

1 The Rise of Islam

TERMS & NAMES

- Allah
- Muhammad
- Islam
- Muslim
- Hijrah
- Qur'an
- mosque
- hajj
- Sunna
- shari'a

MAIN IDEA

Muhammad unified the Arab people both politically and through the religion of Islam.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

As the world's fastest growing major religion, Islam has a strong impact on the lives of millions today.

SETTING THE STAGE The cultures of the Arabian Peninsula were in constant contact with each other for centuries. Southwest Asia (often referred to as the Middle East) was a bridge between Africa, Asia, and Europe, where goods were traded and new ideas were shared. One set of shared ideas would become a powerful force for change in the world—the religion of Islam.

Deserts, Towns, and Travelers

The Arabian Peninsula is a crossroads of three continents—Africa, Europe, and Asia. At its longest and widest points, the peninsula is about 1,200 miles from north to south and 1,300 miles from east to west. Only a tiny strip of fertile land in south Arabia and Oman and a few oases can support agriculture. The remainder of the land is desert, which in the past was inhabited by nomadic Arab herders.

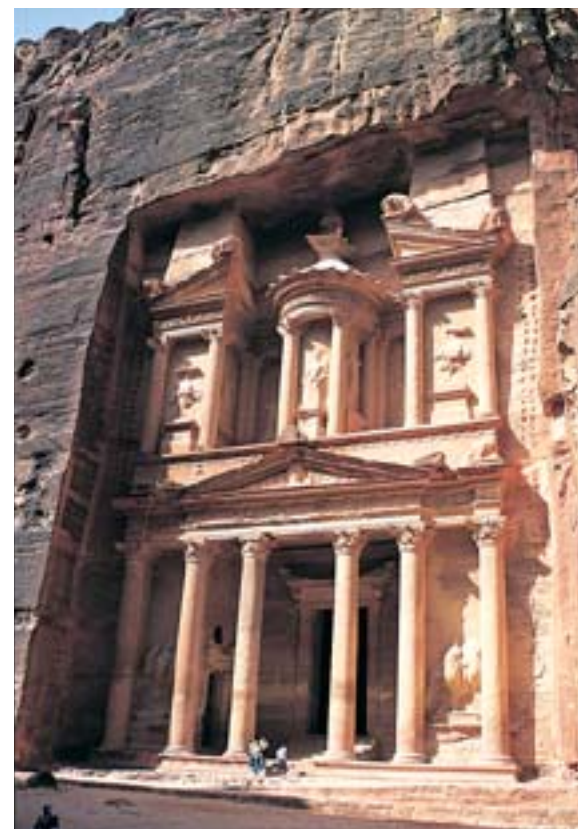
Vocabulary

oases: places in the desert made fertile by the presence of water.

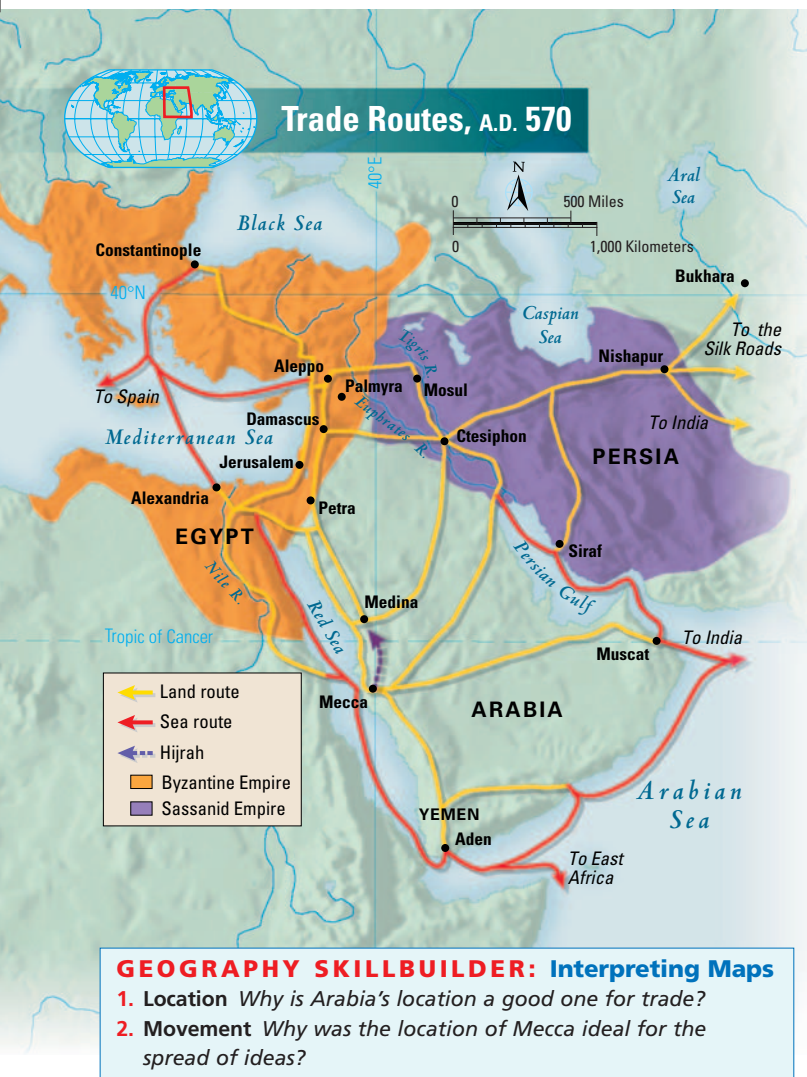
Desert and Town Life On this desert, the nomads, called Bedouins (BEHD-oo-ihnz), were organized into tribes and groups called clans. These clans provided security and support for a life made difficult by the extreme conditions of the desert. The tribesmen took pride in their ability to adapt to the desert conditions and to defend themselves against raids by other clans seeking water, grazing territory, livestock, or food supplies. Because of the desert nomads' fighting ability, they eventually became the core of armies who would build a huge empire in the 600s and 700s. The Bedouin ideals of courage and loyalty to family, along with their warrior skills, would become part of the Islamic way of life.

