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Article

# Reassessing the Masjid al-Haram: A Quranic Multidimensional Analysis of Sacred Geography

Kazi Abdul Mannan

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business, Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology, Dhaka, Bangladesh; drkaziabdulmannan@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study investigates the Qur'anic characteristics of the Masjid al-Harām and the region of Bakkah by employing a Qur'an-only hermeneutic framework grounded in historical geography, ecology, agriculture, environmental studies, geopolitics, and linguistics. The Qur'an describes the Sacred House as the "first House established for humanity" located in *Bakkah* (Qur'an 3:96), positioned in a barren valley with no cultivation (Qur'an 14:37), embedded within a mountainous environment, marked by secure geopolitical protection (Qur'an 29:67), and surrounded by distinct ecological and agricultural constraints (Qur'an 14:37; 80:24–32). This research argues that these Qur'anic features do not correspond to the environmental, historical, or geographical conditions of present-day Mecca. Instead, the Qur'anic descriptions align more consistently with the Mount Hermon–Bakka Valley region in the Levant, where a barren, elevated, mountainous, and historically ancient valley exists, matching the Qur'an's multilayered profile of Bakkah. The Qur'an situates the Abrahamic settlement, the barren valley, and the House's geopolitical centrality in a region that predates later Islamic historical narratives and does not depend on extra-Qur'anic sources. The findings challenge traditional assumptions and propose a re-evaluation of the location of the Masjid al-Harām through a strictly Qur'anic lens.

**Keywords:** Bakkah; Masjid al-Harām; Mount Hermon; Qur'anic geography; barren valley; historical ecology; Qur'an-only analysis

## 1. Introduction

The Masjid al-Haram and its surrounding valley represent one of the most significant sacred landscapes described in the Qur'an. Its geographical, ecological, agricultural, environmental, geopolitical, and linguistic features are presented through a unique divine discourse that positions the sanctuary at the intersection of human history, primordial monotheism, and global spiritual guidance. While a substantial body of scholarship exists on the region, much of it has relied heavily on post-Qur'anic historical narrations, archaeological interpretations, and theological traditions. This research deliberately departs from such approaches and anchors its analysis entirely in the Qur'an itself, seeking to reconstruct a multidimensional academic understanding of the Masjid al-Haram area solely through Qur'anic evidence. By excluding lahuwal hadith and all extra-scriptural sources, the study centres the Qur'an as the primary and sufficient textual authority for examining the sanctuary's characteristics.

The Qur'an provides rich and varied references to the Masjid al-Haram, describing it not merely as a physical structure but as a cosmologically significant institution deeply embedded within a larger sacred geography. The text identifies the site as "*the first House established for mankind*" located in *Bakkah*, endowed with blessings and universal guidance (Qur'an 3:96). This singular statement situates the location at the earliest point in human sacred history, implying both theological and geographical primacy. The Qur'an's emphasis on "firstness" suggests that the sanctuary predates all other human-built religious centres, thereby assigning it a foundational status within the spiritual narrative of humankind.

The Qur'anic portrayal of the Masjid al-Haram is multidimensional. It describes the area as a secure sanctuary where human life, animal life, and environmental boundaries are protected through divine legislation (Qur'an 2:125; 5:97). This understanding of security extends beyond political order; it shapes the region as a divinely governed ecological and social system. The sanctuary is presented as a place where aggression is prohibited, violence is suspended, and sanctity is preserved across seasons. Such descriptions emphasise that the Masjid al-Haram operates under a distinctive environmental ethic established by revelation.

The Qur'an also situates the sanctuary within a specific historical geography, particularly through the narrative of Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham). The text recounts Ibrāhīm's supplication: "I have settled some of my descendants in a valley without cultivation (*ghayri dhī zar'*)" (Qur'an 14:37). This statement provides one of the most important geographical and ecological clues about the Masjid al-Haram area. It identifies the region as a valley-topographically enclosed or partially enclosed-and explicitly describes it as lacking cultivable land. Such a description characterises the sanctuary's environment as arid, barren, and agriculturally limited. Importantly, the verse does not name the valley, but the surrounding context makes clear that the reference is to the location of the Sacred House (al-bayt al-muharram). The Qur'an's own linguistic construction, therefore, becomes the principal source for understanding the valley's natural conditions.

From an ecological and agricultural viewpoint, the Qur'an's descriptions suggest that the region's natural resources were initially insufficient for self-sustaining agricultural development. Yet the valley becomes a fully inhabited human settlement, not through any external historical explanations, but through divine facilitation embedded in the narrative itself. Ibrāhīm prays for the valley's transformation through divine blessing, asking that its inhabitants be granted security (Qur'an 2:126) and provision of fruits (2:126; 14:37). These supplications indicate two ecological and economic themes: the sanctuary was not originally agriculturally productive, and (2) its sustenance depended on provisions brought from outside the valley. The Qur'an's language strongly implies economic interconnection between the sanctuary and other fruit-bearing regions, thus highlighting early regional trade networks centred around the Sacred House.

In addition to its ecological and economic roles, the Qur'an also frames the Masjid al-Haram as a geopolitical and civilizational centre. It names the region "*umm al-qurā'*"-the "mother of towns" (Qur'an 42:7)-suggesting that the sanctuary represents a central hub within the broader settlement patterns of the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. The Qur'an further describes the site as a global point of convergence for diverse peoples who travel from "*every distant path*" (Qur'an 22:27). This portrayal reflects the sanctuary's function as an international gathering place, generating cultural, economic, and spiritual interactions across nations and tribes. The Qur'an thus positions the Masjid al-Haram as a focal point of transregional unity, transcending political, linguistic, and ethnic boundaries.

Linguistically, the region gains even greater significance. The Qur'an affirms that the revelation was sent "*in clear Arabic*" (Qur'an 26:195) and directed toward the inhabitants of the "*mother of towns*" (42:7). This connection between the sanctuary and the Arabic language implies that the Masjid al-Haram area served as a linguistic environment conducive to the preservation and transmission of divine revelation. The clarity and purity attributed to the Qur'anic Arabic reflect the linguistic ecology of the region, which the Qur'an treats as an integral part of the revelation's communicative purpose.

Despite the Qur'an's concise yet profound descriptions, academic scholarship has often overlooked the integrated multidimensionality embedded within these verses. Studies of the Masjid al-Haram tend to focus either on theological aspects, historical narratives, or later interpretations that rely heavily on literature external to the Qur'an. Such approaches risk overshadowing the Qur'an's own internal logic and textual coherence. This research, therefore, adopts a purely Qur'anic methodology, reconstructing the sanctuary's characteristics through direct analysis of relevant āyāt across multiple themes: geography, ecology, agriculture, environment, geopolitics, and linguistics.

The significance of this research lies in its interdisciplinary Qur'anic hermeneutic. By uniting various Qur'anic references into a cohesive academic narrative, this study illustrates how the Masjid al-Haram functions as a complex system of divine law, environmental adaptation, social

organisation, and global spiritual leadership. The sanctuary is presented not simply as a religious structure, but as a living landscape shaped by divine decree and human participation. Its arid environment, its security laws, its linguistic role, its geopolitical influence, and its agricultural dependence collectively form a distinct Qur'anic model of sacred space. Through such an approach, this research aims to contribute to Qur'anic studies, historical geography, environmental humanities, and interdisciplinary understandings of sacred landscapes-while maintaining strict adherence to the Qur'an as the sole authoritative source.

The research undertakes four major goals:

- To identify and analyse Qur'anic descriptions of the Masjid al-Haram area and its immediate environment.
- To develop a Qur'anic theoretical framework that integrates geography, ecology, agriculture, geopolitics, linguistics, and environmental science.
- To apply a qualitative thematic methodology to interpret Qur'anic textual evidence.
- To demonstrate how Qur'anic depictions of the sanctuary contribute to understanding its global religious and cultural role.

## 2. Qur'anic Theoretical Framework

A Qur'anic theoretical framework forms the conceptual foundation for understanding the characteristics of the Masjid al-Haram area as described exclusively in the Qur'an. This framework must emerge directly from the Qur'an's own discourse, its thematic patterns, its linguistic structures, its interconnected references, and its internal worldview. By refraining from incorporating non-Qur'anic traditions or external historical narratives, the analysis preserves textual purity and ensures that all conclusions are grounded exclusively in divine revelation. The Qur'an presents the Masjid al-Haram not merely as a religious site but as a multidimensional entity embedded within sacred geography, environmental law, ecological constraints, agricultural limitations, geopolitical centrality, and linguistic significance. These interconnected dimensions form the Qur'anic theoretical model through which the sanctuary can be comprehensively understood.

The framework rests upon five interrelated Qur'anic pillars:

- Sacred Geography and Primordial Origin
- Environmental and Ecological Laws of the Sanctuary
- Agricultural and Economic Characteristics
- Geopolitical and Civilizational Centrality
- Linguistic and Revelatory Significance

Each of these pillars emerges explicitly from Qur'anic statements and provides the structural basis for interpreting the Masjid al-Haram area within an academic, multidimensional approach.

### 2.1. Sacred Geography and Primordial Origin

The Qur'an establishes the Masjid al-Haram within a framework of primordial sacred geography. The most fundamental description appears in:

*"Indeed, the first House established for mankind was surely that at Bakkah-blessed and guidance for the worlds."* (Qur'an 3:96)

This āyah carries three core theoretical implications:

**Primordial Priority:** The sanctuary predates all other houses of worship. The term *"awwalu baytin"* (the first House) informs the theoretical foundation that Masjid al-Haram is the earliest sacred structure associated with human history.

**Universality:** The phrase *"lil-nās"* (for mankind) positions the sanctuary as a universal institution limited to a tribe, region, or ethnicity.

**Sacred Geography:** The location *"Bakkah"* situates the sanctuary in a valley-like topography. Linguistically, *"Bakkah"* conveys narrowness, density, and crowding-supporting a geographic interpretation of a constricted valley.

The Qur'an reinforces the sacred nature of the geography in multiple verses. God declares the area around the House as a place of security (amnan), instructing Ibrāhīm:

*"And [mention] when We made the House a place of return for the people and [a place of] security."* (Qur'an 2:125)

This security is not metaphorical but a divine law that shapes the region's environmental and social order. The theoretical implication is that the sanctuary exists within a *sacrosanct geographical zone*, marked by divine protection and primordial significance.

## 2.2. Environmental and Ecological Laws of the Sanctuary

The environment of the sanctuary is defined by Qur'anic ecological governance. Environmental protection is explicitly legislated by divine command:

*"And whoever intends therein a deviation or wrongdoing-We will cause him to taste a painful punishment."* (Qur'an 22:25)

This verse indicates that the sanctuary's environment operates under heightened moral and ecological restrictions. Additional ecological principles arise from the rules surrounding hunting:

*"O you who believe, do not kill game while you are in the state of sanctity."* (Qur'an 5:95) *"God has made the Sacred House a sanctuary for the people."* (Qur'an 5:97)

These verses imply:

- Preservation of animal life
- Protection of ecosystems
- Inviolability of natural order within the sanctuary

Moreover, Ibrāhīm's description of the valley as *"ghayri dhī zar"* (without cultivation) (Qur'an 14:37) provides foundational ecological information:

- The valley had minimal vegetation
- The landscape was arid
- Soil fertility was extremely limited
- The climate was not supportive of agriculture

Thus, the Qur'an constructs an environmental theory describing the Masjid al-Haram area as an arid, ecologically sensitive, and divinely regulated sanctuary where human behaviour is constrained by sacred ecological law.

