

What is "al hajj" according to The Quran?

In Traditional *Islam* "al hajj" is commonly taken to mean "the pilgrimage" and involves travelling to a specific location (i.e. *Makkah*, Saudi Arabia) to participate in various rituals. Some of these traditional practices are not found in The *Quran*, some are, and some, it could be argued, are loosely based on it.

In The *Quran*, "al hajj" seems to refer to something well known to the audience: a certain undertaking/event. It does not really matter what one calls it in English as the things taking place due to it will be the same. Meanings such as "the symposium/feast/homage/commemoration" seem to work ok.

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 sometimes shown in **blue** font.

Before continuing, the reader is recommended to familiarise themselves with [this article on the meaning of "al masjid al haram"](#) as it may make understanding "al hajj" easier.

Abbreviations:

AQ = *al quran* (the reading)

CAD = Classical Arabic Dictionaries

Review of HaJJ occurrences

2:158 Indeed, the *safa*¹ and the *marwah*² are from the markers/tokens (*sha3air*)³ of God, so whoever did **HaJJ**⁴ (at/of) the shelter/house⁵ or enlivened/visited⁶ there is no blame/error on him that he go amongst by/at them both⁷ and whoever volunteered good/better⁸ then God is Appreciative, Knowing.

1 - root: Sad-Fa-Waw. See [Project Root List](#) to read about possible meanings for given roots in this article.

2 - root: Miim-Ra-Waw.

3 - root: Shiin-Ayn-Ra. The root meanings and *Quran* usage suggest the word describes things/tokens/symbols/markers/practices (usually to do with sustenance/benefit) that have a deeper significance, i.e. help make us aware of something (e.g. God and His beneficence). Honouring such "*sha3air*" can indicate "*taqwa*" (forethoughtfulness/conscientiousness/piety) of the hearts, and can provide opportunity to be thankful and/or magnify God for what He has guided you - see 5:2, 22:32, 22:36-37.

4 - root: Ha-Jim-Jim. Note the perfect/past tense implies one could have done "*HaJJ*" but not necessarily encountered "*safa*" and "*marwah*" yet, meaning they are not compulsory aspects of "*HaJJ*" (or "*umrah*") but are accessible *secondary* to it. Also if they were an intrinsic part of "*al HaJJ*" then there would be no need to state "there is no blame on him that he should go about/amongst them". This is further reinforced by the imperfect tense "*ttawwaf*" which follows. As a side note, some Traditional commentators also mention this point.

5 - root: Ba-Ya-Ta. It principally means to reach the night or spend the night in and "*bayt*" is that place. It can be used for any structure that is utilised for such a purpose. Thus, "*bayt*" is closer to shelter as the conceptual meaning and within that meaning is the house. In this context it refers to the locality/region/area, wherein "*al hajj*" is being held, and is thus acting as a shelter/house for the people. This will be further discussed later.

6 - root: Ayn-Miim-Ra. Also perfect/past tense.

7 - root: Tay-Waw-Fa. Note it says "*ttawwaf bi*" which is the exact same phrase in 22:29 (involving the ancient/noble shelter/house / "*al bayt al 3tiq*") which most commentators take to mean "circuit" but they do not take it to mean "circuit" here. Some may argue that since there are two objects here, going to and fro is the implied meaning here rather than "circuit".

8 - the phrase "whoever volunteered good/better" is likely related to what came before, i.e. "no blame on him that he go about them". Interestingly, if it is taken as "whoever volunteered better", as I feel the implication is, then this can only mean: better than "going about/amongst *safa* and *marwah*". The obvious question then is: what is better?

2:158 clearly indicates there is a difference between *HaJJ* and *i'tamara*/visited (commonly translated as "*umrah*").

The additional information we have extracted about "*safa*" and "*marwah*" is as follows, which may help narrow down the possible meanings:

- 1) other occurrences of "*sha3air* of God" refer to provision of sustenance/food by means of the animals, thus they *could* be related to that
- 2) they are accessible to those who did *HaJJ* or visited the house/shelter, but are secondary to it
- 3) it is possible some might mistakenly assign blame if one goes about them or one going about them could think they are doing something negative/wrong
- 4) it *may* be possible to volunteer better than going amongst them

When we look at CAD "*al safa*" can refer to the animals which give much milk (said of she-camel/sheep/goat), and "*al marwah*" can refer to a stone where a cooking fire is started or on which an animal is slaughtered. If we opt for these meanings then the one going about them in 2:158 would be consuming food, not providing it. If so, this makes it easy to understand why this could be thought of as a negative, i.e. someone at this location could take advantage of such offerings/availability and consume aplenty without giving in return. This would also help explain why it says "whoever volunteered better" because providing food is better than consuming it, and this may tie in with verses such as 2:196 which discusses giving an offering/gift (e.g. an animal to be used for food provision). This is also the case for one who did *HaJJ* because even though doing *HaJJ* involves providing food for others, one could still consume more than they gave.

