

THE
ROLE OF THE MOSQUE
IN ISLAM

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دور المساجد في الاسلام

THE ROLE OF THE MOSQUE IN ISLAM

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Foreword

The Mosque has continuously played an active role in the guidance of the Muslim community, teachings both the young and older generations, as well as producing a venue for Muslims to meet each other on religious occasions. But the Mosque has much more potential than this, and we need to utilize it fully so that many more areas of the lives of Muslims may benefit from it.

As a starting point, the Council of Mosques: U.K and Eire held a Seminar in 1988 which was attended by representatives of many Muslim organizations. Short papers on the theme of The Role of the Mosque were delivered during this Seminar by Sheikh Suhaib Hasan, Dr. S.Darsh, Mr. M. Akram Cheema, and Mr. Yusuf Islam. The text of these papers was later published in the bi-monthly An-Nida, and now Al-Qur'an Society is pleased to reproduce them.

We hope that these four papers will help Muslims to re-discover the immense potential of the Mosque, so that once again it can become the heart which pumps life and energy into the Muslim community.

K. HASAN
The Editor

THE MOSQUE AS A COMMUNITY CENTRE

BY DR. SAYED AD-DARSH

The Mosque is the most important institution in Islam. After the home and working place, it is the most frequented place. The Muslim visits it at least twice, if not three or five times a day. There, he rekindles his spirituality, strengthens his relationship with his Creator, meets his fellow Muslim brothers and renews his sense of belonging.

Places of worship are known from the time the history of man was recorded. This is a confirmation of the fact that man is created as a religious creature. He had to satisfy his religious craving to establish a relationship with his Creator. He built the temple, the shrine, the synagogue, the church and the mosque for that purpose. These places fulfilled, in one way or another, this basic task, in accordance with the vision of the role of religion in the life of given religious tradition.

ISLAMIC CONCEPT

Al-Islam is the final religion to have been revealed by Allâh. Its Book is the final revelation. Its Messenger is the seal of all Prophets and Messengers. As such, it dealt with the affairs of this life in a comprehensive way. It is a religion, spiritual force, and a way of life. It aims to produce the type of man who is described in its Book as the best man, the community as the best community to be brought forward to human beings. To evolve and bring about such pioneering personality, there should be the instrument capable of achieving this goal. It was not a school, nor an educational institution. For education is conceived, to a great extent as a means of handing over a skill or a profession. It was not a place of meditation, for a place of meditation caters for the spiritual dimension. It was the Mosque. For the mosque, in

Islam, was synonymous with appearance of the Muslim community.

THE MAKKAN PERIOD

Looking at the early stage in the Islamic Mission, in particular the Makkan era, we see a group of converts living in a sea of polytheists. They exercised their basic religious acts as individuals. The authority, the way of life, the social norms were all dominated by non-Muslims. Muslims were living as strangers in such an environment. The change here was directed towards the faith in a Supreme, Transcendent, Everlasting One Creator. This awareness, on the part of man, was the most important aspect of the new mission at that stage. This may account for the absence, then the far-reaching social change which was to take place later on as a result of the change in the environment. That was the Madina era.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE MOSQUE

The migration of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) from Makkah to al-Madina signalled a great change in the character of the Muslim community. For the first time, the Prophet felt free from the dominant authority of the polytheists at Makkah. On arrival at the outskirts of the new city, at Quba, he spent a few days resting and preparing for the entrance to the city. But he did not waste any time. He built the first mosque there, the mosque of Quba. The Prophet stayed in Quba from Monday to Friday morning when he started marching to al-Madina proper. In this way the time for Jum'a a prayer caught up with him at the valley of Rânunâ'a, the settlement of Banu Salim. There he offered the first Jum'a congregational prayer. The mosque there was the second mosque in Islam. Many people came to intercept the Prophet offering their protection and hospitality. The Prophet gratefully acknowledged their good feelings requesting them to release the leash of his she-camel, for it was directed by Allâh to

the place where the Prophet is to stay. Finally the she-camel came to a halt. The Prophet descended and later on his Great Mosque was built. So, we see in a short period of time three mosques were built. This is a great indication to the far-reaching role the mosque is to play in moulding the shape of the community which is chosen by Allâh to lead humanity in the spiritual, moral and social change which was going to change the future history of mankind till the last day.

In his commentary on the Qur'an, Al-Qurtubi wrote extensively on these two verses, bringing out a wide range of topics related to the mosque. I shall be touching on some of these topics:

THE FUNCTION OF THE MOSQUE

A — In the Qur'an: There are a number of verses in the Qur'an which stress, most importantly, the spiritual function of the mosque. In Chapter 24: *The Light*, Allâh Most High says:

فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تَرْفَعَ وَيَذْكُرَ فِيهَا أَسْمَاءَ مَسِيحٍ لَمْ يَفِهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ ﴿٣٦﴾
رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا
نَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ ﴿٣٧﴾

"In house which Allâh has allowed to be exalted and that His name shall be remembered therein. Therein do offer praise to Him at morning and evening. Men whom neither merchandise, nor sale beguile them from the remembrance of Allâh and constancy in prayer and paying to the poor their due, who fear the day when hearts and eyeballs will be overturned." (24: 36,37)

i) The word translated here "Exalted" is literally "to be raised high". But the two meanings are acceptable here. The literal meaning is to indicate that mosques are to be built in a respectful but impressive but non-expensive way. They are the