## 2.3. Agricultural and Economic Characteristics

The Qur'an presents an agricultural and economic framework that reflects the valley's natural limitations and dependence on external provisions. The primary verse establishing the sanctuary's agricultural context is:

*"I have settled some of my descendants in a valley without cultivation by Your Sacred House."* (Qur'an 14:37)

This āyah establishes the following theoretical pillars:

- Agricultural limitation: No cultivable land existed in the valley.
- Environmental vulnerability: Human settlement required divine intervention.
- Dependence on external food supply: The valley could not sustain its population independently.

This theme appears again when Ibrāhīm prays:

*"My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits."* (Qur'an 2:126)

The request for *"thamarāt"* (fruits) indicates:

- Fruits did not naturally grow in the valley.
- Provision had to come from external regions.
- The sanctuary was connected to broader trade networks for sustenance.

This verse contributes to a theoretical model in which the Masjid al-Haram area is:

- Agriculturally dependent
- Economically interconnected
- Regionally integrated through supply networks

Thus, agriculture in this Qur'anic framework is not localised but relational-dependent upon regional movement, exchange, and divine blessing.

#### 2.4. Geopolitical and Civilizational Centrality

The Qur'an constructs a geopolitical framework in which the Masjid al-Haram functions as a global axis of human gathering, unity, and governance. First, the sanctuary is described as a universal call for pilgrimage:

*"And proclaim to mankind the pilgrimage; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, from every distant track."* (Qur'an 22:27)

This verse articulates:

- Transregional mobility
- Global human convergence
- Civilizational interaction

The site becomes a meeting point for people from diverse regions, establishing a Qur'anic model of global unity centred around a sacred institution. The sanctuary's geopolitical significance is further emphasised:

*"It is the place in which whoever enters shall be safe."* (Qur'an 3:97)

*"Do they not see that We have made a secure sanctuary while people are being snatched away all around them?"* (Qur'an 29:67)

These verses describe:

- A unique geopolitical security model
- A divinely protected territory
- A comparative peace zone amid regional instability

Additionally, the Qur'an names the area *"umm al-qurā"*-the "mother of towns" (Qur'an 42:7), implying:

- A central civilizational role
- A focal point of communication
- A geographic and political nucleus

Thus, the Qur'anic geopolitical framework positions the sanctuary as the heart of sacred space, communal unity, and interregional connectivity.

#### 2.5. Linguistic and Revelatory Significance

The Qur'an links the sanctuary with the linguistic purity and clarity of revelation. The Qur'an states:

*"The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down upon your heart... in clear Arabic."* (Qur'an 26:193–195)

The revelation was delivered in *"lisānin 'arabiyyin mubīn"*-clear Arabic-suggesting that the linguistic environment surrounding the sanctuary was suitable for hosting divine revelation. The Qur'an also reveals:

*"Thus, we have revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an so that you may warn the Mother of Towns and those around it."* (Qur'an 42:7)

This verse binds together:

- The linguistic clarity of Arabic
- The sanctified geography of Umm al-qurā

- The revelatory responsibility assigned to the sanctuary

The theoretical principle is that the Masjid al-Haram area functioned as:

- The linguistic base of revelation
- A centre of communicative clarity
- A semiotic environment designed for divine message transmission

This linguistic pillar connects sacred geography to sacred language, forming a critical component of the Qur'anic theoretical structure.

### 2.6. Synthesis of the Qur'anic Theoretical Framework

The Qur'anic framework reveals the Masjid al-Haram region as:

- Primordially sacred
- Environmentally regulated
- Ecologically vulnerable yet divinely protected
- Economically interdependent
- Geopolitically central
- Linguistically significant

These features collectively provide a multidimensional conceptual model rooted entirely in Qur'anic revelation.

## 3. Research Methodology

The methodological orientation of this study is shaped by the fundamental principle that the Holy Qur'an constitutes the primary, self-sufficient, and authoritative textual source for understanding the characteristics of the Masjid al-Haram area. This principle arises from the Qur'an's own declaration that it is a "fully detailed Scripture" (*kitāban mufassalan*) and "explains all things" (*tibyānan li-kulli shay'*) (Qur'an 6:114; 16:89). Accordingly, this research adopts a Qur'an-only qualitative methodology, excluding all extra-Qur'anic traditions, narrations, or later historical reconstructions commonly referred to as *lahu al-hadith* (Qur'an 31:6). This epistemic commitment ensures that the findings remain anchored in the linguistic, thematic, geographical, ecological, and geopolitical descriptions that the Qur'an explicitly provides regarding the Sacred Precinct (*al-Masjid al-Haram*, *al-Bayt al-Harām*, *al-Balad al-Amīn*, and *al-Bayt al-'Atīq*).

### 3.1. Methodological Paradigm

This study employs a qualitative interpretivist paradigm, which aims to understand the Qur'anic depiction of the Masjid al-Haram not through external narratives but through hermeneutic engagement with the Qur'anic text itself. The interpretivist approach is appropriate because the Qur'an contains multidimensional descriptions—spiritual, historical, ecological, and geopolitical—that require contextual, thematic, and linguistic interpretation. This paradigm aligns with the Qur'an's own instruction to "reflect" (*yatafakkarūn*, *yatadabbarūn*) on its verses (Qur'an 47:24; 38:29), thereby justifying deep textual reflection as a valid mode of scholarly inquiry.

### 3.2. Sources of Data

The primary and only textual source for this research is the Qur'an. Secondary sources such as historical chronicles, hadith literature, archaeological interpretations, or classical exegesis are intentionally excluded because they often introduce non-Qur'anic narratives or mythologies that the Qur'an itself warns against (Qur'an 31:6; 45:6). As the Qur'an affirms, believers are commanded to follow only what has been revealed from their Lord (Qur'an 7:3). Therefore, data used for analysis consists exclusively of:

- Direct Qur'anic verses explicitly mentioning the Masjid al-Haram and its associated concepts (e.g., Qur'an 2:144; 2:149–150; 5:97; 8:34; 9:7, 9:19, 9:28; 22:25–29; 48:25–27).

- Verses describing geographical markers related to the Sacred Territory (e.g., Qur'an 95:3; 106:1–4).
- Verses describing environmental and ecological features of the region (e.g., Qur'an 14:37; 23:19–20; 80:24–32).
- Verses describing linguistic, historical, and geopolitical themes about the settlement, elevation, and sanctity of the area (e.g., Qur'an 2:125–129; 3:96–97; 28:57; 29:67).

Collectively, these verses function as the “dataset” from which the conceptual framework of the Masjid al-Haram is derived.

### 3.3. Qualitative Thematic Analysis

The study adopts thematic coding and textual synthesis as the primary method of analysis. This approach involves the systematic identification of recurring patterns, concepts, and descriptors in the Qur'anic text.

Three levels of thematic analysis were conducted:

#### 3.3.1. Open Coding

The initial stage involved extracting all verses that contain keywords such as:

- *al-Masjid al-Haram*
- *al-Bayt al-Harām*
- *al-Bayt al- 'Atīq*
- *al-Balad al-Amīn*
- *al-Mash'ar al-Harām*
- references to natural features, vegetation, terrain, mountains, valleys, or barren lands
- references to protection, safety, security, or prohibition of warfare
- references to trade, travel, and geopolitics

Each verse was treated as a discrete data unit.

#### 3.3.2. Axial Coding

The second stage involved grouping verses into interrelated thematic clusters, such as:

- Sanctity and Prohibition Zones (Qur'an 5:97; 22:25)
- Historical Foundations and Abrahamic Legacy (Qur'an 2:125–129; 3:96–97)
- Environmental and Ecological Descriptions (Qur'an 14:37; 80:24–32)
- Geopolitical Safety and Security (Qur'an 29:67; 106:1–4)
- Topographical and Geographical Indicators (Qur'an 95:3; 2:158)
- Agricultural and Climatic Themes (Qur'an 6:99; 16:10–11)
- Linguistic and Symbolic Terminology (analysis of root structures such as *h-r-m*, *b-y-t*, *s-k-n*, *w-d-y*)

The clustering facilitated multidimensional interpretation reflective of the study's broad scope.

#### 3.3.3. Selective Coding

Themes were then synthesised into overarching conceptual dimensions:

- Qur'anic Geography-how the Sacred Sanctuary is embedded in natural and symbolic geography.
- Qur'anic Ecology and Agriculture The Qur'an describes the environmental patterns surrounding the Sanctuary.
- Qur'anic Geopolitics: the area functions as a zone of global safety, trade, and divine protection.
- Qur'anic Linguistics: the chosen terminology constructs meaning around the Sanctuary.

These final categories structure the overall analysis of the paper.

### 3.4. Hermeneutical Principles

Because the Qur'an is self-referential and self-explanatory (Qur'an 25:33), hermeneutical principles were drawn from the Qur'an itself:

- Intra-Qur'anic Tafsīr: The Qur'an interprets its own concepts through cross-referencing. For example, the term *balad* (city) in Qur'an 95:3 is clarified through parallels in Qur'an 90:1–3.
- Semantic Field Analysis: Key Arabic root structures (*h-r-m*, *'-m-n*, *b-y-t*, *w-d-y*) were analysed to establish consistent meanings across the Qur'an.
- Contextual Consistency: Verses are interpreted within their broader thematic context (e.g., the sanctity of the Sanctuary is linked to safety, prohibition of violence, and divine protection).
- Topographic Interpretation through Qur'anic Descriptors Only: External geographic assumptions are avoided. For example, the barren nature of the valley is derived from Qur'an 14:37 without invoking later geographical claims.
- Avoidance of Mythology or Unverified Narratives: The methodology explicitly rejects any data that cannot be directly derived from the Qur'an, following the Qur'anic instruction to avoid extraneous tales (Qur'an 31:6).

### 3.5. Analytical Dimensions of the Study

The methodology integrates several complementary qualitative lenses:

#### 3.5.1. Historical-Geographical Analysis

Historical geography is reconstructed solely from Qur'anic descriptions. For example:

- The valley's barrenness (Qur'an 14:37).
- The sanctified dwelling appointed by God (Qur'an 2:125).
- The global primacy of the first House (Qur'an 3:96).

This eliminates dependence on post-Qur'anic geography.

#### 3.5.2. Ecological and Environmental Interpretation

Ecological data are drawn from Qur'anic descriptions of:

- water cycles (Qur'an 23:18)
- vegetation patterns (Qur'an 80:24–32)
- barren lands and survival systems (Qur'an 14:37)

The goal is to understand how the Qur'an situates the Sacred House within its environmental reality.

#### 3.5.3. Agricultural and Climatic Indicators

The Qur'an describes seasonal patterns (Qur'an 106:1–4), crop diversity (Qur'an 6:141), and climatic variations that influence settlement around the Sacred House.

#### 3.5.4. Geopolitical and Socio-Economic Analysis

This dimension arises from verses describing:

- security (Qur'an 29:67)
- trade (Qur'an 106:1–4)
- international visitation and pilgrimage (Qur'an 22:27)

#### 3.5.5. Linguistic Analysis

Root-based interpretation clarifies conceptual meanings, such as:

- *ḥ-r-m*: sacred, inviolable
- *'-m-n*: safety, security
- *b-y-t*: dwelling, house
- *w-d-y*: valley

This linguistic rigour ensures conceptual accuracy without importing external definitions.

### 3.6. Ethical Considerations

The Qur'an instructs believers not to mix truth with falsehood (Qur'an 2:42) and not to follow unverifiable narratives (Qur'an 17:36). Therefore, the methodology adheres to:

- textual purity
- avoidance of unverified reports
- reliance on clear Qur'anic evidence
- preservation of linguistic integrity

### 3.7. Limitations

The methodology is intentionally restrictive because it excludes:

- later historical records
- hadith narrations
- archaeological interpretations
- classical exegesis

However, this limitation is also its strength, enabling a uniquely Qur'an-centric reconstruction of the Masjid al-Haram's characteristics.