If we do choose this meaning, then we may need to consider why animals of milking are not discussed under the ordinary food to give/feed others with for one undertaking the *HaJJ* and this may be because it is more difficult for one to do, as the timing needs to be right for a female animal to give milk, e.g. shortly after them giving birth. Giving an animal for slaughter is much easier.

There are other possibilities for these words from CAD, e.g. "*al safa*" can mean "the palm tree heavy with fruit", "*al marwah*" can mean "a type of fragrant tree".

A plausible interpretation of "no blame on him that he go about them" is that this phrase is often used in AQ to discuss an exception/modification to the recommendation/rule/principle (e.g. 2:229, 2:282, 4:101, 4:102, 24:29, 24:58, 24:60), thus could refer to an exception, e.g. regarding slaughtering of animals on a stone (as this may be misconstrued as a throwback to idolatrous practice, see 5:3), or "*marwah*" can mean a stone from which blades are made even though there is no hunting or fighting in this period, or sightseeing of unique/stone landmarks at such a location could be mistaken for their veneration. Volunteering good/better in this case would be to help out at the event rather than sightseeing perhaps.

There seems to be insufficient evidence, as per *Quran*, to definitively deduce the meaning of "*safa*" and "*marwah*", however we should bear in mind that whatever they are the implication is that **they are not critical/compulsory aspects for one who did "*HaJJ*" or visited.**

#

2:189

They ask you regarding the crescent/new moons (*hila*) say: 'They are assigned/set times for the people as well as for the **HaJJ** and righteousness is not that you come to the houses from their backs, but righteousness is one who is forethoughtful/conscientious and comes to the houses from their doors. And be aware of God that you may succeed.

The "*hila*" reference suggests that these moon phases (Arabic plural, i.e. 3 or more) can be used to time the *HaJJ*. This could have various permutations. The latter half of the verse seems to be describing an idiom about having a sincere/honest/straightforward approach to something.

#

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

2:195

And spend in the way of God, but do not throw yourselves with your hands/resources to destruction, and do good, indeed God loves the good-doers.

2:196

And fulfil the **HaJJ** and the visit for God. So if you are prevented/restrained then (give) what is easy of the offering/gift 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 him harm/annoyance of/from his chief/representative then redeem/ransom from abstinence/fast or charity or sacrifice/observance.

So when you are safe/secure (i.e. in the designated vicinity) then whoever benefited/enjoyed with the visit to the **HaJJ** then (give) what is easy of the offering/gift, so whoever couldn't find then an abstinence/fast three days during the **HaJJ** and seven when you returned, this is ten complete.

That is for one whose people are not present (at) the inviolable time of acknowledgement (*al masjid al haram*) and be conscious of God and know that God is severe in punishment.

2:197

The **HaJJ** (are/at) months (*ashur*) well known. So whoever undertook in them the **HaJJ** then there shall be no sexual conduct /obscenity, nor wickedness/transgression, nor quarreling in the **HaJJ** and any good that you do, God is aware of it; and bring provision, but the best/better provision is forethought/conscientiousness(*taqwa*) and be aware of Me O people of understanding.

2:198

Not is on you blame to seek bounty from your Lord, so when you proceeded from familiarisations/recognitions** then remember God in the presence of the inviolable place of perception/markers/practices*** and remember Him as He has guided you; for you were straying before that.

2:199

Then proceed from wherever the people proceeded, and seek God's forgiveness; God is surely Forgiving, Merciful.

2:200

So when you have completed (root: QDY) your acts of servitude/devotion (*manasik*) then remember God as you remember your fathers or even greater. From among the people are those who say: "Our Lord, give us from this world!", but in the Hereafter he has no part.

2:201

And some of them say: "Our Lord, give us good in this world, and good in the Hereafter, and spare us from the retribution of the Fire."

2:202

These will have a benefit for what they have gained; and God is swift in reckoning.

