



The Rise of Islam

MAIN IDEA

RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL SYSTEMS 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.

TERMS & NAMES

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

SETTING THE STAGE The cultures of the Arabian Peninsula were in constant contact with one another 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 Trade Routes

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.

Desert and Town Life On this desert, the Arab 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 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. 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, as you can see on the map on the next page. Trade routes through Arabia ran from the extreme south of the peninsula to the Byzantine and Sassanid (Persian) 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.

Mecca During certain holy months, caravans stopped in Mecca, a city in western Arabia. They brought religious pilgrims who came to worship at an ancient shrine in the city called the Ka'aba (KAH•buh). Over the years, the Arabs had



Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on important aspects of Islam.



introduced the worship of many gods and spirits to this place. The Ka'aba contained over 360 idols brought by many tribes. The Qur'an associated this house of worship with Abraham, a believer in one God and considered a prophet.

The concept of belief in one God, called **Allah** (AL•uh) in Arabic, was known on the Arabian Peninsula. Many Christians and Jews lived there and practiced monotheism. Into this mixed religious environment of Mecca, around A.D. 570, Muhammad was born.

Muhammad, Prophet of Islam

Muhammad (mu•HAM•id) was born into the clan of a powerful Meccan family. Orphaned at the age of six, Muhammad was raised by his grandfather and his uncle. He received little schooling and began working in the caravan trade as a very young man. At the age of 25, Muhammad became a trader and business manager for Khadijah (kah•DEE•juh), a wealthy businesswoman of about 40. Later, Muhammad 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 he believed 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 Allah. “What shall I proclaim?” asked Muhammad. The voice answered:

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Primary Sources

A What kind of teaching does the phrase “the use of the pen” refer to?

PRIMARY SOURCE **A**

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, sura 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 the last of the prophets. He began to teach 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.” **Muslim** (MUHZ•lihm) 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, but he met with some hostility. 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.

The Hijrah After some of his followers had been attacked, Muhammad decided to leave Mecca in 622. Following a small band of supporters he sent ahead, Muhammad moved to the town of Yathrib, over 200 miles to the north of Mecca. This migration became known as the **Hijrah** (HIHJ•ruh). The Hijrah to Yathrib marked a turning point for Muhammad. He attracted many devoted followers. Later, Yathrib was renamed Medina.

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 his message appealing. Finally, Muhammad also became a military leader in the growing hostilities between Mecca and Medina.

Returning to Mecca In 630, Muhammad and 10,000 of his followers marched to the outskirts of Mecca. Facing sure defeat, Mecca’s leaders surrendered. Muhammad entered the city in triumph. He destroyed the idols in the Ka’aba and had the call to prayer made from its roof.

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.

▼ The Abyssinian army set out to destroy the Ka’aba. Their elephants, however, refused to attack.