## 4. Historical Geography of the Masjid al-Haram Area

A historical–geographical analysis of the Masjid al-Haram area must begin with the Qur'an's own presentation of the Sacred Territory (*al-Masjid al-Haram, al-Bayt al-Harām, al-Bayt al-'Atīq, al-Balad al-Amīn*) as an ancient, divinely designated sanctuary whose significance transcends human interpretation. As the Qur'an testifies, "The first House established for humanity is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for all beings" (Qur'an 3:96). This verse provides two critical insights: first, the House is the earliest divinely instituted sanctuary in human history; second, its purpose and geographical distinctiveness operate on a universal scale, not merely local or tribal. The region's history, geography, ecology, topography, and settlement patterns can therefore only be reconstructed reliably by reading the Qur'an's multidimensional descriptions.

### 4.1. Antiquity of the Sacred House and Its Geographic Position

The Qur'an presents the origin of the Sacred House as interconnected with early human history. It uses the phrase *awwal bayt* ("the first House") (Qur'an 3:96), indicating temporal priority and foundational status. The term *Bakkah* in this verse is unique, and its Qur'anic usage suggests a place with deep antiquity and a divinely fixed location. The specification of *Bakkah* also reflects a geographical distinction within the broader *Haram* area. Unlike later historical writings, the Qur'an does not associate this with any external narrative but treats it as an already known and established reality for its first audience. Thus, the Sacred House is geographically positioned in a terrain that historically predates all later worship sites and settlement structures referenced in scripture.

The Qur'an describes this region as a valley-*biwādin ghayri dhī zar'* ("a valley without cultivation") (Qur'an 14:37). This description provides crucial geographic information. The term *wād* denotes an area between elevations, typically characterised by erosion pathways, seasonal water flow, or dry riverbeds. The absence of vegetation ("without cultivation") signifies an arid ecosystem with minimal agricultural capacity. Therefore, historically, settlement in the region would have depended not on natural fertility but on divine designation and external resources.

The barren geography aligns with the Qur'anic emphasis on the House's sanctity and protection. The divine command to Abraham to "proclaim the pilgrimage to humanity" (Qur'an 22:27) indicates that, despite the geographical harshness, the area was to become a global destination. This paradox infertile valley becoming a centre of international visitation, a central feature of the Qur'anic historical-geographical narrative.

#### 4.2. The Transformation of an Inhospitable Valley into a Secure Sanctuary

A key element of the Qur'anic geographical portrayal is the transformation of an otherwise hostile environment into a zone of complete security. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes safety as an essential feature of the Sacred Precinct: "Whoever enters it is safe" (Qur'an 3:97). The same notion appears in descriptions of the city as a protected sanctuary: "Have they not seen that We made [this] a secure sanctuary while people are being snatched away all around them?" (Qur'an 29:67). Another verse describes it as *al-balad al-amīn* ("the secure city") (Qur'an 95:3).

Historically, this means that the region's political and geographical conditions were distinct from surrounding territories, which were prone to conflict, raiding, and instability. While the Qur'an does not narrate the external political dynamics in detail, it depicts a contrast: surrounding regions faced danger, while the sanctuary remained protected. This safety is not attributed to military power or geographical defensibility but to divine decree. The transformation from a barren, vulnerable valley into a secure centre of global movement and gathering thus constitutes one of the most historically significant geographical features described in the Qur'an.

#### 4.3. The Valley's Surrounding Mountains and the Concept of a Delimited Sanctuary

Although the Qur'an does not list specific mountains, it describes the region as a *ḥaram*-a protected zone with boundaries, restrictions, and prohibitions. This implies a geographically demarcated space. The term *ḥaram* (root ḥ-r-m) conveys inviolability and restriction, showing that the area is defined not by random geography but by deliberate divine boundary-setting.

The Qur'an states that some individuals attempted to violate the sanctity of the House, but divine intervention prevented such actions (Qur'an 22:25). The existence of boundaries indicates an enclosed geographical unit likely surrounded by natural features such as elevated terrain, which naturally supports the notion of a circumscribed sacred zone.

Moreover, the Qur'an's reference to *al-mash'ar al-harām* (Qur'an 2:198) indicates another sacred landmark within the broader Haram area. This confirms the presence of multiple significant sites within the same geographic system-valleys, elevations, and open spaces-forming a spatial complex that has historically functioned as a unified sacred landscape.

#### 4.4. Climatic Patterns and Seasonal Movement

The Qur'an provides notable clues regarding the region's climatic dynamics through the chapter *Sūrat Quraysh*. It states: "For the security of the Quraysh-their security in the winter and summer journeys" (Qur'an 106:1-2). This indicates that the inhabitants of the Sacred City were historically situated at the intersection of trade or travel routes, requiring them to move seasonally due to climatic conditions or economic patterns.

These journeys reveal important geographical implications:

- **Climatic Extremes:** The need for separate winter and summer migrations implies that the region experiences significant seasonal variation-likely heat-intense summers and cooler winters, consistent with an inland valley surrounded by rocky elevations.
- **Strategic Positioning Along Trade Paths:** Although the Qur'an does not detail trading goods, it clearly acknowledges the existence of regional networks. The very concept of "journeys" suggests a location not isolated but connected to broader geographical systems.
- **Dependency on External Resources:** The barren nature of the valley (Qur'an 14:37) necessitated reliance on imports, reinforcing the centrality of seasonal movement.

Thus, while the Qur'an does not identify exact routes, the historical-geographical conclusion is clear: the Masjid al-Haram area occupied a pivotal yet climatically challenging position requiring predictable seasonal mobility.

#### 4.5. *The House as a Geopolitical Centre of Gathering*

Geographically, the Sacred House functions not merely as a local shrine but as a global gathering point: "Proclaim the pilgrimage to humanity; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel from every distant pass" (Qur'an 22:27). The phrase *min kulli fajjin 'amīq* ("from every distant pass") provides strong geographical evidence that:

- the region is accessible through multiple entry routes;
- these routes include elevated passes, valleys, or mountain corridors;
- The area is situated in a rugged terrain requiring specialised travel.

The verse also implies that the sanctuary historically drew people from diverse environmental backgrounds and long distances, thereby functioning as a transregional hub. This reflects a unique geopolitical phenomenon: a barren valley-seemingly unsuitable for sustaining large populations-nonetheless becoming a major international destination solely due to divine designation.

#### 4.6. *Intersections of Geography, History, and Divine Protection*

The Qur'an connects the sanctuary's geography with episodes of divine protection without detailing specific battles or extraneous stories. For example, regarding the Sacred Mosque, it states that God restrained the hands of the disbelievers and the hands of the believers from each other within its vicinity (Qur'an 48:24). This suggests that the area witnessed historical tension or attempts at conflict, yet divine intervention preserved its sanctity.

Similarly, Qur'an 8:34 describes those who prevented believers from reaching the Sacred Mosque as unjust, indicating the geopolitical importance of access control. These verses affirm that the sanctuary was strategically vital and often contested, reinforcing its geographical significance in regional power relations.

#### 4.7. *Settlement Patterns and Human Presence in a Harsh Ecosystem*

The Qur'an acknowledges the difficulty of the location for sustaining life: "a valley without cultivation" (Qur'an 14:37). Yet it simultaneously depicts the area as a site chosen for settlement by Abraham's family. This indicates that the region's historical habitation is rooted not in its environmental suitability but in divine command.

The Qur'an also refers to houses, dwellings, and permanent structures near the Sacred Mosque (Qur'an 24:36; 22:25), showing that by the time of revelation, the valley had become a settled urban environment despite its ecological constraints.

The transformation from barren valley to populated city reflects:

- increasing human settlement;
- development of infrastructure around the House;
- emergence of socio-economic systems supported by seasonal travel and international visitation.

Taken together, these verses constitute the Qur'an's unique historical-geographical narrative of urbanisation surrounding the Sacred Precinct.

#### 4.8. The Sacred House as the Religious, Spatial, and Civilizational Centre

The Qur'an establishes the Sacred House as the spiritual and geographical axis of humanity: "the centre for people" (*qiyāman lil-nās*) (Qur'an 5:97). This phrase indicates a foundational human role that transcends political or ethnic identity.

Historically, this means that the region developed as:

- a civilizational node;
- a point of convergence for diverse populations;
- a stable sanctuary within unstable surroundings;
- a symbolically elevated but geographically challenging location.

Ultimately, the significance of the Masjid al-Haram area emerges not from its natural resources but from its divinely assigned purpose and the geographical, ecological, and historical conditions that shaped its evolution.

## 5. Ecological and Environmental Analysis

A Qur'an-centred ecological and environmental analysis of the Masjid al-Haram area requires understanding how the Qur'an portrays the natural conditions surrounding the Sacred Sanctuary, its broader environmental context, and the ecological constraints and opportunities embedded in its landscape. Unlike external historical or geographical narratives, the Qur'an offers its own ecological framework, built through direct descriptions of terrain, climate, vegetation, water systems, human-environment relationships, and the divine regulation of natural phenomena. By examining these descriptions, it becomes possible to reconstruct a coherent ecological portrait of the region based exclusively on the Qur'an's testimony.

### 5.1. Ecological Identity of a Barren Valley

The Qur'an provides a foundational ecological description of the Sacred Territory when Abraham declares, "I have settled part of my offspring in a valley without cultivation" (*biwādin ghayri dhī zar'*) (Qur'an 14:37). This verse identifies three essential ecological markers:

- **Valley Environment:** The term *wād* indicates a landscape positioned between elevations, shaped by geological processes such as erosion and intermittent water flow. Valleys in arid regions typically serve as corridors of movement and temporary water channels.
- **Absence of Cultivation:** The phrase *ghayri dhī zar'* denotes ecological infertility, suggesting that the natural soil conditions, rainfall patterns, and hydrological structure do not support crop agriculture.
- **Human Settlement Despite Ecological Hardship:** Settlement in such a valley indicates human dependence on external resources and divine support, rather than environmental abundance.

Thus, the Qur'an frames the ecological identity of the Masjid al-Haram area as fundamentally dry, agriculturally limited, and climatically harsh.

### 5.2. Climatic Conditions and Patterns of Environmental Stress

The Qur'an describes climatic conditions relevant to arid regions through its repeated discussions of heat, dryness, and environmental variability. Although it does not describe the Sacred Valley's microclimate in explicit terms, its broader patterns align with ecological markers of a desert or semi-desert zone.

Several verses describe conditions consistent with low precipitation and intense sunlight:

- The Qur'an mentions land receiving "little or no water" (Qur'an 16:65; 25:48).
- It describes the intense heat of the sun, where shade becomes a divine relief (Qur'an 25:45; 16:81).
- It highlights the difficulty of producing vegetation without rainfall (Qur'an 32:27; 6:99).

Taken together, these climatic depictions align with a hot, arid environment where natural vegetation is sparse, water scarcity is persistent, and shade becomes a critical ecological necessity.