2:203

And remember God during days specified/numbered/counted. Whoever hurries to two days there is no sin upon him; and whoever delays there is no sin upon him for the one who is forethoughtful/conscientious/pious. And be aware of God, and know that it is to Him that you will be gathered.

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

** 'arafaat (pl. of 'arafat, masculine 'araf, being a version of 'aarif, the active form of 'arafa and/or 'arfun, the informational noun of 'arafa) can mean 'familiarizations, approbations, recognitions.' See 49: 13 for example.

*** Arabic: "al mash'ar al haram" literally means: the inviolable place of awareness/perception/knowledge and/or where "sha3air" are found/practiced, and most likely refers to the locality. The form "maf3al" (same as "mashAAr") is most commonly used to denote place in AQ. See end of [this](#) article.

There is no sacred place/building/mountain required in order to make sense of this term, as in the Traditional variant understandings (some are of the view that it means *Muzdalifah*: an open level area near *Makkah*, see interpretation of Al-Qurtubi. Some think it refers to a mountain which is called *Qazah* in *Muzdalifah*. It is also interpreted to refer to the place between the two mountains of *Muzdalifah* from the narrow passage between the last two mountains before entering *Makkah* for those coming from 'Arafah and the valley of *Muhassir*)

Lane's Lexicon states: "mash'ar: signify a place (of the performance) of religious rites and ceremonies of the hajj", "a place where a thing is known to be - And hence, A place of the performance of religious services".

It is theoretically possible that instead of simply referring to the general locality, the original *HaJJ* had a specific location within this area for the "sha3air", e.g. where animals were taken and slaughtered, meat distributed etc.

Following on from 2:195 it is no coincidence that *HaJJ* allows one to spend in the way of God and do good. This [article on 2:196](#) should be read to understand the above translation. Note that "whoever enjoyed in the visit to the *HaJJ*" implies the period for *HaJJ* is longer than 3 days, because one is in a position to determine enjoyment/benefit from being there and [thereafter](#) undergo abstinence for 3 days [during](#) the *HaJJ*.

As a side note: if "shahr" in 2:197 is taken as "full-moon", and this is coupled with "hila" in 2:189, then this could indicate a period for "al *HaJJ*" would be from one full-moon to crescent/new moon, which is about 10/15 days respectively. This would result in several fixed *HaJJ* periods in the inviolable months, presumably with gaps inbetween each *HaJJ* period.

#

3:96 Indeed, the first **1 house/shelter** placed/set-down **2** for mankind was the one with/in/by/at *bakka* **3** blessed and a guidance for the beings.

3:97 In **it** clear signs/evidences, the stance/position/status **4** of Abraham, and whoever entered **it** was securing. And for God upon mankind (is) the *HaJJ* (at/of) the house/shelter, whoever is able to make a way to **5 it**, and whoever conceals/rejects then truly God has no need of the beings.

1first means others are possible, also see 24:36. This would explain well the narration interplay between Abraham's example and the believers this time around, indicating that Abraham's model is an example for them to follow. This is perhaps linked to his status as an *imam*/model/exemplar for mankind [2:124].

2 Arabic: "*wudi'Aa*" often translated incorrectly as "set-up" or the like.

3 this could be a proper name of a place, however it could mean "distinguishing/ranking above others", "crowding" or some other CAD meaning for Ba-Kaf-Kaf. Interestingly, "crowding" is a common meaning to both BaKKah and MaKKah, thus could explain how they became interchanged in future Traditional Islamic sources. I personally think "*makkah*" means "crowding" in 48:24.

4 Arabic: "*maqam*" does not commonly mean physical standing place, see other occurrences.

5 Arabic: "*ila*" implies motion and/or direction.

Note the object of **it** (Arabic: *hi/hu*) is "*bayt/shelter*". Most Traditional translators try to explain this away as referring to "the *haram/sanctuary* of Makkah" e.g. Ibn Kathir.

If the "*bayt*" mentioned in 3:96 is the cuboid called *Kaabah* in *Makkah*, then this has some issues:

1) a building is never described as a "guidance" elsewhere in AQ. However a community/nation can guide (e.g. 7:159, 7:181, 21:73)

2) according to traditional Islamic history the cuboid called *Kaabah* has been demolished and rebuilt several times - if so, does its status as a "guidance" and "securing" become temporarily suspended at these times?

3) what are the clear signs in the cuboid called *Kaabah*? Is there even any? It is very rare for people to enter it today.