The areas with more fertile soil and the larger oases had enough water to support farming communities. By the early 600s, many Arabs had chosen to settle in an oasis or in a market town. A few generations earlier, the town dwellers had themselves been nomads. They, however, left the Bedouin life behind for life in settled areas. Larger towns near the western coast of Arabia became market towns for local, regional, and long-distance trade goods.

Crossroads of Trade and Ideas By the early 600s, trade routes connected Arabia to the major ocean and land trade routes. Trade routes through Arabia ran from the extreme south of the peninsula to the Byzantine and Sassanid empires to the north. Merchants from these two empires moved along the caravan routes, trading for goods from the Silk Roads of the east. They transported spices and incense from Yemen and other products to the west. They also carried information and ideas from the world outside Arabia. By the early 600s, cities such as Petra and Palmyra had



Petra, one of the early Arab trading cities, was literally a rock city. Buildings were carved out of the red sandstone cliffs. The name Petra means "rock" in Greek.



long been prosperous trading centers on the caravan routes.

The city of Mecca, in western Arabia, became an important stop on the trade route. During certain holy months, caravans stopped in Mecca. They brought religious pilgrims who came to worship at an ancient shrine in the city. Mecca housed a simple house of worship called the Ka'aba (KAH-buh). The Arabs associated this house of worship with Abraham, a believer in one God. Over the years, they had introduced the worship of many gods and spirits to the place. The Ka'aba contained over 360 idols brought here by many tribes. Many people traveled to this site as a pilgrimage.

The concept of belief in one God, called **Allah** (AL-luh) in Arabic, was no stranger to the Arabian Peninsula. A tradition of belief in one God had long been followed by a few people, known as *hanifs*. Many Christians and Jews lived in Arab lands and practiced monotheism. Into this mixed religious environment of Mecca, around A.D. 570, Muhammad was born.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

A. Summarizing

What religious traditions were in practice in the Arabian Peninsula?

The Prophet Muhammad

Muhammad (mu-HAM-id) was born into the clan of a powerful Meccan family. Orphaned at the age of six, the boy was raised by his grandfather and uncle. He received little schooling and began working in the caravan trade as a very young man. Muhammad became a trader and business manager for Khadijah (kah-DEE-juh), a wealthy businesswoman. When Muhammad was 25, he and Khadijah married. Theirs was both a good marriage and a good business partnership.

Revelations Muhammad took great interest in religion and often spent time alone in prayer and meditation. At about the age of 40, Muhammad's life was changed overnight when a voice called to him while he meditated in a cave outside Mecca. According to Muslim belief, the voice was that of the angel Gabriel, who told Muhammad that he was a messenger of God. "What shall I proclaim?" asked Muhammad. The voice answered:

THE QUR'AN

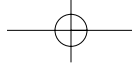
Proclaim! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, who created man out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. Proclaim! And thy Lord is most bountiful. He who taught (the use of) the pen taught man that which he knew not.

