



# **THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH) AND URBANIZATION OF MADINAH:**

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**SPAHIC OMER**



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# **THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH) AND URBANIZATION OF MADINAH:**

*A Study of The Philosophy  
and Principles*

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*To my wife, children, parents, and parents-in-law*



# PERDANA



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# Introduction

The Islamic theory of general planning and urbanization is as old as the Muslim community. Its fundamental principles have been comprehensively laid in the Holy *Qur'an*, as well as in the sayings and practices of the Prophet (PBUH). Certainly, the best example of the earliest Islamic planning and urbanization is the establishment of the Muslim community in Madinah in the wake of the migration (*Hijrah*) from Makkah. Henceforth, planning and urbanization evolved steadily, corresponding with both the rapid spread of Islam throughout the world and the incredible growth of the civilization and cultures inspired by the Islamic world-view.

In this unassuming book, I attempted to identify and examine some principles of Islamic urban planning and development, which the Prophet (PBUH) under the aegis of revelation had bequeathed to the subsequent Muslim generations. Central to the book are some vital urbanization and development issues as advanced by the Islamic perception on reality, truth, the world, space and time, and to which the young Muslim religion was then intensively acquainting itself with. The issues discussed are: the philosophy of the Islamic city, the mosque institution, provision of social amenities, spirituality and urban development, peaceful coexistence with the environment, housing, the marketplace, and open spaces. By exploring these subjects, the strength and soundness of the fundamentals of the first Muslim community clearly come into sight, as does the visionary disposition of the Prophet (PBUH) in leadership, sustainability and management.

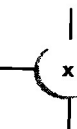
The period covered by the study is the one which the first Muslims had spent in Madinah subsequent to the *Hijrah*, that is the last ten years of the Prophet's heavenly mission. Studying this period from the perspective of urban planning and development is of great importance indeed because at the time of the *Hijrah* with the ongoing revelation of Islam was already in its 13<sup>th</sup> year, the Muslims were yet to set up a free and autonomous state of their own. Once the city of Madinah with most of its inhabitants wholeheartedly welcomed the new religion - so fiercely disapproved of by many where it had originated - the prophet

Muhammad (PBUH) and Urbanization of Madinah wait finally came to an end and the stage was set for broadening the focus of the young community's undertakings. As a result, the focus of revelation was likewise widened. The religion of Islam thus began to assert itself as a universal code of life overlooking no segment of human existence, after having been portrayed essentially as an inclusive belief system during the entire precarious *Makkan* episode. From the point of urbanization, the entire Madinah period, the first half in particular, was exceptionally eventful too.

This book aims, firstly, to help its readers identify and understand the essence, purpose and origins of the Islamic theory of general planning and development; secondly, to help its readers understand, appreciate and promote the extent of the Prophet's concern about the idea of urban planning and development and its objectives; and thirdly, to play a part in clarifying and removing some pervasive misconceptions/misunderstandings about Islam and its Prophet (PBUH) and about the nature and achievements of the early Muslim community in Madinah.

The city is an actual organic entity and so must be studied as such. If one wants to understand really a city: its form, function and spatial arrangement, plus the values and decisions on which the former rests, one must try hard to experience it as if he is one of its users, as if he is of those affected by the said values and decisions. One; furthermore, ought to possess some hands-on experience of the city core components: what are they exactly like; how do they function in their natural and socio-economic contexts; how are they related to each other; how are they related to the climate, topography and cultural history of an area, etc.? A city cannot be properly studied from a distance: from pictures, videos, books, archives, and the like. The final outcome of this approach is bound to be an incomplete, patchy, and even unreliable and unscientific research output.

Studying the city of Madinah, as it was during the Prophet's era, cannot be viewed as an exception to this research principle just because of its historical remoteness. Though it was totally different then from what it is now, yet a number of its earliest urban elements, which were central to the urbanization process, are still traceable today. Besides, only a few city with its original physical



features are still intact these days - albeit in a completely different form and with different functions. And that's why in addition to an extensive library-based research, the outcome of which makes up the essence of this book, a field work (visiting the city of Madinah) was essential for collecting a bulk of indispensable data. Indeed, the data proved crucial for the successful completion of the project, and was obtained via observation, surveillance, taking photographs and conducting interviews.

