



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ كَاتِبًا لِأُولَئِكَ فِي هَذِهِ  
الْأَيَّامِ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ  
وَيُعْمِلُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَهُمْ رِضًا مِمَّا يُفْعَلُونَ  
وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ  
وَأَنزَلَ

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◀ The Qu’ran is the holy book of Islam. Its pages record Muhammad’s teachings.

## The Prophet Muhammad

### 8.1 Introduction

In Chapter 7, you learned about the geography of the Arabian Peninsula, where **Muhammad** was born in about 570 C.E. Muhammad taught the faith called **Islam**, one of the great religions of the world. In this chapter, you will learn about his life and the early spread of Islam in the 600s and 700s C.E.

Muhammad’s birthplace, Makkah (Mecca), was an ancient place of worship. According to Arab and Muslim tradition, many centuries before Muhammad was born, it was here that God tested the faith of the **prophet** Abraham by commanding that he leave his wife Hagar and baby son Ishmael in a desolate valley. As Abraham’s wife desperately searched for water, a miracle happened. A spring bubbled up at her son’s feet. This spring became known as Zamzam. Over time, people settled near it, and, according to the Qur’an, Abraham built a house of worship called the Ka’ba.

By the time of Muhammad’s birth, Makkah was a prosperous city that stood at the crossroads of great trade routes. Many people came to worship at the Ka’ba. But instead of honoring the one God of the Abrahamic faiths, the worshippers at the Ka’ba honored the many traditional gods who had shrines at the Ka’ba.

According to Islamic teachings, Muhammad was living in Makkah when he experienced his own call to prophethood. Like Abraham, according to religious Scriptures, Muhammad proclaimed belief in a single God. At first the faith he taught, Islam, met with resistance in Makkah. But Muhammad and his followers, called **Muslims**, eventually triumphed. Makkah became Islam’s most sacred city, and the Ka’ba became a center of Islamic worship.

In this chapter, you will explore Muhammad’s life. You will learn how Islam quickly spread throughout Arabia and beyond. As you will see, within a century of Muhammad’s death, a great Muslim empire stretched from North Africa to central Asia.



Use this illustrated manuscript as a graphic organizer to help you learn about Muhammad’s life and teachings.

## The Arabian Peninsula



## 8.2 Arabia During Muhammad's Time

Islam has its roots in Arabia, where Muhammad was born. To understand Islam's beginnings, we first need to look at the world in which Muhammad grew up.

The town of Makkah, Muhammad's birthplace, was located in a dry, rocky valley in western Arabia. Unlike oasis towns, Makkah did not have agriculture. Instead, it gained wealth as a trading city. Merchants traveling along caravan routes stopped at the city's market and inns. They bought spices, sheepskins, meat, dates, and other wares from townspeople and nomads.

By the late 6th century C.E., when Muhammad was born, Makkah was a prosperous city. Merchant families brought goods into Makkah from faraway places. Merchants grew wealthy through trade with Yemen (southern Arabia), Syria, and Africa. Over time, a handful of families had come to rule the city. These families would not share their fortune with the weaker, poorer **clans** who lived in the city.

Makkah was also a religious center. The Ka'ba, a cube-shaped shrine, was said to have been built by Abraham for God centuries before. In Muhammad's day, according to Islamic teaching, most Arabs were **polytheists** (people who believed in many gods), and the Ka'ba housed hundreds of statues of gods. Pilgrims from all over Arabia came to Makkah to worship.

Many Arabs, however, lived in the desert rather than in towns. There was no central government in Arabia. Instead, Arabs pledged loyalty to their clans and larger groups called **tribes**. Sometimes tribes launched raids on other tribes to capture territory, animals, goods, watering places, and even wives. When someone was killed during a raid, his family was honor-bound to avenge that death.