4) I am not aware of any non-Islamic source that states Abraham was in the area of *Makkah*, nor any prophet/messenger thereafter.

5) in present day *Makkah*, the alleged "*maqam Ibrahim*" (stone imprint of Abraham's footsteps) is outside the cuboid called *Kaabah*, not inside it like the verses say.

6) I am not aware of any source which cites a place called *Makkah* or a cuboid called *Kaabah* prior to traditional Islamic sources.

#

22:25

Surely, those who have rejected/concealed and hinder from the path of God and the inviolable time of acknowledgement 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.

22:26

And when We appointed for Abraham the position of the shelter/house: that do not associate with Me anything, and purify My shelter/house for those who: go about/among, and stand/maintain/observe, and humble/incline, and submit/acknowledge.

22:27

And call out among the people with/by the **HaJJ**, they will come to you walking and on every transport, they will come from every remote pass.

22:28

That they may witness benefits for themselves and recall God's name in days known over what He has provided for them of the animal livestock. So eat from it and feed the suffering and the poor.

22:29

Then let them perform/complete/decide/fulfill (root: **ODY**) their: self-denial/neglect or devotional/cleansing/comfort acts* and fulfill their vows**, and go about in/by the noble/liberated house/shelter (*al bayt al atiq*)***.

22:30

That, and whoever honours God's restrictions/sanctions, then it is better for him with His Lord. And the livestock are made lawful for you; except what is being recited to you; so avoid the foulness/impurity of idols and avoid false word.

22:31

Monotheists to God, not those who associate partners with Him. And whoever associates partner with God, then it is as if he has fallen from the sky and the birds snatch him or the wind/force takes him to a place far off.

22:32

That, and whoever honors the markers/tokens of God, then indeed it is from piety/forethought of the hearts.

22:33

For you in them are benefits to an appointed term/time, then their lawful/permitted place to the noble/liberated house/shelter (*al bayt al atiq*)***.

22:34

And for every nation We have made an act of servitude/devotion that they mention God's name over what He has provided them of the animal livestock. So your God is One God; submit to Him and give good tidings to the humble ones.

22:35

Those who, when God is mentioned, their hearts revere, and they are patient to what befalls them, and they uphold the bond/*salat*, and from what We provide them they spend.

22:36

And the plump livestock, We have made them for you among the markers/tokens of God; for you in them is good, so mention God's name upon them lined up; then when down on their sides, then eat from them and feed the needy who ask and those who do not. It was like thus that We have made them in service to you, that you may be thankful

22:37

Neither their meat nor their blood reaches God, but what reaches Him is the conscientiousness/piety/forethought from you. It was like thus that He made them in service to you, so that you may magnify God for what He has guided you, and give good news to the good-doers.

* this first part of the verse could be interpreted several ways. If coupled with 2:200 it seems to suggest "then let them complete their devotional acts". Interestingly, Traditionalist commentators say this part in 22:29 is about ending *ihram*/pilgrim status (i.e. ending one's HaJJ), which would be the result if one completed their devotional act, i.e. animal slaughter and feeding of the needy.

** for possible examples see 2:270-271, 76:7.

*** can mean noble/ancient/liberated/beautiful/generous

22:26 makes it clear that the only requirement for the position of the shelter is that it is established by someone who doesn't setup partners. Clearly, this is not necessarily a particular location but any location where this criterion is met.

22:34 suggests that this is an important practice all communities/nations had in common, and thus perhaps is the only obligatory one. 22:67 suggests similar. It may be helpful to reflect upon the act being asked of us and why: utilising the tokens/*sha3air* of God in this way, i.e. for providing sustenance to those in need, is an act that reiterates/mirrors what God has done for us. Thus, what better way to show one's humility/thanks/remembrance/praise/recognition before God than to provide for others just as God has provided for you.

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9:1

An acquittal/release from God and His messenger to those with whom you made a treaty from among the polytheists.

9:2

So roam the earth/land for four months and know that you will not escape God, and that

God will disgrace the ungrateful/rejecters.

9:3

And an announcement from God and His messenger to the people (on) the day of the greatest *HaJJ** "God is quit/free from the polytheists and so is His messenger". If you repent, then it is better for you, and if you turn away, then know that you will not escape God, and give news to those who conceal/reject of a painful retribution.