Under its Long-Term Research Grant Scheme, the Research Centre of the International Islamic University Malaysia sponsored enthusiastically both the research - in Malaysia as well as in Madinah – and writing the book. My profound gratitude is therefore extended to the Center and the University. My special thanks are also due to the leadership of the Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design for its unreserved support I enjoyed in the course of my research engagements. I would like also to thank Dr. Ir. Ahmad Farid Moustapha – the Architectural, Planning and Engineering Consultant in Madinah - whose total assistance and paternal care made my stay in Madinah, as a researcher, exceptionally convenient, fruitful and enjoyable. Were it not for him and his support, several aspects of my research activities in Madinah would have been difficult, and some even impossible, to accomplish. May Allah Almighty – therefore - bless, guide and forgive him and his family.

The ideas and views expressed in the book are mine and I am fully responsible for them. I welcome any constructive suggestion concerning the book contents, especially such as pertaining to my methodology, arguments, inferences, and the nature of the collected data and my understanding and interpretation of them.



# Some Observations on the Phenomenon of the Islamic City (Madinah)



## From *Yathrib* to Madinah

Prior to the *Hijrah* (migration) of the Prophet (PBUH) from Makkah to Madinah, the latter was called *Yathrib* consisting of several loosely interrelated settlements. Its population was mainly made up of Arabs and Jews, the former being divided into the *Aws* and *Khazraj* tribes and the latter into *Banu Qaynuqa'*, *Banu al-Nadir* and *Banu Qurayzah* tribes. Due to the delicate and incoherent social geography of the place in early days, it may be that the name *Yathrib* was not originally applied to the entire Madinah oasis, but rather only to a section thereof and to some of its settlements.

However, after the arrival of the Prophet and his companions from Makkah (*Muhajirs* or Migrants), as well as after the conversion of many Madinah citizen to Islam, the city morphology and its population structure were set to change forever. The first stage of such a drastic transformation hit the road as early as during the instant building of the principal mosque – ahead of anything else - which at once assumed the central role of affairs and developments instigated and flavored by the aspirations and goals of the new community as we shall see later. The city's name was expectedly altered in the process. The name adopted for the prototype Islamic city was Madinah (simply “the City”), derived from the Arabic words *maddana* and *tamaddun* which mean to civilize (urbanize) and civilization respectively. By the same root word, the concepts *madaniyy* and *mutamaddin*, both of which denote civilized, civil and cultured, are derived too. The function, spatial arrangement and the content of Madinah - the prototype Islamic city - have been emulated for centuries by the Muslims all over their vast territories, as much as the indigenous geographical, climatic and other inherent factors and conditions permitted, the prophet the adoption of the name Madinah was a

judicious, gradual and not at all a hasty and prejudiced course of action on the part of the Prophet (PBUH), thus enabling everyone to come to terms with the new phenomenon and its far-reaching implications. This could be inferred from the substance of the Madinah Constitution written in the wake of the *Hijrah*. Therein it was still stated *Yathrib* rather than Madinah whenever the home of the migration and its general population was implied.<sup>1</sup>

The Prophet (PBUH) was not in favor of retaining *Yathrib* as the name of the novel and unique city-state for two major reasons: firstly, because its meaning was miles away from reflecting Madinah's lure, uniqueness and dynamism; and secondly, because the name *Yathrib*, conversely, bore a couple of connotations which were not only improper for naming the impending urban marvel, but were also, to an extent, offensive. The most compelling, upsetting and attention-grabbing meanings of *Yathrib* are reproach (*tathrib*) and malevolence or ill will (*tharb*). While still in Makkah, the Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said: "I was ordered to (migrate to) a town which will eat up towns. They used to say, *Yathrib*, but it is Madinah. It removes the bad people like the blacksmith's furnace removes impurities from the iron."<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, changing the name *Yathrib* was just one of the numerous examples in which the Prophet (PBUH) is seen altering the improper pre-Islamic names of the people and every so often of the places. *Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani* remarked that the Prophet (PBUH) loved very much beautiful and meaningful names, and hated ugly and worthless ones.<sup>3</sup> In one *hadith*, the Prophet (PBUH) said that the dearest names to Allah are 'Abdullah (the servant of Allah) and 'Abdurrahman (the servant of the most Gracious).<sup>4</sup> As such, the two names were the ones which the Prophet (PBUH) gave most frequently to his newly converted to Islam companions. In Muslim b. *al-Hajjaj's* anthology of *hadith* (*Sahih Muslim*) there is a chapter entitled "Excellence of changing ugly names to good names", which contains reports that

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1985), vol. 3 p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab Fada'il al-Madinah, Hadith No. 1871.

