

## What is the meaning of *al masjid al haram* according to The *Quran*?

In the following article, all occurrences of "*al masjid al haram*" in The *Quran* were analysed and information extracted, in order to gain a better understanding. The traditional understanding of this term is "The Sacred Mosque" (in Mecca). Whilst this is by far the most common understanding, a small minority of those who follow a Quran based islam have opted for different understandings.

In this work, sometimes significant points will be made, but also small observations which by themselves may not provide definitive insight, but taken together will hopefully provide a coherent view. Whilst reading this article, it is recommended to [open a new window](#) in order to lookup and study each verse cited and context. For further information, clickable links are given throughout the article. For the purposes of accuracy/clarity direct translations are shown in **blue** font.

Abbreviations:

AQ = al quran (the reading)

CAD = Classical Arabic Dictionaries

AMAH = al masjid al haram

In [Part 1](#) of this comprehensive study on SuJuD it was shown that the most suitable meanings for SuJuD were "**to submit, honour or pay respect**", which may be better rendered as "to give acknowledgement/recognition (in a subservient/submissive manner)" as the core meaning. In [Part 2](#) an analysis of "*masjid*" was undertaken, however no definitive conclusion was reached.

The literal meaning of "*al maSjID al HaRaM*" is roughly "the inviolable\*/restricted/forbidden/sacred implemented SJD", but the form/manner in which this implementation takes and what it refers to is open to interpretation. By far, the most common interpretation is "place of SJD" e.g. Mosque, but some others include: act of SJD, institute of SJD, time of SJD. Perhaps the most well-known theoretical meanings of this Arabic word form would be place/time of SJD.

\*'inviolable' simply means not to be violated/infringed. This meaning seems to be the most coherent for its occurrences (see root: [HRM](#)).

### Review of occurrences

**17:1** Glory be to the One who took with/by His servant (at) night from **al maSJD al haram** *ila/to al maSJD al aqsa* which We have blessed around\* it that We may show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Listener, the Seer.

**17:2** And We gave Moses the decree/writ and We made it a guidance for the Children of Israel: "Choose no guardian/protector besides Me."

**17:3** Progeny whom We carried with Noah, indeed he was a thankful servant.

**17:4** And We determined to the Children of Israel in the decree/writ, surely you will cause corruption twice in the earth/land, and you will reach great arrogance.

**17:5** So, when came the first promise, We sent against you servants of Ours, possessors of great might, so they breached the midst of the homes, and was a promise fulfilled.

**17:6** Then We granted you victory over them, and We reinforced you with wealth and children, and We made you more numerous.

**17:7** If you do good, you do good for yourselves, and if you do bad, then it is for it (i.e. yourselves). So when came the last/after promise, to sadden/distress your faces/wills and enter **al maSJD** just as they entered it the first time, and to destroy what they had overcome/conquered (with) destruction.

**17:8** Perhaps your Lord will have mercy on you, and if you revert then so will We\*\*. And We made Hell a gathering place for the rejecters/concealers/ungrateful.

**17:9** Indeed, this reading/*quran* guides to that which is more upright, and it gives glad tidings to the believers who do good work, that for them is a great reward.

\*note the often overlooked "blessed AROUND it", not "it" itself but AROUND it.

\*\* the wording of this warning statement implies it is addressing those in opposition at the time of this revelation

In Traditional sources there is an elaborate story behind 17:1, commonly referred to as "the night journey" (*isra*) and "ascension" (*miraj*) involving prophet Muhammad being taken from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca to the Farthest Mosque in Jerusalem, but as usual there is variance within these accounts about the details. For example, some say it was a physical transportation, some say spiritual journey or vision/dream. There are many online articles discussing the details and problems surrounding this story. You may wish to research this (e.g. [here](#), or [here](#)).

If understood traditionally as a journey to *Al Masjid Al Aqsa* in Jerusalem, it should be noted that it was NOT built at the time, thus has been explained away as referring to the area/site, since "*masjid*" can generically mean "place of SJD" not an actual building. Whilst this is theoretically possible, many still treat it as a proper noun. Interestingly, if we take it as an area, traditionalist commentators often say the whole earth is a "*masjid*" (based on a traditional *hadith*) thus why this area is allegedly singled out is unclear, as it would certainly not be the farthest *masjid*. It is also debatable whether *Al Masjid Al Aqsa* can truly be described as "blessed around it" when the region is full of conflict/oppression today. Perhaps one could argue this was a reference to the past and/or at the time of revelation only.

Similarly, it is also debatable whether the mosque *Al Masjid Al Haram* was built at this time, or even if it was it would have been rudimentary. Most consider it was not built at the time, thus regard it simply referring to the area/site. Again, many still treat it as a proper noun.

Notably, in the same chapter, in 17:93, the messenger clearly implies he cannot ascend in the heaven/sky and is only a human. Not only does this rule out the physical journey/ascension theory, but implies if he were to ascend physically it would make him other than human which is the very opposite of Quran's message. Also see 6:35. Further, a physical journey has not been described using such terms in AQ elsewhere as far as I am aware, so we can safely rule out the physical journey option.

#### Who does 17:1 refer to?

It can realistically only be Moses or Muhammad. Moses because he is mentioned in the next verse and it begins with "*wa/and*" implying a link to what was said previously. Muhammad because when AQ uses 3rd person singular delivery with the term "*abd/servant*" and does not explicitly name the *abd* addressed, it always or strongly points to the messenger of *Quran*, i.e. prophet Muhammad. Please see all occurrences here: Our *abd* - 2:23, 8:41, His *abd* - 18:1, 25:1, 39:36, 53:10, 57:9, God's *abd* - 72:19. Note how the start of the very next chapter, 18, and also 25 begin in a similar manner to 17. This weighs 17:1 in favour of referring to prophet Muhammad.

It is clear from 17:1 the reason given for taking His servant from A to B was to be shown some of God's signs/*ayat*. Hence a possible link to Moses in 17:2 with "and We gave Moses the decree/writ", however if so, this would make this the odd one out, as when AQ discusses revelation it does not use these terms nor describe anything similar. Unless a link and explanation can be found of course. Thus, if anything, 17:1 seems to imply some other kind of signs/*ayat*.

AMAH is NEVER mentioned along with Moses elsewhere in AQ, and in fact is exclusively mentioned along with the messenger of Quran. Taking these points into account, this weighs 17:1 significantly in favour of referring to prophet Muhammad.

The use of "*bi*" and "*ila*" in 17:1 suggest God took with/by His servant from A to B. Since we have ruled out a physical journey, this only leaves a spiritual journey and/or vision/dream or some other understanding. The use of "night" may indicate during sleep, i.e. a dream/vision.

Interestingly, the context for 17:7 is established by the dual mention of "*masjid*" in 17:1,

and it just so happens to mention "enter *al maSJD* just as they entered it the first time", implying a minimum of two "*masjid*" are of relevance - coincidence? If so, what is it referring to? As stated in part 2 of this series on *SuJUD*, the most prominently known "AL maSJD" in AQ is AMAH, thus in terms of probability, would likely refer to that.

The only times the words "enter/*dKhl*" and "*maSJD*" occur side-by-side are in 17:5 "enter *al maSJD*" and 48:27 "enter AMAH" - and it just so happens that in 48:27 it states "...God has confirmed the vision (*al ru'ya*) of His messenger with truth/reality, surely you will enter AMAH..." giving us a link to a vision/dream - coincidence? Perhaps, but later in chapter 17, in 17:60 it says:

**17:59** ...and We sent to Thamud the camel as a visible sign, but they wronged her. And We do not send the signs/*ayat* except as a warning.

**17:60** And when We said to thee: "Your Lord has encompassed the people." And We did not make the vision (*al ru'ya*) that We showed\* thee except as a trial for the people, and the accursed tree\*\* in the *quran*/reading. And We warn them, but it only increases their transgression.

\*note how "show" (imperfect tense) in 17:1, and "showed" (perfect tense) in 17:60, i.e. an action done/completed by 17:60. The same word (*arayna*) is used in both cases, which is the same root as *ru'ya*/vision.