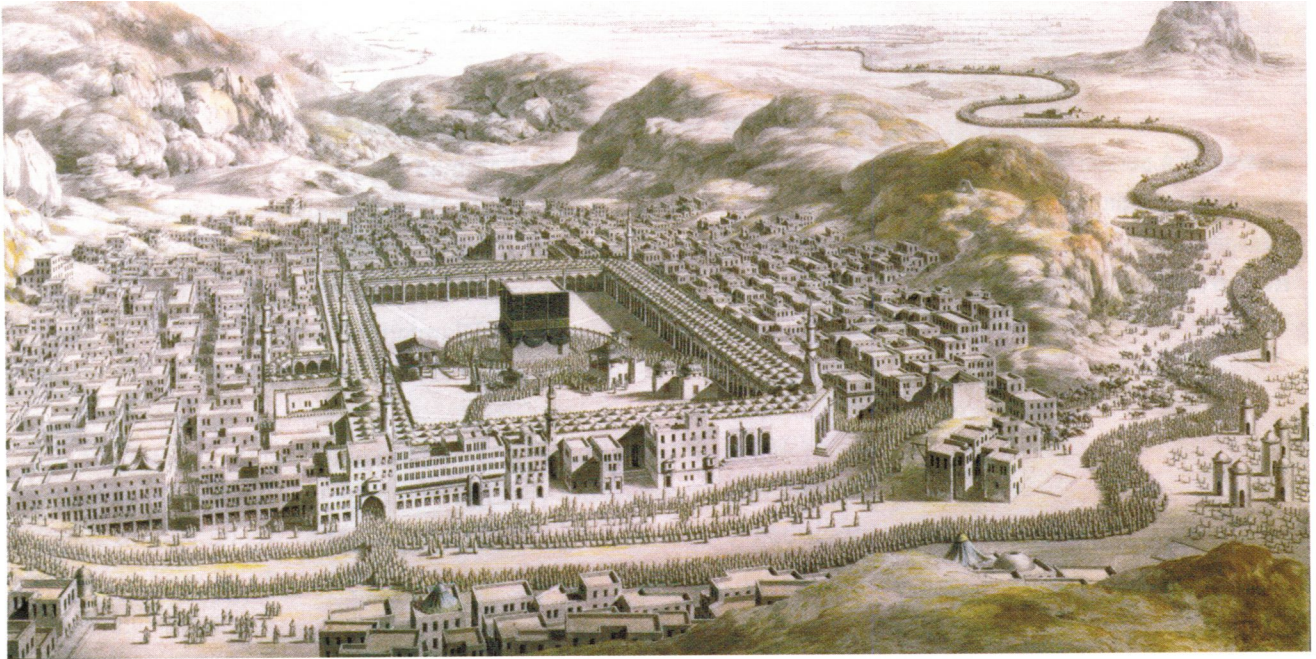
Although Arabs on the peninsula were not united as a nation, they shared ties of culture, especially language. Arabic poetry celebrated the history of the Arab people, the beauty of their land, and their way of life. Poets and singers from different tribes competed at gatherings held at the markets and during pilgrimages.

This was the culture into which Muhammad was born. Let's turn now to the story of his life and how he changed his world.

**clan** a group of related families  
**polytheist** a person who believes in more than one god  
**tribe** a social group that shares a common ancestry, leadership, and traditions

In the late sixth century, Makkah was a wealthy trading city with a busy marketplace.





### 8.3 Muhammad's Early Life

Around 570 C.E., a boy named Muhammad was born in Makkah. Muhammad's early life was a humble one. Few people who were not members of his clan, the Hashim, noted his birth. His father had already died, and the clan was poor.

Following custom, Muhammad's mother sent her baby to live with a nomad family in the desert. There the young boy learned about Arab traditions, such as being kind to strangers and helping orphans, widows, and other needy members of society.

When Muhammad was about five or six, he returned to the city and his mother. They had little time together, because she soon died. Muhammad was left in the care of his grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, a highly regarded leader of the Hashim clan. Upon Abd al-Muttalib's death, Muhammad's uncle, Abu Talib, a respected merchant himself, took charge of the orphan. Abu Talib also became head of the clan.

As a boy, Muhammad watched his family's flocks of sheep and goats. When he was about 12 years old, he accompanied his uncle on a trading journey. They traveled far north to Syria. On this journey, Muhammad gained his first exposure to places outside of the Arabian deserts.