<sup>3</sup> Al-'Asqalani Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari bi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Cairo: Maktabah al-Kulliyat al-Azhariyyah, 1978), vol. 8 p. 216.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Kitab al-Adab, Hadith No. 2759.

the Prophet (PBUH) changed, for instance, the name of ‘*Asiyā*’ (Disobedient) to *Jamilah* (Beautiful).<sup>5</sup> The original name of the Prophet’s wife *Zaynab* was *Barra* (Pious), but he changed it to *Zaynab* saying: “I did not like that it should be said: “He had come out from *Barra* (Pious).”<sup>6</sup>

True to the expectations and anticipations of the Prophet (PBUH), the old name of Madinah, *Yathrib*, was occasionally the target of the Madinah hypocrites’ undying attempts to sneer at and ridicule the Prophet (PBUH), Islam and the Muslims. While discoursing on the battle of the *Khandaq* (Ditch) or Confederates (*Al-Ahzab*) - one of the most perilous confrontations between the Muslims and their diverse enemies inside as well as outside Madinah - the Holy *Qur’an* reveals that the hypocrites, who had already displayed their true colors in the course of the battle, have at one point said to the Muslims intending to poke fun at them: “Ye men of *Yathrib*! Ye cannot stand (the attack)! Therefore go back!” (*Al-Ahzab* 13) It should be noted that the event of the unholy Confederacy against Islam took place in the fifth year following the *Hijrah*. By then, the Madinah community was already standing firmly as a sovereign city-state with no single ambiguity left as regards its philosophy, purpose and vision. And for one to call then the inhabitants of Madinah “the People of *Yathrib*”, especially under the earlier-defined conditions, was really something of an oddity and could only mean covert mockery and ill intentions.

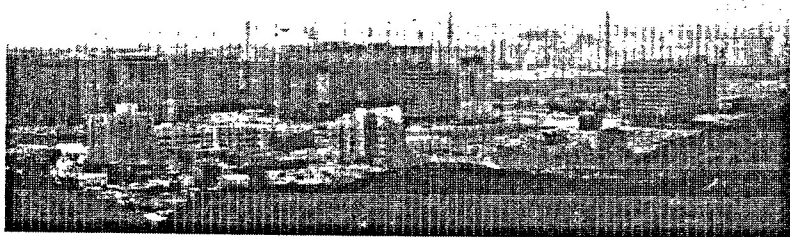
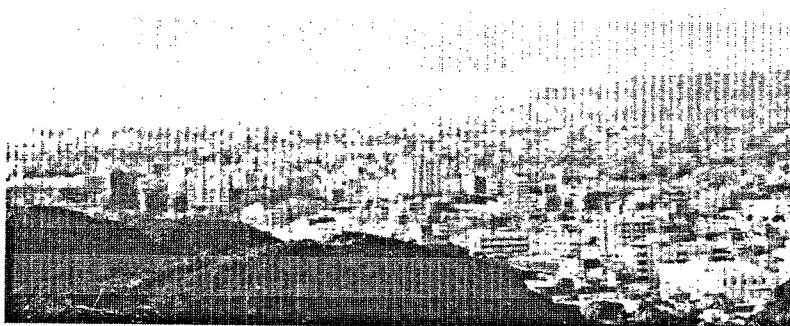
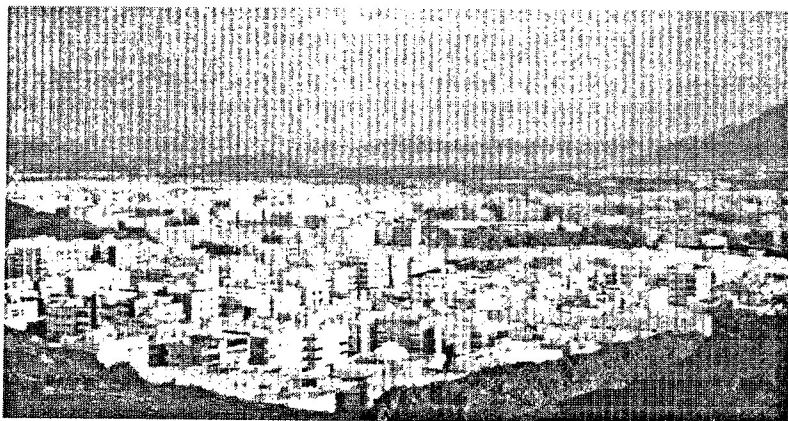
The Prophet’s words in the aforementioned *hadith*: “...They used to say, *Yathrib*, but it is Madinah...”, some would rather link up with the Madinah hypocrites and nobody else. This way, yet another likelihood could be hewed, that is, the Prophet (PBUH) did not pronounce this *hadith* while in Makkah, as contended by many, but rather after his arrival in Madinah and in an appropriate context. Because of this, some people felt tempted to argue that once the Prophet (PBUH) changed the name *Yathrib* to Madinah, he completely prohibited the usage of the former. Infringing this norm meant committing a considerable offence.<sup>7</sup>

