

6. Prophets and People

IF GREAT PERSONALITIES enrich a place, then al-Quds (Jerusalem) is second to none. The greatest Prophets have either lived in or passed by the blessed city of al-Quds (Jerusalem). Hence, the significance of al-Aqṣā Sanctuary and Palestine is further enhanced by both the presence of noble Prophets and major events that occurred during the lifetime of these great men.

A. Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

And We saved him and Lot and brought him to the land upon which We had bestowed Our blessings for all the people of the world.

[Sūrah al-Anbiyā' 21: 71]

Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام migrated from his hometown of Ur in modern-day Iraq with his wife Sārah and nephew Lūṭ عليه السلام and moved towards Palestine and settled there. The particular city of Palestine in which he first settled is a matter of conjecture. However, after a short period, he and his wife Sārah moved towards Egypt where they encountered a tyrannical leader.

The Egyptian tyrant was enchanted by Sārah's beauty and

tried to seduce her. However, she was protected from him by Allah ﷻ who debilitated his hand when he tried to touch her. The tyrant begged Sārah to “break the spell” because he thought she had bewitched him. Sārah prayed to Allah ﷻ and the tyrant was cured. Again, he tried to get hold of Sārah and a second time his hand became debilitated. He once again asked Sārah to “break the spell” and she prayed to Allah ﷻ and he was cured. The tyrant was now convinced that Sārah was a witch and he became scared of her. To safeguard himself from her, he offered gifts and a maid called Hājar, to escape further spells. Sārah and Ibrāhīm ﷺ returned to Palestine and settled there.

Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ later married Hājar. Although Ibrāhīm ﷺ was very old (some say 80 years) Hājar bore him a son. Thereafter, Ibrāhīm ﷺ was commanded by Allah ﷻ to take his wife Hājar and their young son, Ismāil ﷺ, to the Arabian Desert (modernday Makkah) and leave them there. He followed the command of Allah and left Hājar and Ismāil in Makkah and returned to Palestine. Throughout his lifetime, Ibrāhīm ﷺ made several visits to the growing settlement of Makkah to see his son Ismāil ﷺ and together they re-built the Ka’bah.

However, Sārah, who remained in Palestine, also became pregnant in her old age and a second son called Ishāq ﷺ was born. The Holy Qur’an states:

وَبَشِّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

And We gave him the good news of Isaac, a Prophet and among the righteous ones.

[Sūrah al-Şāffāt 37: 112]

This good news of the birth of Ishāq ﷺ was given to Ibrāhīm ﷺ in Palestine when he was approximately 100 years old. Ishāq ﷺ lived with his father in and around al-Quds (Jerusalem), where he preached, traded, and eventually grew old and died. The graves of Ibrāhīm ﷺ and Ishāq ﷺ are very near al-Quds (Jerusalem) in the city of Khalīl now called Hebron.

Ibrāhīm ﷺ re-built the Ka’bah in Makkah with his first son Ismāil ﷺ, and the Masjid al-Aqṣā in al-Quds (Jerusalem) with his other son Ishāq ﷺ.

When Ibrāhīm ﷺ arrived in Palestine, according to Genesis XIV:18-20, a person by the name of Melchizedek who is referred to as the king of Salem (thought to be where the name

Jerusalem is derived from), offered Ibrāhīm ؑ a tithe (piece of land); however Ibrāhīm ؑ did not want the land for free and decided to purchase this land from the king of Salem.

Again according to Genesis XIII:18, Ibrāhīm ؑ built on this land a “tent” to praise Allah ﷻ and later Ishāq ؑ re-built it. Ishāq ؑ was the father of Ya‘qūb ؑ, who in turn was the father of Yūsuf ؑ. When the children of Ya‘qūb ؑ moved to Egypt, the “house of Allah” slipped out of view.

After Ādam ؑ, Ibrāhīm ؑ and Ishāq ؑ, are the second group of Prophets who re-built Masjid al-Aqṣā.

B. Prophet Mūsā ؑ

The progeny of Yūsuf ؑ continued to live in Egypt until the coming of Mūsā ؑ, at which time the persecution of them was intensified. Under the guidance of Mūsā ؑ they escaped to the Holy Land – Palestine.

In all the verses below, the references to ‘town’ ‘land’ and ‘place’ refer to Palestine and the city of al-Quds (Jerusalem) in particular: *Enter this town* (2: 58), *enter the holy land* (5: 21), *O Mūsā! In this land are a people of exceeding strength* (5: 22), *Therefore will the land be out of their reach for forty years* (5: 26), *Dwell in this town and eat therein as you wish* (7: 161), *We settled the Children of Israel in a beautiful dwelling place* (10: 93), *Dwell securely in the land* (17: 104), and *to establish a firm place for them* (28: 6).

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا
وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةً نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And recall when We said: “Go into this town and eat abundantly of its food; but enter the gate a prostrate, saying, ‘Repentance’. We will forgive you your sins and shall bestow more favour on the doers of good.”