9:4

Except for those with whom you had a treaty from among the polytheists if they did not reduce anything from it nor did they plan to attack you; you shall continue the treaty with them until its expiry. Truly, God loves the forethoughtful/conscientious.

9:5

So when the restricted months** are passed, then you may fight the polytheists wherever you find them...

*can also mean "...greatest day of the *HaJJ*...". In terms of likelihood I think this is the lesser likely option as there is no indication for what day would be the greatest or why. Whilst "greatest *HaJJ*" may indicate in terms of *HaJJ* passed, this current one is the greatest thus far, probably because the believers have become the majority/authority, the establishment of God's *deen* has been realised etc.

** Arabic plural, meaning 3 or more *shahr*/month/full-moon

The above verses indicate the *HaJJ* takes place within the restricted/inviolable months, and "day of the greatest *HaJJ*" is prior to at least 3 of them. The most prevalent Traditional understanding is that *HaJJ* is only done in the first of the four inviolable/restricted months (called "*Dhu-I-Hijjah*") - perhaps these verses are where this interpretation came from.

It is possible, and most likely in my view, that "day of the greatest *HaJJ*" is simply referring to the first day of this *HaJJ* period, i.e. first day of the four restricted/inviolable *shahr*. This makes most sense within the context.

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9:17

It was not for the polytheists that they develop/cultivate God's times of acknowledgement (*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 times of acknowledgement (*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 doing *HaJJ* and development/cultivation (of) the inviolable time of acknowledgement (*al masjid 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.

9: 19 is an interesting verse and tells the 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. This suggests to me that uplifting and bringing the believers together was an important aspect, rather than the means used to achieve this (i.e. the inviolable time of acknowledgement), see [2: 140-151](#).

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Additional Notes

What is "al bayt" in these verses?

To help answer this question, some comparable verses are shown below, with key words colour-coordinated:

52:4 And/by the frequented/enlivened **house/shelter** (*bayt*).

90:1 I swear by (or call to witness) this **land/town** (*balad*).

90:2 And you (are) free/lawful in this **land/town** (*balad*).

95:3 And this **land/town** (*balad*) **secure**.

106:3 So let them serve the Lord of this **house/shelter** (*bayt*).

106:4 The One who fed them from hunger, and **secured** them from fear.

27:91 I have been ordered to serve the Lord of this **land/town** (*balad*) the One who made it **inviolable/restricted** (*haram*) and to Him are all things, and I have been ordered to be of those who submit.

28:57 And they said: "If we follow the guidance with you, we will be deposed from our **soil/land** (*ard*). Did We not establish for them a **sanctuary** (*haram*) **secure**, **are brought to it all kinds of fruits**, as a provision from Us? Indeed, most of them do not know.

29:67 Do they not see that We have made a **sanctuary** (*haram*) **secure**, while are being taken away the people around them? Then do in falsehood they believe, and in favour of God they disbelieve?

14:35 And when Abraham said: "My Lord, make this **land/town** (*balad*) **secure** and keep me and my sons away from serving idols."

14:36 "My Lord, indeed they have misguided many among the people. So, whoever follows me, then indeed he is of me, and whoever disobeys me, then You are Forgiving, Merciful."

14:37 "Our Lord, indeed I have settled from my progeny in/by an uncultivated valley in the presence of Your **house/shelter** (*bayt*) made **inviolable** (*muharam*). Our Lord, that they may uphold the bond. So make the hearts of the people move towards them and **provide them of the fruits** that they may be thankful."

2:125 And when We made the **house/shelter** (*bayt*) a place of return/filling/reward for mankind and a **security**, and take (to yourselves) from the position/status of Abraham a place/time of blessing/bonding, and We made a covenant to Abraham and Ishmael that "You (both) purify My **house/shelter** (*bayt*) for those who go among/about, and stay/devote, and incline and honour/acknowledge."

2:126 And when Abraham said: "My Lord, make this a **town/land** (*balad*) **securing**, and **provide for its people/community of the fruits** for whoever believes in God and the Last Day." He said: "As for he who rejects/conceals, then I will let him enjoy for a while, then I will force him to the retribution of the Fire, and miserable is the destiny!".

2:127 And when Abraham was raising the foundations from/of the **house/shelter** (*bayt*) and Ishmael: "Our Lord accept this from us, You are the Hearer, the Knowledgeable."