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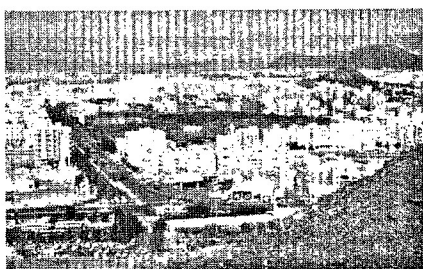
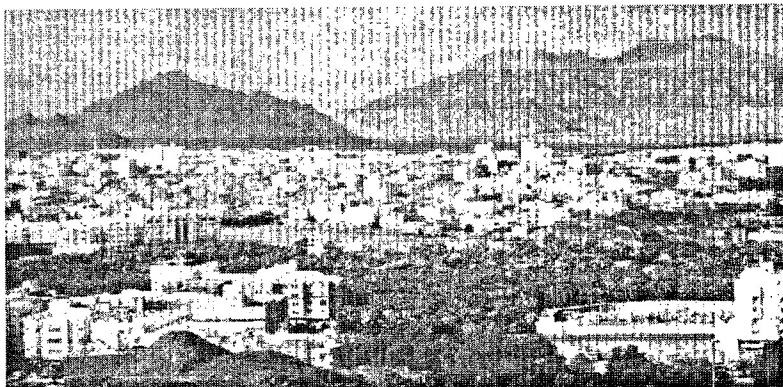
<sup>5</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Adab, Hadith No. 5332.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Hadith No. 5335-5336.

<sup>7</sup> Al-‘Asqalani Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari bi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 8 p. 216.



**Figures 1-3**  
View of different parts of Madinah from the *Sal'* hill.



**Figures 4-5**  
View of different parts of  
Madinah from the *Sal'* hill.

## **The Islamic City: A microcosm of Islamic Civilization**

The name Madinah (the City) was not given at the dictates of chance, as the advent of the new world-view and those who had already exemplified it in their thoughts, words and deeds implied the advent of a whole bunch of new concepts and philosophies. Of them was the idea of the urban settlement or the city which transcended the conventional divinity-free idea that the same is a relatively permanent and highly organized center of population, of greater size or importance than a village.

Similarly, the city as perceived by Islam easily transcends what some theorists attempt to say even today on the historical phenomenon of the city in general, that the same – for instance – is a mere unique, cumulative, historical process, which takes its particular form “through a long chain of individual events, subject to a host of historical events and historical sites and to the

broad influences of culture, climate, and economic and political structure”; or that the city should be solely looked at as a pattern “of activity in space which facilitate the production, distribution, and consumption of material goods”; or that the city is planted only “to dominate a subject countryside, to prevent a resource from falling into enemy hands, or to defend a border”, etc.<sup>8</sup> The philosophy of the city in Islam partially or wholly runs parallel with what is meant by all these definitions; nonetheless, it is far more than that.

In addition, the city in Islam, more importantly, stands as the ground for the people’s interaction with Allah Almighty – their Creator and Lord -, space, the environment and, of course, with themselves at various levels, given that the city is a place where they live, work, play, learn, worship, rise and fall. The outcome of these and other activities which the people engage themselves in cities – and other settlements of theirs - is what we call cultures and civilizations but which vary by reason of the principles and values on which they rest, as well as by reason of the objectives intended to be thereby achieved. In other words, the city in Islam is a microcosm of Islamic culture and civilization in that individuals, families and virtually every other unit in the hierarchy of the Islamic socio-political, economic and religious structure, are bred and nurtured therein. Regardless of which is the cause and which is the effect, civilization and the Islamic urbanism seem to be destined to rise together and to fall together. Hence, it was very much suitable for the name of the prototype Islamic city to be derived from the word *tamaddun*, which denotes civilization.