\*\* see 37:62-66

Note that even though the vision was shown to thee (singular, i.e. the messenger) it is a *fit'na*/trial for the people, meaning that it MUST have been relayed to them. This is compounded by the theme recurrent of sending the signs/*ayat* as a warning and the use of "We warn them / make them fearful...". According to the traditional explanations of 17:60 (which they link to 17:1), their source material is primarily the traditional *hadith*. For those following a *Quran* based *islam*, the strong preference is to have a self-contained explanation within AQ itself. If so, where is this vision explained?

Furthermore, in AQ *ru'ya*/vision/dream is used in only three other instances, that is for Joseph (12:5, 12:100), the King (12:43) and Abraham (37:102), and it means dream/vision in ALL cases, specifically a vision foretelling a future occurrence/event, and in ALL instances the *ru'ya*/vision is explained. IF 17:60 and 48:27 are unexplained, then they would be the odd ones out in AQ, which would be highly unusual.

17:60 also tells us the reason for the vision and that is it was a *fit'na*/trial for the people. This would serve to explain the whole content of chapter 17, which is a series of stories about messengership, and warnings, reasons for rejection, destruction of rejecting/deviant communities, paradigm shifts and God's will coming to pass. Hence likely why 17:2 uses "Choose no guardian/protector besides Me". Is this another coincidence? As a side note, in 17:60 it says it increases their transgression, possibly implying it may get worse before it gets better for believers.

Thus, any understanding of AMAH should take these issues into account and be able to explain them. If we link these "coincidences" together, we have shown that 17:1 most likely refers to the messenger of Quran, there is an association between 17:1, 17:7, 17:60 and 48:27, and it is likely regarding a vision foretelling a future occurrence which will be blessed around, involving overcoming the opposition, which would serve as a warning/trial for such people, and is fulfilled upon entering AMAH securing, relieving your chiefs, restraining not fearing with a victory near (see 48:27 analysis). If so, is there an explanation of AMAH that can provide a fit?

If we take '*al masjid al haram*' as "the inviolable time of SJD/acknowledgement" (i.e. the term referring to the time-period/event of the 'inviolable months') and '*al masjid al aqsa*' as "the farthest/remotest time of SJD/acknowledgement" (implying a time of SJD/acknowledgement in the future), this would slot in perfectly with all that has been discussed previously. Around this future time is blessed, e.g. the believers have grown in numbers/power/authority, have overcome etc and a foretelling of this would serve as a warning/trial for the opposing people, and is completed upon entering AMAH, with a victory near. Much of AQ may have to be read to appreciate this progression in success for the believers. By "inviolable months" I am referring to "*al ashhur al hurum*" which are mentioned

in 2:194, 2:217, 5:2, 5:97, 9:5 and refer to a time-period in which *al hajj* (the symposium/feast) is held, various regulations are in place etc. Please read these occurrences to familiarise yourself with this subject.

Note how *ru'ya*/vision is a foretelling of a future occurrence/event, and how the above fits with our chosen meaning of maSJD and AMAH. In other words, maSJD, AMAH and '*al masjid al aqsa*' must be a reference to a time-period. So we can say the prophet Muhammad experienced the vision and relayed revelation of chapter 17 during AMAH. Note that AMAH (i.e. the term referring to the time-period/event of the inviolable months) would have been a regular, or semi-regular, occurrence, e.g. every year perhaps. This is also suggested by AQ, e.g. 9:28, 28:27.

It is interesting to note how traditional commentators explain away some points, e.g. the vision referred to in 17:60 (which they link to 17:1) is described as a "trial/ordeal/*fit'na* for the people" so they say this is because: Al Jalalayn (altafsir.com) "*since they denied it and some of them [even] apostatised when he [the Prophet] informed them of it*", Ibn Kathir (qtafsir.com) implies that since the prophet saw it with his physical eyes, rather than a dream, that is why, but unfortunately for him this contradicts 17:93. In my view, their explanations are unsatisfactory and certainly not based on AQ. They also do not seem to explain why it is placed in the context of a warning. The traditional story of *isra* and *miraj* does not come across as a warning, hence perhaps the silence on this point. To make things clearer, a translation of the verses is now shown below:

**17:1** Glory be to the One who took with/by His servant (at) night from **the inviolable time of SJD/acknowledgement to the farthest/remotest time of SJD/acknowledgement** which We have blessed around it that We may show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Listener, the Seer.

**17:7** If you do good, you do good for yourselves, and if you do bad, then it is for it (i.e. yourselves). So when came the last/after promise, to sadden/distress your faces/wills and enter **THE time of SJD/acknowledgement** just as they\* entered it\*\* the first time, and to destroy what they had overcome/conquered (with) destruction.

\*i.e. Our servants, but this time they would be the present believers and perhaps their allies.

\*\* THE maSJD, i.e. al masjid al haram / the inviolable time of SJD/acknowledgement, which would occur regularly, e.g. yearly.

Some may claim that this understanding contradicts several passages in AQ in which the prophet Muhammad clearly states he does not know the future. However there is no contradiction, as none knows the future, including Muhammad (5:109, 6:50, 7:188, 10:20, 18:110, 27:65, 46:9, 81:24). Only God knows the future and this knowledge can be attained only through divine revelations/signs (3:44, 3:179, 11:49, 12:102, 30:2, 72:26-28). The messenger only follows what is inspired/revealed to him, and this particular vision is relayed in the revelation itself. This is also suggested when the vision is fulfilled in 48:27 "...He knew what you did not know...". Or some may claim the switch in addressee in 17:7 is problematic, however this is fairly common in AQ, i.e. switching from past to present audience etc, e.g. see 2:142. This is commonly known as "*iltifaat*" (see [here](#)).

An interesting observation is that the traditional explanations of 48:27 follow a *basic* outline to what was found above, see Asad's note 38 on 48:27 (my insertion in bold): "*Shortly before the expedition which ended at Hudaibiyyah, the Prophet had a dream in which he saw himself and his followers entering Mecca (read: al masjid al haram) as pilgrims. This dream-vision was destined to be fulfilled a year later, in 7 H., when the Muslims were able to perform their first peaceful pilgrimage to the Holy City (read: al masjid al haram)*". In other words, a successful entering of AMAH by the believers at some point in the future. Surprisingly, most mainstream traditional commentators do not link the vision of 48:27 to chapter 17. To them, the vision of 48:27 is not explained in AQ. If my findings are correct, then this would imply somewhere along the way the chapter 17 vision was disassociated from the 48:27 vision, and the former distorted for their own ends. For example, in this case, a fixing of the 5-daily *salat*. For those who do not know, according to tradition, it was only after the alleged *isra* and *miraj* did a fix of 5-daily *salat* come into

observance, as prior to this it was 2-daily for the *mumineen*/believers (click: [further reading](#)).

It is strongly recommend to re-read the analysis above and ponder over the findings presented here. Also try to insert 'act/institution/etc of SJD' to see if it works. I personally could not make much sense of these possible understandings in this instance.

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In the following translation, please note: thou/thy/thee = singular, you/your = plural. Also the coloured words are there to aid your own study/comparison.

**2:140** Or do you say that Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Patriarchs were all Jewish or Nazarene? Say: "Are you more knowledgeable or is God?" Who is more wicked than one who conceals a testimony with him from God? God is not unaware of what you do.

**2:141** That was a community that passed away, to them is what they earned and to you is what you have earned; you will not be asked about what they used to do.

**2:142** The foolish from the people will say: "What has turned them from the **qiblah/focal-point** which they were on it?" Say: "To God is the east and the west, He guides whomever He wishes to a straight/establishing path."

**2:143** And as such **We** have made you a balanced community so that you will be witnesses over the people, and the messenger will be a witness over you. And not **We** made the **qiblah/focal-point** which *thou* were on **it** except that **We** make evident he who follows the messenger from he who will turn back on his heels. And indeed **it** was certainly a great (thing/test) except for those whom God guided; And not was God to let go waste your belief. Indeed, God is over the people Fully-Kind and Merciful.