- The things described as secure in these contexts are sanctuary/*haram*, town/land/*balad*, and shelter/*bayt*.
- Provision of fruits is associated in these contexts with the sanctuary/*haram*, people of the town/land/*balad* and people of the shelter/*bayt*.
- 27:91 makes clear that it is the town/land/*balad* that is the part made inviolable/restricted, and "this" clearly implies the town/land is finite/delimited, i.e. has spatial boundaries.
- 14:37 gives us an example of a shelter/*bayt* made inviolable.
- The only thing that Abraham asked to be made secure was the town/land/*balad*, and the only thing God explicitly made secure, in the context of Abraham, was the house/shelter/*bayt*. Are we told if God answered his prayer in AQ? Yes, if *balad=bayt*.

There does seem to be enough overlap to suggest that in these contexts the *bayt*/shelter could refer to the *balad*/town/land. If so, this would make sense.

In Arabia it has been noted by historians that there were many areas setup as "*haram*/sanctuary" i.e. a location wherein no fighting takes place so people can congregate in safety, for trading, worship etc. We can reasonably assume that various "*haram*" had different names, and perhaps different regulations - and it just so happens that AQ describes its particular "*haram*" setup as "*al bayt al haram*" (the inviolable shelter/house). This coincides well with the people who would be attending/inhabiting/hosting it, i.e. "*ahl-l-bayt* / people of the house/shelter" [see 11:73, 33:33]. Thus, "*ahl-l-bayt*" is not referring to those living in a single household of clay/bricks, but those living in (or wishing to live in) God's house/shelter.

Interestingly, it can be noted that traditional commentators (e.g. Ibn Kathir) [cite alternative names](#) for "*Makkah*" such as "*al bayt al atiq*", and "*al bayt al haram*". In addition, switch in meaning of terms has been noted for 3:97 above and also understandings related to "*al masjid al haram*". The point being that it is common to find "*al bayt al atiq*" / "*al bayt al haram*" and even "*bayt*" referring to regions in the Traditional understandings, so to suggest that *bayt=balad* here should not be seen as something new.

Further, there are examples of lands/towns referred to as "*bayt*" in Arabic, e.g. Bethlehem ~ *bayt lahm* (house of meat), Jerusalem ~ *bayt al maqdis* (house of the holiness), *bayt jubrin* (house of the powerful), *bayt dajan*, *bayt jala*, *bayt awwa*, *bayt hanoun* etc. I do not know the extent of this practice however, e.g. if it is mentioned in CAD or not. This could be an area for further research.

Lastly, a question may arise that if the author of AQ meant "*al bayt*" to refer to "the *balad*/land/town" in the *HaJJ* verses, then why not just say that? It seems to me that to say "the town/land" would more so imply a specific location only, i.e. that land/town, whilst stating "*al bayt* / the shelter" in my view conveys more so a conceptual term, i.e. a model/exemplar that can be copied and implemented wherever the criteria is fulfilled. Note that in no *HaJJ* (or *umrah*/visit) verse does it say it is done at/to/in the *balad*/land/town.

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It may be interesting to note that all verses that discuss "*al hajj*" occur in the latter half of the revelation of AQ, not only according to Traditional order of revelation but also independent analysis of the likely order based on content, style etc, e.g. see chapter 7 of "Introduction to Quran" by Richard Bell, or chapter 2 of "Discovering the Quran" by Neal Robinson. This is potentially interesting because according to Traditional Islamic sources "*al hajj*" was a regular event, perhaps yearly, yet it goes unmentioned until the latter

half of revelation. The possible reason for this is discussed in the article on "[al masjid al haram](#)".

Since discussion of the *HaJJ* appears late in AQ, it is more likely that knowledge of it was not as well ingrained and widespread as other teachings amongst believers, perhaps making it easier to distort/change in future. Furthermore, as is often the case, there was likely a movement towards orthodoxy/formalisation of activities etc.

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When to end one's *HaJJ*?

A person undertaking *HaJJ* can hurry to 2 days but usually it is more than this [2:203]. The word "*ma3doodat*" [2:80, 2:184, 2:203, 3:24, 12:20] typically indicates a low number, e.g. from 3-10 as it is often used for numbers which can be counted by one's fingers. A maximum of 10 days may also be indicated in 2:196 wherein it seems to make equivalent (in terms of giving) one who benefitted/enjoyed in a visit to the *HaJJ* and one who did *HaJJ*. The phrase "ten complete" in 2:196 is interesting as it is obvious $7+3=10$, thus may be a clarifying instruction to reassure the instructed that since there is no fixed number 10 is considered complete.