### 5.3. Water as the Central Ecological Variable

Water is a recurring theme in the Qur'an's ecological discourse. While the Qur'an does not describe specific water sources in the Sacred Valley, it provides a universal ecological principle: "We made from water every living thing" (Qur'an 21:30). Because the valley is explicitly described as barren (Qur'an 14:37), the presence of a stable population around the Sacred House implies the need for external provisioning, divine intervention, or climatic anomalies not detailed in the Qur'an. The Qur'an describes natural water systems as follows:

- Rainfall: falling in measured amounts (Qur'an 23:18).
- Rivers and streams: usually absent from the Sacred Valley, but present elsewhere as ecological contrasts (Qur'an 13:3; 16:15).
- Subsurface water: emerging from the earth (Qur'an 23:20), but without specific reference to the Haram region.
- Seasonal flows: implied by the concept of valleys and terrain responding to rain (Qur'an 13:17).

The Qur'an thus situates water as a divinely measured ecological factor. In the context of the Sacred Valley, the absence of explicit Qur'anic references to abundant water suggests a natural environment characterised by scarcity and reliance on external ecological systems.

### 5.4. Vegetation and Flora: A Comparative Ecological Perspective

The Qur'an does not list plants native to the Sacred Valley, but it references a wide range of fruits, trees, and vegetation found in other regions, thereby enabling a comparative ecological analysis.

These include:

- Olives (Qur'an 6:99; 23:20)
- Dates (Qur'an 16:11; 19:25)
- Grapes (Qur'an 16:11; 80:28)
- Grains and cereals (Qur'an 80:27)
- Gardens and orchards (Qur'an 78:15–16)

None of these is attributed directly to the Sacred Valley. Instead, their repeated mention emphasises regions blessed with water, fertile soil, and stable climates-conditions opposite those of "a valley without cultivation" (Qur'an 14:37).

Nevertheless, the Qur'an describes flora in ecological terms relevant to the study:

- Vegetation flourishes only after rainfall (Qur'an 22:63).
- Dry lands remain barren until water revives them (Qur'an 41:39).
- God brings forth diverse crops from the same soil with differing qualities (Qur'an 13:4).

The contrast between fertile lands described in these verses and the barren valley of the Sacred House highlights the sanctuary's unique ecological status: it is significant not because of natural abundance but despite ecological limitations.

### 5.5. Ecological Symbolism and Divine Sustenance

The Qur'an often frames ecological scarcity in spiritual and symbolic terms. For example:

- Human vulnerability in barren landscapes signifies dependence on divine guidance.
- The transformation of dead land into fertile territory becomes a metaphor for resurrection (Qur'an 30:50; 35:9).
- Ecological hardship accentuates the value of divine protection and blessing.

In the context of the Sacred Valley, Abraham's prayer-"that they may establish prayer" (Qur'an 14:37)-links spiritual purpose to ecological survival. The prayer for "security" and "provision from fruits" (Qur'an 14:37) further reflects an ecosystem that could not naturally support agricultural production without external assistance.

This ecological symbolism strengthens the Qur'anic portrayal of the valley as a place where human survival depends not on environmental richness but on divine oversight.

#### 5.6. Environmental Stability and the Prohibition of Violence

The Qur'an repeatedly emphasises that the Sacred House and its surroundings are zones of safety (Qur'an 3:97; 29:67). From an ecological perspective, the prohibition of violence and disruption within the Haram (Qur'an 22:25) functions as:

- Environmental Preservation: Prohibitions may minimise ecological degradation in an already fragile environment.
- Protection of wildlife and natural features: Although the Qur'an does not specify animals or plants within the Haram, the broader principle of preventing harm supports ecological balance.
- Maintenance of environmental sanctity: Violence often leads to the destruction of water sources, soil stability, vegetation, and migration patterns.

Thus, environmental stability is intertwined with the sanctuary's legal and spiritual sanctity.

#### 5.7. Winds, Dust, and Atmospheric Dynamics

The Qur'an describes winds and atmospheric conditions that are characteristic of arid landscapes:

- Winds that scatter dust (Qur'an 51:1).
- Hot, harsh winds (Qur'an 69:6).
- Winds that bring rain clouds (Qur'an 30:48).
- Winds used as thresholds of mercy (Qur'an 7:57).

While not specific to the Sacred Valley, these atmospheric descriptions align with environments where dust storms, heat waves, and seasonal wind patterns shape ecological conditions. A valley setting surrounded by elevations would naturally channel winds and dust through its basin, further shaping its environmental character.

#### 5.8. Ecological Constraints and Human Adaptation

The Qur'an depicts human adaptation to environmental constraints through several mechanisms:

- Seasonal travel (Qur'an 106:1–2), enabling access to resources not available locally.
- Reliance on divine provision (Qur'an 14:37), acknowledging ecological limitations.
- Urbanisation in difficult terrain (Qur'an 2:125; 22:25), indicating social structures built despite environmental adversity.

Human settlement in the Sacred Valley, therefore, represents an adaptive ecological strategy grounded in spiritual, economic, and demographic factors rather than environmental convenience.

#### 5.9. Ecological Function of the Haram as a Global Gathering Point

The Qur'an describes the sanctuary as a place where people assemble from "every distant pass" (Qur'an 22:27). Such large-scale visitation requires:

- paths through rugged ecosystems;
- environmental planning for population movement;
- capacity to host people in a barren environment;
- availability of shade, shelter, and water from external sources.

This highlights the valley's ecological paradox: although naturally inhospitable, it functions as a global centre of human convergence.

### 5.10. The Sanctuary's Ecological Legacy within the Qur'anic Framework

The Qur'an frames the ecological status of the Haram not as an accident of geography but as a divinely managed environmental reality. Its defining features include:

- ecological scarcity;
- reliance on divine protection;
- symbolic significance of environmental hardship;
- transformation into a place of abundance through divine decree;
- environmental laws ensuring stability;
- global ecological hospitality despite local limitations.

The ecology of the Sacred Valley, therefore, stands as a unique model in the Qur'anic worldview: a barren landscape elevated to global significance through divine determination, spiritual purpose, and human adaptation.

## 6. Agricultural Analysis and Food Systems

An ecological and agricultural study of the Masjid al-Haram region depends entirely on the Qur'an's descriptions of the valley, its surrounding environment, and the divine provisions that allowed human settlement and socio-economic continuity in an otherwise barren landscape. The Qur'an provides an intricate agricultural worldview that, when interpreted within its historical-geographical context, explains how food systems in and around the Sacred Territory functioned despite severe environmental constraints. The Qur'anic perspective, therefore, is not merely descriptive but deeply analytical, demonstrating how divine regulation, regional ecology, and human movement intersected to sustain life in a valley defined explicitly as "without cultivation" (*biwādin ghayri dhī zar'*) (Qur'an 14:37).

### 6.1. The Barren Valley as the Starting Point of Agricultural Analysis

The primary ecological foundation of any agricultural study of the Haram region begins with the Qur'anic declaration of its natural infertility. When Abraham prayed, "I have settled some of my offspring in a valley without cultivation near Your Sacred House" (Qur'an 14:37), the term *ghayri dhī zar'* provides a definitive agricultural assessment. The word *zar'* in Qur'anic usage denotes cultivated fields, sowing, plantation, and all activities involving the production of crops (Qur'an 56:63–67). Thus, *without cultivation* implies:

- Absence of arable soil
- Lack of reliable local water sources for agriculture
- Harsh climatic conditions are not favourable to most crops
- Dependence on non-local food supply chains

This explicit ecological assessment serves as the foundation for understanding the agricultural dynamics of the Sacred Territory: the location was never meant to be agriculturally self-sufficient. Its food system functioned through divine facilitation, external trade, human dispersal, and spiritual-economic mechanisms linked to pilgrimage.

### 6.2. Divine Provision and Dependency on External Food Sources

The Qur'an emphasises that when natural fertility is limited, God provides sustenance through alternative means. Abraham's prayer continues: "Provide for them fruits so that they may be thankful" (Qur'an 14:37). Notably, the Qur'an does not claim that these fruits originate from the valley itself; rather, provisions (*thamarāt*) come to the people settled there.

The concept of *thamarāt* appears in numerous verses relating to divine provision (Qur'an 6:99, 16:11, 23:19). It encompasses grapes, olives, dates, grains, and various other fruits and crops. The Qur'an's use of the indefinite plural form suggests a diversity of imported agricultural products.

This aligns with the Qur'anic principle that God can provide for a settlement despite environmental scarcity. For example, "a secure town... its provision coming to it abundantly from every place" (Qur'an 16:112) describes a pattern remarkably similar to the situation of the Haram region: a secure sanctuary receiving goods from various regions.

Thus, the agricultural system of the Masjid al-Haram area must be understood not in terms of local production but in terms of regional circulation, importation, and seasonal connectivity.

### 6.3. Seasonal Mobility and Agricultural Exchange

Sūrat Quraysh provides a crucial agricultural-economic perspective: the people of the Sacred City maintained winter and summer journeys (Qur'an 106:1–2). These journeys correspond to:

- Winter movement toward warmer, agriculturally rich areas
- Summer movement toward cooler regions with different produce
- Cyclical exchanges between ecological zones

This bi-seasonal pattern is essential for understanding agricultural supply chains. The valley, lacking local fertility, relied on:

- Products transported from agricultural regions
- Seasonal trade routes connecting the valley to diverse climates
- A continuous influx of goods due to pilgrimage traffic

The Qur'anic description reflects a sophisticated agricultural-economic system shaped by mobility, not by direct cultivation.

### 6.4. The Symbolic and Economic Role of Dates as an Adjacent Regional Resource

Although the Sacred Valley itself lacks cultivation, the Qur'an frequently highlights date palms (*nakhl*) as one of the most important regional resources surrounding deserts and arid environments. Several verses detail their ecological value and nutritional significance (Qur'an 16:11; 23:19; 36:34). Dates are described as:

- a staple food
- a durable form of sustenance
- a natural product requiring minimal irrigation compared to other crops

While the valley of the Haram does not produce date palms, the broader Arabian ecosystem does. Therefore, date products naturally entered the food system of the Sacred City through exchange and trade.

### 6.5. Grains, Cereals, and Staple Foods in Qur'anic Agriculture

The Qur'an lists multiple categories of crops essential for ancient food systems:

- Grains (*ḥabb*) (Qur'an 6:99; 80:27)
- Corn or cereal stalks (*qaḍb*) (Qur'an 80:28)
- Fruits (*thamarāt*) (Qur'an 14:37)
- Vegetation, including edible plants (Qur'an 80:24–32)

These categories indicate the diversity of crops that travellers and traders would bring into the region. The Qur'an also emphasises that God is the ultimate cause of growth: "Have you seen what you sow? Is it you who make it grow or are We the Grower?" (Qur'an 56:63–64). This rhetorical framework highlights the dependence of agriculture on divine processes rather than human capability-fitting for a sanctuary set in an infertile environment.

### 6.6. Food Storage, Durability, and Supply Stability

The Qur'an frequently highlights crops that preserve well over time. For example:

- Dates, grains, dried fruits

- Durable produce carried by caravans
- Items resistant to desert heat

This is implied in the description of caravans travelling long distances (Qur'an 12:70–82) and in the mention of food storage during years of scarcity (Qur'an 12:47–49). While this narrative concerns Egypt, it provides insight into broader Qur'anic food-economy principles: storage, transportability, and durability were essential for sustaining desert settlements.

Therefore, the food system of the Haram region would depend on:

- Imported durable foods
- Seasonal shipments
- Trade-based distribution networks

#### 6.7. *The Sacred House as a Hub of Food Distribution During Pilgrimage*

The Qur'an indicates that pilgrimage seasons brought people from "every distant pass" (Qur'an 22:27). The Mass movement of people naturally requires food availability. The Qur'an emphasises that certain sacrificial animals provide food for pilgrims (Qur'an 22:28, 36). These animals:

- are brought from various regions
- provide meat
- support seasonal food surges around the Sanctuary

This demonstrates a ritual-integrated food system-distinct from agriculture, yet agriculturally significant because it involves livestock raised in fertile regions and transported to the Sanctuary.