[Sūrah al-Baqarah 2: 58]

يَقَوْمٍ أَدْخَلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمَقْدَسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَرْتَدُّوا عَلَىٰ
أَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

My people! Enter the holy land which Allah has ordained for you; and do not turn back for then you will turn about losers.
[Sūrah al-Mā'idah 5: 21]

قَالُوا يَمْوَسَىٰ إِنَّ فِيهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِينَ وَإِنَّا لَن نَدْخُلُهَا حَتَّىٰ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا
فَإِن يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِنَّا دَاخِلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

They answered: "Moses, therein live a ferocious people: we will not enter unless they depart from it; but if they do depart from it then we will surely enter it."
[Sūrah al-Mā'idah 5: 22]

قَالَ فَإِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً يَتِيهُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَىٰ
الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Allah said: "This land will now be forbidden to them for forty years and they will remain wandering about on the earth. Do not grieve over the condition of these transgressing people."
[Sūrah al-Mā'idah 5: 26]

وَإِذ قِيلَ لَهُمْ اسْكُنُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ
وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتِكُمْ سَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾

And recall when it was said to them: "Dwell in this town and eat plentifully of whatever you please, and say: 'Repentance', and enter the gate prostrate. We shall forgive you your sins and shall bestow further favours on those who do good."
[Sūrah al-A'rāf 7: 161]

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَأَخِيهِ أَنْ تَبَوِّءْ لِقَوْمِكَ مِمَّا بَمِصْرَ بُيُوتًا وَأَجْعَلُوا
بُيُوتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

And We directed Moses and his brother: "Prepare a few houses for your people in Egypt, and make your houses a direction for them to pray, and establish Prayer, and give glad tidings to the people of faith."

[Sūrah Yūnus 10: 87]

وَلَقَدْ بَوَّأْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مَبُوءًا صِدْقٍ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا
حَتَّىٰ جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا
كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

We settled the Children of Israel in a blessed land and provided them with all manner of good things. They only disagreed among themselves after knowledge (of the Truth had) come to them. Surely your Lord will judge among them on the Day of Resurrection concerning their disagreements.

[Sūrah Yūnus 10: 93]

وَقُلْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ لِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اسْكُنُوا الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ
الْآخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ لَفِيفًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

And thereafter We said to the Children of Israel: "Now dwell in the land, but when the promised time of the Hereafter comes, We shall bring you all together."

[Sūrah al-Isrā' 17: 104]

وَمُكِّنْ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرِي فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا
مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿٦﴾

And to grant them power in the land, and make Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts see what they had feared.

[Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ 28: 6]

After Pharaoh began his persecution, Mūsā عليه السلام with his brother Hārūn (Aaron) عليه السلام guided the Banū Isrā'īl (Children of Israel) to flee from Egypt towards Palestine. After crossing the Red Sea, where Pharaoh and his men died, the Banū Isrā'īl began to argue and protest at the lack of water, food and shade. Mūsā عليه السلام prayed to Allah ﷻ and all three were provided. Despite these favours, their ingratitude continued and they built a statue of a calf to worship in total contradiction to Mūsā's عليه السلام commands.

When they arrived on the outskirts of Palestine, Mūsā عليه السلام commanded them to *enter the Holy Land* (5: 21), they nevertheless remonstrated, *O Mūsā! In this land are a people of exceeding strength: never shall we enter it until they leave it: if (once) they leave, then shall we enter* (5: 22).

Mūsā عليه السلام assured them of victory if they marched forward and he also planned the attack for them – *Assault them at the (proper) gate, when you enter victory will be yours* (5: 23). However, the Banū Isrā'īl remained obstinate and said, *Mūsā, you and your Lord go and fight, we will wait here* (5: 24).

Mūsā عليه السلام was deeply pained and felt dejected with the Banū Isrā'īl and thus he turned to Allah ﷻ, *O My Lord! I have power only over myself and my brother (Hārūn), so separate us from this rebellious people* (5: 25).

Allah ﷻ brought down His punishment on the ungrateful and recusant, *they shall be forbidden to enter the land for 40 years, while they wander about on earth and grieve not over the rebellious people* (5: 26).

The Banū Isrā'īl thus remained wandering aimlessly in the desert and it is narrated that only when all the adult members of the rebellious generation had died, did their descendants cross the River Jordan and move towards Jericho in Palestine. Even Mūsā عليه السلام and his brother Hārūn عليه السلام died before reaching the Holy Land. A ḥadīth *Qudsī* reports:

Abu Hurayrah ؓ reports that the Prophet ﷺ said, “the angel of death was sent to Mūsā. When he came to Mūsā, Mūsā slapped him on the eye. The angel returned to Allah ﷻ and said, ‘You have sent me to a servant who does not want to die’. Allah ﷻ ordered the angel, ‘Return to him and tell him to put his hand on the back of an ox and for every hair that will come under it, he will be granted one year of life’. Mūsā said, ‘O Lord! What will happen after that?’ Allah ﷻ replied, ‘Then death’. Mūsā decided, ‘Let it be now’. Mūsā then requested Allah ﷻ to let him die close to the Sacred Land, so much so, that he would be at a distance of a stone’s throw from it”. Abu Hurayrah ؓ added, the Prophet ﷺ then said, “If I were there, I would show you his grave below the red sand hill on the side of the road”.

