

# The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

## IS MAKKAH THE ORIGINAL LOCATION FOR THE MASJID AL-HARAM?

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This article will attempt to address some claims against the original Masjid al-Haram being located in Makkah. It will then argue from internal evidence why it is highly likely that the Masjid al-Haram was located in the city of Makkah.

It is appreciated that within Western scholarship, notable scholars such as Patricia Crone and Michael Cook have strongly questioned the original site of the sanctuary as located in Makkah. However, this article has not been written to critique their work.

This article is primarily written to ascertain whether there is sufficient internal evidence within the Quran which 'beyond reasonable doubt' suggests that Makkah was indeed the location of the Masjid al-Haram. Such supporting evidence would corroborate the traditional position and the practice of pilgrimage to the site in Makkah for well over a millennia.

Some of the other claims are:

- (1) The original Masjid al Haram was not in Makkah but in Jerusalem.
- (2) The original Masjid al Haram was not in Makkah or Jerusalem but at Jabal al-Lawz (Possible location where Prophet Moses <sup>(pbuh)</sup> was summoned by God).
- (3) The original Masjid al-Haram was somewhere North of Arabia but not at Makkah.

## STARTING POINT

I refer the user to the following bullet points which have been assumed in this article.

- Arguing from silence is not an argument (Fallacy argument). Just because no historical source is found for X, does not mean that X did not exist.
- Just because the Quran does not directly connect the Ka'aba with Makkah in one verse does not mean they are not connected. There is an inherent fallacy argument of exhaustive hypothesis inherent within such an approach. Just because something is not X, does not mean therefore it is Y. Y must be proved beyond reasonable doubt. Also, we must look at all related verses to ascertain as best we can how cogent a particular hypothesis remains.
- There is no reason to suggest that Non-Muslim sources were or are better informed than Islamic sources.
- One cannot conclude that just because the authenticity of many Islamic traditions may be disputed, that it cannot be correct about a **particular matter**.

## **CLAIM 1** MASJID AL-HARAM WAS ORIGINALLY IN JERUSALEM NOT MAKKAH

### WHAT WE KNOW

The Quran refers to the Masjid al-Haram in different verses.

**Masjid Al Haram (Sacred Mosque)** - 2:144, 2:217, 5:2, 8:34, 9:7, 9:19, 9:28, 17:1, 22:25, 48:25; 48:27

**Bayt Al Haram (Sacred House)** - 5:2, 5:97

**Bayt (House)** - 8:35

Jerusalem is well attested to be located in the Holy Lands. This is not a point of dispute. What is important to note is that the Quran **never** makes use of the term 'barakna' (blessed) to describe the sanctuary at Makkah, which is normally referred to as '**Masjid Al Haram**' (Prohibited / Inviolable Mosque)

The Quranic use of the term 'blessed' to signify a land that is blessed has always been reserved for localities in the Holy Lands.

For example, some terms used in the Quran.

(1) **Barakna hawlahu**

017.001 - Masjid Aqsa

(2) **Barakna fiha**

007.137 - Blessed lands for the Children of Israel

021.071 - Prophets Abraham and Lot <sup>(pbut)</sup> delivered to the blessed lands

021.081 - Wind flowed for Solomon on the blessed lands

034.018 - Saba and cities in-between

### (3) Mubaraká

003:096 - The first house that Prophet Abraham <sup>(pbuh)</sup> built

028:030 - The place where God summoned Prophet Moses <sup>(pbuh)</sup> (Blessed area)

I have noted a claim that Temple Mount in **Hebrew** is known as 'Bayt al-haram'. The word 'haram' carries the nuanced meaning of being prohibited, forbidden or made inviolable. The Temple mount in Hebrew is known as '**Har haBáyit**' [1] and is not associated with such descriptions as 'Bayt al-haram' in Hebrew. [2]

There is no convincing evidence in the Quran that the Masjid al-Haram was originally located in Jerusalem.

**Please see related article [1] below.**

## **CLAIM 2** THERE IS NO PROOF FROM THE QURAN THAT THE KA'ABA WAS LOCATED IN MAKKAH

Before we have a look at some Quranic verses with a view to contest this claim, it is to be noted as outlined in the opening paragraph, **that absence of proof does not equate to proof of absence**. This is an argument from silence (argumentum e silentio) which is a well known **fallacy argument**.

The Ka'aba has been mentioned twice in the Quran, verse 5:95 and verse 5:97. From both verses it is clear that this was a place of worship and was associated with the Sacred House.

### **005.097**

"**God has made the Ka'aba, the Sacred House, an establishment for mankind and (also) the sacred months, the animals for offerings, and the garlands that mark them so that you may know that God has knowledge of what is in the heavens and on earth and that God is well acquainted with all things**"

The only place in the Quran where the Ka'aba 'appears' to be associated with Makkah is in the following verses.