As Muhammad grew up, he took on more duties and made more trading journeys. He became a trader who enjoyed a reputation throughout Makkah for his honesty. People called him al-Amin, which means "the Trustworthy."

Muhammad was still a young man when he began managing caravans for a widow named Khadijah, who ran a trading business. Muhammad earned her great profits. Impressed with his abilities and honesty, Khadijah proposed marriage. Muhammad accepted her offer, and at around age 25 he married Khadijah. Muhammad and Khadijah had several children, but only their daughter Fatimah had children of her own. She continued the bloodline of Muhammad.

The Ka'ba shrine in Makkah was surrounded by homes. In Muhammad's time, people came from all over Arabia to worship at Makkah.

**convert** a person who adopts new beliefs, especially those of a religious faith

**monotheism** belief in a single God

## 8.4 The Call to Prophethood

For the next 15 years, Muhammad made his living as a merchant. Although he enjoyed success in business, he also cared about spiritual matters. He often spent time at prayer in the mountains around Makkah.

In about 610 C.E., Muhammad went to pray in a cave in the mountains. It was there, according to Islamic teachings, that he received the call to be a prophet, or messenger of God, whom the Arabs called Allah.

Muhammad later described the remarkable events of that night. He told that he received a visit from the angel Gabriel. Muhammad described how Gabriel told him several times to “recite.” Muhammad asked what he was to recite, and Gabriel answered:

*Recite—in the name of thy Lord!  
Who created man from blood coagulated  
Recite! Thy Lord is wondrous kind  
Who by the pen has taught mankind  
Things they knew not.*

Muhammad left the cave, quaking with fear. But Gabriel spoke to him again, declaring, “You are the messenger of God.”

At first, Muhammad feared that he might be going mad. But, according to Muslim tradition, Khadijah consoled Muhammad and expressed her faith that God had chosen him as a prophet to communicate his words to the people.

Khadijah became the first **convert** to Islam. The faith of Islam is based on **monotheism**, or the belief in a single God. This God, Muhammad taught, was the same God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Through Gabriel, God told Muhammad to teach others about treating people with compassion, honesty, and justice.

According to Muslim tradition, Gabriel continued to reveal messages from God over the next 22 years. At first, Muhammad confided these messages only to his family and friends, including his cousin Ali and a close companion, Abu Bakr. Gradually, a small group of followers developed at Makkah. They were called Muslims, which means “those who surrender to God.” For Muslims, Islam was a way of life and the basis for creating a just society.

Though Muhammad apparently could neither read nor write, he said that the messages from Gabriel were imprinted on his mind and heart. His followers also memorized them. Eventually, some followers wrote down these words and collected them in the Qur’an (also spelled Koran), the holy book of Islam. The poetic beauty of this book helped attract new believers to Islam.

The Hira Cave is where, according to Islamic teachings, Muhammad was first visited by the angel Gabriel.



## 8.5 Muhammad's Teaching Meets with Rejection

Around 613 C.E., Muhammad began to preach to other Makkans. He taught that people must worship one God, that all believers in God were equal, and that the rich should share their wealth. He urged Makkans to take care of orphans and the poor, and to improve the status of women.

Some members of Muhammad's clan became Muslims. People from other clans and social classes also joined him. Most Makkans, however, rejected Muhammad's teachings. Makkah's leaders did not want to share their wealth. They also feared that if Muhammad grew stronger, he would seize political power. Merchants worried that if people stopped worshipping their gods, they might stop making pilgrimages to Makkah. Muhammad's monotheistic teachings also disturbed Arabs who did not want to give up their gods.

To prevent the spread of the prophet's message, some Arabs called Muhammad a liar. Some tortured his weaker followers. Despite this treatment, the Muslims would not give up their faith. Muhammad was also protected by Abu Talib, the head of the Hashim clan. Anyone who harmed a member of the clan would face Abu Talib's vengeance.

As the number of Muslims grew, the powerful clans of Makkah started a **boycott** to make Muhammad's followers give up Islam. For three years, the Hashim clan suffered as Makkans refused to do business with them. Although they were threatened with starvation, the boycott failed to break their will. These difficult years, however, took their toll on Abu Talib and Khadijah. In 619, these trusted family members died.