**2:144** Indeed, **We** see *thy* face/consideration/purpose shifting/moving *fee*/in the sky/heaven; so **We** will surely turn *thee* (onto/to) a **qiblah/focal-point** that will please *thee*: so turn *thy* face/purpose/consideration **in the direction** (of) **al maSJD al haram** and **wherever** that you are so turn your faces/purposes/considerations in **its direction** and indeed those who have been given the writ/decreed know that **it** is the truth from their Lord. And God is not unaware of what they do.

**2:145** And even if *thou* come to those who have been given the writ/decreed with all signs/evidences they would not follow *thy* **qiblah/focal-point**, and nor will *thou* be a follower of their **qiblah/focal-point**, and nor some of them are followers of each others **qiblah/focal-point**. And surely if *thou* were to follow their desires from after what came to *thou* of the knowledge, indeed *thou* would then surely be among the wrongdoers.

**2:146** Those to whom We have given the decree/writ recognise **it** like they recognise their sons; and indeed a group of them surely hides the truth while they know.

**2:147** The truth from your Lord, so do not be from the doubters/disputers.

**2:148** And for each is a direction/course/goal (*wijhatun*) he turns towards it, so race\* (to yourselves) the good. **Wherever** that you will be, God will bring you (all) together. God is on every thing Able/Powerful.

**2:149** And from **wherever** *thou* start/come forth so turn *thy* face/purpose/consideration **in the direction** (of) **al masjid al haram**, and indeed **it** is surely the truth from your Lord, and God is not unaware of what you do.

**2:150** And from **wherever** *thou* start/come forth so turn *thy* face/purpose/consideration **in the direction** (of) **al masjid al haram** and **wherever** that you are so turn your faces/purposes/considerations in **its direction** so that not will be for the people against you debate, except those who wronged among them. So do not fear them, but fear Me and that I may complete My favour upon you and so that you may be guided.

**2:151** As We have sent a messenger to you from amongst yourselves to recite Our revelations to you, and purify you, and teach you the decree/book and the wisdom, and teach you what you did not know.

\*race/*istabiqu* is used elsewhere for the physical racing but no-one takes it as physical here. See 5:48 and 12:25 as examples. Likewise "*wajh*" can mean the physical face but not always, see its many occurrences, along with CAD.

The traditional understanding of these verses is that *qiblah* means "prayer direction", and

these verses discuss a change of *qiblah* from facing Jerusalem back to the cuboid called Kaabah in Mecca. There is a little variance when it comes to who, if anyone, commanded the prophet to face Jerusalem in the 1st place, e.g. did the prophet simply follow the custom of the Jews in Medina (where this revelation allegedly occurred) and face Jerusalem, or was he commanded by God to do so and later God abrogated this command in order to pray towards the cuboid. Readers unfamiliar with the theories on abrogation may wish to study this subject for background information - however, as usual, variance exists amongst Traditionalists (see the works "[K. al nasikh wa-l-mansukh](#)" by Abu Ubaid al-Qasim b. Sallam, "[The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation](#)" by John Burton).

The following is a list of the problems regarding this traditional explanation:

- 1) It is entirely an interpretation based on external sources (i.e. traditions). The terms "*kaabah*", "*mecca*", "*AMAH*", "turn your *wajh*/face/consideration", "*masjid*" etc are NEVER discussed elsewhere in AQ involving a specific physical direction, nor is an example given of anyone performing *salat* in a particular direction. Some cite 4:102 but please see part 1 of this series for its analysis.
- 2) The word "*qiblah*", and its root (QBL), cannot be shown to clearly mean "prayer direction" in any AQ occurrence.
- 3) All traditional commentators translate the only other occurrence of the specific noun "*qiblah*" (apart from these verses) in 10:87 as "oratories / places of worship" not "prayer direction". The likely reason is that to do so would make little sense as 10:87 says "...and make your houses a *qiblah*...". Further, they turn it into a plural here, whilst elsewhere it is singular.
- 4) In addition to 2:142, the following verses also clearly imply turning to a specific direction is irrelevant, e.g. 2:115 says "for God is the east and the west so wherever you turn so there is God's *wajh*/presence/consideration...", 2:177 "...it is not righteousness that you turn your *wujud*/faces/considerations towards/*qibala* the east and the west...". Note the similar words used "turn/*walla*", "wherever/*ayna*", "*wajh*/face/consideration", and these messages (the only ones of their kind) are only found in chapter 2, and the only times verb form 2 of "turn" is used in chapter 2 are 2:115, 2:142-150, 2:177. Some commentators explain this away by saying there was no prayer direction initially, and later this was abrogated, and so on. However, note that in terms of sequence, this same message is given prior to AND after the "change of *qiblah*" verses. Interestingly, some traditional commentators accept that any direction is not special, and the only thing that makes it special is God having imposed it, no other reason.
- 5) The verses do not say turn in the direction of the "*Kaabah*", but *AMAH*. One may ask then, what does one do once inside *AMAH* or next to it.
- 6) The verses do not say turn your *wajh* DURING *salat*, this is an inserted interpretation. In fact, it explicitly says "wherever you are" / "wherever thou start or come forth", implying no limitation, and if so, this would make it impossible to face one direction all the time.
- 7) Technically, it is impossible to face an object on a spheroid (i.e. earth) if you are a long distance away from it. One actually faces a random point in space, and even if one were to draw a line on the earth's surface in a direction towards the intended object being even one degree off can result in being many miles away from the object. Thus, it is actually near impossible to do, unless in close proximity to the object, so if one wishes to take this interpretation, one must accept facing one direction is symbolic only.
- 8) Note how 2:141 clearly implies the past is the past, but according to the traditional understanding the verses which follow are about resuming the *qiblah* of Abraham *et al*. Seems a mixed message.
- 9) The reason given for the apparent change in *qiblah* is "not will be for the people against you debate", and "that I may complete My favour upon you and so that you may be guided". The traditional commentators try to explain these away using traditions, see Al Jalalayn (altafsir.com), ibn Kathir (qtafsir.com), Asad (quranix.net). Interestingly, traditional Islamic history shows that their relations with the Jewish tribes of Medina only worsened after this point - potentially contradicting the reasoning offered in AQ.
- 10) 2:145 says "...nor will they follow each other's *qiblah*..." - a much missed point is the

fact that the traditional understanding of "*qiblah*" as "prayer direction" requires the people of the book to have a minimum of TWO different "*qiblah*" or "prayer directions" in order to make sense logically, i.e. Jews pray one direction, Christians pray another. I did not find a commentator who explained this away. It is possible they did not realise this. However, there is apparently some evidence to suggest early Christians prayed facing east, and Jews faced Jerusalem, thus satisfying the two-minimum criteria. To me the context of this suggests people can have many *qiblah*, even their own individual *qiblah*, i.e. more than two.

**11)** If these verses were revealed in *Medina*, as alleged, then the direction of Jerusalem from there is clearly north-west, not west. Further, there may be some evidence Christians prayed to the east, but Jews do not pray to the west, thus the use of "east" and "west" in 2:142 are unlikely meant to be taken as discussing prayer directions, as some claim. Most traditional commentators do not claim this however.

**12)** If facing the cuboid called "*Kaabah*" pleased the messenger, as implied in 2:144, then it should be noted it was full of idols at the time, as even accepted in traditional sources. They allege that since it was the first house dedicated to worship, built by Abraham, this was more important than the fact it was filled with idols and a pagan symbol, hence "pleased".

**13)** IF the cuboid called "*Kaabah*" was also the *qiblah* of Abraham, as agreed upon by traditionalists, then it should be noted prophets Moses and Jesus (who came after Abraham) were NEVER recorded, in any source, as visiting it nor facing it during prayer. This would be extremely unusual. Thus, the explanation sometimes given is that Jerusalem was the legitimate *qiblah* for Moses/Jesus, and then the original *qiblah* (i.e. cuboid called *Kaabah*) was restored with the final revelation, i.e. *Quran*. This requires us to believe for some reason God changed it, then restored it, and now seemingly assigns blame to the people of the book for not accepting this change. Can we really blame them for not changing, as this explanation is tantamount to God being the source of confusion, which is unacceptable in my view. Further, it is implied in 2:146 that some of the people of the *kitab*/book know that this change is the truth, implying somewhere in their own scriptures this *qiblah* is mentioned or that their *qiblah* will be superseded by a future messenger etc - if so, where is this information? Perhaps further research needs to be done in this area.