Qur'an Surah 96:1-5

After much soul-searching, Muhammad came to believe that the Lord who spoke to him through Gabriel was Allah. Muhammad became convinced that he was indeed the last of the prophets. He taught that Allah was the one and only God and that all other gods must be abandoned. People who agreed to this basic principle of Islam were called Muslims. In Arabic, **Islam** (ihs-LAHM) means "submission to the will of Allah."

Background

Muhammad is often referred to as The Prophet.



Muslim (MOOZ-lim) means “one who has submitted.” Muhammad’s wife, Khadijah, and several close friends and relatives were his first followers.

By 613, Muhammad had begun to preach publicly in Mecca. At first, he had little success. Many Meccans believed his revolutionary ideas would lead to neglect of the traditional Arab gods. They feared that Mecca would lose its position as a pilgrimage center if people accepted Muhammad’s monotheistic beliefs. Some of his followers were even beaten up or stoned in the streets.

The Hijrah Facing such hostility, Muhammad decided to leave Mecca. In 622, following a small band of supporters he sent ahead, Muhammad resettled in the town of Yathrib, over 200 miles to the north of Mecca. This migration became known as the **Hijrah** (hih·JEE-ruh). The Hijrah to Yathrib marked a turning point for Muhammad. He attracted many devoted followers. Later, Yathrib was renamed Medina, meaning “city of the Prophet.”

In Medina, Muhammad displayed impressive leadership skills. He fashioned an agreement that joined his own people with the Arabs and Jews of Medina as a single community. These groups accepted Muhammad as a political leader. As a religious leader, he drew many more converts who found the message and the Messenger appealing. Finally, Muhammad also became a military leader in the hostilities between Mecca and Medina.

Returning to Mecca Many of the region’s Bedouin tribes converted to Islam and joined Muhammad and his followers. During the years that the Muslims and the Meccans battled against each other, Mecca’s power as a city declined. In 630, the Prophet and 10,000 of his followers marched to the outskirts of Mecca. Facing sure defeat, Mecca’s leaders surrendered. The Prophet entered the city in triumph.

When he entered the city, Muhammad went to the Ka’aba and declared, “Truth has come and falsehood has vanished.” Then he destroyed the idols in the Ka’aba and had the call to prayer made from the roof of the Ka’aba.

Most Meccans pledged their loyalty to Muhammad, and many converted to Islam. By doing so, they joined the *umma*, or Muslim religious community. Muhammad died two years later, at about the age of 62. However, he had taken great strides toward unifying the entire Arabian Peninsula under Islam.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY
B. Summarizing
 Identify four major events in the life of Muhammad.