While these losses were terrible for Muhammad, that year he reported a miraculous event. The Qur'an tells the story of the Night Journey in which a winged horse took Muhammad to Jerusalem, the city toward which early Muslims had directed their prayers. There he met and prayed with earlier prophets, like Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. The horse then guided Muhammad through the seven levels of heaven, and Muhammad met God. To this day, Jerusalem is a holy city for Muslims.



As-Akhar rock is thought to be where, according to Muslim tradition, Muhammad ended his Night Journey to Jerusalem and was led to heaven. An eight-sided, domed monument now marks the spot over the rock.

**boycott** a refusal to do business with an organization or group



The Prophet's Mosque in Madinah holds Muhammad's tomb.

## 8.6 From the Migration to Madinah to the End of His Life

With Abu Talib's death, Muhammad lost his protector. As Muslims came under more attacks, Muhammad sought a new home. Then a group of Arab pilgrims from a town called Yathrib visited Makkah and converted to Islam. They asked Muhammad to move to Yathrib to bring peace between feuding tribes. In return, they pledged their protection.

In 622, Muhammad and his followers left Makkah on a journey known as the *hijrah*. Yathrib was renamed Madinah (also spelled Medina), short for the "City of the Prophet." The year of Muhammad's *hijrah* later became the first year in the Muslim calendar.

In Madinah, Muhammad developed a new Muslim community as more Arabs converted to Islam. Muslims pledged to be loyal and helpful to each other. They emphasized the brotherhood of faith over the ties of family, clan, and tribe. Muhammad also asked his followers to respect Christians and Jews. Like Muslims, these "People of the Book" believed in one God.

The Makkans, however, still felt threatened. In 624, fighting broke out between the Muslims and Makkans. The Muslims successfully attacked a caravan on its way to Makkah. A few years later, the Makkans staged a **siege** of Madinah, but failed to capture the city.

Meanwhile, Muhammad convinced other tribes to join the Muslim community. As Islam spread across Arabia, the Makkans made a truce with the Muslims. In 628, they agreed to let Muhammad make the pilgrimage to their city the following year. In 630, however, they broke the truce. As Muhammad's army marched toward Makkah, the city's leaders surrendered without a battle. Muhammad and his followers destroyed the idols (statues of gods) at the Ka'ba and rededicated the shrine to Allah. Muhammad also forgave his former enemies. The war had ended.

In March 632, Muhammad led his final pilgrimage. In the town of his birth, he delivered his Last Sermon. He reminded Muslims to treat each other well and to be faithful to their community. Shortly after his return to Madinah, Muhammad died.

**siege** an attempt to surround a place and cut off all access to it in order to force a surrender

## 8.7 The Four Caliphs

When Muhammad died, most of central and southern Arabia was under Muslim control. After the prophet's death, his companions had to choose a new leader to preserve the community. They picked Abu Bakr, Muhammad's friend and father-in-law.

Abu Bakr became the first **caliph**, or Muslim ruler. He and the three leaders who followed him came to be known to a large group of Muslims as the "rightly guided" caliphs. These caliphs were said by this group of Muslims to have followed the Qur'an and the example of Muhammad. The Muslim government was called the *caliphate*.

When some tribes tried to break away, Abu Bakr used military campaigns to reunite the community. Under his leadership, Muslims completed the unification of Arabia. Then they began to carry the teachings of Islam beyond the Arabian Peninsula.

After Abu Bakr died in 634 C.E., Caliph Umar expanded the Muslim empire. In addition to spreading the faith of Islam, conquest allowed Muslims to gain new lands, resources, and goods.

By 643, the Muslim empire included lands in Iraq, Persia, the eastern Mediterranean, and North Africa. Umar set up governments and tax systems in these **provinces**. He also let Jews and Christians worship as they liked. In Egypt, treaties allowed for freedom of worship in exchange for the payment of tribute. Later, Muslims completed similar treaties with the Nubians, a people who lived to the south of Egypt.