**14)** AMAH as a building likely did not exist at the time, as admitted by traditional sources, and refers to the area/site (see Encyclopaedia of Quran, volume 3, p77). How this was delineated is anyone's guess. Please note some commentators regard AMAH as Mecca in some verses, e.g. 9:28.

**15)** As is clear from the last part of 2:144, the only requirement for knowing the true "*qiblah*" is to be given the decree/scripture from our Lord. There is no requirement to have a compass or to consult a geographical map to know the true "*qiblah*" from our Lord.

**16)** IF the Jerusalem *qiblah* was appointed by God, then this indirectly implies the messenger was dissatisfied with such a *qiblah* when 2:144 says "...We see thy face/consideration shifting in the sky..." and "...that will please thee...", i.e. was the messenger dissatisfied with a command from God?

**17)** The use of masculine suffix pronoun "*hu/it*" in these verses is somewhat problematic (see bold blue in the above translation), as IF "it" refers to AMAH as a physical building then it seems odd (e.g. they recognise it/AMAH as they recognise their sons). Tafsir Al Jalalayn states the "it" in 2:146 refers to Muhammad, Ibn Kathir says it could be Muhammad or Kaabah but unfortunately for him the latter is a feminine noun so it cannot be that. Perhaps Ibn Kathir meant AMAH. Some translators imply the "*it*" refers to the *qiblah* but again, this is a feminine noun (see the use of feminine "*ha/it*" in 2:143 for confirmation of this). For me, the variance is telling. It should be strongly noted that in AQ Abraham is never said to have built AMAH, nor is it explicitly mentioned in his presence, thus for the people of the writ/deed to link this to Abraham and recognise AMAH as the truth is somewhat difficult. Unfortunately, it is not possible to state with certainty what the masculine pronoun "*hu*" refers to, but in my humble opinion, the flow and logic of the verses suggest it=AMAH, especially considering the usage of "*it is the truth from your Lord*" in 2:144, 2:147 and 2:149.

**18)** 2:145 would imply that if the messenger were to follow their *qiblah* after these revelations then he would be a wrongdoer and following their desires, yet he was apparently following it previously. Is there a precedent for this in AQ, i.e. doing X is allowed then a

future revelation clearly changes doing X to desires/wrongdoing? Not to my knowledge.

**19)** The expression "turn + *wajh*", is used in 6: 79 and rendered as "I shall turn my face to the One who created the heavens and the earth..." but explained as "making his religion and works sincere" (e.g. Ibn Kathir, Ibn Abbas), likely because this was prior to the alleged building of the cuboid called "*Kaaba*", thus to render it as a physical direction when such a place did not exist would be problematic for Traditionalists, yet they take this same phrase to mean physical directional command here. Also see "*wajh*" in 'Verbal Idioms of Quran' by Mustansir Mir. This shows that this phrase does have a link to mindset/sincerity/intention/approach/etc even in traditional sources. The phrase is also used in 28: 22 (albeit "turn" is verb form 5 not 2) and likely denotes an actual physical turning of one's face, but uses the Arabic word "*tilq'aa*" for "towards" not "*shatra* (in the direction)" like these verses. Perhaps "*til'qaa*" is more appropriate for a physical turning towards, also see 7: 47. It is somewhat peculiar "*shatra*" is used, rather than the more common "*ila/to*" for example, IF it did mean a physical face turning towards/to something.

As a side note, also recall how in part 2 it was shown the phrase "*aqim wajh*" had no link to a physical face or directional command.

**20)** IF it was a reference to turning towards another direction in prayer, then to me, it seems odd that in 2: 142 it states the foolish (*al sufahau*) will ask "what has turned them from..." when this seems like a reasonable question to ask. Think about it, if you were there as an observer, and a group prayed towards X then Y for about 18 months (as the traditional story goes) then back to X again, wouldn't you ask "why" also? If so, you are of the foolish ones according to the traditional understanding.

Clearly the traditional position has issues, thus is there an alternative understanding that fits better? Before some options are discussed, it should be mentioned Muhammad Asad has a slightly different take on these verses, as he does not regard the prophet as being commanded to face Jerusalem, then later commanded otherwise (see his translation and notes on [quranix.net](http://quranix.net)). He does not believe in abrogation ([see here](#)). Unusually, he says the "great test" in 2: 143 was restoring the "prayer direction" from Jerusalem to the cuboid called Kaabah NOT from the cuboid to Jerusalem as is commonly interpreted. Traditional Islamic history tells us that the Arabs revered the cuboid and Muhammad and the believers faced it whilst in Mecca, thus one would think it would have been harder to face away from it, than return to it. Furthermore, his view would imply that the messenger was "pleased" for the believers to undergo a "great test" - which I consider unlikely. Lastly, the flow of the verses does not seem to fit his take on it. He seems to hold this understanding as a consequence of rejecting abrogation.

If one does or does not believe in abrogation, in either case, any explanation for these verses should be able to reasonably explain a change of *qiblah*, which these verses strongly suggest occurred.

#### change of *qiblah* - an understanding based on *Quran*

The information we can extract about the meaning of "*qiblah*", and the change, from these verses is as follows:

- this new change is in some way related to guiding to a straight/establishing path, and making the believers a balanced/moderate community
- the *qiblah* which they were on was a great test (i.e. difficult), except those God guided, and their belief in such was not going to be for nothing
- in this case the *qiblah* happens to be AMAH, but there are potentially many other *qiblah*, as individuals could have their own *qiblah*
- in 2: 148 the usage of "wherever" is the ONLY time it appears without a close link to "turn+*wajh*+AMAH" therefore likens "*wijhatun* (direction/course/goal)" with "*qiblah*" and consequently likens AMAH to "race to the good" or at least we can say AMAH involves this. Furthermore, AQ implies each person may have their own "*qiblah*" in

2:145 then later in 2:148 says "for each is a *wijhatun* he turns towards it", strongly suggesting "*qiblah*" and "*wijhatun*" are being related as similar terms/concepts. Please re-read these verses as this is a key finding.

- the effects of this change will be less debate from the people, lead to God completing His favour, aid guiding, and bringing you all together.
- wherever one is they should turn their *wajh*/purpose/consideration in the direction of AMAH, and from the contexts that likely involves being oriented towards the truth of your Lord, the good, and uniting of believers

To me, "turning one's *wajh* in the sky" in 2:144 comes across as an idiom, so whilst it could be literally translated as "turning one's face IN the sky" it is implying one is directionless, aimless, floating/blowing in the wind, i.e. no plan/goal to progress, looking/searching for a way/resolution. Interestingly it is listed in 'Verbal Idioms of Quran' by Mustansir Mir but explained as he turned his face towards the heaven so often that it is added emphasis to say his face was IN the heaven, even though it literally is not. Perhaps, but that does not change the fact that it is taken by all to mean he was seeking guidance. The new *qiblah* resolves this, and is also pleasing, implying a possible easing of argumentation/hostility for the believers, which would tie in with "no debate against you".

As a side note, the only other use of "wly/turn" in these verses other than "turn+*wajh*" is 2:148 "...he turns towards it (*wijhatun*/course/goal)", which is primarily figurative and not taken physical-directional by anyone. This may help indicate the type of turning being referred to in these verses.

Based on the above, usage of the root QBL in AQ, CAD meanings, and the only other occurrence of "*qiblah*" in 10:87, in terms of likelihood for the meaning of "*qiblah*", in my view, are:

- 1) **focal-point** - focus/centre of interest or activity
- 2) **direction** - general aim or purpose; a general way in which someone/something is developing
- 3) **point-of-approach** - a way in which to approaching something
- 4) **counteraction** - to oppose and mitigate the effects of by contrary action

Further, "[to God is the east and the west](#)" in 2:142 implies God encompasses all things, and the use of "[God is Able/Powerful](#)" in 2:148 seems to restate this theme, i.e. this change is perhaps part of a bigger plan, and only the foolish will not understand this. This is reinforced with "[God will bring you \(all\) together](#)" and "[that I may complete My favour upon you](#)". Note, "[God will bring you all together](#)" which implies many/all believers coming together, and it is not something easy/ordinary, as it says "[God is Able/Powerful](#)" implying something a little out of the ordinary. Whatever this new change in *qiblah* is, i.e. AMAH, should be able to accomplish this.