#### 6.8. *The Role of Rain, Natural Water, and Vegetation in Surrounding Areas*

Although the valley itself is barren, the Qur'an describes the ecological patterns of the surrounding regions:

- Rain produces vegetation, grain, olives, dates, and gardens (Qur'an 6:99)
- Rain revives dead land, making crops available (Qur'an 23:18–20)
- Different zones produce different foods (Qur'an 13:4)

These descriptions imply that agricultural diversity existed nearby, contributing indirectly to the food systems that supplied the Sacred City. The Qur'anic principle of ecological diversity (*ikhṭilāf al-athmār*) (Qur'an 13:4) indicates a natural regional mosaic that supported food exchanges and caravans essential for the valley.

#### 6.9. *The Relationship Between Agriculture and Trade-Based Urbanisation*

The Qur'anic worldview suggests that urban centres in harsh environments grow not through local agriculture but through:

- Trade
- Mobility
- Pilgrimage
- economic specialisation

In the case of the Sacred City, its divine status generated continuous traffic, making it a centre where agricultural goods from many regions converged. God "made it secure" (Qur'an 29:67), ensuring stable trade conditions, which allowed food systems to flourish despite the valley's infertility.

Thus, the Qur'anic agricultural model of the Haram region is:

- not production-based
- not land-dependent
- but network-based and mobility-driven

### 6.10. Synthesis: Qur'anic Agricultural Logic for the Haram Region

The Qur'anic agricultural logic for understanding the Masjid al-Haram region emerges from the interplay between environmental limitation, divine provision, and human economic adaptation. The Qur'an repeatedly highlights that the Sacred Territory is situated in a valley "without cultivation" (*biwādin ghayri dhī zar'*) (Qur'an 14:37), establishing at the outset that agricultural productivity is not the natural foundation of the region's livelihood. Instead, the valley's ecological constraints-limited rainfall, barren soil, and absence of natural cultivation-create a paradoxical agricultural system entirely dependent on external provision, divine facilitation, and transregional exchange.

This initial description sets the methodological and theological boundary: agriculture is not the organising principle of life in the Haram region. Rather, the region's agricultural logic is constructed around compensation for what the land cannot produce and the mobilisation of external resources toward a divinely chosen site. The Qur'an clarifies that despite the land's barrenness, provision (*rizq*) is guaranteed. For example, God promises to "provide for them from the fruits of kinds" even though their place of dwelling is agriculturally sterile (Qur'an 2:266; 2:126). The mention of "fruit" (*thamarāt*) in plural indicates not only diversity but also continuity in supply, implying sustained systems of exchange, storage, and distribution rather than local production.

This Qur'anic pattern aligns with the unique role of the Haram region as a global gathering point. The influx of people "from every distant path" (Qur'an 22:27) inevitably creates demand for varied food sources. Therefore, Qur'anic agricultural logic for the Haram region is not associated with cultivation but with supply chains, logistics, and the management of resources brought from multiple ecological zones. The area's role as a sanctuary necessitates a stable provisioning system independent of local agricultural capacity.

Accordingly, agricultural goods mentioned in the Qur'an, dates, olives, grapes, grains, figs, pomegranates, vegetables, and other produce (Qur'an 6:99–141; 16:10–11; 23:19; 80:24–31)-serve as examples of human nutrition but are not tied directly to the local ecology of the Haram region. Instead, the Qur'an categorises these as signs of divine creation dispersed across various climatic and geographic zones. For the Haram region, these items represent imported sustenance rather than indigenous crops. The agricultural logic is therefore centrifugal, not radial: foods circulate toward the Haram rather than originate from it.

Furthermore, the chapter *Sūrat Quraysh* (Qur'an 106:1–4) provides a foundational geopolitical framework for understanding the region's food systems. The winter and summer journeys indicate seasonal acquisition routes-with one likely oriented toward warmer regions and the other toward cooler climates. This suggests that Quraysh historically maintained access to agricultural variety precisely because they travelled through regions where different crops flourished seasonally. These trade patterns formed a hybrid agricultural economy, wherein the population of the Haram region participated in agricultural systems without directly producing agricultural goods.

This Qur'anic agricultural logic reinforces the concept that subsistence in the Haram region is not rooted in soil fertility but in divine security, safe passage, and international movement. Because the sanctuary is safe-"a secure sanctuary" (Qur'an 29:67)-merchants and pilgrims can traverse the area freely, facilitating the consistent flow of food goods. The security of the Haram is thus the ecological equivalent of rainfall in fertile regions: it is the condition that enables life and sustenance. Without violence, warfare, or raiding in the sacred zone (Qur'an 2:191; 22:25), food systems naturally stabilise around predictable patterns of exchange.

Additionally, the Qur'anic categorisation of food sources into water-dependent systems (Qur'an 23:18–20), animal-based resources (Qur'an 16:5–8; 40:79), and plant-based agriculture (Qur'an 6:99–141) allows us to see how the Haram region integrates these environmental zones through exchange. Since the valley lacks natural water for cultivation, it must rely on regions blessed with rivers, rain-fed agriculture, and grazing lands. Thus, the Qur'anic narrative frames the Haram as the recipient node of an extensive environmental network.

The synthesis, therefore, reveals a coherent Qur'anic agricultural logic:

- The land is barren, not capable of supporting crops.

- Provision is promised by God, but not through local agriculture.
- Diverse foods arrive from multiple ecological regions.
- Safety enables exchange, creating stable food systems.
- Seasonal journeys sustain supply chains.
- The Haram region is the endpoint of agricultural movement, not its origin.

Consequently, the Qur'anic portrayal of agriculture in the Haram region is not that of cultivation but of divine provisioning through transregional networks, aligning the ecological limitations of the valley with its spiritual centrality and geopolitical connectivity.

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## 7. Environmental Characteristics

The environmental characteristics of the Masjid al-Haram region can be understood only through the Qur'anic descriptions of terrain, climate, hydrology, vegetation, landforms, and ecological patterns. The Qur'an does not narrate external tales, myths, or historical reconstructions; rather, it provides direct environmental indicators that collectively form a coherent ecological portrait of the Haram region. In this section, environmental characteristics are derived exclusively from Qur'anic verses, presenting a holistic ecological interpretation of the sacred environment that surrounds the first House established for humanity (Qur'an 3:96).

### 7.1. Arid Environment and the Concept of a Barren Valley

One of the most definitive environmental indicators in the Qur'an is the description of the Sacred precinct as a settlement located in "a valley without cultivation" (*biwāḍīn ghayri dhī zar'*) (Qur'an 14:37). The term *wāḍ* is crucial here—it signifies a dry valley or a depressed terrain between elevations, often associated with seasonal water pathways, ephemeral streams, or arid gorges. The explicit negation of agriculture ("without cultivation") means the natural environment is fundamentally non-arable. This verse conveys several environmental characteristics:

- Extremely low natural soil fertility.
- Insufficient rainfall to support agriculture.
- Dependence on external ecological systems.
- Harshness of the climate that restricts vegetation growth.

Thus, the environmental baseline is a hyper-arid landscape shaped by scarcity and heat.

### 7.2. Climatic Attributes: Heat, Dryness, and Seasonal Extremes

Although the Qur'an does not quantify temperatures, it provides contextual clues about environmental extremity. The frequent emphasis on shade, relief from heat, and protective structures (Qur'an 16:80; 25:48) indicates a desert climate where heat stress is a defining condition. Additionally, *Sūrat Quraysh* references winter–summer travel cycles (Qur'an 106:1–2), implying significant seasonal contrasts—hot summers and milder winters. From these clues, environmental characteristics include:

- Intense summer heat consistent with inland desert climates.
- Marked seasonality, prompting movement for resource access.
- Low precipitation and erratic rainfall.

The Qur'an's broader environmental descriptions of desert life—such as parched lands revived by rain (Qur'an 30:50), reflect the ecological rhythms consistent with the Haram region.

### 7.3. Hydrology in a Rain-Scarce Landscape

The Qur'an does not name any specific springs or water sources in the Haram region. It only describes the valley as barren and dependent on God's provisions. Therefore, hydrology must be understood through general Qur'anic principles:

- Rain is a rare but transformative event (Qur'an 30:48–50).
- Water is a divine mercy distributed with calculated balance (Qur'an 23:18).
- Humans depend on God's management of water cycles, not abundant local sources (Qur'an 67:30).

In this context, the Haram's environmental system is characterised by:

- Severe water scarcity.
- Reliance on minimal, unpredictable rainfall.
- Hydrological vulnerability demanding divine provision.

The Qur'an implies a fragile environmental equilibrium requiring divine guarantee rather than natural abundance.

### 7.4. Surrounding Mountains and Geomorphological Features

While no mountain names appear in the Qur'an, its repeated mention of "the valley" (Qur'an 14:37; 48:24) and references to elevated passes from which pilgrims arrive (Qur'an 22:27) indicate mountainous or rugged surroundings. Additional relevant clues include:

- The Qur'anic emphasis on the stability provided by mountains (Qur'an 16:15).
- The contrast between rocky terrain and fertile plains (Qur'an 36:34–35).

This suggests that the Haram region's geomorphology includes:

- Rocky elevations enclosing the central valley.
- Narrow passes or ridges for entry.
- Topographic contrasts between harsh mountains and the Sanctuary's centrality.

The unique environmental isolation contributes to its sanctity and divine protection.

### 7.5. Flora and Vegetation: Natural Limitations

The Qur'an emphasises that the valley "has no cultivation" (Qur'an 14:37), which means:

- No natural crop growth.
- No sustained agricultural economy.
- Vegetation is naturally minimal or sparse.

Elsewhere, the Qur'an describes desert vegetation as limited to thorny plants and sparse growth (Qur'an 88:6–7)—not specifically referencing the Haram, but reflective of desert ecosystems. However, the Qur'an often mentions:

- Palm trees
- Vines
- Grains
- Olives
- Figs

These appear as examples of God's creation, not as species native to the Haram. Therefore, they cannot be assumed as part of the Haram's natural vegetation. Thus, the environmental vegetation pattern of the Masjid al-Haram area must be classified as:

- Extremely sparse natural flora
- Primarily desert shrubs

- Absence of native agricultural vegetation

The Qur'anic description is environmentally coherent: a harsh land requiring divine designation for human settlement.

#### 7.6. Environmental Safety and Divine Protection

A unique environmental characteristic of the Haram area is its divinely granted safety: "Whoever enters it is safe" (Qur'an 3:97). Later, the Qur'an says God made it "a secure sanctuary while people around them were being snatched away" (Qur'an 29:67). This protection is environmental in the sense that:

- Harsh landscapes normally expose settlers to threats.
- The valley's barren nature should make it vulnerable.
- Yet divine intervention creates a stable environmental bubble.

Thus, security emerges as an ecological feature linked to divine decree rather than geography.

#### 7.7. Environmental Restrictions and Sacred Limitations

The Qur'an states that aggression within the Sacred Mosque is heavily condemned (Qur'an 2:191; 22:25). Hunting is restricted during sacred months (Qur'an 5:2). Though not limited to the Haram alone, these restrictions define:

- A distinctive environmental ethic.
- Protection of fauna during certain periods.
- Ecological preservation embedded in sacred law.

Thus, the Haram functions as an environmentally regulated zone with divine restrictions safeguarding ecological balance.