For *al-Farabi*, an outstanding Muslim philosopher of the fourth/tenth century, who wrote on the ideal city (*al-Madinah al-Fadilah*), “the fashioning of a city (state) is not the outcome of a natural process; it depends, like the moral life of individuals, on the right decision being taken, it makes all the difference whether the ‘will’ and ‘choice’ are directed towards the true good or not. The result will be either a good or bad city (state).”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, “the excellent city resembles the perfect and healthy body, all of

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<sup>8</sup> Lynch Kevin, *Good City Form*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), p. 327-343.

<sup>9</sup> *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, a revised text with introduction, translation, and commentary by Richard Walzer, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 433.

whose limbs cooperate to make the life of the animal perfect and to preserve it in this state.”<sup>10</sup> The ruler(s) of the excellent city, the foundation and source of the policies by which the city will be governed, must align its resourcefulness and energy with vision and pragmatism rooted in wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom and knowledge the ruler(s) must receive firstly by means of his predisposition to rulership by his inborn nature, and secondly from his fervent and fruitful relationship with the divine reality, i.e. the revelation conveyed to the Prophet (PBUH) and embodied in the Holy *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. Due to his central qualities, such a ruler may well become something like a visionary forecast capable of warning of things and problems that are yet to come and befall the city, as well as solving particular predicaments which exist at present, unlike those who had detached themselves from divinity and through their faulty judgments missed the right path, bringing about, in consequence, nothing but ignorance and wickedness to their cities.<sup>11</sup>

*Ibn Khaldun* - one of the greatest Muslim historians, and also known as the father of modern social science and cultural history wrote in his celebrated “*Muqaddimah*” that apart from defense purposes, cities are also built because people once rose above desert life and desert culture – as a necessary development in their civilizational growth - start seeking tranquility, restfulness and relaxation, and try to provide the aspects of civilization that were lacking in the desert. This unavoidably leads to the emergence of sedentary culture brought about by luxury and comforts, and which must be governed by someone who is superior over others and who shall act as a restraining influence and mediator, i.e. royal authority, upholding peace and order. Such developments can occur only in large and complex urban areas, hence, *Ibn Khaldun* proclaimed, while entitling some of the “*Muqaddimah*” chapters, that “Royal authority calls for urban settlement”, that “Dynasties are prior to towns and cities; towns and cities are secondary (products) of royal authority”, and that “Only a strong royal authority is able to construct large cities and high monuments”.<sup>12</sup> It stands to reason, therefore, that the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 245-253.

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existence of Bedouins is prior to, and the basis of, the existence of towns and cities. Urbanization - and, as such, refined civilization - is found to be the goal of the Bedouin. The life and achievements of the city are the life and achievements of the dynasty: "If the dynasty is of short duration, life in the town will stop at the end of the dynasty. Its civilization will recede, and the town will fall into ruins. On the other hand, if the dynasty is of long duration and lasts a long time, new constructions will always go up in the town, the number of large mansions will increase, and the walls of the town will extend further and further. Eventually, the layout of the town will cover a wide area, and the town will extend so far and so wide as to be almost beyond measurement."<sup>13</sup>

### **The Islamic City: A Place for Total Submission to God**

The name Madinah (the City) was not given at the dictates of chance, as the advent of the new world-view and those who had already exemplified it in their thoughts, words and deeds implied the advent of a whole bunch of new concepts and philosophies. Of them was the idea of the urban settlement or the city which transcended the conventional divinity-free idea that the same is a relatively permanent and highly organized center of population, of greater size or importance than a village.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

predisposition to rulership by his inborn nature, and secondly from his fervent and fruitful relationship with the divine reality, i.e. the revelation conveyed to the Prophet (PBUH) and embodied in the Holy *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. Due to his central qualities, such a ruler may well become something like a visionary forecast capable of warning of things and problems that are yet to come and befall the city, as well as solving particular predicaments which exist at present, unlike those who had detached themselves from divinity and through their faulty judgments missed the right path, bringing about, in consequence, nothing but ignorance and wickedness to their cities.<sup>17</sup>

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## The Islamic City and Spiritual Indebtedness

Furthermore, one of the meanings of the Arabic verb *dana* - which is one of the derivations of the word Madinah (the City) - is ‘to be indebted to someone’. Having named the first capital of the Islamic state Madinah, the Prophet (PBUH) indicated that by ceaselessly worshipping God, civilizational components can be generated from which not only the followers of Islam but also the whole of mankind shall benefit. The people in fact embarked on returning the debt of creation and existence to their Creator and Sustainer. However, the feat of returning and settling the debt to God had commenced for many individuals long ago when in Makkah, yet neither the full realization of the same by the Muslims as an organic, autonomous and self-directed entity, nor the sanctioned methods of the successful debt repayment.<sup>20</sup>