Upon Umar's death in 644 C.E., Uthman became caliph. Uthman was a member of the Umayyad clan. He helped unite Muslims when he selected an official edition of the Qur'an. But he also awarded high posts to his relatives. People in the provinces complained that they were ruled unfairly. Discontent spread, and rebels killed Uthman in 656.

Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, reluctantly agreed to become the fourth caliph. Some Umayyads challenged his rule, drawing the Muslim community into a civil war. Ali sent forces against them. When he ended the rebellion through negotiation, some of his supporters disapproved of his action. In 661, one of them murdered Ali.



The fourth caliph in the Muslim government fought against rebellious Muslims who challenged his rule.

**caliph** a title taken by Muslim rulers who claimed religious authority to rule

**province** a division of a country or an empire

### The Expansion of Islam, 632–750





## 8.8 The Umayyad Dynasty

Soon after Ali's death, Mu'awiyah, the leader of the Umayyads, claimed the caliphate. Most Muslims, called the Sunnis, came to accept him. But a minority of Muslims, known as the Shi'a, or "party" of Ali, refused to do so. They believed that only people directly related to Muhammad through his son-in-law Ali should be caliph. The split between the Sunnis and Shi'a lasts to this day.

**dynasty** a line of rulers descended from the same family  
**garrison** a place where a group of soldiers is stationed for defensive purposes

Mu'awiyah put down a revolt by Ali's supporters. He held on to the role of caliph. He also founded the Umayyad **dynasty**. In 661, the Umayyads moved their capital to Damascus, Syria. From there, the caliphs ruled the huge Muslim empire for close to 100 years. To maintain control, they kept large armies posted at **garrison** towns.

Slowly, the lands of the Muslim empire took on more elements of Arab culture. Muslims introduced the Arabic language. Along with Islam, acceptance of Arabic helped unite the diverse people of the empire. In addition, Arabs took over as top officials. People bought goods with new Arab coins. While the Muslims did not force people to convert to Islam, some non-Arabs willingly became Muslims.

The Muslim empire continued to expand. The Umayyad caliphs sent armies into central Asia and northwestern India. In 711, Muslim armies began their conquests of present-day Spain. However, at the Battle of Tours in 732, forces under the Frankish king Charles Martel turned the Muslims back in west-central France. This battle marked the farthest extent of Muslim advances into present-day France.

Muslims held on to land in Spain, where Muslim states lasted for almost 800 years. Muslims in Spain built some of the greatest cities of medieval Europe. Their capital city, Cordoba, became a center of learning where Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scholars shared ideas. Through their work, Muslim Spain made amazing advances in arts, science, technology, and literature. You will learn more about the accomplishments of Islamic civilization in Chapter 10.



The first two caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar, are buried on either side of Muhammad's tomb.

## 8.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you learned about the life of Muhammad and the early spread of Islam. Muhammad and his followers unified Arabia. Within 100 years, Muslims created a great empire.

When Muhammad was born, Arabia was not a united country. Tribes raided each other and fought over the region's scarce resources. Arabs did, however, share economic ties through trade, as well as the Arabic language and culture.

