term Bayt al-Maqdis when addressing the area Joshua was marching to conquer. It is well known that Joshua is associated with the conquest of Jericho and not the walled city of Bayt al-Maqdis. However since Jericho is taken to be part of Bayt al-Maqdis by early Muslims (El-Awaisi 2005:171-2). Therefore this Ḥadīth is referring to the region of Bayt al-Maqdis.

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<sup>17</sup> In this raid the Prophet named locations within the region such as Ubna, al-Darūm amongst others, these were around a location of a previous battle namely Mu'ta. See Omar 2006.

## Prophet John in Bayt al-Maqdis

Another Prophet, whom Prophet Muhammad talked about in relation to Bayt al-Maqdis, is Prophet Yahya (John). Prophet Muhammad said that Prophet John was given five orders to promulgate and command the children of Israel to implement. So he gathered the people in Bayt al-Maqdis and the mosque filled up to the terraces; he then spoke the commands to them (al-Tirmidhī 2000, v.2:721-2; al-Ḥakim 1990, v.1:204-5). In the Ḥadīth Prophet Muhammad referred to the place where Prophet John gathered the people as Bayt al-Maqdis. This could not be a region, as it would not be possible to fill up a region for a speech, nor could it be a large city for the same reason. However, this could be the case for a mosque; the Ḥadīth explicitly states that it refers to a mosque. It goes on to say that the mosque became fully packed until people overflowed onto the terraces. In this Ḥadīth, therefore, Prophet Muhammad referred to the mosque as Bayt al-Maqdis.

## The Land of Raising and Gathering

The Prophet was asked by Maymūnah bint al-Ḥarith about Bayt al-Maqdis; he told her, it is the land of raising and gathering (Ibn Mājah 2000:206; Abū Dawūd 2000, v.1:80). From this sentence he is obviously referring to a large area, as the term used is *Arḍ* (land), which cannot be used to refer to a small area or a city; rather it would refer to a large area that could include many cities. This is supported further by other *Aḥādīth* that refers to al-Sham as the land of the raising and gathering.

However, the second part of the Ḥadīth states "go and pray in it, as a prayer in it is equal to one thousand times a prayer in any other." When the Prophet was further asked if a person would not be able to get to it, the Prophet added "send oil to light it." This restricts the meaning of the Ḥadīth to the mosque only, and cannot be used for the city or the region since the text has a masculine structure, not the feminine one needed when speaking about the city.

Nevertheless the first part of the Ḥadīth can be taken to refer to the region generally, with the second part referring specifically to

the mosque. This is further supported by another Ḥadīth narrated by Abū Dhar, in which he asks the Prophet: Which is better, a prayer in the mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis or the mosque of the Prophet (in Madinah)? The Prophet replied that his mosque was four times better; however, a time would come where a place to see Bayt al-Maqdis from would be better than the whole world (al-Ḥakīm 1990, v.4:554; al-Hindī 1998, v.12:115). In some of the narrations, in the Prophet's reply he states: "ولنعلم المصلى في أرض المحشر" "والمنشر" "*wala ni'ma al-Muṣallā fi Arḍ al-Maḥshar wal-Manshar*" that it is an admirable place of worship in the land of gathering and raising (al-Hindī 1998, v.12:115). Which implies that this land is much more than the mosque; the mosque is only a small part of it.

### Starting off on Pilgrimage from Bayt al-Maqdis

One of Prophet Muhammad's wives, Umm Salamah, whom the Prophet married in Madinah in the year 4AH, narrated that she heard the Prophet say that whosoever set off for *Hajj* (pilgrimage) or *Umrāh* (lesser-pilgrimage) from al-Aqsa Mosque would be forgiven or guaranteed Paradise.<sup>18</sup> This refers to the commencing of *Ihrām* (state of sacredness) from this site. However, there are just as many *Aḥādīth* where the name al-Aqsa Mosque is replaced by Bayt al-Maqdis.<sup>19</sup> The question here is, what does Bayt al-Maqdis refer to in these narrations –could it be a synonym for al-Aqsa Mosque? It could actually refer to the city or even further to cover the region.

In some of the narrations which mention al-Aqsa Mosque, the narrator from Umm Salamah is Ḥakīmah bint Umayyah and the narrator from Ḥakīmah mentions that when she heard this Ḥadīth, she set off directly for Bayt al-Maqdis to commence her *Umrāh* from there (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.18:260-1). Although the term used in the Ḥadīth is al-Aqsa Mosque, the term used here is Bayt al-Maqdis. It is similar to saying that someone is going to Makkah; it also implies that he is going to the mosque, and this is a similar

<sup>18</sup> Abū Dawūd 2000, v.1:298; al-Daraqutnī 1998, v.1:221; al-Bukhārī 2001, v.1:161;

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Mājah 2000, v.1:161; al-Daraqutnī 1998, v.1:161

case in the Ḥadīth of Umm-Salamah, namely, that it would be referring to the city if not the general region.

### People steadfast

In more than seventy-five narrations in the books of Ḥadīth, it is said that Prophet Muhammad talked about a group of people steadfast in the truth throughout time (al-Qazqī 2003: 179-210). However some of the narrations specify where they are. In one Ḥadīth it said that they are *Ahl al-Gharb* (the people of the West) (Muslim 2000, v.2:841). However the exegetists do not agree about what this means. There are many claims that it is the Arabs, people in al-Sham, people of Bayt al-Maqdis and people of strength. However, some of the *Aḥādīth* explicitly mention al-Sham as being the place of this group (al-Nasā'ī 2000, v.2:588; Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.14:433). Moreover, some Ḥadīth say it is Bayt al-Maqdis (al-Ṭabarānī nd, v.8:145) and its *Aknāf* (the area around) (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.16:270).