The use of "wherever" in "[wherever you all are](#)" and "[wherever thou start/come forth](#)" is interesting. We can reasonably assume that at the time of revelation all followers of the messenger (*mumineen*/believers) were not all in one place, thus could imply a coming together, a unification of sorts will result if this new *qiblah* is followed. The implication is these verses are discussing something that will help bring this about.

2:150 implies "[race \(to yourselves\) the good](#)" and the change in focal-point to AMAH took place BEFORE the completion of God's favour. The singular use in 2:149 and 2:150 "[wherever thou start/come forth](#)" implies the messenger would have to depart from somewhere, whilst others may not necessarily have to do so. Bringing you all together could be a reference to an ushering towards one place/event at one time. Interestingly, the root of the term "[shatra \(in the direction of\)](#)" has some links to things distant/remote and journeying to a distant/remote country/land. This may be a coincidence but it may explain a connotation this term has and the reason for its unique usage in these verses.

IF "the inviolable time of SJD/acknowledgement" (i.e. the term referring to the time-period/event of the inviolable months) is chosen as a meaning for AMAH, this would provide a

crucial link to a specific time wherein certain events take place. If believers were to adopt this as their new focal-point, this would certainly involve some having to travel to a location, bring believers together from all over, promote unity amongst themselves and a wider people (because such an event was supposed to be open to all, wherein hostilities/fighting were meant to cease) and allow them to put forward good deeds, which would likely result in good-will from others. This could, in part, explain the "no debate against you". IF understandings such as "the inviolable institution/act/etc of SJD" refer to such a time/event, then they could work also. If a link is not made to such a thing, I personally find it difficult to explain what these verses could refer to. Further, if no link is made, then this would imply their previous "*qiblah*" was not this, thus what they changed from and to would have to be explained.

As a side note, this understanding also opens up the possibility that the messenger was pleased due to him being a trader, if he was a trader that is, considering much trading would be done during such a time/event, see 9:28.

The people of the book may have recognised it as the truth because they have a practice which resembles this period in which the HaJJ/symposium/feast is held, called "hagg sukot" (feast of tabernacles) which involves tents and travelling to a certain location for a festival/feast/gathering, remembering/thanking God, celebrating the Torah, spreading the message, with similar timing and is open to all. There is also talk of representatives (see 2:196 analysis) etc. We know from AQ that the HaJJ was a regular occurrence in Moses' time, see 28:27. This is perhaps an area for further research.

So we may have a better idea of the meaning of *qiblah* and AMAH, but what was the change these verses allude to?

Firstly, it must be accepted that this is not clearly stated in AQ, thus some interpretation/thinking becomes necessary. Without an explicit reference, this could explain the fanciful traditional interpretations.

When I examined where in AQ this subject and related words were discussed, an interesting discovery was made. ALL verses discussing HaJJ, AMAH, "*al bayt al haram*," "*al bayt al atiq*" and "*kaaba*" occur in the latter revealed chapters of AQ, in order of revelation, not only according to traditional order of revelation but also based on analysis of chapter content (e.g. see chapter 7 of "Introduction to Quran" by Richard Bell, or chapter 2 of "Discovering the Quran" by Neal Robinson, or simply do an online search for the traditional ordering). Out of all the latter chapters that discuss AMAH, chapter 2 is the first of them, in order of revelation, implying that from this point forward, AMAH was the focus - coincidence? 17:1 is the only occurrence of AMAH that occurs midway through order of revelation. Bearing in mind what has been proposed above, involving a future prophecy, and noting 17:1-7 gives no special status to AMAH or mentions anything about it, and simply uses it as a reference point - this suggests at this point in time it was not a focal-point. Another coincidence? Not to me. As a side note, whatever meaning of AMAH is chosen, they should be able to reasonably explain why it only occurs in the latter stages of revelation.

This information provides us with a self-contained explanation for the change in focal-point mentioned in 2:142-150. If AMAH had been the focus for the believers from the start then this would have been difficult to succeed in because of their low numbers initially, hostility against them etc but later when their numbers/influence/message/power had grown AMAH / "the inviolable time of SJD/acknowledgement" became a perfect vehicle for all believers to converge upon, thus solidifying their position and eventually overcome the opposition.

Some recurrent themes of the surrounding context in chapter 2 are that it is not the mere profession of a creed but righteous conduct that is proper, and the repeated exemplars of Abraham and to follow his creed, is something the believers had in common with the people of the book, placing an emphasis on unity. The believers utilising what Abraham followed and did as the blueprint for their future direction and ultimately success. These themes could explain the placement of these verses.

A question may arise, that once the results of such a change in "*qiblah*" are fulfilled (e.g. believers are brought together, completion of God's favour, and subsequently believers becoming victorious, completion of the messenger's mission and Quran revelation etc), are the believers still to turn their *wajh*/consideration/purpose in the direction of AMAH wherever

they are? In other words, is this a command for all people at all times and all places? I think so, but this could, theoretically, be debated. Interestingly, in Traditional Islamic history itself, there is variance regarding the obligation of hajj and the importance it had/has at the time, and shortly after prophet Muhammad's death.

It may be interesting to note that according to Traditional Islamic history, revelation of AQ took place over a period of 23 years, and during most of this time, the believers were allegedly praying inside AMAH, towards the cuboid called Kaabah, the inviolable months and *al hajj* were presumably a regular occurrence and taking place, but all these things are only mentioned in the last few years of revelation, according to tradition. This could suggest that AMAH/etc was not a focal-point for believers, as it simply went unmentioned, until later on. This could be an interesting area of research.

###

**2:190** And fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not transgress, God does not like the transgressors.

**2:191** And kill them wherever you found them, and expel them from wherever they expelled you, and persecution/oppression is worse than the killing. And do not fight them *AAinda* (in the presence of) \* **al masjid al haram** until they fight you *fee* in it; so if they fight you then kill them, such is the recompense of the rejecters/concealers.

**2:192** Then if they cease, then indeed God is Forgiving, Merciful.

**2:193** And fight them until there is no persecution/oppression and becomes the obligation/system for God. So if they cease then no hostility except against the wrongdoers.

**2:194** The restricted month for/with the restricted month, and (for) the restrictions/sanctions (see 22: 30) is just recompense. So whoever transgressed upon you, then you transgress on him in the same as he transgressed upon you; and be conscious of God, and know that God is with those who are cautious/guarding/God-conscious.

**2:195** And spend in the cause of God, but do not throw your resources to disaster. And do kindness/good, for God loves those who do kindness/good.

**2:196** And complete/fulfill the *HaJJ*/feast/symposium and the visit for God. So if you are prevented/held-back then (give) what is easy of the offering and do not relieve/unburden your chiefs/representatives (of this duty) until the offering reaches its permitted/lawful place\*\* , so whoever from among you was sick or with/by him harm/annoyance from his chief/representative then a ransom from abstinence/fast or charity or observance. So when safe/secure (i.e. in the designated vicinity) then whoever benefited/enjoyed by/with the visit to the *HaJJ*/symposium then (give) what is easy of the offering so whoever couldn't find then an abstinence/fast three days during the *HaJJ*/symposium and seven when you returned, this is ten complete. That is for one whose people are not at-hand/present (at) **al masjid al haram** and be conscious of God and know that God is severe in punishment.

**2:197** The *HaJJ*/symposium (are) the months/full-moons well known...

\* Arabic: *AAinda* (root: Ayn-Nun-Dal) = Preposition: here, with, by, at the point of, about, from, in the presence of. The word denotes the idea of nearness, whether it be actual in the sense of possession or ideational, it also denotes a sense of rank or dignity or opinion, time and place. See [Project Root List](#). "with" or "in the presence of" seems to fit best for the many occurrences of this preposition.