There is also a theoretical scenario wherein a visitor to the *HaJJ* enjoyed/benefitted (thus should undergo 3 days abstinence during *HaJJ*, and 7 upon return) but there is less than 3 days of *HaJJ* left thus cannot abstain 3 days during it. The guidance provided could indicate that one is to make it up to 10, e.g. if only one day left of *HaJJ*, abstinence that day, then 9 upon return. Please note that this scenario would be rare as it is unlikely someone would on purpose make such an important trip with so little time to enjoy or benefit from it, unless they were delayed unexpectedly enroute etc.

If the above information is coupled with 2:200, 22:29 and 22:34, it implies the individual determines when their obligation of *HaJJ* is complete - and that is once they have performed their obligatory act of devotion/servitude, i.e. slaughter an animal to share and feed those in need. That would explain why there is no fixed duration time explicitly stated in AQ. Interestingly most traditional commentators also regard one's personal *HaJJ* to end after this act.

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5:2 You who believe, do not violate the tokens/regulations of God, nor the inviolable/restricted month, nor the offerings/gifts, nor the prefects/repositories* nor those pursuing the inviolable shelter (*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*** the inviolable time of acknowledgement that you transgress. And help one another on righteousness and *taqwa*/conscientiousness, and do not help one another on sin and transgression. And be aware of God, for God's retribution is severe.

* Arabic: "*qalaida*" root: Qaf-Lam-Dal. Consider the infrastructure/management required for such an event.

**this phrase 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.

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

5:95 O you who believe, do not kill any game while you are restricted; and whoever of you kills it deliberately, then recompense is value similar to what was killed of the livestock, judging by two equitable persons from you, an offering/gift reaching the base/projection (*al kaabah*)* or expiation feeding needy people, or compensation/equivalent that in fast/abstinence; that he may taste the consequence of his deed. God forgives what has passed, and whoever returns then God will take retribution from him. God is Severe, Owner of retribution.

5:96 Lawful for you is the game of the sea and its food is provision for you and for the travelers; and forbidden for you is the game of the land as long as you are under

restriction; and be conscious of God the one to whom you will be gathered.

5:97 God has made the base/projection (*al kaabah*) the inviolable shelter, a standing/management/support for the people, and the restricted/inviolable month, and the gift/offering, and the prefects/repositories; that is so you may know that God knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, and that God is aware of all things.

5:98 Know that God is powerful in retribution, and that God is Forgiving, Merciful.

5:99 Not on the messenger except the conveyance, and God knows what you reveal and what you conceal.

* Note that currently in the city of Makkah no offerings/gifts are brought to the cuboid called Kaabah.

To clarify, according to the Arabic, in 5:97 it says "God made the base/projection/*kaabah*: the inviolable shelter, a standing/management/*qiyaaman* for the people. (He also made) the inviolable month, the gift/offering and prefects/repositories: (*qiyaaman*) for the people".

The word "*qiyaaman*" (root: [QWM](#)) seems to have a core meaning of "to be/make straight". If we read the occurrences of this word in AQ we find that it can mean either: physical standing, and, metaphorical standing, i.e.

maintain/support/establish/upstanding. If we look at 4:5, which is similar to 5:97, as an object (e.g. wealth) is described as "*qiyaaman*" for others, it means a "means of support" / "management" / "maintenance" then these meanings seems to fit best in 5:97. The implication is that whatever is "*qiyaaman*" helps people to stand upright i.e. support/maintain/establish them.

The end of 5:97 gives us the reason for what came before: "that is so you may know that God knows what is in heavens and what is in the earth". This reminder suggests these regulations have some insight into our own selves, e.g. our actions during this period, our provision requirements, the environment we live in, and when we experience such a setup we may realise the knowledge and insight God has into this and our existence.

Interestingly, if the interpretation is that we have an area wherein restrictions are enforced, either generally and/or for the *HaJJ*, then that area must have a spatial/geographical limit/boundary. This makes logical and practical sense. Thus, my view on "*al kaabah*" is that it likely refers to an area/region. Based on the CAD meanings, either a base/valley, or an area raised (in relation to surrounding terrain). I mainly say this because it is clear in AQ that certain restrictions are in place in the inviolable months and *HaJJ* is taking place somewhere, thus it is a logical necessity to have such an area demarcated, hence the "*al kaabah*" reference.