[*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*]

C. Prophet Dāwūd ؑ

After the Banū Isrā’īl were delivered on the outskirts of the Holy Land by Mūsā ؑ, they came under the sway of the Philistines. After a few hundred years of living under the Philistines, they united behind Ṭalūt (Saul) who marched them forward to confront the Philistines. The Bible talks of the giant Goliath of the Philistines who challenged the Banū Isrā’īl to combat. However, it was not Saul who came out to confront Goliath but a young and unarmed Dāwūd ؑ. The well-known story of how Dāwūd ؑ brought the mighty Goliath down to his knees with only a sling, need not be retold here in great detail. *“And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver’s beam...”* [1 Samuel XVII 4-7]

But Dāwūd was only armed with a sling and a few stones, “And Dāwūd put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it, which smote the Philistine in his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth.” [1 Samuel XVII 49]

Saul became the first King of the Israelites, but according to the Old Testament King Saul was jealous of Dāwūd ؑ and tried to get rid of him. Dāwūd ؑ retreated with his companions to the wilderness. They formed a coalition with their old

enemies the Philistines and together attacked and killed Saul.

Dāwūd عليه السلام was crowned the Second King of the Israelites. Dāwūd عليه السلام, the King and Prophet, united his men and moved towards Jerusalem, which had been a Jebusite city since the 1800s BC. Dāwūd عليه السلام defeated the Jebusites who were a tribe in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem became his capital. Dāwūd عليه السلام integrated with the local population and did not kill nor expel the Jebusites. The Bible says, “*The Jebusites dwell with the children of Judea at Jerusalem unto this day*”. [Joshua XV 63]

Dāwūd عليه السلام spent almost his entire life in and around Palestine and, in particular, in the vicinity of al-Quds (Jerusalem). He served al-Aqṣā Sanctuary and many events in his noble life are focused around the Masjid al-Aqṣā.

إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً
كُلُّ لَهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَأَتَيْنَهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصَّلَ
الْخِطَابِ ﴿٤٠﴾

With him We had subjected the mountains that they join him in celebrating Allah's glory, evening and morning, and the birds, too, in their flocks, and turn again and again to celebrating Allah's glory. And We strengthened his kingdom and endowed him with wisdom and decisive judgement.

[Sūrah Ṣād 38: 18-20]

﴿٤٠﴾ وَقَدَدَّءِ أَتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يَجِبَالِ أُوْبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ وَالنَّالَهُ الْحَدِيدَ ﴿٤١﴾

We bestowed Our favour upon David. (We commanded): “O mountains, sing Allah's praises with him”; (and so did We command) the birds. We softened the iron for him.

[Sūrah Saba' 34: 10]

Dāwūd عليه السلام was favoured with a melodious voice and the Qur'an informs us that the hills and birds praised in unison the Greatness of Allah ﷻ. These hills are none other than the hills of the city of al-Quds (Jerusalem). The Holy Qur'an also refers

to Us in devotion.

[Sūrah Ṣād 38: 30]

According to the Jewish tradition it is cited in the Aggadah that Dāwūd's mother was a daughter of Ithra, an Ismailite. Dāwūd ﷺ is also reported to have had three wives; Michal, daughter of King Saul; Maacah, daughter of the Canaanite King Talmal of Geshur; and Bathsheba, a Hittite from Giloh, who was the mother of Sulaymān ﷺ.

It is extremely significant to emphasise the fact that the Bible states that Sulaymān's mother was a Hittite and was not a Jew. Under the Judaic law, the child's religious line of heritage is from the mother and not the father. Therefore according to Judaic rule, Sulaymān ﷺ is not a Jew and under the present-day Israeli Law, Sulaymān ﷺ would not be allowed to reside in Palestine!

The story in the Old Testament accuses Dāwūd ﷺ of adultery with Bathsheba, the mother of Sulaymān ﷺ and conspiracy to murder Bathsheba's husband Uriah, who was a general in Dāwūd's army. *"And it came to pass in an evening that David arose from his bed and walked upon the roof of the house: and from there he saw a woman washing herself, and the woman was very beautiful.*

And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, It is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.

And David sent for her and took her and she came unto him and he lay with her...

And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child. [2 Samuel XI 2-5]

Thereafter, according to the Bible, Dāwūd conspired to get Uriah killed: *"send Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle that he may be smitten and die". [2 Samuel XI 15]*

Islam states categorically that all of the Prophets were righteous men and free of sin. It is therefore incumbent upon Muslims to respect Dāwūd ﷺ for his noble character and as a sinless Prophet of Allah ﷻ. For a Muslim to believe otherwise would expel him/her from the fold of Islam; such is the respect demanded of Muslims for the Prophets of Allah. The Qur'ān extols Dāwūd's ﷺ character by calling him, *"...Our slave Dāwūd, endued with power. Verily, he ever turned in repentance to Allah"* (38: 17).

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, is quoted as saying that Dāwūd عليه السلام was one of the noblest Prophets.

D. Prophet Sulaymān عليه السلام

After Dāwūd's death, Sulaymān عليه السلام inherited his father's Kingdom. He resumed the construction of Masjid al-Aqṣā (also known as Solomon's Temple) which had been started during his father's era. Sulaymān عليه السلام ruled for a further 40 years, from 978 BC to 938 BC, thus making a total of 80 years rule between the two Prophets, Dāwūd عليه السلام and Sulaymān عليه السلام.