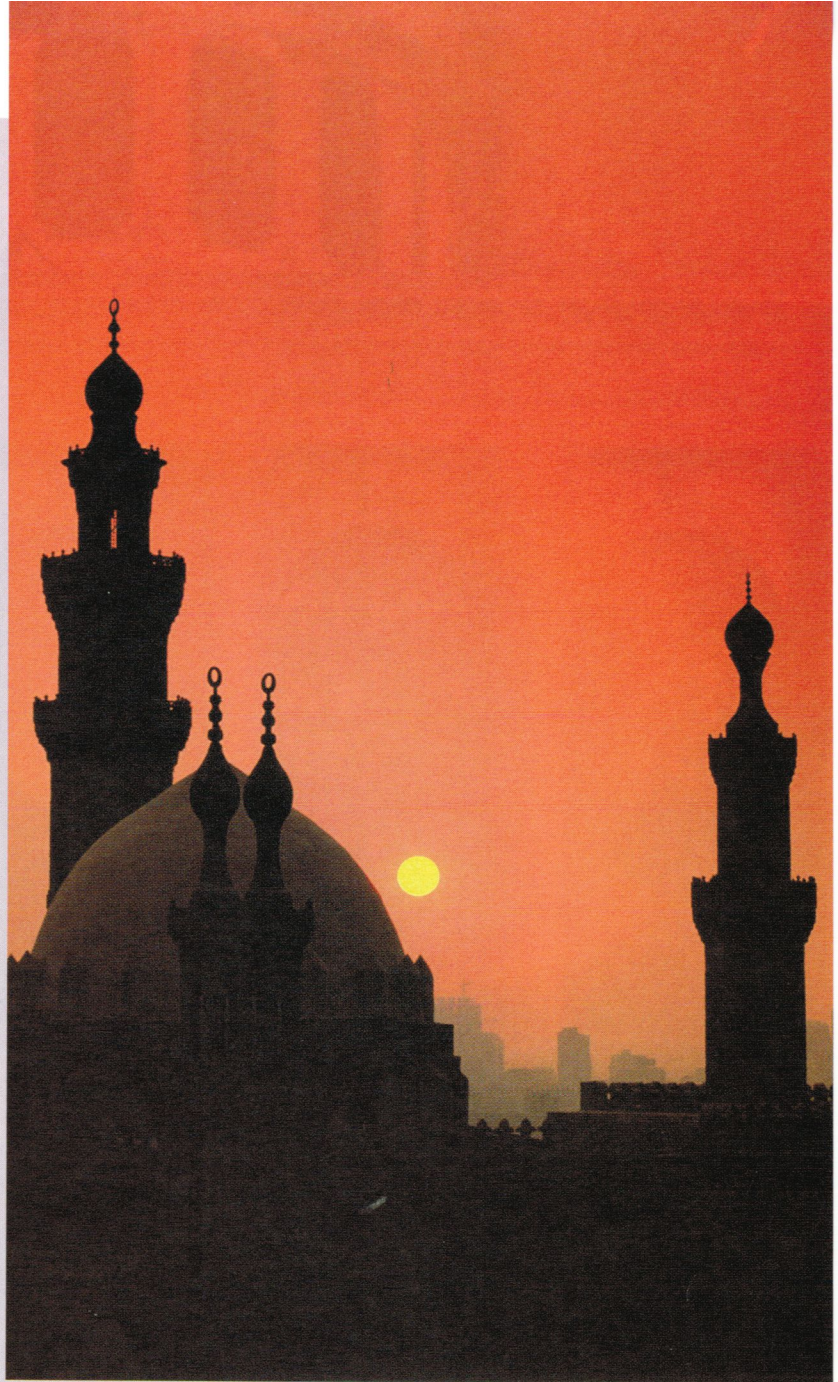
Born in Makkah, Muhammad was, according to Muslim tradition, a successful merchant known for his honesty. He was also a spiritual man. After a dramatic experience during a night of prayer in 610, he gradually came to accept his calling as a prophet. Muhammad described how he continued to receive revelations from the angel Gabriel. His teachings were gathered in the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam.

Muhammad taught that there was only one God. He also taught equality. He told his followers to share their wealth and to care for the less fortunate in society. He preached tolerance for Christians and Jews as fellow worshipers of the one true God.

Many people in Makkah opposed Islam. In 622, Muhammad and his followers moved to Madinah. There Muhammad established a Muslim community. By the time of his death in 632, people throughout central and southern Arabia had accepted the teachings of Islam and the Qur'an as the words of God.

The caliphs who followed Muhammad greatly expanded the lands under their rule despite struggles over leadership and even civil war. In 661, the Umayyads moved their capital to Syria. By the mid 700s, the Muslim empire included Spain, North Africa, the Middle East, and part of central Asia and India.

Along with the Arabic language, the acceptance of Islam helped unify this vast empire. In the next chapter, you will learn more about the core beliefs of the Islamic faith.



Muslims continued to follow Muhammad's teachings as Islam spread throughout the Middle East and beyond.