\*\* al bayt al atiq [22:33], al ka'aba / al bayt al haram [5:95-97]

2:191 says "kill them wherever you found them", no restrictions about place, but it could be argued that at the end it mentions AMAH as the exception, IF one took it to mean a physical building/place. 2:191 states "until they fight you in it (AMAH)" which means AMAH can be fought in and implies it is something that already exists, and likens "AAinda" with "fee". For an analysis of 2:196, [this article](#) must be studied. The flaws in the traditional understanding of this verse are significant.

###

**2:217** They ask you about the inviolable month (*al shahr al haram*) "Is there fighting in it?" Say: "Fighting in it is a great wrong but hindering from the way/path of God and to reject/conceal in/with/by Him/it and **al masjid al haram**, and expelling its people\* from it is a greater wrong *AAinda*/(in the presence of) God, and the persecution/oppression is worse than killing/warfare." And they will not cease to fight you until they turn you away from your system/obligation if they are able. And whoever of you turns away from his system/obligation, then dies while he is rejecting/concealing, then these have nullified their deeds in this world and the hereafter; and these are the companions of the Fire, in it they are dwelling.

\*"its people" likely refers to the people within it and also pursuing it, see 22:25, 8:34, 9:17-18. This may also relate to some instances of the *muhajirin*/emigrants mentioned in AQ.

All translators that I checked translate "*kifr bihi*" in 2:217 as "disbelief/deny/reject in Him" however this creates an issue with what follows as it would require rendering "wa (kifr bi) AMAH" as "and disbelief/deny/reject in AMAH". This is problematic according to Traditional Islamic history because the polytheists were devoted to AMAH, thus did not disbelieve/deny/reject in it. This may explain the variance for this part in translations. Interestingly, I could not find a "*kifr bihi*" in AQ referring to God. Furthermore, it says the persecution/oppression (*al fit'na*) is worse than the killing/warfare, implying what was said before in 2:217 is about *fit'na*, not about rejecting/disbelieving in God. Thus, in terms of probability, "*kifr bihi*" likely means "deny/reject/conceal in it (the path of God)", i.e. the closest preceding masculine singular.

An important article dealing with an alleged grammatical problem in 2:217 can be found [HERE](#) - it is technical, but essentially the case ending of AMAH shows that it is joined to a preceding phrase in this verse - but what phrase? If we accept the wording of AQ as is, then interpreting AMAH as "the inviolable time of SJD/acknowledgement" (i.e. the term referring to the time-period/event of the inviolable months) the alleged grammar problem disappears. In the article note how Farra and Razi say similar. Abu Hayyan's explanation is simple and could also work since in spoken vernacular Arabic it is common to add on a genitive pronoun without the preposition "*bi*" being repeated, e.g. 5:69 "... *amana biAllahi wa alyawmi al-akhiri*...". It would still leave the potential problem of explaining "deny/reject/conceal in AMAH" however (as stated in that article), but this is perhaps less of an issue for the alternative understandings of 'the inviolable act/institution/time of SJD'.

Please note that the author of that article resorts to the rhetoric style ("*balagha*") in order to explain away the alleged "inconsistency" in traditional interpretation and grammar. This suggests that the solutions discussed in the article were unsatisfactory, and there is little idea about how to explain the alleged "inconsistency", hence being placed under the conveniently fuzzy/undefined catch-all category of "*balagha*". For those relying upon AQ, it is much preferable to have a solution that corresponds to its internal structure and logic, if there is such a solution. In this case there is.

###

**8:33** But God was not to punish them (concealers/rejecters/deniers) while you are among them, nor will God punish them while they continue to seek forgiveness.

**8:34** And why should God not punish them while they hinder from **al maSJD al haram**, and they were not its guardians/protectors! Its guardians/protectors are the conscientious; but most of them do not know.

8:30-40 should possibly be read in conjunction with 9:1-19 and 48:24-28, as they describe similar events.

###

**22:25** Surely, those who have rejected/concealed and hinder from the path of God and **al masjid al haram** which We made for mankind, equal are the devotee/attached/resident in it

and the bedouin/visitor/traveller, and whoever intends/wishes in it deviation (or) wrongdoing, We will make him taste from painful retribution.

This verse causes some problems for the 'institution/act/place of SJD' understandings. For example, the Sacred Mosque in Mecca is not open to mankind (only those classed as "Muslim"); and as far as I am aware no-one resides in the Mosque. If it is argued they did reside there in the past but not now, then there is no warrant for this in AQ. Not surprisingly, some commentators regard AMAH as referring to the sanctuary and/or Mecca as a whole. In terms of 'act/institution of SJD' the terms "*akifu*/devotee/resident" and "*baadi*/bedouin/visitor" would require explanation.

###

**48:24** And He is the One who withheld their hands against you, and your hands against them in midst/interior (of) crowding/*MaKKah*, after He had made you victorious over them. God is Seer of what you do.

**48:25** They are those who concealed/rejected and hindered you from/concerning\* **al maSJD al haram**, and prevented the offering/gift from reaching its permitted/lawful place. And if not for believing men and believing women whom you did not know, that you may trample them so would befall you from them sin without knowledge, that God may admit in His mercy whomever He wills. If they had been apart\*\* surely We would then have punished those who concealed/rejected among them with a painful retribution.

**48:26** When those who concealed/rejected had put in their hearts disdain, the disdain of the ignorance, then God sent down His tranquility upon His messenger and upon the believers, and made them adhere to the word of righteousness/God-consciousness, and they were more deserving of it and worthy of it. And God is fully aware of all things.

**48:27** Certainly, God has confirmed His messenger's vision\*\*\* with truth/reality, surely you (plural) will enter **al masjid al haram**, if God wills, securing/trusting, unburdening/relieving your chiefs/representatives\*\*\*\*, and restraining/relinquishing not fearing. So, He knew what you did not know, and He made besides that a victory near/close.

**48:28** He is the One who sent His messenger with the guidance and the system/obligation of truth, so that it would expose all other systems. And God is sufficient as a witness.

\*Arabic: *AAani* is a preposition and can mean: from, of, for, about, concerning.

\*\*implies they are all mixed together. One possible meaning of MKK is "crowding" hence the rendition above (Ref: [one](#), [two](#), [three](#)). Could also be a reference to 8:33.

\*\*\* Arabic: '*al ruya*' (dream/vision), see analysis of 17:1-7 and 17:60

\*\*\*\* see discussion of 2:196 above. Many translators interpolate "hair" and imply the "*wa/and*" which follows means "or" to make their rendition fit better.

48:25 implies both believing men and women were present and out in public and were unknown to the believers addressed. Note the possible link between this and the utilisation of AMAH in 2:148-150 in bringing you all together and completing of God's favour.

"not fearing" likely implies that it is possible to enter AMAH fearing, and perhaps previously the believers did so. See in conjunction with 2:114.

As a side note, 48:25 clearly implies that it would not be possible to identify believers amongst the people, thus interpretations of 48:29 that imply a physical mark upon believer's faces (from prostrating) is highly unlikely.

###

**5:2** You who believe, do not violate the regulations of God, nor the inviolable month, nor the offerings/gifts, nor the prefects/administrations, nor those persuading the inviolable house (*al bayt al haram*) seeking bounty\* from their Lord and pleasure/approval. And when lawful, then hunt. And let not the hatred of a people because they hindered you from/concerning **al masjid al haram**; that you transgress. And help one another on righteousness and piety, and do not help one another on sin and transgression. And be aware of God, for God's retribution is severe.

\*relates to worldly benefits/provisions, see 48:29, 59:8, 2:198, 16:14, 17:12, 17:66, 28:73, 30:46, 35:12, 45:12, 73:20, 62:10, 2:265, 30:23.

###

**9:7** How can those polytheists have a pledge *AAinda*/(in the presence of) \* God and His messenger? Except for those whom you made a pledge *AAinda*/(in the presence of) \* **al masjid al haram**. As long as they are straight with you, then you are straight with them. Truly, The God loves the forethoughtful/conscientious.

\*note the double use of "*AAinda*" which most translators render differently in each occurrence.

###

**9:17** It was not for the polytheists that they develop/cultivate God's **maSaJiD** witnessing over their own rejection/concealment. For these, their works have fallen, and in the Fire they will abide.