The following verses relate to Allah's ﷻ favour upon Sulaymān عليه السلام by commanding the wind to be under Sulaymān's "control" in the land that Allah ﷻ says He has blessed. The blessed land in this verse of the Holy Qur'ān refers to Palestine. It was an honour for the land of Palestine that Sulaymān عليه السلام travelled through it with the aid of the wind, a miracle with which Allah ﷻ had exclusively favoured Sulaymān عليه السلام. Palestine, a blessed land, was further exalted as it also became the place of Allah's special favours upon one of His Prophets.

وَسُلِّمْنَا لَهِ الرِّيحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا
وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَالِمِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

And We subdued the strongly raging wind to Solomon which blew at his bidding towards the land We blessed. We know everything.

[Sūrah al-Anbiyā' 21: 81]

فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاءً حَيْثُ أَصَابَ ﴿٣٦﴾

We subjected the wind to him, so that it blew gently at his bidding, wherever he directed it.

[Sūrah Ṣād 38: 36]

وَلَسَلِّمْنَ الزَّيْحَ غُدُوها شَهْرٌ وَرَوَاحُها شَهْرٌ وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ وَمِنَ
الْجِنِّ مَنْ يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَمَنْ يَزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ
عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿١٢﴾

And We subdued the wind to Solomon: its morning course was a month's journey and its evening course was a month's journey. We gave him a spring flowing with molten brass, and We subdued for him jinn who, by his Lord's permission, worked before him. Such of them as swerved from Our commandment, We let them taste the chastisement of the Blazing Fire.

[Sūrah Saba' 34: 12]

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ وَأَلْقَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ جَسَداً ثُمَّ أَنَابَ ﴿٣٤﴾

Surely We put Solomon to the test and cast upon his throne a mere body. Thereupon he penitently turned (to Us).

[Sūrah Şād 38: 34]

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَلْبِغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِنِّي
بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٣٥﴾

He said: "My Lord, forgive me and bestow upon me a kingdom such as none other after me will deserve. Surely You are the Bounteous Giver."

[Sūrah Şād 38: 35]

وَلَسَلِّمْنَ الْرِّيحَ غُدُوها شَهْرٌ وَرَوَاحُها شَهْرٌ وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَن يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَمَن يَزِغْ مِنْهُم عَنْ أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِن عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿١٢﴾ يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِن مَّحْرِبٍ وَتَمَثِيلٍ أَجْفَانٍ كَأَلْبُوابٍ وَقُدُورٍ رَّاسِيَتٍ أَعْمَلُوا ءَالَ دَاوُدَ شُكْرًا وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

And We subdued the wind to Solomon: its morning course was a month's journey and its evening course was a month's journey. We gave him a spring flowing with molten brass, and We subdued for him jinn who, by his Lord's permission, worked before him. Such of them as swerved from Our commandment, We let them taste the chastisement of the Blazing Fire. They made for him whatever he would desire: stately buildings, images, basins like water-troughs and huge, built-in cauldrons: "Work, O house of David, in thankfulness (to your Lord). Few of My servants are truly thankful."

[Sūrah Saba' 34: 12-13]

Allah ﷻ even subjected the Jinn to Sulaymān's order, and he used the Jinn profitably and employed their energy towards building dams, large cauldron and whole cities. There is also an indication here that the Jinn were used in the re-construction of Masjid al-Aqṣā.

All the above verses of the Holy Qur'ān make a direct or an indirect reference to the land of Palestine, via events or people associated with the land of Palestine.

Upon Sulaymān's ﷺ death, according to Biblical traditions his son Rehoboam was crowned. However, within a very short period, a revolt began and hatred between the different Jewish tribes reared up and the kingdom was split in 922 BC. To the north, Israel was formed which later became known as Samaria. To the south, Judea was formed with Jerusalem as its capital. A great rivalry ensued between these two neighbours and by 722 BC the Assyrians (from modern-day Syria) conquered and destroyed Israel.

Judea, where the children of Dāwūd ﷺ lived, remained united and intact for a while. However, even here religious corruption crept in slowly, idolatry and superstition became the norm and even the Masjid al-Aqṣā (Temple) was not spared. "Altars and high places were erected on every hill and under every green tree. In Judea there were as many gods as there were towns. Images of gods in silver, wood and stone were erected in the houses. The Temple itself was once more desecrated by hideous idols".³

E. Prophet Arāmiyah (Jeremiah) ﷺ

As the Jewish tribes slipped into spiritual corruption Prophet Arāmiyah (Jeremiah) ﷺ was sent by Allah ﷻ to guide the people back onto the right path. He lived within al-Quds (Jerusalem) and warned the people of the pending punishment if they did not correct their ways. But the Jews did not listen or take heed.

