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978-1-108-06198-8 - The History of the Temple of Jerusalem: Translated from the Arabic Ms. of the Imám Jalal-Addín al Síúti

Jalal Al-Din Al-Suyuti Translated by James Reynolds

Excerpt

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H I S T O R Y, &c.

CHAPTER I.

Upon the Names of the Masjidu-l-Aksá, and its Marvels,
and the supreme merit of visiting it.

KNOW that there are many names, all expressive of the Glory of the place in question. Thus, to use the words of the author of the ‘Descriptive Characters of the Mosques,’ for forming a judgment upon mosques—“ I have collected *seventeen names* of this Temple, all bearing upon the precious privileges (and pre-eminence) attached to the Masjidu-l-Aksá. It is called Al Aksá, because it is the most *distant* mosque towards which pilgrimage is directed. It is said that beyond it there is no place for adoration, and nothing after it but filth and impurity. It is reported that Abdallah Ibn Salam said to the prophet of God, (upon him be the peace and blessing of God !) when his discourse appeared in the course of conversation to bear upon the mosque Al Aksá, and the reason why it was called Al

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Aksá; ‘It is, because it is the middle of the world: it is beyond the centre neither on this side nor on that.’ Upon which Muhammad said, ‘Thou hast truly spoken.’ It is also named ‘the Mosque of Elya,’ (or Elia,) spelt with *hamza*, having *kasra* for its vowel; then a quiescent *ya*, then a *lam* with *kasra*, then another *moveable ya*, then long *alif*; as, for example, *karazyá* (carraway-seed). It is also reported that the dawn of morning and evening meet in it; which means that the Baitu-l-Mukaddas is in the *midst* of all wonderful and excellent things. The author of the book ‘The Derivations of the Three Languages,’ says, it is spelt with *gesma*, and *lam*, and *medda*; also in the Sunna of Abu-Yalí-Al-Musallí, it is said (from Ibn Abbás) that the word is Ilya, with *alif* and *lam*, and that its signification is foreign. It is called also the Holy House (Baitu-l-Mukaddisu), with a *fatha* over the *mim*, and a *gesma* over the *kaf*, meaning a place purified from pollution, and derived from the word Kadds, or Kads, which means purified, blessed, or holy. The noun or root has the sense of purification or sanctification. Thus we say the Holy Spirit Gabriel, (peace be upon him!) because he is a spirit who causes or effects holiness and purity; for of him (it has been said), ‘We will sanctify for thee one by whom thou mayest flee from those things which become thee not.’ He is called the Vessel

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of Sanctification, because in him is purification found.

“Thus, therefore, the meaning of the Holy or Consecrated House is, *a place whereby we may obtain purification from sin*. It is also called the Upraised Place, uncontaminated by Paganism: moreover, it is called the *Consecrated House*, (Baitu-l-Mukaddas,) with a *damma* over the *mim*, and a *fatha* over the *dal*, which has *teshdid*, signifying a pure place, sacred from idols. It is called also Bait-Al-Mukdus, with *damma* over the *dal*, and *sukin* (*gesma*) over the two syllables. It is also called Salem, on account of the abundance of mercy of the angels therein, as says Ibn Bari. Also it is called Shallam; the initial letter being *shin*, with the diacritical marks: this *shin* is foreign: (in Arabic it is *sin*;) the *lam* following this *shin* has *teshdid*. It is a synonyme of the Holy House. It is also said to be written without the diacritical points, and with a *kasra* under the *lam* (*Sallam*). This is Arabic; and in Arabic its meaning is, The Holy House. Again, it is called Ushalim, with a *damma* over the *hamza*, a *fatha* over the *shin*, and the short *kasra* under the *lam*. But we are told by Abu Obeidah, in addressing himself to Omar-Ibn-Al-Umthari, that many spell the word with a *fatha* over both the *shin* and the *lam*. It is still further named Kùrat Elya (i. e. Civitas Elia) and Salem, and Bait Ayyil, and Sion,