Where this specific area is may or may not be important for us now. For example, 27:91 and 5:97 say God made such an area inviolable thus one could argue who are we to change it, thus its location should be kept as is (this assumes this location is known and correct, e.g. current city of Makkah). However one could argue that the position of the shelter in 22:26 is one wherein no partner is associated with God, and since the messenger of *Quran* followed the example of the first shelter setup by Abraham (who is unlikely to have been in the region of Makkah) one could re-institute this model at one's locality, wherever that may be.

There are also other considerations, e.g. is a certain place more special than other places, would this create discrimination by proximity, are the actions and goals more/less important than a special location, does Makkah today pass the criteria of not associating partners with God? etc. These issues issue may require further consideration.

There is just-recompense (*qisas*) for violating the restrictions/sanctions/*hurrumat* [2:194], but not for violating the *sha3air*. This suggests that the restriction one is under in 5:2 and 5:95-96 refers to the restrictions during the restricted/inviolable months, and not only during when one is undertaking *HaJJ*. In fact *HaJJ* is not mentioned in chapter 5.

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Summary and Discussion

al HaJJ ~ the symposium/feast/homage/commemoration

Taking the above review of occurrences into account, a summarised reference list of the information extracted about the *HaJJ* is shown below:

When

occurs within the *ashur*(plural of *shahr*) well known i.e. the four inviolable/restricted months [2:197, 9:2-5]

the crescent/new moons are used as set times for it [2:189]

Guidelines

the principal requirement: the position of the shelter and of those hosting it is that nothing is associated with God i.e. monotheism [22:26, 22:31]

can take place at a shelter wherein this criteria is met [3:96, 22:26]

done for God [3:97, 2:196]

during this time there is an amnesty/truce in place if there are warring parties (self-defence is still allowed however) [9:2, 2:191]

this type of event will nurture a sense of brotherhood amongst monotheists/believers, provide opportunity to witness benefits, remember/mention/thank/magnify God, spend in the way of God and do good [2:195-198, 9:18-20, 22:25-28, 22:35]

Participants

it is open to all mankind (who are willing to abide by the laws of the land) - for whoever is able to make a way to it [3:97, 9:18, 22:27]

if you wish to go but are prevented then send whatever is easy of gift/offering (with a representative) - if unable to do this then one can redeem by way of abstinence/charity/sacrifice [2:196]

Undertaking HaJJ

for monotheists - those wishing to uphold the *salat*/bond and bring forth betterment [22:31, 22:35, 9:18, 9:28]

no sex/wrongdoing/quarreling - this may aid the positive atmosphere and one's spiritual experience [2:197]

bring provision [2:197]

one's state of mind should be piety/conscientiousness/forethoughtfulness/*taqwa* and sincere/straightforward [2:189, 2:197, 2:203, 22:32, 22:37]

can be done in 2 days but typically would be 3-10 days, and one's obligation is fulfilled after the act of animal slaughter and feeding those in need [2:200, 2:203, 22:29, 22:34]

Visitors

if you enjoyed in the visit to the *HaJJ* then give whatever is easy of gift/offering - if unable then abstinence 3 days during + 7 when you return = 10 complete [2:196]

Activities

one may seek bounty (i.e. worldly benefit, e.g. trade), get to know one another, go about the place, remember/mention/thank/magnify God, if doing *HaJJ* slaughter an animal to eat and share with the needy [2:198, 2:200, 2:203, 22:28, 22:34, 22:36]

The *HaJJ* seems to be a vehicle through which commemoration of God, spending in the way of God, experiencing benefits for oneself/others and brotherhood are actualised. Such an undertaking/event would also serve as an excellent example for visitors, and

thus perhaps help spread the message. Humans are by nature social beings and there is nothing more powerful than seeing the truth for oneself, and this effect could tie in with some of the other meanings of the root Ha-Jiim-Jiim: e.g. "overcome another by/in argument/evidences/testimonies".

It should be noted that the latter stages of *Quran* revelation suggest a confederation of sorts was forming amongst monotheists/believers. The findings above also suggest this and this momentum sets up much of what we know of Islamic history quite well. For further reading, see the excellent work "[Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam](#)" by Professor Fred Donner.

One issue that was not covered in detail in this article was the timing of *HaJJ* (and/or the inviolable/restricted months) with regard to the *Quranic* calendar system, i.e. when during the year. This is an area for further research.

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

[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](#)

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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 November 2nd, 2013. 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]