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ
وَلَتَعْلَنَ عُلُوقًا كَثِيرًا ۖ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَٰئِهِمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا أُولِي
بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولًا ۗ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا
لَكُمْ آلِكْرَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمَدَدْنَاكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ
نَفِيرًا ۗ إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ
الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسُوءُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ
وَلِيَتَّبِعُوا مَا عُلُوًّا تَبِيرًا ۗ عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يَرْحَمَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدتُّمْ عَدْنَا
وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا ۗ

*Then We clearly declared to the Children of Israel in the Book:
"Twice you will make mischief in the land and will commit trans-*

gression." So, when the occasion for the first of the transgressions arrived, We raised against you some of Our creatures who were full of might, and they ran over the whole of your land. This was a promise that was bound to be fulfilled. Then We granted you an upper hand against them, and strengthened you with wealth and children, and multiplied your numbers. Whenever you did good, it was to your own advantage; and whenever you committed evil, it was to your own disadvantage. So, when the time of the fulfilment of the second promise arrived, (We raised other enemies that would) disfigure your faces and enter the Temple (of Jerusalem) as they had entered the first time, and destroy whatever they could lay their hands on. Your Lord may well show Mercy to you, but if you revert (to your evil behaviour), We shall revert (to chastising you). We have made Hell a prison for those who are thankless of Allah's bounties.

[Sūrah al-Isrā' 17: 4-8]

Allah ﷻ says in the Holy Qur'an that He forewarned the Banū Isrā'īl in previous scriptures that they would create mischief twice and, on both occasions Allah ﷻ would send an enemy to destroy them. Many scholars are of the view that the two corruptions spoken of refer first, to the period of Arāmiyah ﷺ in 586 BC and, second, to the Roman era when in 70 CE after the ascension of 'Īsā ﷺ Jerusalem was destroyed.

Even in the present-day Torah the text of this first warning is to be found in the books of Yasayah, Yarmiyah, Hizqeel and Zakariyā.

As the Jews fell into transgression and rebellion against Allah's Command, as stated above, Prophet Arāmiyah ﷺ was sent to guide them.

Around this time (6th Century BC), an empire was emerging in Babylon. In 586 Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, attacked Judea and destroyed it. Nebuchadnezzar eventually entered al-Quds (Jerusalem) and destroyed Masjid al-Aqṣā (Temple) and imprisoned the Jewish population in chains, taking them all to Babylon. The Qur'an informs us "*We raised against you some of Our creatures who were full of might, and they ran over the whole of your land. This was a promise that was bound to be fulfilled*".

Ibn Kathīr, the great Islamic scholar, writes that while Nebuchadnezzar's army was looting and destroying the city they heard Jews crying "wish we had listened to Arāmiyah". Upon enquiry about him, the army learnt that Arāmiyah ﷺ had pre-

dicted their victory in Judea. Arāmiyah ﷺ was brought before Nebuchadnezzar, who was greatly impressed by him and offered him a high office. However, Arāmiyah ﷺ declined, and the king released him.

After carrying away what they could, the Babylonians burnt down the city of al-Quds (Jerusalem). Thus, Judea ceased to exist as a nation.

The Holy Qur’ān alludes to this episode in verse 2:259. Imām al-Baghawī, in his *tafsīr* of the verse below states that “the hamlet” is most likely alluding to al-Quds (Jerusalem) and the person mentioned is most likely Prophet Arāmiyah ﷺ.

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّى يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ وَانظُرْ إِلَى حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَانظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٥٩﴾

Or consider him by way of example who passed by a town that was fallen down upon its turrets. He exclaimed: “How will Allah restore life to this town that is now dead?” Allah then caused him to remain dead for a hundred years and then raised him to life, and asked him: “How long did you remain in this state?” He replied: “I remained so for a day or a part of a day.” Allah rejoined: “No, you have rather stayed thus for a hundred years. But look at your food and your drink, there is no deterioration in them. And look at your ass (how its entire skeleton has rotted). And We did all this so that We might make you a token of instruction for people. And see how We will put the bones (of the ass) together and will clothe them with flesh.” Thus when the reality became clear to him, he said: “I know that Allah has power over everything.”

[Sūrah al-Baqarah 2: 259]

After a period had elapsed, Arāmiyah ﷺ returned to the city of al-Quds (Jerusalem) and found it desolate and destroyed. In despair, he wondered how Allah ﷻ would ever revive it. Allah ﷻ caused sleep to overtake him. When he awoke he was asked for how long had he been sleeping? He replied for part of a day, “No” was the reply. He was informed he had been sleeping for 100 years and, to show him Allah’s Power, Allah ﷻ destroyed the stronger of the two, the donkey, reducing it to a skeleton, while the “weaker” food and drink remained intact and fine. Before his eyes, Allah ﷻ brought the donkey back to life and when Arāmiyah ﷺ observed this miracle his despair for the destroyed city of al-Quds (Jerusalem) vanished, as he knew Allah ﷻ had Power over all things and, as promised, He would revive the city again.

Political Leadership or Greek Influences

The United Kingdom of Israel lasted for 96 years – from 1018 BC to 922 BC. In 922 the kingdom was split in two:

- ISRAEL: The northern kingdom lasted for 200 years – 922 BC to 722 BC
- JUDEA: The southern kingdom lasted for 336 years – 922 BC to 586 BC

Around 600 BC, the Persian Empire, East of Babylon, was emerging under the leadership of Shah Cyrus. He attacked Babylon around 550 BC and occupied it and all other territories belonging to Babylon including the land of Canaan and Jerusalem.

The Persians were sympathetic to the Jews and allowed them the freedom to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their lives. Some did return but others chose to move to the more fertile and rich land of Persia. A new Persian King, Darius, was compassionate enough to not only allow the rebuilding of the Temple but also to aid the Jews financially and, thus, in around 538 BC the construction of the so-called second Jewish Temple began. Persian rule came to an end after 200 years in 330 BC when Alexander the Great occupied Jerusalem. This ushered in Greek culture, language and tradition to the area.