**9:18** Only will develop/cultivate God's **maSaJiD** is one who believes in God\* and the Last Day, and upholds the bond/*salat*, and brings forth betterment, and does not fear except God. Then perhaps these that will be of the guided ones.

**9:19** Have you made the watering of those undertaking HaJJ and development/cultivation (of) **al maSJD al haram** like the one who believed in God and the Last Day and strived in the cause of God? They are not the same with God. And God does not guide the wrongdoers.

**9:20** Those who believed and emigrated and strived in the cause of God with their wealth and their lives are in a greater degree with God. These are the winners.

\*see 22:31

Note the similar wording in 9:17, 9:18, 9:19 regarding develop/cultivate/enliven God's maSaJiD and AMAH, as if they were almost interchangeable in this context.

Does 9:19 imply cultivation of AMAH is not necessarily God-related? It seems the tone of this verse is telling AQ's audience to reflect upon their priorities, i.e. the worldly benefits/considerations of such an event are not as important as the believers individually and collectively, e.g. it is simply a means to an end. In 9:19 the latter is more important/better than the former. Do we find this in Saudi Arabia today? This possibly seems to be setting them up to hear the news later, that polytheists are not welcome anymore at such an event, or at least those polytheists who broke the treaty.

9:19 also seems to imply there is a tangible difference between "watering of those undertaking HaJJ and development of AMAH" and "one who believed in God and the Last Day and strived in the cause of God". This might present some issues with any understandings that try to equate AMAH with God's system in full, as striving in the cause of God would surely involve trying to develop AMAH, thus making them overlap/similar, IF it meant something like that.

Note how maSaJiD is plural in 9:17-18, yet in 9:19 AMAH is singular. IF these verses were about mosques, why the change from plural to singular? Tafsir of Jalalayn claims it can be read singular, and Ibn Kathir claims the plural can refer to The Sacred Mosque. How convenient! IF it meant mosque then this switch between plural/singular leaves out the theoretical situation of developing a normal *masjid*, not AMAH, if that is equal to what is said or not.

To perhaps get a better idea of the background see Toshihiko Izutsu's work on the Lord Allah pre-Quran ('God and Man in The Koran', chapter 4).

###

**9:28** O you who believe, indeed the polytheists are impure\* so let them not approach/near **al maSJD al haram** after this year of theirs; and if you fear poverty, then soon God will enrich you from His bounty, if He wills. Indeed God is Knowledgeable, Wise.

\*Arabic: "*najasun*" (root: Nun-Jiim-Siin), implies in mind/influence.

This clearly implies the polytheists participated in AMAH previously, and "if you fear poverty" shows there is a potential monetary impact to this decision. These two issues require explanation for whatever meaning of AMAH is chosen.

Some traditional commentators say AMAH refers to the Sacred Mosque here, others say the *haram*/sanctuary/Makkah. Some say it is about entering it, others say it is about being near to it as well as entering. If so, how near is near? If it meant entering the Sacred Mosque, then this does not make sense because that would imply trading is primarily being done inside it which is highly unlikely and unheard of in traditions. Hence likely why some say AMAH refers to Mecca. Interestingly Tafsir ibn Abbas admits such people undertake pilgrimage and circumambulation of the cuboid called Kaabah yet says they are idolaters, implying they are doing (and wishing to do in future) the same rituals believers do (even after prophet Muhammad allegedly destroyed the idols inside it) yet they are still idolaters! If so, how does one differentiate between such people and believers?

Some wonder how to explain that HaJJ [22:27] and AMAH [22:25] are open to mankind but here AMAH is not allowed for these polytheists. They are open to mankind however not to active troublemakers, and this is what chapter 9 discusses. 9:28 seems to refer to specific polytheists by use of "this year of theirs", and is therefore likely referring to the polytheists who violated the treaty. To me, this would suggest that the believers should not enter into a treaty with them which would allow them to undertake HaJJ and/or participate in AMAH. Further, technically it is impossible to determine what is in one's heart, therefore who is and who is not a polytheist, unless it is blatant polytheism, thus for this stipulation to apply to all mankind for all time seems overblown and impractical.

If the Holy Mosque was a strict monotheistic symbol, why would polytheists care about not being allowed to enter it? There seems to be little explanation for this in the traditions. It could be argued that even though the idols inside the cuboid called "Kaabah" were destroyed (according to tradition), they still revered the cuboid (and '*hajar aswad*' / black rock) hence still wanting to enter it etc.

## Summary and Discussion

Taking the above review of occurrences into account, a summarised reference list of the information extracted about 'al masjid al haram' will be shown below:

- Glory be to the One who took with/by His servant (at) night from **al maSJD al haram** to *al maSJD al aqsa* which We have blessed around it that We may show him of Our signs.
- We will surely turn *thee* (onto/to) a focal-point that will please *thee*: so turn *thy* face/purpose/consideration in the direction (of) **al maSJD al haram** and wherever that you are so turn your faces/purposes/considerations in its direction and indeed those who have been given the writ/decreed know that it is the truth from their Lord.
- Those to whom We have given the decree/writ recognise it like they recognise their sons; and indeed a group of them surely hides the truth while they know
- from wherever *thou* start/come forth so turn *thy* face/purpose/consideration in the direction (of) **al masjid al haram** and wherever that you are so turn your faces/purposes/considerations in its direction so that not will be for the people against you debate, except those who wronged among them. So do not fear them, but fear Me and that I may complete My favour upon you and so that you may be guided.
- And do not fight them *AAinda*/(in the presence of) **al masjid al haram** until they fight you in it
- That is for one whose people are not at-hand/present (at) **al masjid al haram**
- hindering from the way/path of God and to reject in it and (reject in) **al masjid al haram**, and expelling its people from it is a greater wrong *AAinda*/(in the presence of) God

- And why should God not punish them while they hinder from **al maSJD al haram**, and they were not its guardians/protectors! Its guardians/protectors are the conscientious
- those who have rejected/concealed and hinder from the path of God and **al masjid al haram** which We made for mankind, equal are the devotee/attached/resident in it and the bedouin/visitor/traveller, and whoever intends/wishes in it deviation (or) wrongdoing, We will make him taste from painful retribution.
- They are those who concealed/rejected and hindered you from/concerning **al maSJD al haram**, and prevented the offering/gift from reaching its permitted/lawful place.
- Certainly, God has confirmed His messenger's vision with truth/reality, surely you (plural) will enter **al masjid al haram**, if God wills, securing/trusting, unburdening/relieving your chiefs/representatives, and restraining/relinquishing not fearing.
- And let not the hatred of a people because they hindered you from/concerning **al masjid al haram**; that you transgress.
- those whom you made a pledge *AAinda*/(in the presence of) **al masjid al haram**.
- Have you made the watering of those undertaking *HaJJ* and development/cultivation (of) **al maSJD al haram** like the one who believed in God and the Last Day and strived in the cause of God?
- the polytheists are impure so let them not approach/near **al maSJD al haram** after this year of theirs; and if you fear poverty, then soon God will enrich you from His bounty

Of course all verses and their analysis should be read, but the above brief list can be used by readers to run their understanding of '*al masjid al haram*' through to see how it fits.

Some understandings are reviewed below, as discussed on the free-minds.org forum:

'**The Sacred Mosque**' fares most poorly in 17:1, 2:142-150, 2:217, 9:28, and relatively poorly in 2:196, 22:25, 9:19. Also, please note that traditional commentators (e.g. Tafsir of Ibn Kathir, Al-Jalalayn, Ibn Abbas) frequently switch their understanding of AMAH depending on verse, e.g. it can mean 'the sacred site/area of prostration' in 17:1, '*kaaba* (cuboid)' in 2:144/2:149/2:150, 'the sanctuary / Mecca' in 2:196, 2:217, 22:25, 9:28. Usually, when one forces an incorrect understanding into AQ it will result in inconsistency/variance/contradiction, see the important test of 4:82. If the problems discussed in this work can be answered then it is recommended for those advocating such a view to put forth their answers.

