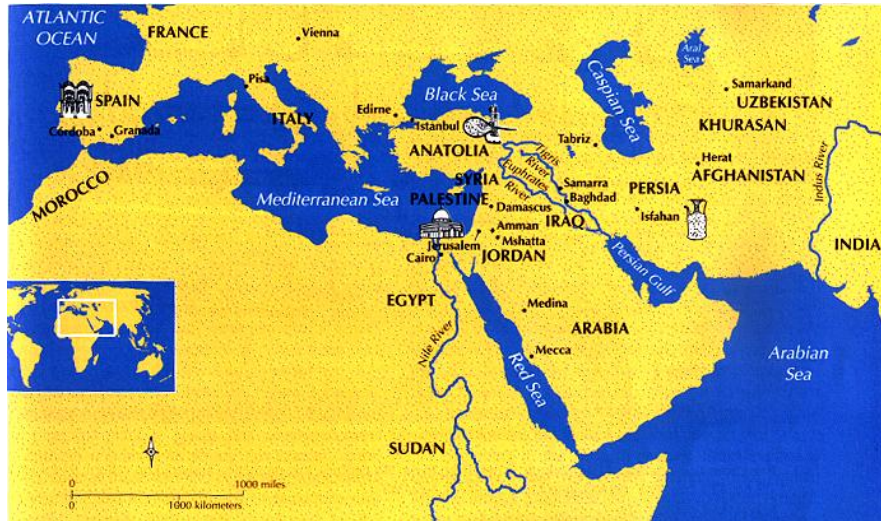


D50 HW Reading | The Prophet Muhammad



Muhammad's Early Life

Around 570 C.E., a boy named Muhammad was born in Makkah (also called "Mecca"). 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.

I learned that...

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 with his grandfather, Adb 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.

I learned that...

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 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 Mecca for his honesty. People called him al-Amin, which means "the Trustworthy."

I learned that...

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.

I learned that...

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 Mecca. 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.

I learned that...

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 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.”

I learned that...

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 to **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.

I learned that...

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 Mecca. 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.

I learned that...

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.

I learned that...