However, the nature of the debt is so total that whatever man sees around him and in him and from him is all owned by the Creator owns, man has no choice but to abase himself before his Lord and Master and give himself up in unconditional and complete service to Him, should he harbor any hope of avoiding living in a state of utter loss.<sup>21</sup> “By the time, verily man is in loss, except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual enjoining of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy.” (*al-‘Asr* 2-3)

Even before one’s coming to this world did one’s very self,

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., vol. 2 p. 235.

<sup>20</sup> While the fact of returning and settling the debt to God commenced much earlier in Makkah for many individuals, in Madinah it only began after the historic migration (*Hijrah*).

<sup>21</sup> See: Al-Attas Syed Muhammad al-Naqib, “*Islam: the Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality*”, in: *The Challenge of Islam*, edited by Altaf Gauhar, (London: Islamic Council of Europe, 1978), p. 37.

his soul, acknowledge God as his Lord together with other souls when they all testified before Him as regards to themselves, thus drawing upon himself the burden of the debt as early as then: "When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): 'Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes and sustains you)?' – They said: 'Yea! We do testify!' (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: 'Of this we were never mindful.'" (*al-A'raf* 172) "Seeing that he owns absolutely nothing to 'repay' his dept, except his own consciousness of the fact that he is himself the very substance of the debt, so must he 'repay' with himself, so must he 'return' himself to Him Who owns him absolutely. He is himself the debt to be returned to the Owner."<sup>22</sup>

No sooner is man born than he sets out displaying his inherent readiness to benefit (borrow) from this world: to breathe, to wear apparel, to drink, albeit without possessing anything, save his very self, to give away in return. Man is therefore born, in a way, as an habitant and insolvent consumer. Not only does he own nothing, but also he remains forever short of enjoying a power of bringing into being anything without making use of the available raw materials and elements created for him in nature. Creating *ex nihilo* (from absolute nothingness), as a sign of genuine richness, sovereignty and might, is the right and power of God alone. Indeed, everything that man invents, conceives, concocts and creates is possible only because the unbounded bounties and munificence from God which man only discovers, manages, processes, uses and reuses in different ways most convenient and efficient for him. The outcome of man's myriad civilizational pursuits on earth are never really his own possession and, as such, in no way could be solely utilized for returning the debt of creation and existence to God. Hence, being prudent, modest and grateful when dealing with God's gifts, as well as with one's own accomplishments, are of the virtues most appreciated, and the opposite of the vices most detested, in man.

In short, whenever he rebels against God and His guidance, man becomes truly a destitute and helpless creature in every sense of the word. He needs God, depending on Him every

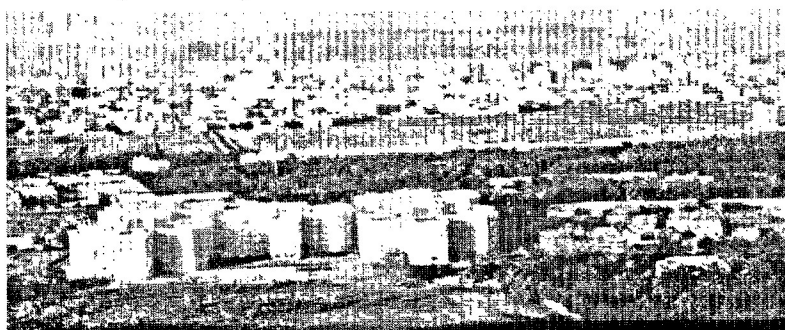
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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

moment of his life. God has no need of him: "O ye men! It is ye that have need of Allah: but Allah is the One Free of all wants, Worthy of all praise." (*Fatir* 15) The only formula for man to survive and enrich himself, both spiritually and materially, is thus to give himself up humbly and appreciatively in unconditional and complete service to Him, the Creator, Lord and Sustainer of the worlds. Man cannot turn his back on this amazingly pressing reality best described as a wonderful bargain in which man, in point of fact, is asked to give so little but promised in return so much. About this Allah says: "O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Chastisement? That ye believe in Allah and His Messenger, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah, with your wealth and your persons: that will be best for you, if ye but knew! He will forgive you your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to beautiful Mansions in Gardens of Eternity: that is indeed the supreme Triumph. And another (favor will He bestow), which ye do love, - help from Allah and a speedy victory. So give the Glad Tidings to the Believers." (*al-Saff* 10-13)