'**the restricted/inviolable act of SJD/compliance**' and '**the inviolable institution of SJD/obedience**' fare most poorly in 17:1, 2:196, and relatively poorly in 2:142-150, 22:25, 9:19, 9:28. Since these two are novel understandings there has been little analytical discussion about them. If the problems discussed in this work can be answered then it is recommended for those advocating such a view to put forth their answers.

In my view, '**the inviolable time of SJD/acknowledgement**' (i.e. the term referring to the time-period/event of the inviolable months) did not perform poorly in any occurrence, however since it is uncommon to read these verses with this meaning it may seem odd for some readers. If readers can identify problems that have not been considered then please let me know.

To better understand what is meant, an analogy may help: "the inviolable time of SJD" can be likened to the term "the summer holidays", the former takes place during the inviolable months of ABCD/etc and the latter during the summer months of June/July/August/etc (in the Northern hemisphere), and the term can be used in a wide variety of ways, e.g. a person can say: "I am working in the summer holidays", "I am looking forward to the summer holidays", "I will meet you in the summer holidays", "The summer holidays are my favourite time of the year", "I try to make the most out of the summer holidays" etc. They are slightly different aspects of the same time-period/event. Note how the term has time as well as event

connotations, and this is the same for "the inviolable time of SJD/acknowledgement". Please note, for SJD one can choose any meaning from: honour/submission or paying respect, as discussed in part 1.

The evidence gathered in this article very strongly links the meaning of AMAH to a special time-period/event, e.g. the inviolable months (*al ashhur al hurum*) wherein the HaJJ/feast/symposium takes place. Whatever meaning of AMAH is chosen, if such a link does not underpin the chosen meaning, then it is highly unlikely to fit in AQ. The meanings of 'the inviolable act/institution/place of SJD' do not have this inherent link.

Further, for those advocating 'act/institution/etc of SJD' without a link to something specific/fixed/identifiable (such as '*al ashhur al hurum*'), a critical question becomes necessary to answer: in the many occurrences of "*masjid*" what makes it "inviolable" sometimes and sometimes not? I personally do not see how this can be soundly answered, except by resorting to arbitrary reasoning.

In addition an answer is also required as to why AMAH is always singular, whilst "*masjid*" can be singular and plural. As we can see, by not fixing it to something clearly identifiable, getting a logical and coherent answer to these questions seems difficult. In the same way that the ordinary word "*shahr* (month/full-moon/moon-cycle)" can be linked to "*haram*" and refer to something specific, the ordinary word "*masjid*" can be linked to "*haram*" and refer to something specific. Its meaning and use then becomes easily identifiable and practical. So, let's say there are inviolable months wherein *al hajj* is held, various restrictions are in place etc etc. If one were living at that time, and were to refer to this time-period/event, what phrase/term would one use? Please ponder on this. In my view, AQ uses AMAH.

The understanding of "*masjid*" as "time of *sujud*/acknowledgement" possibly also gives us a route to how this meaning was gradually converted into "place of *sujud*/acknowledgement" i.e. Mosque, because as the believers became the majority and established in the land, they would have been likely to have regular meetings for communal/administration issues. A regular meet-up somewhere for a "time of SJD" turned that somewhere into a place of/for SJD. As their numbers and wealth grew they likely made buildings for such purposes, and those buildings perhaps came to be known as "Masjid" i.e. Mosque. The understanding of "*masjid*" as "time of SJD/acknowledgement" also fits with the findings in part 2.

Interestingly, it has been noted that according to traditional grammarians themselves the word form "*masjid*" does NOT conform to their own rules of morphology when determining a 'noun of place' (e.g. mosque), so they treat "*masjid*" as an exception to their rules. In other words, according to their own linguistic rules if it meant a 'noun of place' the form should more correctly be "*masjad*" (i.e. with a *fatha* on the second root consonant *Jiim*). For example, the noun of place/location for [RaQaDa](#) (same form as SaJaDa) is maRQaD not maRQiD, for [NaKaBa](#) is maNKaB not maNKiB. However, that does mean the form "*masjid*" cannot be a 'noun of place', it theoretically can, as the grammarians also list other exceptions to their rule which are used in AQ and they do seem to indicate time/place (and perhaps concept).

An explanation of this is given below:

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So, the form "*maf3al*" is known as a "noun of time and place" (T&P), indicating when and/or where the verb occurs.

Example:

*dakhala* = he entered

*madkhal* = the time and/or place of entering

The noun of time and place can either be of the patterns "*maf3al*" or "*maf3il*" depending of the middle vowel of the present tense verb. If the middle vowel is a *kasra*, the noun of T&P is

"maf3il". If the middle vowel is *fatha* or *dhamma*, the noun of T&P is "maf3al"

Example:

*yajlis* = he sits ; therefore, the noun of T&P is "*majlis*"

*yadhul* = he enters ; therefore, the noun of T&P is "*madkhal*"

*yashrab* = he drinks ; therefore, the noun of T&P is "*mashrab*"

There are 12 exceptions to the rules stated above, listed by grammarians, e.g. in 'A Grammar of the Arabic Language' by W. Wright, and they are:

(the specific word forms in **red** do not appear in *Quran* to my knowledge)

1. *majzir* = the T/P of slaughtering
2. *masjid* = the T/P of prostration
3. *masqib* = the T/P of falling
4. *maskin* = the T/P of habitation
5. *mashriq* = the T/P of the sun rise
6. *ma6li3* (مطلع) = the T/P of ascent
7. *maghrib* = the T/P of the sun set
8. *mafriq* = the T/P of division
9. *marfiq* = the T/P of resting one's self
10. *manbit* = the T/P of a plant's growth
11. *mankhir* = the T/P of the breath passing through the nose (commonly, the nostrils)
12. *mansik* = the T/P of sacrifice

All the above 12 take a *dhamma* on the present tense verb, but, in violation of the rules, they take a *kasra* for the noun of T&P instead of a *fatha*.

However, the regular forms are also said to occur, that is, *majzar*, *masjad*, *masqab*, *maskan*, etc.

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Other examples of word form "maf3il" in AQ include: "*majalis*", "*mantiq*", "*mawazin*", "*mawatin*", "*mawadi3*". There may be others. If the reader knows of any, please let me know. Their usage seems to indicate this form can indicate time/place/concept. Please read all occurrences.

The only forms that I came across of "maf3al" in AQ were "*marqad*", "*mankab*" and "*majma'a*" and all denote place. There may be others. If the reader knows of any, please let me know. Please read all occurrences.

To conclude, the word form "*ma3fil*" (same as "*masjid*") can indicate a noun of time/place (and perhaps concept). This is well established and accepted. Thus, to state it may mean a noun of time should not be seen as unusual.

### Conclusion of parts 1, 2, 3

The Quranic evidence weighs the evidence in favour of SJD meaning "to submit/honour/pay respect", "*masjid*" meaning "time of SJD", "*al masjid al haram*" meaning "the inviolable time of SJD" (i.e. the term referring to the time-period/event of the inviolable months). This understanding provides a logical, coherent and practical answer throughout, and helps answer some of the most difficult questions in *Quran* exegesis (e.g. 17:1, 2:142-150).

The reader is recommended to re-read and reflect upon the findings of this work. All feedback is welcome, especially corrections. Thanks.

Tools/Resources/Books used:

[www.StudyQuran.org](http://www.StudyQuran.org)

[Project Root List](#) - Quran concordance, grammar and dictionary

[Quranic Arabic Corpus](#)

'[Verbal Idioms of the Quran](#)' by Mustansir Mir

'[Dictionary of The Holy Quran](#)' by Abdul Mannan Omar

[Study Method](#)

This work would not have been possible without the many people who have contributed to this topic, and without the resources now available to anyone wishing to study The Quran in detail. For these stepping stones, I am indebted and truly thankful.

**IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER:**

This work reflects my personal understanding, as of October 4th, 2012. Seeking knowledge is a continual process and I will try to improve my understanding of the signs within 'the reading' (al quran) and out with it, unless The God wills otherwise. All information is correct to the best of my knowledge only and thus should not be taken as a fact. One should always seek knowledge and verify for themselves when possible: 17:36, 20:114, 35:28, 49:6, 58:11.

And do not follow what you have no knowledge of; surely the hearing, the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that. [17:36]