

Islam Notes

Arabs were nomadic people in the Arabian Peninsula – peninsula lacked in rivers/lakes. Various tribes guided the Arabs around the land – sheikh. Camels were domesticated during the first millennium BC & allowed the Arabs to expand the caravan trade.

Arabs were polytheistic but believed in one supreme god & named him “Allah”. The Arabs traced their heritage through Abraham & his son Ishmael. It is believed that these two built the Kaaba-a house of worship- in Mecca. The Black Stone is the cornerstone of the Kaaba.

The Life of Muhammad

Orphaned at age 5. He was born in Mecca to a merchant family. He became a caravan manager and married a woman named Khadija. He was unhappy with the state of Meccan society so he began to meditate in the outlying hills of the city.

Muslims believe that during these meditations the prophet received revelations from God. The messages were given to Muhammad through the archangel, Gabriel.

Muhammad was instructed to recite what Gabriel told him. It is believed that these were the final revelations given to humankind by God. God had already revealed himself to other prophets (Adam, Noah, Jesus, etc.)

The Quran is a compellation of the revelations given to Muhammad-it is the holy book of Islam. It contains the ethical guidelines & laws in which Muslims are to live their life.

Those who practice the Islamic faith are known as Muslim. Muslims believe in one God and Muhammad is his prophet.

Muhammad’s wife became the first convert to Islam. He strove to spread Allah’s message to the people of Mecca. Many rejected Muhammad & his claim to be the prophet.

He left Mecca in 622 with 30 followers. They went north to the city of Yathrib (later renamed Madina). This year marks the first year of the Islamic calendar. This movement is known as the Hijah.

Muhammad’s support began to rise in Medina & throughout the travelling Arabs (Bedouins). Muhammad was a skilled political and religious leader. He developed a military force to protect him and his followers. He returned to Mecca in 630 with 10,000 followers. The city surrendered and most of the city converted to Islam. He declared the Kaaba a sacred shrine of Islam. Two years after his return to Mecca, he died.

The Religion

Islam emphasizes salvation and the hope of an afterlife. Muslims do not believe that the prophet was divine.

Five Pillars

- Proclamation of faith
- Daily prayer, five times
- Giving of alms
- Fasting during Ramadan
- Hajj

**Those who follow the pillars will have eternal afterlife.

Al-Masjid Al-Haram – most sacred mosque in the Islamic world

-the Kaaba is the large cube in which the mosque was built around

-the Black Stone is inside the Kaaba

-it was given to Abraham by Gabriel. It is believed that it is turned black because of the sins of Adam & Eve

-it is believed to be a celestial stone that fell from heaven

Shari'ah – code of law

- Practical laws to regulate daily life
- Based on interpretations of the Quran and Muhammad's example
- It regulates all aspects of Muslim life including family life, business, practice, government, and moral conduct
- It does not separate religious matters from civil political law.

Muslims are forbidden to gamble, eat pork, drink alcohol, or engage in dishonest behavior.

The Arab Empire

In a male-oriented society, who would lead Islam after the death of Muhammad?

Abu-Bakr (Muhammad's father-in-law) became the first caliph; united the Muslim world. Islam expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula.

The Quran permits defensive warfare (jihad). Muslims are guaranteed a place in the afterlife if they die in battle.

After Bakr died, the conflict of who should rule began to rise. In 661, Mu'awiyah became caliph and established the Umayyad Dynasty. The capital was moved to Damascus. Massive expansion into Europe occurred, but it was stopped at the Battle of Tours by Charles Martel in France.

The fall of the Umayyad Dynasty led to the split in the Islamic religion: Sunni & Shia (Shiite) Muslims.

762 – Abbasid Dynasty builds new capital in Baghdad, Iraq.

Under the Abbasid dynasty, rule became more complex. The caliph was counseled by a vizier and a small counsel. The Muslim empire was politically divided by the end of the Abbasid dynasty.

Daily Life & Culture

House of Wisdom is a research center under the Abbasid Dynasty (830 AD). Here, scientific text was translated into Arabic, Greek, Persian, and Indian language. Christian, Jewish, & Muslim scholars worked here.

- Developed the place-value system
- Invented algebra (same still used today)
- Developed trigonometry
- Described solar eclipses
- Described the moon's effect on the ocean/tides
- Improved the Astrolabe/measured the size & circumference of the Earth
- Determined the basic outlines of Asia, Europe, & North Africa – developed the first accurate maps of the eastern hemisphere
- Developed alchemy
- *Cannon of Medicine* – summary of all medical knowledge of the time
- Development of calligraphy
- Development of arabesque
- Literature – “Sinbad the Sailor”, “Aladdin and his Lamp”, “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves”