

the view of the majority of commentators. It may also be understood as referring to all the places where Ibrâheem stood or halted during Hajj, which refers to all the rituals, namely ṭawâf (circumambulation of the Kaaba), *sa'iy* (going between Şafâ and Marwah), standing in 'Arafah and Muzdalifah, stoning the *jamarât* (stone pillars), offering the sacrifice, and other actions that are done during Hajj.

Hence what is meant by the words «a place of prayer» is a place of worship; in other words, follow his example in the rituals of Hajj. It may be that this is a more appropriate meaning, because that would also include the first meaning (the two raka'ât following ṭawâf), and the wording may indicate that.

«We commanded Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel, that they should purify My House» that is, We revealed to them and instructed them to purify the House of Allah, ridding it of all traces of polytheism, disbelief, sin, abomination, impurities and filth, so that it might be «for those who circumambulate it» and «stay there [for worship], or bow or prostrate there» that is, those who pray there. Ṭawâf is mentioned first, because it is unique to al-Masjid al-Ḥarâm; that is followed by mention of staying there (for worship), which is known as *i'tikâf* (devotional retreat), one of the conditions of which is that it should be done in a mosque. Prayer is mentioned last, although it is a superior act, because it is not specific to the mosque and may be offered anywhere.

Allah attributed the House to Himself for several reasons, such as the following:

- So that Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel would pay extra attention to purifying it, because it is the House of Allah, so they would strive hard and do their utmost.
- The fact that it is described as Allah's House is a sign of honour; this is an implicit instruction to His slaves to venerate and honour it.
- The fact that it is connected to Allah is what makes people's hearts attached to it.