In the land of Canaan, Greek influence was no less and Jews as well as Canaanites buckled under its pressure. Greek colonies were established at Gaza and around the central plain of Palestine.

Hellenisation, i.e the spread of ancient Greek culture became so extreme that a statue of Jupiter was placed on the altar of the Temple (Masjid al-Aqṣā) and sacrifices were offered to it.

After several decades of assimilation to Greek culture, another people, the Hasmonean Jews began what is known as the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucids. In 164 BC they captured Jerusalem but, immediately after the conquest, the Jews started fighting amongst themselves, as the ambitions of the different groups to be rulers became clear.

The Pharisees started a rebellion around 88 BC and captured Jerusalem from the Hasmoneans but could not hold onto power for long, as they lacked unity. Soon after, another Jewish sect of Pharisees tried to confront the Hasmoneans.

While the Jews were engaged in their internal rivalry a new Empire was emerging in Europe – the Romans – who conquered Jerusalem in 63 BC. The land of Palestine and all the other occupied territories were divided into Roman provinces and Rome appointed procurators as their servants to take charge of the day-to-day affairs. Rome demanded huge tax revenues from their procurators, who in turn, oppressed the general public and extorted great wealth for the Roman emperor.

The Romans appointed Herod over Jerusalem, a descendant of the Edomite tribe who had recently converted to Judaism. Herod, like the other Procurators, was for all intents and purposes a puppet of Rome from 37 to 4 BC.

During his governorship, Herod extended the Temple on a grand scale, but he angered the orthodox Jews by placing a golden eagle at its entrance to please his Roman masters. Herod arrested the orthodox Jews, mainly the Pharisees, who removed the eagle in a rebellion, and had most of them executed.⁴

However, after Herod's death, his area of control was further divided among his three sons. This situation, however, did not last very long, as the whole of Palestine had become a Roman State after the year 44 CE.

F. Prophet 'Īsā ﷺ and Sayyidatunā Maryam

In the midst of this mayhem, Allah ﷻ once more sent a Prophet to guide the Banū Isrā'il onto the right path:

إِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّرَأْتُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٣٥﴾

(He also heard) when [Imrān's woman said: "O Lord! Behold, unto You do I vow that the child in my womb is to be devoted to Your exclusive service. Accept it, then, from me. Surely You alone are All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

[Sūrah āl-'Imrān 3: 35]

فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنْثَىٰ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ﴿٣٦﴾

But when she gave birth to a female child, she said: "O Lord! I have given birth to a female" – and Allah knew full well what she had given birth to – "and a male is not the same as a female. I have named her Mary and commit her and her offspring to You for protection from Satan, the accursed."

[Sūrah āl-'Imrān 3: 36]

These verses refer to Hannah, the mother of Sayyidatunā Maryam who vowed to place her child in the service of Masjid al-Aqṣā (Temple). However, when the child, Maryam, was born, Hannah was concerned as to how she would fulfil her promise, as girls were not allowed to serve or enter al-Aqṣā Sanctuary. Nevertheless, Zakariyā ﷺ who at the time was the Imām of al-Aqṣā Sanctuary, built her a *mihrāb* within the compounds of the al-Aqṣā Sanctuary where Sayyidatunā Maryam was able to stay and meditate.

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ
عَلَىٰ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

Then came the time when the angels said: "O Mary! Behold, Allah has chosen you, and has made you pure, and has exalted you above all the women in the world."

[Sūrah āl-'Imrān 3: 42]

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ اتَّيَبَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا ﴿١٦﴾

(O Muḥammad), recite in the Book the account of Mary, when she withdrew from her people to a place towards the east.

[Sūrah Maryam 19: 16]

﴿ فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا ﴿٢٢﴾

Then she conceived him and withdrew with him to a far-off place.

[Sūrah Maryam 19: 22]

فَاجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَىٰ جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَلَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا
وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنْسِيًّا ﴿٢٣﴾

And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree: she cried (in her anguish) "Ah! would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!"

[Sūrah Maryam 19: 23]

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ
عِيسَىٰ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

And when the angels said: "O Mary! Allah gives you the glad tidings of a command from Him: his name shall be Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary. He shall be highly honoured in this world and in the Next, and shall be one of those near stationed to Allah"

[Sūrah āl-'Imrān 3: 45]

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And he shall speak to people in the cradle and also later when he grows to maturity and shall indeed be among the righteous."

[Sūrah āl-'Imrān 3: 46]

وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةً وَءَاوَيْنَهُمَا إِلَى رُبُوعٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ ﴿٥٠﴾

And We made Mary's son, and his mother, a Sign, and We gave them refuge on a lofty ground, a peaceful site with springs flowing in it.

[Sūrah al-Mu'minūn 23: 50]

وَرَسُولًا إِلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

And he will be a Messenger to the Children of Israel. (And when he came to them he said): "I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. I will make for you from clay the likeness of a bird and then I will breathe into it and by the leave of Allah it will become a bird. I will also heal the blind and the leper, and by the leave of Allah I will bring the dead to life. I will also inform you of what

things you eat and what you treasure up in your houses. Surely this is a Sign for you if you are true believers”.

[Sūrah āl-‘Imrān 3: 49]

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يٰعِيسَىٰ إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
وَجَاعِلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ
مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

(And it was part of His scheme) when Allah said, “O Jesus! I will recall you and raise you up to Me and will purify you (of the company) of those who disbelieve, and will set your followers above the unbelievers till the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me shall all of you return, and I shall judge between you regarding whatever you differed among yourselves”.

[Sūrah āl-‘Imrān 3: 55]

بَل رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٥٨﴾

But Allah raised him to Himself. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

[Sūrah al-Nisā’ 4: 158]

It is more than likely that it was near Jerusalem that Maryam’s mother took a vow to place her child in the service of al-Aqṣā Sanctuary, and it was in al-Aqṣā Sanctuary that Sayyidatunā Maryam served and further received the tidings from Allah ﷻ about the miraculous birth of ‘Īsā ﷺ.

Within the vicinity of Jerusalem (in Bethlehem) ‘Īsā ﷺ was born and it is in and around Jerusalem that ‘Īsā ﷺ preached to the Banū Isrā’īl. Finally, it is from Jerusalem that ‘Īsā ﷺ was raised to his Lord. All these verses and incidents reinforce the importance of Palestine to Muslims.

As ‘Īsā ﷺ grew older, he began to teach and command people to believe in one God and that there is no mediation between the Lord and His creation. This annoyed the Jews and as ‘Īsā’s popularity grew they became concerned about their status in society. The Jews began to plot and plan against ‘Īsā ﷺ.

According to the Bible, while the Jews were in a meeting, one of the twelve apostles of 'Īsā ﷺ, Judas Iscariot, came to them and offered, *"What will you give me if I deliver him [‘Īsā] to you?"* Judas bargained with them until they agreed to give him thirty pieces of silver known as Shekels. The plot was thus laid for the capture of 'Īsā ﷺ.

However, only the Roman governor, at the time, Pontius Pilate, could decree the death penalty. Hence, the Jews went to Pilate and conspired against 'Īsā ﷺ with false and malicious claims and demanded that he be killed.

The Gospel of St Matthew states: *"Pilate said unto them, what shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, let him be crucified. And the Governor said, why, what evil has he done? But they cried out the more, saying, let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see you to it. They replied let his blood be on us and our children".*

It is further reported in the Bible that on one occasion as 'Īsā walked out of Jerusalem he prophesied the destruction of the Temple: *"And Jesus went out and departed from the Temple, and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the Temple. And Jesus said unto them See you all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down"* (Matthew XXIV 2).

In May 66 AD a revolt broke out throughout Palestine against the Romans, which resulted in many Romans and their collaborators, who were mainly Jewish Priests, being put to death.⁵

Rome dispatched an army headed by General Titus. Titus, the Roman General, quashed the revolt and in his wake flattened the whole city of Jerusalem, including Herod's Temple. The few Jews that remained were deported from Palestine and banned from even entering Jerusalem. This is the second of Allah's promises referred to in verse 17: 7-8, *"So when the second promise came to pass, [We raised up against you a people] that they may disgrace your faces and may enter the Mosque as they entered it the first time and that they may destroy, whatever they conquered with utter destruction. It may be that your Lord will have mercy upon you but if you return We shall return and We have made Hell a prison for the unbelievers".*

This brought an end to the Jewish presence in Palestine and for nearly the next 600 years, no Jew resided within the Blessed city of Jerusalem.

G. Christian Palestine

After the ascension of 'Īsā ﷺ, his teachings continued to spread amongst the poor. Christianity became established as a religion for the followers of 'Īsā ﷺ 32 years after his death. The Romans started to view Christianity as a threat and it was banned. The followers of Christianity were persecuted throughout the empire and their numbers began to dwindle. But in a turn of fortune, around 320 CE, the Roman emperor Constantine embraced Christianity and this single event not only saved Christianity but also helped spread it far and wide as it became the official religion of the empire.

After nearly 600 years of Roman rule over Jerusalem, the Persians occupied the city in 614 for a short period. Theophanes, the Roman historian, records the occupation: "In this year the Persians took Jordan, Palestine and its holy city in battle. At the hands of the Jews they killed many people in it. Some say 90,000.⁶ The Jews, according to their means bought the Christians and then killed them. The Persians captured and led off to Persia Zacharia, the patriarch of Jerusalem, the precious life-giving wood (the supposed fragment of the "True Cross" on which Christ was crucified) and many prisoners. As a gesture of goodwill and a token of appreciation for assisting the Persians gain Jerusalem, the Jews were given administrative power in Jerusalem. This time, the Jews are alleged to have avenged their mistreatment by banishing all the Christians out of the city. Whatever was not destroyed during the invasion of Jerusalem by the Persians, the Jews made sure they razed it to the ground; even the Church of the Resurrection was not spared. But the Jewish administration did not last long as the Persians quickly became aware and concerned at the excessive oppression of the Christians. The Persians decided to hand the city back to the Christians. Under the leadership of Modestus, most of the Churches and holy sites began to be renovated.