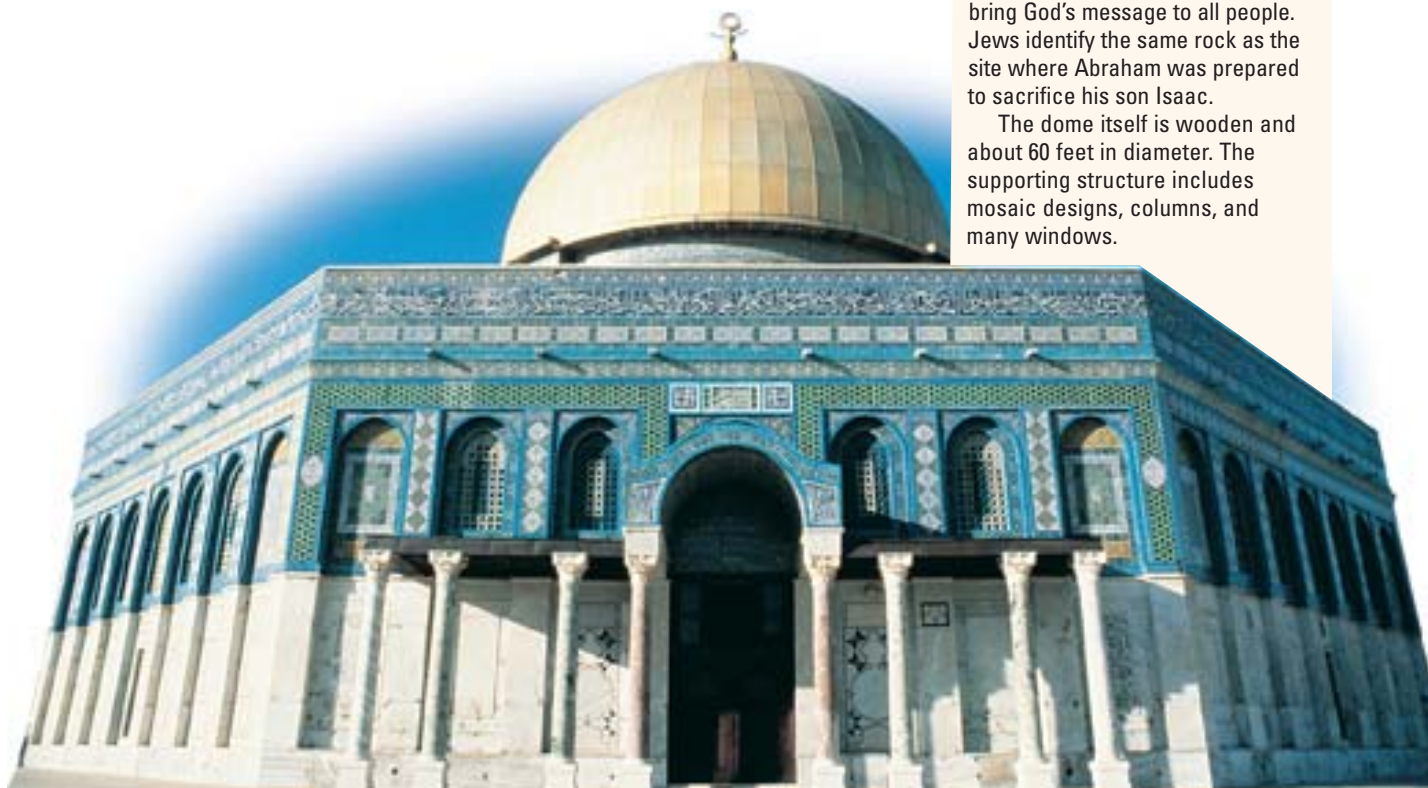
SPOTLIGHT ON

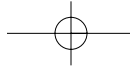
The Dome of the Rock

The Dome of the Rock, located in Jerusalem, is the earliest surviving Islamic monument. It was completed in 691. It is situated on Mount Moriah, the site of a Jewish temple destroyed by Romans in A.D. 70.

The rock on the site is the spot from which Muslims say Muhammad ascended to heaven to learn of Allah’s will. With Allah’s blessing, Muhammad returned to earth to bring God’s message to all people. Jews identify the same rock as the site where Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac.

The dome itself is wooden and about 60 feet in diameter. The supporting structure includes mosaic designs, columns, and many windows.





Beliefs and Practices of Islam

The main teaching of Islam is that there is only one God, Allah. All other beliefs and practices follow from this teaching. Islam teaches that there is good and evil, and

that each individual is responsible for the actions of his or her life. The holy book of the Muslims, the **Qur'an** (kuh-RAN), states, "And if any one earns sin, he earns it against his own soul" (Surah 4:111). Muslims believe that each person will stand before Allah on a final judgment day and enter either heaven or hell.



Artists decorating the Qur'an do it as a holy act. The design is geometric and often repeats to show the infinite quality of Allah. Muslims use abstract designs because they are not permitted to picture Muhammad or the angels.

The Five Pillars To be a Muslim, all believers have to carry out five duties. These duties demonstrate a Muslim's submission to the will of God. These duties are known as the Five Pillars of Islam.

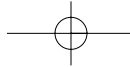
- **Faith** To become a Muslim, a person has to testify to the following statement of faith: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." This simple statement is heard again and again in Islamic rituals and in Muslim daily life.
- **Prayer** Five times a day, Muslims face toward Mecca to pray. They may assemble at a **mosque** (mahsk), an Islamic house of worship. Or they may pray wherever they find themselves. The duty of praying serves to bring Muslims closer to God.
- **Alms** Muhammad taught that all Muslims have a responsibility to support the less fortunate. Muslims meet that social responsibility by giving alms, or money for the poor, through a special religious tax.
- **Fasting** During the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, Muslims fast. They eat and drink nothing between dawn and sunset. A simple meal is eaten at the end of the day. The duty of fasting reminds Muslims that they have "greater needs than bread."
- **Pilgrimage** All Muslims perform the **hajj** (haj), or pilgrimage to Mecca, at least once in a lifetime. In the past, this involved a grueling journey across deserts, mountains, and seas. Today, many pilgrims arrive by airplane. During the pilgrimage events in Mecca, pilgrims wear identical garments so that all stand as equals before God.

A Way of Life Muslims do not separate their personal life from their religious life. Carrying out the Five Pillars of Islam ensures that Muslims live their religion while serving in their community. Along with the Five Pillars, there are other customs, morals, and laws for Islamic society that affect Muslims' daily lives. Believers are forbidden to eat pork or to drink wine or other intoxicating beverages. Friday afternoons are set aside for communal worship and prayer. Muslims who are able to do so gather at a mosque to worship. Unlike many other religions, Islam has no priests or central religious authority. Every Muslim is expected to worship God directly. Islam does, however, have a scholar class called the *ulama*, who are concerned with learning and law. The *ulama* includes religious teachers who study the words and deeds of Muhammad and apply them to everyday life.