"If ye loan to Allah a beautiful loan, He will double it to your (credit), and He will grant you Forgiveness: for Allah is All-Thankful, most Forbearing, - Knower of what is hidden and what is open, Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom." (*al-Taghabun* 17-18)

"And remember, your Lord caused to be declared (publicly): 'If ye are grateful, I will add more (favors) unto you; but if ye show ingratitude, truly my punishment is terrible indeed.'" (*Ibrahim* 7)



**Figure 6**  
The city of Madinah seen from the *Uhud* mountain.

## The Islamic City and the Societal Dimension of Islam

Islam is so much concerned about quenching man's thirst for socializing and interacting that some people could not help observing – albeit erroneously – that the Islamic ideals have a preference for the sedentary over the nomadic lifestyle and for the city dweller over the villager.<sup>23</sup> This assertion is not totally baseless, though. To be sure, Islam's treatment of human settlements and the standards as well as values that nurture and sustain them is such as no other religion or ideology is able to parallel it. Islam in its capacity as the only religion in the sight of God (*Alu 'Imran* 19) carefully strikes a balance between its precepts and values meant for the personal and family realm, on the one hand, and for the whole society (humankind), on the other. While a number of them govern each of the two poles, a big portion of the tenets of Islam is still shared by both. Unless propounded at the societal scale, Islam as a universal way of life and a religion that came to change people's improper living patterns and furnish them with those based upon the *tawhidic* paradigm instead, it will fail to meet its objectives. Its real colors will thus be given no adequate ground to exhibit their glow and aptitude, and people will be left short of perceiving and experiencing fully the excellence, beauty and pragmatism of its world-view.

Joel Kotkin also observed: "From its origins in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Islam has always been a profoundly an urban faith. The need to gather the community of believers required a settlement of some size for performing fully one's duty as a Muslim. The Prophet Muhammad did not want his people to return to the desert and its clan-oriented value system. Islam virtually demanded cities to serve as 'the places where men pray together'. This urban orientation came naturally for a religion that first sprang to life in a city of successful merchants."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See: *From Madina to Metropolis*, edited by L. Carl Brown, (Princeton: the Darwin Press, 1973), see the editor's introduction, p. 38.

<sup>24</sup> Kotkin Joel, *Islamic Cities: Can the Past Be the Key to the Future?*, <http://www.islamicity.com/articles/Articles.asp?ref=GL0306-1991>

For this reason, no sooner had the Prophet (PBUH) migrated to Madinah than a shift in the focus of revelation occurred, from that dealing with the issues concerning faith (*iman*) and individual spiritual upbringing - as witnessed in Makkah - to that of creating a solid community and all the issues related thereto - as witnessed in Madinah. Having thus changed the milieu, from that dominated by his foes and the foes of Truth in Makkah to that dominated by his supporters and the supporters of the Islamic cause in Madinah, of the things that right away obsessed the Prophet's mind was the urbanization and development of the first capital of the just-formed Islamic state. It is something that he could only dream of during the entire duration of his stay as Allah's Messenger in Makkah. So significant was this far-reaching change in the pattern of the earliest Islamic mission that the Muslims during the reign of the second caliph 'Umar b. al-Khattab concurred that it should mark the commencement of the Muslim calendar, taking precedence over a host of other decisive occurrences which the young and dynamic Islamic society was never devoid of.

The realization of the Muslim community in Madinah was viable in that the fundamentals for it was exceptionally fertile. The elementary ingredients essential for creating a sovereign state and its ability to flourish, such as freedom, land, the people (followers), the solitary cause, the cohesive struggle, and legislation, were on hand ready to be utilized by the visionary leadership headed by the Prophet (PBUH) and guided by the heavenly will exemplified in revelation.

The significance of this turnaround in the fortune of the nascent Islamic community in fact had some far more extensive consequences than appeared. The new beginning for Madinah signified a new beginning for a large portion of the human race and its socio-political and ideological configuration, since the Prophet (PBUH) was the seal of prophets and his message the final one suited to be applied in every place and time till the end of this terrestrial life. However, at that particular juncture, i.e. during and immediately after the *Hijrah*, such an astounding truth was yet to become a common and widespread mass conviction either because the Prophet (PBUH) was yet to spell out some vital aspects thereof, or he did, but some people could hardly come to terms what it really meant as it was new to them.