#### 7.8. Environmental Interaction with Pilgrimage Systems

Pilgrims come "from every distant pass" (Qur'an 22:27), which has environmental implications:

- The valley is a convergence point of global ecologies.
- A sensitive environment receives cyclical population surges.
- Environmental stress must be absorbed by the barren terrain.

Despite its fragile ecology, the region manages this global influx through divine ordinance.

#### 7.9. Synthesis: Environmental Identity of the Haram

Combining all Qur'anic indicators, the Haram environment is characterised by:

- An arid, non-cultivable valley.
- Severe heat and seasonal variation.
- Scarcity of water and vegetation.
- Divine protection overriding environmental vulnerability.
- Geographically isolated but globally connected.

The Qur'anic environmental identity of the Masjid al-Haram region thus emerges as a paradoxical blend of ecological fragility and spiritual centrality.

## 8. Geopolitical Characteristics of the Masjid al-Haram Area

The geopolitical importance of the Masjid al-Haram area in the Qur'an transcends local, regional, and historical narratives. The Qur'an frames the Haram not as a tribal centre but as a universal geopolitical institution established by divine authority. This section analyses the Qur'anic geopolitical framework, focusing solely on explicit Qur'anic descriptions.

### 8.1. *The Haram as a Global Centre for Humanity*

The Qur'an declares the Sacred House as "a guidance for all peoples" (Qur'an 3:96) and "a standing place for humanity" (*qiyāman lil-nās*) (Qur'an 5:97). This elevates its geopolitical status beyond any nation, tribe, or empire. Geopolitical implications:

- A universal geopolitical institution.
- A global centre of communal and spiritual identity.
- A divinely mandated meeting point for nations (Qur'an 22:27).

Thus, the Haram functions as a geopolitical axis mundi for humanity.

### 8.2. *The Sanctuary as a Demilitarised Zone*

The Qur'an asserts that warfare within the Sacred Mosque is prohibited unless believers are attacked (Qur'an 2:191). Entry of hostile forces is condemned (Qur'an 22:25). This establishes the Haram as the earliest known demilitarised zone (DMZ) in human scripture. Geopolitical consequences:

- Neutral sacred territory.
- Prohibition of political aggression within the boundaries.
- Sanctuary status upheld by divine authority rather than military power.

This makes the Haram a unique entity: politically contested historically, yet divinely shielded.

### 8.3. *Security as a Divine Geopolitical Strategy*

A central geopolitical characteristic is the divinely guaranteed stability: "We made [this] a secure sanctuary while people around them were being snatched away" (Qur'an 29:67). This security operates on a geopolitical level:

- Surrounding regions faced violence, raids, or instability.
- The Haram remained secure in contrast.
- This stability facilitated economic, diplomatic, and spiritual movement.

Thus, the sanctuary is an island of geopolitical safety in a turbulent environment.

### 8.4. *Economic Geopolitics: Trade Routes and Travel Systems*

The Qur'an notes the "winter and summer journeys" of the people connected to the Haram (Qur'an 106:1-4). These journeys suggest:

- Integration into regional and interregional trade networks.
- A strategic position linking different climatic and economic zones.
- Diplomatic mobility guaranteed by sanctuary affiliation.

The Haram's geopolitical power derives from this economic integration.

### 8.5. *Access Control and Geopolitical Legitimacy*

The Qur'an sharply criticises those who barred believers from the Sacred Mosque (Qur'an 8:34). Control over access is therefore a geopolitical violation. Implications:

- The Haram is a neutral space not owned by a tribe.
- Access is a divine right, not a political privilege.
- Illegitimate control undermines divine law.

Thus, geopolitical legitimacy derives from compliance with divine regulations, not territorial sovereignty.

### 8.6. *Pilgrimage as a Multinational Movement System*

Pilgrims arrive "from every distant pass" (Qur'an 22:27). This global mobility establishes:

- An annual multinational gathering.
- Cross-cultural exchange.
- Interregional communication networks.
- A peaceful convergence of nations under divine law.

This makes the Haram one of the earliest geopolitical hubs of global mobility.

#### 8.7. *The Haram as a Symbol of Political Neutrality*

The Qur'an condemns both desecration and political manipulation of the Sacred Mosque (Qur'an 9:17–19). The House is not a tool of political power but an institution of guidance. Thus, the Qur'anic geopolitical principle insists on:

- Neutral governance.
- Equality of access.
- Freedom from political exploitation.

The sanctuary is therefore a geopolitically neutral zone governed by divine law.

#### 8.8. *International Boundaries and Diplomatic Relations*

Although the Qur'an does not define political borders directly, the existence of:

- sacred months (Qur'an 9:36),
- regulated movement (Qur'an 2:198),
- restrictions on warfare (Qur'an 2:191),
- creates a geopolitical system with diplomatic boundaries.

These geopolitical mechanisms ensure:

- conflict minimisation,
- regulated international travel,
- predictable peace periods.

Thus, the Haram functions within a wider network of geopolitically structured norms.

#### 8.9. *The Haram as a Spiritual-Political Capital*

Though the Qur'an does not describe modern political "capitals," the Sacred House functions as the spiritual capital of humanity, shaping collective identity. Geopolitical consequences:

- It unifies diverse peoples.
- It transcends ethnicity, tribe, and state.
- It establishes a non-territorial, faith-based political identity.

This makes the Haram a political symbol of universal submission (*islām*).

#### 8.10. *Geopolitical Synthesis*

Combining all Qur'anic elements, the Masjid al-Haram's geopolitical characteristics can be summarised as:

- A globally central sanctuary for humanity.
- A divinely protected demilitarised zone.
- A focal point of international travel and trade.
- A neutral space free from political ownership.
- A unifying axis across nations, peoples, and regions.

Thus, the Qur'an constructs the Masjid al-Haram not only as a religious site but as a divinely instituted geopolitical order.

## 9. Linguistic Characteristics in the Qur'an

The Qur'an's portrayal of the Masjid al-Haram area is shaped fundamentally by its linguistic architecture. Key Arabic roots, semantic fields, morphological structures, and rhetorical devices collectively form the Qur'anic conceptualisation of sacred space, geography, ecology, community, and divine authority. A linguistic analysis of these terms is indispensable because the Qur'an describes the Haram region not through historical storytelling but through precise, layered terminologies whose meanings emerge from their internal usage patterns within the text. This section analyses the principal linguistic features that the Qur'an employs to define the Masjid al-Haram and its surrounding environment.

### 9.1. The Linguistic Centrality of the Root *ḥ-r-m* (ح ر م)

The most defining linguistic feature of the Qur'anic description of the Sacred Sanctuary is the trilateral root *ḥ-r-m*, which conveys meanings of prohibition, inviolability, sacredness, protection, and restriction. The Qur'an uses derivatives such as:

- *ḥarām* (sacred, inviolable) (Qur'an 5:97),
- *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* (The Inviolable Mosque) (Qur'an 2:144),
- *al-Bayt al-Ḥarām* (The Sacred House) (Qur'an 5:97),
- *al-mash'ar al-ḥarām* (The Sacred Monument) (Qur'an 2:198),
- *ḥurumāt* (sanctities, protected things) (Qur'an 22:30).

This root forms the Qur'anic legal-spatial identity of the Haram region. It denotes a zone placed under divine authority rather than human definition. The semantic force of *ḥarām* carries both spatial and moral implications: the region is physically protected and morally regulated. In Qur'an 22:25, the sanctuary is described as a place where wrongdoing is more severe than wrongdoing elsewhere, showing how linguistic sanctity shapes ethical meaning.

Therefore, the root *ḥ-r-m* linguistically establishes the Masjid al-Haram not simply as a location but as a divinely established boundary system, merging space, law, and ritual.

### 9.2. The Term *Bayt* (House): Linguistic Elevation and Universality

Another foundational term is *bayt*, meaning "house," "dwelling," or "abode." In Qur'an 3:96, the Sacred House is called:

- *awwal bayt* ("the first House"),
- *al-bayt* ("the House") (Qur'an 2:125),
- *al-bayt al-'atīq* ("the ancient, liberated House") (Qur'an 22:29).

The root *b-y-t* conveys stability, shelter, and continuity. By applying this term to the sanctuary, the Qur'an linguistically frames it as the archetypal structure that anchors human spiritual history. The designation *al-'atīq* in 22:29 adds connotations of antiquity and freedom, emphasising its historical depth and divine exemption from human domination. Thus, the linguistic status of *bayt* constructs a spiritual geography centred on permanence and universality.

### 9.3. The Root *'-m-n* (م ن ء): Safety, Faith, and Sanctuary

The Qur'an repeatedly describes the Sacred City as *amīn*-safe, secure, protected (Qur'an 95:3). The semantic range of the root *'-m-n* includes:

- safety and protection,
- trust and reliability,
- faith and spiritual security.

This linguistic overlap is deliberate: the Qur'an positions the sanctuary as a place where physical and spiritual security converge. When the Qur'an says, "Whoever enters it is safe" (Qur'an 3:97), it is not describing a historical policy but defining the linguistic-spiritual identity of the Haram region. The term *amān* also appears indirectly in Qur'an 29:67, contrasting the protected city with the

surrounding regions of instability. Thus, *ʿ-m-n* linguistically encodes the sanctuary's geopolitical uniqueness and moral order.

#### 9.4. The Root *w-d-y* (و د ي): Valley and Topographical Identity

The Qur'an uses the term *wād* ("valley") to describe the geography of the Sacred House: "a valley without cultivation" (*biwādin ghayri dhī zar'*) (Qur'an 14:37).

Linguistically, *wād* denotes:

- a depression between mountains,
- a space through which water may occasionally pass,
- a dry riverbed characteristic of arid environments.

This term is crucial for understanding the ecological constraints and historical settlement patterns around the Haram area. The language itself signals a harsh, resource-scarce ecosystem, making the sanctuary's survival and centrality more remarkable from a Qur'anic perspective. The Qur'anic use of *wād* thus forms part of the linguistic evidence for the region's unique topography.

#### 9.5. *Bakkah*: A Unique Term with Singular Usage

The term *Bakkah* appears only once in the Qur'an (Qur'an 3:96). Linguistically, the singular usage (*hapax legomenon*) indicates an ancient, possibly pre-Arabic proper name preserved in revelation. The Qur'an's use of a rare term for the site emphasises its uniqueness and deep antiquity. The internal Qur'anic semantics link *Bakkah* with:

- blessing (*mubārakan*),
- guidance (*hudā*),
- universality (*lil-ʿālamīn*).

Thus, the term plays a linguistic role in elevating the sanctuary as a historical and spiritual reference point for all humanity.

#### 9.6. The Root *s-k-n* (س ك ن): Settlement, Dwelling, and Urbanisation

The Qur'an uses derivatives of *s-k-n* to describe human settlement near the Sacred House. The term conveys stability, residence, and habitation. Abraham's prayer—"I have settled (*askantu*) some of my offspring in a valley without cultivation" (Qur'an 14:37)—establishes the region's earliest Qur'anic settlement narrative. The linguistic force of *sakan* emphasises:

- intentionality (settlement by divine instruction),
- perseverance (living in harsh terrain),
- continuity (a lasting community).

Thus, the linguistic structure of *s-k-n* forms the foundation for interpreting the historical development of the region's population.

#### 9.7. The Semantics of Pilgrimage Terms

Key ritual terms in the Qur'anic linguistic system include:

- *ḥajj* (pilgrimage) (Qur'an 22:27),
- *ʿumrah* (minor pilgrimage) (Qur'an 2:196),
- *ṭawāf*, *rukūʿ*, *sujūd* (Qur'an 22:26),
- *ṣafā* and *marwah* (Qur'an 2:158).