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and Kashboth and Kasrùt, with *sad* plain, and *tha* with the three points; also Baboosh, or Babús, being *shin*, or *sin*; also Kúr Shalah, or Kúr Shallum, and Ariel and Salim, or Salúz. From the Muther Alfaram we learn, that the words Baitu-l-Mukaddas (بيت المقدس) may be spelt either with long or short vowels, and the last word may have a *gesma*, or be moved. It is also called the Holy Land, and the Mosque Al Akúr, and Ilya and Elia, and Shallum with *teshdid*, and Oor Shalem, or The Lord's House, and Sihym, the *sad* having a *kasra* beneath it. The Consecrated House is surnamed 'The Place of Olives,' but is not called 'The Venerable.' ”

Now, with respect to its marvels:—truly, they can never be computed nor defined, nor attained to by human intelligence. First, we will mention these circumstances, bearing upon its pre-eminent Dignity, which are to be found in the book of God. This is his word: “Praise be to him, who brought his servant by night from the Baitu-l-Harám Masjidu-l-Aksá; which place we have blessed to all succeeding generations by our signs!” (verses of the Koran.) Truly, God is the all-hearing and all-seeing; and if the Temple was remarkable for nothing besides these verses, it would be supremely eminent, and be most highly blessed, —on account also of the visit of Burák to its precincts. Thus it hath a double

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blessing ; for God, when he wished to raise up his prophet Muhammad (upon whom be God's peace and blessing!) to heaven, brought him by this glorious road, in order to glorify this city, and in order that the glory and dignity of both cities might centre in him ; and associated the journey from Mecca to heaven in equal honour with the journey from Jerusalem to heaven. Also it is said, " Praised then be God, who preserved him safe from evil !" i. e. Praise God by saying the word Praise ! Also, " There are two mosques, the Venerable mosque and the mosque Al Aksá ; and in these two fell down the perspicuity of the glorious Signs ; and we have blessed its precincts. God shall cause rivers to flow around the Baitu-l-Mukaddas, and cause fruits there to ripen, and display its blessedness, and display also most blessed companies of persons : there shall gently walk the firm in the right" (firm of purpose). The meaning of this is, that God shall bless the constant in good from his own bounty and by his own treasures.

Thus may this house be said to be exalted and holy in dignity and grandeur for all future time and all eternity. Thus again we hear from Khálid Ibn Házím as follows : Al Zoheiri was standing in the Holy House, whilst I was performing a procession in that place and praying therein. I said therefore to him, Is there no Shaikh here, who will recite from the Hidden Book the

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verses upon the Holy Place, which exist in chap. 12? Who said, Akibah-Ibn-Abu-Zainah will do so, if we sit down by him. Then he began to narrate the Virtues of the Holy House; which having related in great abundance, Al Zoheiri said to him, O thou Shaikh! thou hast not yet arrived at that which I will impart to thee—the mighty word, “Praise to him who brought his servant by night from the Venerable Mosque to the Mosque Al Aksá, whose precincts we have blessed!” as also that word revealed unto the children of Israel, “Enter into these well-watered meadows, and eat when ye desire of all good things:” and again, “Enter ye the gate with praise, and say Remission,” for your sins shall be pardoned you, and the hand of the good-doers shall he protect. Now God hath appropriated to no other mosque a gift equal to the privilege granted to this, in engaging to pardon the sins of those who worship there. It is above all others; for no others have so supremely excellent a privilege set apart for them. Again, I will mention the word which was revealed to Abraham and to Lot, (peace be upon them both!) “We will bring him and Lot to a land wherein all the universe shall be blessed, and wherein shall the Holy House be sought:” also another word revealed, “We will give them a home on high ground, full of cool streams and rivulets.”

We will now quote from some of the expounders of

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questions respecting this Temple (from them we learn) a word revealed to the sons of Israel : “ Enter ye the Holy Land which God hath decreed to grant you : do not turn your backs, lest your hearts be wounded, whilst straying from the way : ” and God named this passage, ‘ The Blessed and Holy Passage. ’ Also another word revealed, “ Thus they departed from their abode in haste, in order to erect a place to sacrifice the Passover, ” upon the Rock, they say, of the Baitu-l-Mukaddas. And again another word revealed, “ We have allotted in return to the children of Israë! a sure place of rest : their abode is called Syria, and the Consecrated House ; and that Holy House shall be called ‘ the Peculiar. ’ ” And again, another word, revealed on the day when he manifested the mysteries of his will in the “ place of near access, ” which is said to be the Rock of the Holy House. Also another word, revealed when they were in the untrodden ground (the desert) and the borders of the Consecrated House. And another word revealed “ The figs and the Olives. ” Now Akibah-Ibn-Omar observed that the figs signified Damascus, and the olives the Consecrated Abode. Also another word revealed, “ God hath fixed among you a wall, within which is mercy, and on its external front is punishment. ” This is the wall of the Baitu-l-Mukaddas, within which are the Gates of Mercy, and without, the