However within 8 years, in 622, Heraclius defeated the Persians and re-occupied Jerusalem. Yet again the Jews were banished from the Holy City by Heraclius. He expelled them, ordering that they should not be allowed to come within three miles

of the Holy City. According to Butler, the adversity of exile from Jerusalem for the Jews was minimal compared to the edict that followed instructing the provinces throughout the empire to persecute them – “something like a general massacre of the Jews followed”.⁷

H. The Ṣaḥābah

The Ṣaḥābah, or Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, recognised the holy status and the blessings of the land of Palestine in general and of Jerusalem in particular. Many of them travelled to the Holy City to visit the sacred places and pray there. Some of them travelled there in order to begin the rites of their pilgrimage (Ḥajj or ‘Umrah) from the blessed land. Those that are known to have adorned their iḥrām from al-Aqṣā Sanctuary include: ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ, the second righteous Caliph, Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ ﷺ, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar ﷺ, Tamīm al-Dārī ﷺ, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aṣ ﷺ, Abū Hurayrah ﷺ, and ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās ﷺ.

Other Companions who are known to have visited Masjid al-Aqṣā include: ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām ﷺ, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf ﷺ, Abū Dardā’ ﷺ, Abū Dharr al-Gaffārī ﷺ, Abū Mas’ūd al-Anṣārī ﷺ, Abū ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ ﷺ, ‘Alqamah ﷺ, ‘Awf ibn Mālīk ﷺ, Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ ﷺ, Ḥabīb ibn Siba ﷺ, Jund ibn Junādah ﷺ, Ka’b al-Aḥbār ﷺ, Khālīd ibn Sa’īd ﷺ, Khālīd ibn Walīd ﷺ, Mas’ūd ibn Aws ﷺ, Mu’ādh ibn Jabal ﷺ, Mu’āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān ﷺ, Salmān al-Fārisī ﷺ, ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir ﷺ and Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān ﷺ.

Many more of the Companions travelled to al-Quds (Jerusalem) to be honoured by witnessing the conclusion of the peace treaty. The Prophet’s *mu’addhin* Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ ﷺ, who refused to raise the *adhān* after the Prophet’s death, was one of the first persons to raise the *adhān* in al-Aqṣā Sanctuary after it was conquered. Moreover, many of the Companions died and are buried in the area; their graves are still recognised and visited by Muslims. They include: Shaddād ibn Aws ﷺ, Tamīm al-Dārī ﷺ and ‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit ﷺ.

The ḥadīth below by Ya’lā ibn Shaddād ibn Aws ﷺ shows that the Masjid al-Aqṣā was a favoured and well-frequented place by the Companions, he reports:

“I came to Mu’āwiyah in al-Quds (Jerusalem), he led us in Friday prayer. I saw that most of the people in the Masjid

were the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ...”
[Sunan Abū Dāwūd]

The tradition of the great Ṣaḥābah and our pious predecessors was to frequent al-Aqṣā Sanctuary to not only fulfil the Sunnah but also gain great reward for it. They further used al-Aqṣā Sanctuary as a centre of learning and meditation.

I. The Land of Scholars

Many scholars of Islam were born and lived in this blessed land including:

- Imam al-Shāfi‘ī – Born in Gaza
- Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī – Lived in ‘Asqalān
- Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī – Lived in Nablus
- Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, the conqueror of Spain – Lived in Hebron

Many thousands of pious people and scholars migrated and settled in the Holy City. Moreover, numerous followers and great scholars visited and stayed for short periods in al-Quds (Jerusalem). These include: Imām al-Ghazālī, al-Ḥasan al-Zuhrī, Bishr al-Hāfi and Dhū’l-Nūn al-Miṣrī. The famous Islamic scholar Imām al-Ghazālī used to teach in al-Aqṣā Sanctuary; it is reported that he wrote part of his famous treatise *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (The Revival of Religious Sciences) within al-Aqṣā Sanctuary.

Thus, the Islamic features of al-Quds (Jerusalem) have developed since the earliest times. Besides the Companions and scholars, Muslim Caliphs under Umayyad, ‘Abbasid, Mamluk and Ottoman rule paid great attention to the Holy City in the fields of architecture, religion and the different branches of science.

J. The Martyrs

The soil of this blessed land has been mixed with the sacred blood of countless martyrs. Many decisive battles took place in Palestine where thousands of Muslims sacrificed themselves in the defence of al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf (al-Aqṣā Sanctuary) and for the sake of Allah ﷻ.

The European Crusaders slaughtered more than 70,000 Muslim civilians within the sanctuary of al-Aqṣā and the bodies of the martyrs were piled knee high. The streets of al-Quds

(Jerusalem) became rivers of human blood. Thousands of Muslims were martyred in order to regain al-Aqṣā Sanctuary from the Crusaders especially in the battles of Ḥiṭṭīn where Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī defeated the Crusaders, at the battle of 'Ayn Jālūt near al-Nāsirah where the Tartars were defeated, and in Acre and Caesarea where the last Crusader stronghold was captured.

Since 1948, over one hundred thousand Muslims have been martyred in Palestine due to the never-ending Israeli aggression against Palestinians. The modern-day Palestinians have been targetted as they form the barrier to the Jewish fundamentalist plan of occupying al-Quds (Jerusalem) and the Palestinians have become the protectors of al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf (al-Aqṣā Sanctuary) for the Ummah.