The Qur'an uses these terms not as historical rites but as divinely legislated acts tied to specific sacred landmarks. Their internal semantics define human movement, ritual mapping, and spatial symbolism within the Haram region.

### 9.8. Rhetorical Features: Oaths, Contrast, and Spatial Imagery

The Qur'an uses powerful rhetorical devices to describe the Sacred City:

- Oaths: "By this secure city" (Qur'an 95:3).
- Contrast: sanctuary vs. surrounding insecurity (Qur'an 29:67).
- Spatial imagery: journeys, valleys, elevations (Qur'an 106:1–4; 14:37).

These linguistic structures shape the mental geography of the reader, emphasising the sanctuary's uniqueness.

### 9.9. Linguistic Integration: Space, Morality, and Divine Command

Overall, the Qur'anic linguistic system constructs the Haram region as:

- a divinely bounded space (*ḥarām*),
- a universal spiritual centre (*awwal bayt*),
- a secure geopolitical zone (*amīn*),
- a harsh ecological environment (*wād*),
- a historically deliberate settlement (*askantu*),
- a global destination (*min kulli fajjin 'amīq*, 22:27).

The language of the Qur'an is therefore not descriptive alone-it is constitutive. It defines the sanctuary's identity, purpose, and role in human civilisation.

### 9.10. Oral Tradition and the Speech Community

The Qur'an presents itself as a revelation deeply rooted in oral transmission, recitation, memorisation, and linguistic preservation. The revelation repeatedly describes itself as *qur'ān*-a term rooted in *q-r-*, meaning "to recite aloud" (Qur'an 75:17–18; 73:4). This linguistic identity presupposes that the initial recipients of revelation belonged to a speech community with a strong, sophisticated, and established oral culture capable of receiving, memorizing, preserving, and transmitting a long, complex scripture word-for-word.

The Qur'an repeatedly emphasises listening (*sam'*), understanding (*'aql*), articulation (*bayān*), and clear pronunciation (*lisān mubīn*) as natural capacities of the community to whom it is revealed (Qur'an 55:1–4; 26:192–195). These references indicate a society where oral mastery was already a defining cultural feature.

The Qur'an states that God "taught humanity clear expression" (*'allamahul-bayān*) (Qur'an 55:4). This "bayān" is not merely basic communication but the ability to articulate complex meanings, maintain memorised forms, and engage in structured oral discourse. Furthermore, revelation is described as being conveyed *'alā lisānin 'arabiyyin mubīn* ("upon a clear Arabic tongue") (Qur'an 26:195). Here, *mubīn* indicates clarity, refinement, and linguistic precision-qualities associated with advanced oral cultures where vocabulary, rhythm, phonetics, and memory techniques are deeply cultivated.

The linguistic sophistication assumed by the Qur'an suggests that its first audience was part of a highly developed regional speech network, capable of sustaining sustained recitation-based knowledge systems.

Although the Qur'an does not name Mount Hermon explicitly, it provides clues about the historical linguistic landscape of earlier prophetic communities-such as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-who resided in the broader Levantine highlands. These societies, according to the Qur'an, had:

- long traditions of receiving revelation (Qur'an 2:136; 3:84),
- established communities of scripture (Qur'an 5:68),
- familiarity with prophetic recitation (Qur'an 7:159),
- and regionally interconnected populations capable of preserving divine messages across generations (Qur'an 32:23).

These features strongly resemble the ancient Levantine and northern Arabian highland societies, including the region around Mount Hermon and the Bakka Valley, where literacy, memorisation, oral teaching, and poetic traditions are historically well-attested.

By contrast, no Qur'anic evidence indicates that the people of present-day Makkah possessed such an ancestral prophetic oral tradition before the revelation. While the Qur'an calls them *ummiyyūn* (unlettered or without scripture) (Qur'an 62:2), this term suggests the absence of a long-standing tradition of receiving, transmitting, and preserving divine revelation. The Qur'an never describes them as a people trained in systematic oral preservation before the Qur'an's arrival. Rather, the revelation creates the oral culture among them—it does not assume its prior existence.

The Qur'an insists on precise preservation through recitation: "Indeed, upon Us is its collection and its recitation" (Qur'an 75:17). This divine guarantee presupposes a human community capable of carrying that responsibility. Moreover, the Qur'an references previous communities who preserved revelation orally and textually over centuries, such as the Children of Israel (Qur'an 2:44; 5:44). These populations historically inhabited the northern highlands bordering Mount Hermon, not the barren Hijaz.

The Bakka Valley's surrounding populations were surrounded by scriptural, linguistic, and oral traditions extending back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—all explicitly linked in the Qur'an (Qur'an 2:125–133). This creates strong linguistic continuity with an oral society deeply embedded in the Qur'anic prophetic chain. The Qur'an does not attribute:

- earlier prophets,
- earlier scriptures,
- earlier houses of worship,
- or established oral-memory communities

to the region of present-day Makkah before the Qur'an's revelation. Instead, it repeatedly indicates that the people addressed were unfamiliar with earlier revelation, lacking both scripture and prophetic tradition (Qur'an 36:6; 62:2).

Thus, the Qur'anic requirement for precise recitational preservation aligns more naturally with a people connected to long-standing oral traditions found near Mount Hermon and the Bakka Valley, rather than a population with no prior scriptural memory culture.

## 10. Discussion

The Qur'anic descriptions of the Masjid al-Haram, Bakkah, and the Sacred Territory outline a very specific set of geographical, ecological, environmental, agricultural, historical, and geopolitical features. Throughout this study, all such characteristics have been extracted exclusively from the Qur'anic text without reliance on *lahu al-hadith*, post-Qur'anic histories, inherited traditions, sectarian narratives, or medieval commentaries. The Qur'an repeatedly warns against such extra-scriptural stories (*lahu al-hadith*), which mislead from divine guidance (Qur'an 31:6). Therefore, the discussion that follows is built strictly and solely on Qur'anic verses.

The Qur'an-based reconstruction presented in earlier sections reveals a multidimensional description of the Sacred House that, when compared with the known ecological, geographical, historical, and linguistic conditions of present-day Mecca, displays significant contradictions. In contrast, these Qur'anic characteristics show a remarkable degree of alignment with features found in the Bakkah Valley associated with the Mount Hermon region. This discussion evaluates these convergences and divergences in detail.

### 10.1. Qur'anic Bakkah and the Question of Geographical Consistency

The Qur'an refers to the Sacred House as being located in Bakkah (Qur'an 3:96). However, nowhere in the Qur'an is the word *Mecca* (*Makkah*) used except in 48:24, and even there it is used in a context of conflict, not as the location of the first House. The Qur'an does not equate *Bakkah* with

*Makkah*. This distinction is significant because the Qur'an is linguistically precise—different names signal different realities. Key Qur'anic features of Bakkah include:

- It is the “first House appointed for humankind” (Qur'an 3:96).
- It is blessed and a guidance for the worlds (Qur'an 3:96).
- It is located in a valley without agricultural capacity (Qur'an 14:37).
- It possesses surrounding elevated passes from which pilgrims arrive (Qur'an 22:27).
- It is linked to a region historically inhabited long before Islam, consistent with Abrahamic traditions (Qur'an 2:125–127).
- It is associated with secure settlement where people were protected while violence occurred around them (Qur'an 29:67; 95:3).

When these features are compared with modern Mecca, significant inconsistencies emerge. The present-day Mecca region does not match the precise Qur'anic features of Bakkah:

- It lacks evidence of being the earliest religious sanctuary in human history.
- It does not historically show the agricultural barrenness described in Qur'an 14:37, since archaeological findings suggest settlements with water sources and vegetation.
- Its valleys, plains, and elevations do not match the Qur'anic topographic structure.
- It sits far from ancient Levantine Abrahamic settlements.
- It does not align with the natural geography of “passes” (*fajj*, plural *fijajj*) described in Qur'an 22:27.

In contrast, the Bakkah Valley adjacent to the Mount Hermon system fits these Qur'anic elements much more coherently:

- It is one of the oldest continuously inhabited regions on earth.
- It contains deeply entrenched valleys and high surrounding passes.
- It was central to early Abrahamic migrations and cultural systems.
- It aligns linguistically with ancient references to *Beqaa / Bakkah*.
- It contains restricted agricultural capacity in several sub-valleys.

Thus, the Qur'anic geographical description does not naturally align with the present Meccan region but does align with Mount Hermon's Bakkah Valley corridor.

## 10.2. Historical Consistency and Qur'anic Chronology

The Qur'an places Abraham and Ishmael directly at the Sacred House (Qur'an 2:125–129). This implies:

- The location must have been inhabited or accessible ~5000 years ago.
- The region must have been integrated into early Near Eastern routes.
- It must have been connected to Abraham's broader movements through ancient Canaan, the Levant, and surrounding zones.

However, no credible ancient historical sources—biblical, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Levantine, or archaeological—place Abraham over 1200 km deep into the Arabian Peninsula, where the modern Mecca sits. The Qur'an never states such a distant migration. On the other hand, Abraham's historically attested sphere of movement included:

- Harran
- Canaan
- Hebron
- Damascus
- The northern Arabian fringes
- The Mount Hermon–Jordan Rift corridor

The Mount Hermon/Bakkah region aligns strongly with these patterns. Thus, the Qur'an's historical logic is consistent with a northern Bakkah, not the modern Meccan location, which lacks supporting evidence.

### 10.3. Ecological and Environmental Inconsistencies

The Qur'an describes the valley of Abraham as:

- agriculturally barren (Qur'an 14:37)
- dependent on surrounding fertile regions for sustenance (Qur'an 106:1–4)
- positioned near regions of water cycles and vegetation (Qur'an 23:19–20; 80:24–32)
- receiving surrounding produce brought by traders and travellers

Present-day Mecca:

- It is not historically barren in the sense of Qur'an 14:37; archaeological research shows settlement and agriculture.
- It is extremely arid and climatically hostile, with no ancient agricultural zones near it.
- Is not positioned in a region where "fruits of all kinds are brought" due to natural trade systems (Qur'an 28:57; 6:99).
- Does not historically appear as an ecological hub connected to fertile valley systems.

Meanwhile, the Bakkah Valley (Beqaa Valley) near Mount Hermon fits these environmental descriptions perfectly:

- It is surrounded by highly fertile lands while containing barren sub-valleys in its centre.
- It lies at the intersection of major ecological and agricultural systems of the Levant.
- It historically received diverse fruits, vegetation, and agricultural surplus from surrounding regions (Qur'an 6:141; 16:10–11).
- Its climatic variation aligns strongly with Qur'an 106:1–4.

This suggests the Qur'anic ecological narrative fits the northern Levant far more accurately than the present Mecca.

### 10.4. Geopolitical and Trade-Route Considerations

The Qur'an depicts the Sacred House as:

- a global pilgrimage centre (Qur'an 22:27)
- a secure sanctuary (Qur'an 29:67; 95:3)
- located along major travel circuits (Qur'an 106:1–4)
- a place historically contested in military and political conflict (Qur'an 8:34; 48:24–27)
- positioned in an area others sought to attack or control

However, before Islam:

- No historical sources record present-day Mecca as a major international trade centre.
- There is no documented evidence of pre-Islamic kingdoms fighting over it.
- It does not lie along the major ancient trade routes between Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Levant.

Meanwhile, the Bakkah/Mount Hermon region sits at:

- the crossroads of ancient Near Eastern trade systems
- the fault line of imperial competition (Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman)
- a region historically full of pass-routes (*fajj*, Qur'an 22:27)
- a natural sanctuary zone where multiple cultures converged

The geopolitical environment described in the Qur'an aligns strongly with the northern Bakkah region rather than present-day Mecca.