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Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna). We may further quote those passages bearing upon the supreme eminence of this Temple, from the Sunna of the traditions of Abu Huraira (may the satisfaction of God be perfected in him !): “The fixed abiding-place of the Deity shall be in three mosques alone, the mosque Masjidu-l-Harám, the mosque Al Aksá, and this mosque (i. e. Medina).” Also a passage found among the traditions of Abu-Soad-Al-Hadhari (may the satisfaction of God be with him !): “The prophet of God (upon whom be the peace and blessing of God !) said, ‘There shall be no fixed residence except in three mosques—those of Mecca, Jerusalem, and Medina. Neither shall there be any fasting upon two days—the day of the dawn (i. e. the solemn sacrifice offered at Mecca) and the day of the fast-breaking; neither shall there be prayer at two moments of time, viz. from the prayer before the dawn until sunrise, and from the evening prayer until sun-set; nor shalt thou journey with a woman more than two bareed, (i. e. 24 miles) unless with your wife or nearest relations.’” Thus also in the traditions of Abu Tharir (may the satisfaction of God rest with him !) we have the following: “I said, O Apostle of God, which mosque hath been placed first upon the earth? Who said, in reply, The mosque of the Kaaba. I said, And then? He said, The mosque

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Al Aksá. Then I said, How much time between them? He said, Forty years: also he said, In these two mosques divided prayers centre; and this (i. e. Medina) is also a mosque.”

Also, to quote from Omra-Ibn-Hussain: “I said, O Apostle of God, which is the most beautiful city? Who said, How, if I say that I think the Consecrated House to be the most beautiful? Then I said, That therefore is the most beautiful. Thereupon he said, How then may there not be some place of second rank, besides that, possessing an increase of honour, which may be visited by pilgrims, and to which the winds may point? (But the wind of the Baitu-l-Mukaddas is directed only towards God.) Truly Medina is most noble. Truly to me its savour is sweet; for herein I live, and herein will I die: and if this had not been so, I would not have fled hither from Mecca: also I have never seen a more beautiful moon than that here.”

Again, to quote from Kaab-Al-Habbar, “The hour is fixed (by divine decree) when the Masjidu-l-Harám shall visit the Baitu-l-Mukaddas; and they shall both be conducted to Paradise together; and all their inhabitants within them: also, the last judgment, and the final reckoning shall be in the Baitu-l-Mukaddas.” Again, from the same Kaab, “God brought down the sons of Israél to the Con-

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secrated or Holy Land : and David and Solomon, (peace be upon them both!) being of the number of prophets, were kings of the land : also God Almighty named this migration ‘ The Blessed Passage, and The Holy Passage.’ ” Again, another word written to us in the Psalms, among certain traditions, that “ the land which the sincere worshippers shall tread, shall be called the land of Paradise : they shall tread it who have performed (true) obedience to God.”

Now, it is said that the word ‘ land’ here means ‘ the world,’ and ‘ the sincere’ means the people of Muhammad, (on him may the blessing and the salutation of God remain !) It is also said that this word applies to the sons of Israël. Moreover, this land is said to be that in which the souls of the faithful will assemble together ; which means, that the resurrection of the dead will take place therein, and it shall be called the Holy Land, because it shall be trodden by Muhammad, (upon whom be the blessing of God ! and whom I salute).

Again, another word revealed, “ They act unjustly, who repulse us from the mosques of God, nor suffer his name to be mentioned therein, and by their superior strength persist in desolating these places, so that (the Moslem) cannot enter them but with fear and trembling. Truly in this world they shall have their reward, and in the