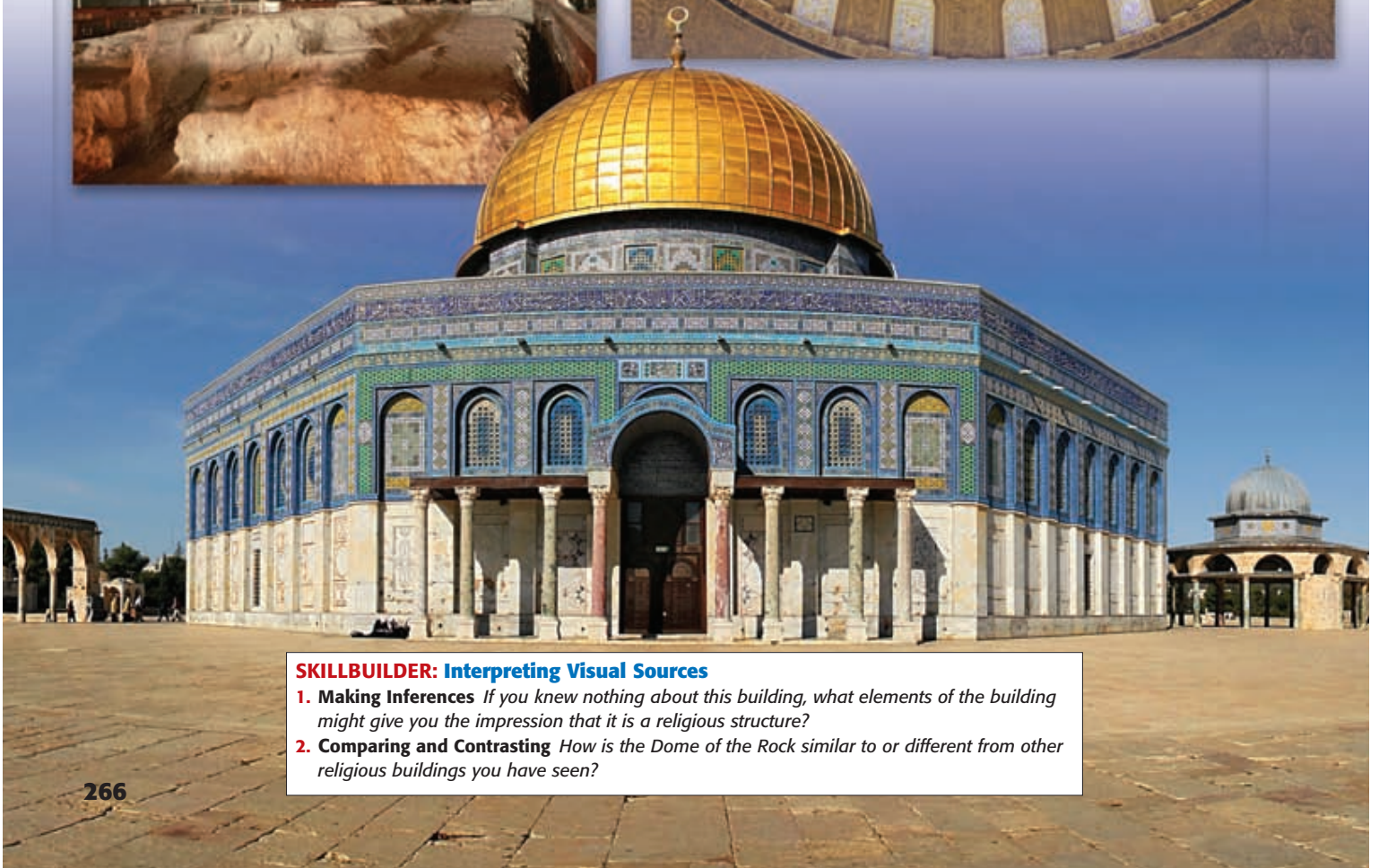
The Dome of the Rock

The Dome of the Rock, located in Jerusalem, is the earliest surviving Islamic monument. It was completed in 691 and is part of a larger complex, which is the third most holy place in Islam. It is situated on Mount Moriah, the site of the Jewish Temple destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, Judaism's holiest place.

The rock on the site (see photograph below, left) is the spot from which Muslims say Muhammad ascended to heaven to learn of Allah's will. With Allah's blessing, Muslims believe Muhammad returned to earth to bring God's message to all people.

▼ This interior view shows the point at which the dome meets the circular walls, or drum. The dome is about 100 feet tall and 60 feet in diameter. It is supported by 16 pillars and columns. The drum is covered with colored glass mosaics that date back to the 7th century. The dome was redecorated later.

▼ The ornate decorations of the exterior are also found on the interior of the building. Notice the geometric designs, a feature often found in Muslim art.



SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Visual Sources

- 1. Making Inferences** *If you knew nothing about this building, what elements of the building might give you the impression that it is a religious structure?*
- 2. Comparing and Contrasting** *How is the Dome of the Rock similar to or different from other religious buildings you have seen?*

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 Five Pillars To be a Muslim, all believers have to carry out five duties. 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 wherever they find themselves.
- **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 between dawn and sunset. A simple meal is eaten at the end of the day. Fasting serves to remind Muslims that their spiritual needs are greater than their physical needs.
- **Pilgrimage** All Muslims who are physically and financially able perform the **hajj** (haj), or pilgrimage to Mecca, at least once. Pilgrims wear identical garments so that all stand as equals before Allah.

A Way of 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 intoxicating beverages. Friday afternoons are set aside for communal worship. Unlike many other religions, Islam has no priests or central religious authority. Every Muslim is expected to worship Allah directly. Islam does, however, have a scholar class called the *ulama*. The *ulama* includes religious teachers who apply the words and deeds of Muhammad 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 revealed it to Muhammad. While Muhammad lived, his followers memorized and recited the revelations he received from Gabriel. Soon after Muhammad’s death, it was suggested that the revelations be collected in a book. This book is the **Qur’an** (kuh•RAN), the holy book of the Muslims.

The Qur’an is written in Arabic, and Muslims consider only the Arabic version to be the true word of Allah. Only Arabic can be used in worship. Wherever Muslims carried the Qur’an, Arabic became the language of worshipers and scholars. Thus, the

▼ Artists decorate the Qur’an as a holy act. The geometric design often repeats to show the infinite quality of Allah.



Social History



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 and even over public address systems or the radio in large cities.

Because they believe that standing before Allah places them on holy ground, Muslims perform a ritual cleansing before praying. They also remove their shoes.



INTERNET ACTIVITY Go online to create a chart identifying and explaining the meaning of Muslim prayer rituals.

Arabic language helped unite conquered peoples as Muslim control expanded.

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 body of law known as **shari'a** (shah•REE•ah). This system of law regulates the family life, moral conduct, and business and community life of Muslims. **B**

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 as the Son of God. They regard the Qur'an as the word of Allah as revealed to Muhammad, in a similar way to the beliefs of Jews and Christians in their holy scriptures. Muslims believe that the Qur'an perfects the earlier revelations. 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.

Muslims refer to Christians and Jews as "people of the book" because each religion has a holy book with teachings similar to those of the Qur'an. Shari'a law requires 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.

MAIN IDEA

Clarifying

B What are the sources of authority for Muslims?

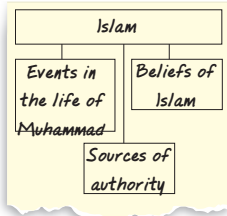
SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

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

USING YOUR NOTES

2. What event in the life of Muhammad signaled the beginning of Islam?



MAIN IDEAS

3. Why was Mecca an important city in western Arabia?
4. What are the Five Pillars of Islam?
5. Why did Muslims consider Christians and Jews "people of the book"?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **RECOGNIZING EFFECTS** How did the beliefs and practices of Islam create unity and strength among Muslims in the 600s?
7. **COMPARING** In what ways are the teachings of the Muslims similar to those of Christians and Jews?
8. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** How did Islam help spread Arabic culture?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL SYSTEMS** Write a **letter** to Muhammad, describing his legacy and that of Islam today.

CONNECT TO TODAY PREPARING AN ORAL REPORT

Today, tensions run high between Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East. Research to find out the causes of this tension. Present your findings in an **oral report**.