### 10.5. Ecological Implication of Hunting Prohibition: Evidence for the Presence of Wildlife in the Haram Region

A further ecological dimension relevant to identifying the Qur'anic Masjid al-Haram concerns the prohibition of hunting within the sanctuary. The Qur'an states clearly, "O you who believe, do not kill game while you are in the state of pilgrimage sanctity..." (Q 5:95), and again, "Lawful to you is game from

*the sea... but forbidden to you is land-game as long as you remain in the sacred state” (Q 5:96).* These verses imply not only a legal boundary but an ecological reality: a region where diverse *land-game species actually existed*. A hunting prohibition has meaning only when the environment supports wildlife populations—animals, birds, and terrestrial game of ecological significance. However, the hyper-arid conditions of present-day Makkah—characterized by minimal vegetation, absence of perennial water systems, and a historically sparse wildlife ecology—render such a prohibition environmentally less meaningful.

In contrast, the Bakka Valley surrounding Mount Hermon is ecologically rich, containing forests, grazing lands, migratory-bird pathways, and habitats for various terrestrial mammals. In such a landscape, a hunting ban would serve a functional purpose, protecting biodiversity in a sacred sanctuary zone where human presence, seasonal gatherings, or ritual movements could have otherwise disrupted wildlife patterns. Thus, the Qur’anic logic embedded in Q 5:95–96 aligns more coherently with an ecologically diverse environment such as the Hermon-Bakka region rather than the historically barren zone of present-day Makkah. This environmental mismatch contributes to the broader argument that the physical characteristics described by the Qur’an point toward a sanctuary located in a resource-rich valley ecosystem rather than an arid desert basin.

#### 10.6. Linguistic Indicators

Several linguistic observations reinforce this conclusion:

**Bakkah / Beqaa:** The root **B-K-K** is preserved identically in the Beqaa/Bekkah Valley name in the Levant. The Qur’an only uses *Bakkah* once—supporting specificity and historicity (Qur’an 3:96).

**Balad al-Amīn:** Means “the secure land,” compatible with Mount Hermon’s geopolitical sanctuary zones (Qur’an 95:3).

**Fajj ‘amīq:** “Distant passes” (Qur’an 22:27) matches the mountain corridors around Mount Hermon, not the low-slope region of modern Mecca.

**Wādī ghayri dhī zar’:** “A valley without cultivation” (Qur’an 14:37) corresponds to many inner sub-valleys within the Beqaa region, but not the historically cultivated Meccan valley system.

Thus, linguistic analysis strongly supports a Levantine Bakkah, not the Arabian city later called Mecca.

#### 10.7. Qur’anic Chronology and the Absence of Meccan Evidence

The Qur’an cites the Abrahamic construction of the House as a settled historical reality (Qur’an 2:125–129). Such an event (~5000 years ago) would have left:

- archaeological signatures
- continuous settlement patterns
- religious-cultural traces
- cross-civilizational references

However:

There is no independent historical or archaeological evidence that any such structure existed in present-day Mecca 5000 years ago. This lack of evidence is not minor—it is critical. If the “first House for humanity” existed, it must have left widespread historical impressions.

In contrast, the Mount Hermon/Bakkah region:

- contains some of the oldest human settlements
- has evidence of continuous religious centres
- lies at the core of the ancient Near Eastern civilisations
- retains deep historical memory in regional cultures

This aligns with Qur’anic expectations far more closely.

### 10.8. Overall Assessment: Qur'anic Descriptions Contradict the Meccan Model

After examining each dimension-historical, ecological, agricultural, environmental, geopolitical, and linguistic-the conclusion emerges clearly:

The attributes the Qur'an assigns to the Masjid al-Haram do not fit the present-day Meccan environment, either geographically, historically, or environmentally. The Meccan attribution appears to rely entirely on post-Qur'anic narratives, which fall under the Qur'anic category of *lahu al-hadith*-stories that divert from divine revelation (Qur'an 31:6). Nothing in the Qur'an itself identifies the historical Mecca of today as the site of the first House.

### 10.9. The Case for the Mount Hermon / Bakkah Valley Alignment

Based strictly on Qur'anic evidence:

- The barren valley (Qur'an 14:37)
- The passes (Qur'an 22:27)
- The ancient human presence (Qur'an 3:96)
- The Abrahamic geography (Qur'an 2:125–129)
- The security and sanctuary zone (Qur'an 29:67; 95:3)
- The centrality to Near Eastern civilisations
- The climatic travel system (Qur'an 106:1–4)
- The fertile-surrounding ecosystem (Qur'an 16:10–11)
- The linguistic preservation of Bakkah

-all align with the Bakkah / Beqaa Valley of the Mount Hermon region.

Thus, from a Qur'an-only perspective, the Mount Hermon region emerges as a far more coherent candidate for the original Masjid al-Haram. A careful and rigorous Qur'anic-only analysis reveals that:

- The Qur'an's detailed descriptions do not match the present Mecca.
- The Qur'an provides no explicit evidence that the Meccan site is the first House.
- The Qur'anic criteria align strongly with the Mount Hermon / Bakkah Valley.
- The historical, ecological, environmental, agricultural, geopolitical, and linguistic conditions fit the Levantine region, not Arabia.

Therefore, the conclusion drawn from strict Qur'anic methodology is:

The present-day Mecca cannot be confidently identified as the Qur'anic Masjid al-Haram. Instead, the Qur'anic features are consistent with a northern Bakkah located in the Mount Hermon region.

## 11. Conclusions

A Qur'an-only analysis of the Masjid al-Harām and the region of Bakkah reveals a coherent and multidimensional description that does not align with the conditions, environment, or historical record of present-day Mecca. The Qur'an describes Bakkah as a valley with no agricultural capacity (*wāḍi' ghayri dhī zar'*) (Qur'an 14:37), embedded within a mountainous landscape, and functioning as the earliest divinely established sanctuary for humanity (Qur'an 3:96–97). It also identifies the region as a secure geopolitical zone where people were protected while surrounding lands faced instability (Qur'an 29:67), and as a place where nations would arrive from "distant mountain passes" (*fajjin 'amīq*) (Qur'an 22:27), indicating a rugged highland terrain. Furthermore, the Qur'an highlights ecological patterns, environmental constraints, and agricultural limitations wholly incompatible with the conditions historically documented in the Arabian Mecca.

In contrast, the Mount Hermon–Bakka Valley region exhibits a striking similarity to the Qur'anic description. It contains an ancient valley enclosed by mountains, historically recognised for its antiquity, elevation, ecological diversity, and strategic geopolitical location. Unlike Mecca, the Bakka Valley of Mount Hermon has demonstrable historical depth extending over several millennia,

matching the Qur'an's depiction of the Abrahamic-era settlement era approximately 5000 years in the past. Importantly, no archaeological, ecological, agricultural, or historical evidence supports the idea that Mecca possessed the Qur'anic characteristics of Bakkah during that period.

Thus, the Qur'anic profile-with its emphasis on terrain, ecology, geopolitics, agriculture, and linguistic cues-strongly supports the argument that the Sacred House described in the Qur'an corresponds more closely to the Bakka Valley of Mount Hermon than to present-day Mecca. This conclusion calls for a critical re-evaluation of longstanding assumptions and for future scholarship to investigate Qur'anic geography independent of extra-scriptural traditions.

## 11. Implications and Future Research

The findings of this multidimensional Qur'anic study carry significant implications for historical geography, Islamic studies, Middle Eastern archaeology, and the broader field of scriptural hermeneutics. By relying exclusively on Qur'anic verses without lahu al-hadith, post-Qur'anic historiography, or theological reconstructions, analysis demonstrates critical inconsistencies between the Qur'anic description of *al-Masjid al-Haram*, *al-Bayt al-'Atiq*, *Bakkah*, and *al-Balad al-Amīn*, and the environmental, ecological, agricultural, geopolitical, and linguistic characteristics of the present-day Makkah region. The Qur'an describes a valley (*wād*) lacking cultivation (Qur'an 14:37), surrounded by mountains, possessing passes accessible from distant regions (22:27), positioned within a secure geopolitical zone (29:67), and associated with an ancient settlement of Abraham's family nearly 5,000 years ago. These features align more closely with the Bakka Valley system near Mount Hermon than with the historically late-urbanised, arid, and geologically distinct site of modern Makkah.

The implications of this finding are substantial. First, they challenge long-held historical assumptions that rely heavily on non-Qur'anic traditions. This study reinforces the Qur'an's instruction *not to follow sources lacking knowledge or certainty* (17:36) and to rely on the revelation's own internal descriptions as fully detailed and sufficient (6:114; 16:89). In doing so, it opens a new methodological pathway for Islamic historical geography-one grounded in scriptural evidence rather than inherited narratives.

Second, this research encourages a reconsideration of sacred geography within Islamic thought. If the geographic centre described by the Qur'an corresponds more accurately with the Bakka-Hermon region, then the conceptual map of early Abrahamic settlement, pilgrimage pathways, ecological context, and geopolitical history requires significant revision. Such a revision would impact interpretations of *qiblah*, sacred boundaries (*hudūd al-ḥaram*), and the historical development of religious practices linked to the Sanctuary.

Third, the findings illuminate the need for empirically grounded exploration of the Bakka-Hermon region using linguistic, geological, ecological, and archaeological methods that align with the Qur'anic description. Modern Makkah's landscape, characterised by hyper-aridity, lack of vegetative diversity, late settlement history, and absence of ancient agricultural indicators-does not match the Qur'anic portrayal of a place connected to diverse fruits (2:126), accessible passes (22:27), and geopolitical security (29:67). This discrepancy calls for systematic, interdisciplinary investigation.

### *Future Research Directions*

To advance this field, several areas warrant further scholarly attention:

- **Qur'anic Geographic Reconstruction Studies:** Detailed mapping of Qur'anic geographical markers-mountains, valleys, passes, trade routes, climatic patterns-should be undertaken using contemporary geospatial technologies (GIS, topographic modelling) focused specifically on the Bakka-Hermon region.
- **Archaeological and Environmental Fieldwork:** Excavations and paleo-environmental analyses in the Hermon-Bakka Valley may reveal settlement layers consistent with an ancient Abrahamic population described 5,000 years ago (14:37; 2:125-129). Such research must remain independent of post-Qur'anic religious biases.

- **Linguistic Reassessment of Qur'anic Toponyms:** Root-based linguistic analysis of *Bakkah*, *Haram*, *Amin*, *Balad*, and *Wād* should continue to refine spatial correlations grounded in Qur'anic semantics rather than later textual traditions.
- **Comparative Ecological Studies:** Research comparing Qur'anic descriptions of water systems, vegetation, fruits, and climatic patterns with existing ecological data from Mount Hermon should be prioritised to assess environmental continuity.
- **Geopolitical History Analysis:** The Qur'an describes a unique security zone (29:67) and transregional visitation system (22:27), suggesting the need to study ancient Levantine and Near Eastern geopolitical structures that align with these characteristics.

This study demonstrates that Qur'anic evidence, when analysed independently, opens an entirely new horizon for understanding the location and nature of the Sacred House. The implications extend beyond geography to epistemology, challenging scholars to rely on Qur'anic certainty rather than inherited narratives. Future research must build on this foundation to construct a fully evidence-based, Qur'an-centric historical understanding of *al-Masjid al-Haram*.

#### **Historical & Theoretical Framework Works (Qur'an-Based Analytical Studies)**

(These works were used only for conceptual support regarding Qur'anic methodology, not historical narratives.)

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