When the Prophet (PBUH) arrived in the town of Madinah, while getting down from his camel he uttered four times the following *Qur'anic* supplication: "O my Lord! Enable me to disembark with Thy blessing: for Thou art the Best to enable (us) to disembark" (*al-Mu'minun* 29). Now, the Prophet (PBUH) had scores of supplications and prayers to chose from and pronounce at this particular occasion, but by no accident did he chose exactly this one. The Prophet *Nuh* (*Noah*) was the one who had uttered the supplication in question. He did so when the flood by which Allah – be He exalted – punished and wiped out the immoral and rebellious section of mankind, subsided and the time came for Nuh and all those who were with him on the Ark - of both animals and humans - to disembark. Under the guardianship of revelation and its *tawhidic* paradigm they were to start afresh their life on earth, free from every pain and anxiety which the agnostics and polytheists formerly used to generate.

By saying the supplication of Nuh, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) seems to have insinuated that his migration to Madinah marked the beginning of the brightest and most significant epoch in the history of mankind. He knew that his followers before long will start playing a prominent role in shaping developments pertaining to the religious convictions, world-views, and socio-political and economic structure of world societies. What's more, the followers of the Prophet (PBUH) were bound to begin in a little while laying their claims to world dominion, aspiring to magnetize someday the center of activity all constructive human engagements to the territories that will be under their permanent control. Thus, it stands to reason that the Prophet's arrival in Madinah entailed no less revolutionary connotations than the Prophet Nuh's disembarkation from the Ark following the great flood, hence the same prayer having been uttered on both occasions.

It must be said at this juncture that this striking philosophy of the city in Islam, and to an extent the morphological characteristics assigned to it - such as having a principle mosque in the center (*jami'*), having a central market (*sug*), etc. - are not distinctive to complex urban settlements alone. Every settlement, big or small, urban or rural, enjoyed the same character throughout different eras. Settlements have been created to function as a field for fulfilling the same purpose, in that they are

created by man (in this case the Muslims) and are meant for man whose solitary task on earth ought to be the execution of his vicegerency mission, regardless of where and how he may live and what legitimate means he may have at his disposal. The only divergence found among these settlements is the lines of the contextual functions of their components and the scale and intensity of such functions. Certainly, it was this reality that compelled I.M. Lapidus to assert that the city and the rural village in Islam are homogenous.<sup>25</sup>

By promoting the idea of “the excellent settlement” in both urban and rural contexts, rather than “the excellent urban settlement” at the expense of the rural ones, Islam advanced an effective workable plan to do away with some persistent depressing social trends which are as old as the emergence of human urban settlements. Perhaps, one of the most disturbing trends is unremitting and hardly controllable migration from rural to urban areas. By creating conducive and “excellent” urban and rural settlements throughout the land - each settlement evenhandedly and equitably catering for the needs of its citizens who share the same vision and strive for the same set of goals - there would be no reason for the people to abandon *en masse* certain places in favor of the others. Since there would seldom be highly appealing and highly unappealing areas (settlements), there is no chance for inferiority complex to establish itself as an awkward psychological syndrome of a group. However, at the individual and even family level, a limited tendency towards dissatisfaction and desire to move from one place to another shall still remain a possibility, but then again that would thus be only on the strength of certain individual judgments normally influenced by lots of other human as well as natural factors.

### ***La darar wa la dirar* (There Is No Inflicting Nor Returning of Harm)**

One of the most important Islamic principles that govern the relationship between the residents of the Islamic city (Madinah),

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<sup>25</sup> Miura Toru, “*Reinterpreting Urban Studies: Towards a New Perspective (Conclusion)*”, in: *Islamic Urban Studies*, edited by Masashi Haneda and Toru Miura, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1994), p. 335.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Urbanization of Madinah attempts to identify and examine some principles of Islamic urban planning and development, which the Prophet (PBUH) under the aegis of revelation had bequeathed to the subsequent Muslim generations. Central to the book are some vital urbanization and development issues as advanced by the Islamic perception of reality, of truth, of the world, of space and time, and which the young Muslim mind was then intensively acquainting itself with. The issues discussed are: the philosophy of the Islamic city, the mosque institution, provision of social amenities, spirituality and urban development, peaceful coexistence with the environment, housing, the marketplace, and open spaces. By exploring these subjects, the strength and soundness of the fundamentals of the first Muslim community clearly come into sight, as does the visionary disposition of the Prophet to leadership, sustainability and management.

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