The wording of the Ḥadīth states that these people are in Bayt al-Maqdis, which would obviously not refer to the mosque, since people do not live in the mosque. Therefore it is either the city or the region or both. As the Ḥadīth is talking about a place and its *aknāf* (surrounding), it can be said that Bayt al-Maqdis here refers to the region of Bayt al-Maqdis and its *Aknāf* is the region of al-Sham.

This is further supported by another narration which mentions some of their characteristics; it says that Prophet Jesus will come to them and join them (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.11:524). In another it states that they will fight the *dajāl* (Antichrist) (al-Ḥakim 1990, v.4:497). It is known from other *Aḥādīth* that the *dajāl* will be killed by Prophet Jesus (Ibn Mājah 2000: 595-6). All these tie in together to give the conclusion that this group is in the region of Bayt al-Maqdis and its *Aknāf*, which would include other parts of al-Sham.

## Bayt al-Maqdis flourishing

As regards some future events, it is narrated that Prophet Muhammad has mentioned that Bayt al-Maqdis will flourish, and its flourishing will mean the deterioration of *Yathrib* (Madinah), close to the end of time (Abū Dawūd 2000, v.2:715-6). Bayt al-Maqdis here is equated to a city, *Yathrib*. It is most likely that, in this Ḥadīth, the reference is to the city of Bayt al-Maqdis and not to its mosque or its region; they could however be part of the flourishing of the city.

## Between Bayt al-Maqdis and the Ka'bah

It is narrated that Prophet Muhammad said that he would have a pool in Paradise extending the same distance as from *Ka'bah* to Bayt al-Maqdis (Ibn Mājah 2000:632). In this Ḥadīth Bayt al-Maqdis is equated to the *Ka'bah*; thus here Bayt al-Maqdis would be referring to the mosque in particular and not the city or the region.

## Other Aḥādīth

In addition to the above narrations there are as many more again on this topic, but they are not as authentic. Some use the name *Aelia* to refer to the city or the region (al-Tirmidhī 2000, v.2:584), others use the name Bayt al-Maqdis and the term *masjid* Bayt al-Maqdis to refer to the mosque (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.9:578), while others use the name Bayt al-Maqdis to refer to the city or the region (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995, v.13:99; Ibn Abī Shaybah 1994, v.8:657; al-Hindī 1996, v.14:141-2; Ibn Mājah 2000:595-7; al-Ṭabarānī 1999, v.1:302). These narrations give similar indications to these in the authentic narrations adding nothing new to the argument, so further discussion of them will cease here. In weak narrations the wordings are also weak, the narrator being able to use a name of his time rather than the one mentioned by the Prophet. This is very clear in some *Aḥādīth*, which use names not used by the Prophet, such as *al-Quds*, in *Musnad Ahmad*.

## Conclusion

As has been discussed, in the pre-Muslim period the area was under Byzantine rule, the city was known as Aelia Capitolina, and the region around it as Aelia from the year 135CE. Arabs had a good knowledge of the whole area in general, and the city in particular, some through their trade connections. Most importantly, though, the Christianised Arabs had a better knowledge of their homelands, as they had lived in many areas in al-Sham for centuries. The Arabs, in addition to being aware of the Latin name, were also using other names such as UriShalim or UriSalim, and Bayt al-Maqdis. However, it seems that they used the name Bayt al-Maqdis more frequently, as well as its Latin name Aelia, which was used by the inhabitants of that time to refer to the region. But it is not clear if they used the names Aelia and Bayt al-Maqdis to refer the region or only to the city at this stage. As for other names, they were aware of some, but rarely used them as they had been out of use for some time.

Prophet Muhammad was aware of other names, but mainly used the name Bayt al-Maqdis in the majority of the narrations – as well as Aelia, though this rarely. During the early Prophetic period, and well before the Night Journey, a framework had been in place to connect Muslims to this land. Already the early Muslims were praying towards Bayt al-Maqdis, and many verses from the Qur'an had been revealed in which Bayt al-Maqdis was a central part. In addition, many traditions of the Prophet used the name Bayt al-Maqdis, mainly to refer to the city. Although in one case it was very clear that reference was to a large region with many districts. There is only evidence of the use of the name Bayt al-Maqdis and not any other name at this period; nevertheless, this is as well as the other terms introduced in the Qur'an.

This link was to be further strengthened with the incident of the Night Journey, which was one of the important milestones, if not *the* most important. This incident brought many narrations about Bayt al-Maqdis, introducing a new term al-Aqsa Mosque for the mosque of Bayt al-Maqdis. In most of the *Aḥādīth* about *al-Isrā'*, Bayt al-Maqdis comes with reference to the city, within which lies

the mosque. The use of the term Aelia within these *Aḥādīth* was either by *Quraysh* or the companions of the Prophet, but rarely by the Prophet himself.

Following the migration to Madinah, it is evident that the term Bayt al-Maqdis continued to be used by the Prophet until his death, as well as some rare use by him of the term Aelia, although it was in constant use by his companions. He was also aware of specific sites within the region, as he named some in documents and ordered armies into specific sites.

As for the meaning of Bayt al-Maqdis in the *Aḥādīth* of the Prophet, it is clear that he used it interchangeably to refer to the mosque, the city and the region. It referred to the mosque explicitly in the case of Prophet John. It explicitly referred to the city in the Story of *al-Isrā'*. Finally, it explicitly referred to the region when it referred to the marching of Joshua towards Bayt al-Maqdis. To conclude, it is safe to say that Prophet Muhammad used the term Bayt al-Maqdis to refer to all three connotations. It can be said that names carry different connotations and they are either general or specific and each must be read in context to understand to what it refers.

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