### **048:024**

"**And He it is Who has withheld men's hands from you, and has withheld your hands from them, in the valley of Makkah (Arabic: Makkata), after He had made you victors over them. God is seer of what you do**"

In the very next verse, we read:

**048.025**

"**They are the ones who denied Revelation and hindered you from the Sacred Mosque (Masjid al-Haram) and the sacrificial animals, detained from reaching their place of sacrifice...**"

There are two possibilities at first reading of verses: 48:24 and 48:25.

(1) The Sacred Mosque referred to in verse 48:25 which contained the Ka'aba (5:97) was located in Makkah (48:24).

(2) Makkah was a location where an altercation nearly took place and 48:25 refers to an incident at another location where the Sacred Mosque was present. This would imply that the two are not linked.

However, **it is accepted** that even though there seems to be connection given the proximity of the two verses, that this **not incontrovertible evidence** that they are part of one location.

## **QURANIC SUPPORT TO LINK MASJID AL-HARAM WITH MAKKAH**

### **SUPPORT 1 UMM UL-QURA (MOTHER OF THE TOWNS)**

- Whatever the original location of the Masjid al-Haram, we know that the mosque was present at a location of a **main city** which had an established community settlement. In verses 42:7 and 6:92, the Quran stresses that an Arabic Quran was revealed to the '**mother city**' (umm-al-qura) and those around it (waman hawlaha).
- We can also deduce that the 'mother tongue' of this town was 'Arabic' not only from 42:7, but clearly from other verses of the Quran and by virtue of the language of the Quran itself.
- The Prophet was from this 'mother town' and had spent his whole life-time in this city amongst this settlement. We can deduce this from verse 10:16 where the Prophet explains "**...indeed I have lived a lifetime among you...**" There is further proof in verses 90:1-2 where God takes oath by the city (balad) and confirms the Prophet's association with that city.
- We know that there were two main cities from verse 43:31 when it was asked why the Quran was not revealed to a man of significance from the two main towns (qaryatayni azmin). This is further corroborated by verse 47:13, which denotes town A from which the Prophet was expelled and town B in which he sought refuge. Town B is most likely known as 'Yathrib' (33:13).
- The Prophet was most likely from the Quraish who formed a certain part of the community where the sanctuary was located (Lord of this house 106.3). They were known to assist

pilgrims and maintained the Masjid al-haram (9:19). They participated in pagan worship which didn't consist much more than whistling and clapping (8:35).

Therefore, we can ascertain from this Quranic data that a considerable, somewhat powerful community of which the Prophet was a part were located in a main city of which the Sacred House was also a part. Two major towns with established settlements existed. The Prophet's main town was the centre (Umm ul-qura) and one that spoke a dialect of Arabic in which the Quran was revealed. This is also consistent with verse 28:59 which refers to central localities receiving messengers and in a language of their own people (14:4).

With respect to the above, it is difficult to accept that such a town was either Jerusalem (Not Arabic as a main language of the people) or any other town which has been long forgotten. A claim for another town as the original site for the Masjid al-Haram must be corroborated with clear evidence (at least in archaeological finds) which has been known to possess **such a vibrant settled community** as indicated by the Quran. It is difficult to accept that this location refers to some isolated location erased from common human memory.

Given that a Prophet had arisen in the midst of this town and Islam was accepted by many as attested by the Quran (110:2), communities must have continued to flourish in these localities. It is difficult to accept that if the original location of the Masjid al-Haram had been moved, that no furore took place amongst successive generations to capture such a momentous event.

## **SUPPORT 2** DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCALITY

- A place called 'Arafat' was a well known place (2:198).
- Near Arafat there was a well known sacred monument (mash'ari haram - 2:198).
- Safa and Marwa were well established places which were ratified by the Quran as God's 'sha'airi' (indications / signs / symbols - 2:158). The practice of circumambulation (tawaaaf) around them was allowed to continue during Hajj.

It is accepted (albeit improbable) that any of these above mentioned places (Arafat, Mash'ari haram, Safa and Marwa) could have been renamed at Makkah as part of a large conspiracy. However, these were places well known at the time of revelation. Therefore, if one is to accept the proposition of another location of the original Sacred Mosque, there has to be cogent evidence to suggest another location that has these well known places present. They have to be well known by the names as they appear in the Quran with archaeological proof of once settled communities as argued for in the above section. Silence or a dearth of sources is not proof.

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

As can be noted from the above article, I find the traditional position that the Sacred Mosque was originally located in Makkah more in harmony with the Quranic data than any other proposition to date.

In the end, only God knows best.

### Related Article:

- (1) [Prophet Abraham's <sup>\(pbuh\)</sup> Original Sanctuary - At Makkah \(Mecca\) or Bakkah \(Baca\)?](#)

## REFERENCES

- [1] JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY [online] [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society\\_&\\_Culture/geo/Mount.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/geo/Mount.html)  
[Accessed 17th November 2011]  
[2] Ibid.

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