Sources of Authority The original source of authority for Muslims is Allah. According to Islamic belief, Allah expressed his will through the Angel Gabriel, who

This tenth-century Turkish prayer rug has a traditional design. The design has an arch at one end. The arch must point to Mecca while the prayers are taking place.





revealed it to Muhammad as the Qur'an. While Muhammad lived, his followers listened to his prayers and teachings and memorized and recited the Revelations. Soon after the Prophet's death, it was suggested that the revelations of Muhammad be collected in a book. This book is the Qur'an.

The Qur'an is written in Arabic, and Muslims consider only the Arabic version to be the true word of God. Only Arabic can be used in worship. Wherever Muslims carried the Qur'an, Arabic became the language of worshipers and scholars. Thus, the Arabic language spread widely as Muslim control expanded into different lands.

Muslims believe that Muhammad's mission as a prophet was to receive the Qur'an and to demonstrate how to apply it in life. To them, the **Sunna** (SOON-uh), or Muhammad's example, is the best model for proper living. The guidance of the Qur'an and Sunna was assembled in a practical form to aid Muslims in applying the will of Allah to their daily lives. This body of law is known as **shari'a** (shah-REE-ah). This system of law regulates the family life, moral conduct, and business and community life of Muslims. It does not separate religious matters from criminal or civil matters, but brings all aspects of life together. Because shari'a applies to all who follow the teachings of the Prophet, it brings a sense of unity to all Muslims.

Links to Judaism and Christianity To Muslims, Allah is the same God that is worshiped in Christianity and Judaism. However, Muslims view Jesus as a prophet, not the Son of God. The Qur'an is regarded as the word of God as revealed to Muhammad, in the same way that Jews and Christians believe the Torah and the Gospels were revealed to Moses and the New Testament writers. Muslims believe that the Qur'an perfects the earlier revelations from God. To them, it is the final book, and Muhammad was the final prophet. All three religions believe in heaven and hell and a day of judgment. The Muslims trace their ancestry to Abraham, as do the Jews and Christians.

The bonds among the three monotheistic religions were reflected in the way the Muslims treated Christians and Jews. Both Christians and Jews were known as "people of the book," because each religion had a holy book with teachings similar to those of the Qur'an. Shari'a law required Muslim leaders to extend religious tolerance to Christians and Jews. A huge Muslim empire, as you will learn in Section 2, grew to include people of many different cultures and religions.



Daily Life

Muslim Prayer

Five times a day—dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and evening—Muslims face toward Mecca to pray. Worshipers are called to prayer by a *muezzin*. The call to prayer sometimes is given from a *minaret* tower like those pictured above. In large cities, muezzins call worshipers to prayer using public address systems and even the radio.

Because they believe that standing before Allah places them on holy ground, Muslims perform a ritual cleansing before praying so that they will not contaminate the holy ground. They also remove their shoes.

Muslims may pray at a mosque, called a *masjid* in Arabic, meaning "place of kneeling to God." This term refers to the movements of prayer, which involve both the body and the mind in worship.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

C. Summarizing

What are the sources of authority for Muslims?

Background

Arab Muslims consider themselves descended from Abraham's son Ismail.

Section 1 Assessment

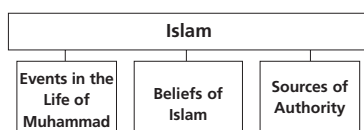
1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify

- Allah
- Muhammad
- Islam
- Muslim
- Hijrah
- Qur'an
- mosque
- hajj
- Sunna
- shari'a

2. TAKING NOTES

Create a diagram like the one shown below. Fill in at least three details for each category.



Based on your notes, write three paragraphs on Islam.

3. RECOGNIZING EFFECTS

Explain how the beliefs and practices of Islam created unity and strength among Muslims in the 600s.

THINK ABOUT

- why individuals felt they were part of a community
- what Muslims did to carry out the Five Pillars of Islam
- how Muslims viewed the relationship between religion and politics

4. THEME ACTIVITY

Religious and Ethical Systems

With a small group, write a conversation that involves a supporter of Muhammad, a person who opposes Muhammad, and a pilgrim visiting Mecca who knows nothing about Muhammad. Place the conversation in a marketplace setting in Mecca. Read or perform your conversation for the class.