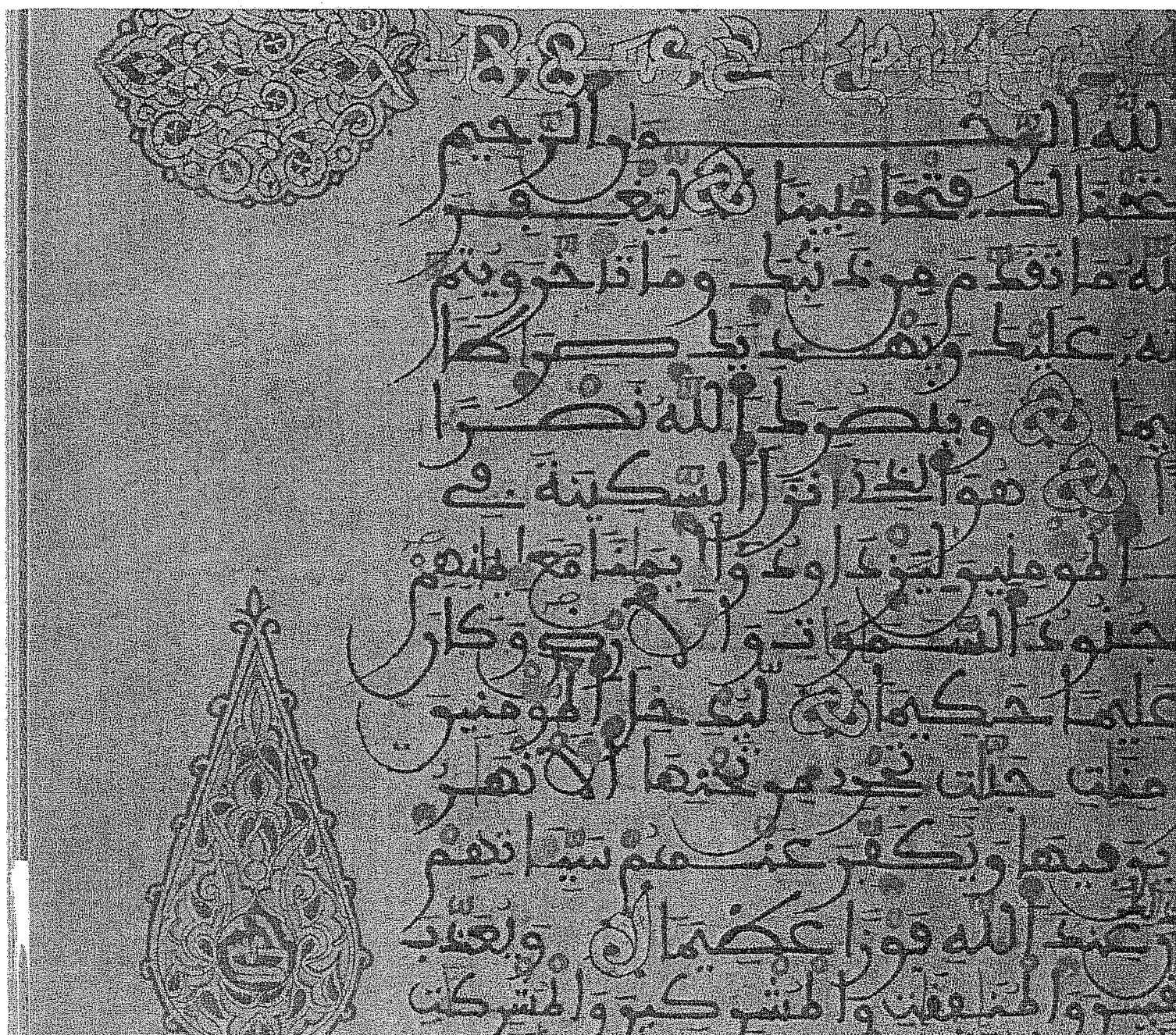


MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION AN ENCYCLOPEDIA



with the command of an invasion by land that would result in the annexation of Sind. During a period of approximately three years, Muhammad conquered the coast of Makran, took control over the important seaport of al-Daibul, and began extending his authority inland over the lower Indus valley. By 712, he had defeated Dahar (the ruler of Sind) and taken over the city of Aror, and he began proceeding northward to capture Multan. During subsequent months, he signed treaties with surrounding states in Rajasthan, Kathiawar, and Gujarat. Muhammad was not only a brilliant military commander and strategist but he was also an excellent administrator; he reorganized the civil administration of the region.

Notwithstanding the superior military power at his disposal, Muhammad was an enlightened ruler, seeking to win over the confidence of the local population. By employing local administrators and forgiving the inhabitants of conquered cities, he garnered a great deal of local support, especially from those who were seeking relief from their autocratic rulers. He was also tolerant of local religious beliefs, declaring at Aror that the local Indian temples were equivalent to churches, synagogues, and the fire temples of the Magians. Not surprisingly, in Multan, he did not destroy the famous temple dedicated to the Sun God. In effect, Muhammad recognized the Hindus and Buddhists as equivalent to the *ahl al-kitab* (the people of the Book), who, like Christians and Jews, had the right to practice their faith in return for the payment of *jizya* (tax). He exempted Brahmins from the tax, a custom that was followed by subsequent Muslim rulers in India.

In 715, the new Ummayyad Caliph Suleiman came to power determined to seek revenge for the support that al-Hajjaj had given to his brother al-Walid in a dispute about succession to the caliphate. Because al-Hajjaj was already dead, the Caliph's wrath descended on al-Hajjaj's family, the most prominent among them being Muhammad ibn al-Qasim. The new Caliph dismissed Muhammad from his post in Sind, ordering his immediate arrest and repatriation to Iraq. Muhammad was imprisoned at al-Wasit, where he and other members of his clan were tortured and killed. Today, Muhammad ibn al-Qasim is memorialized as a great hero in contemporary Pakistan, especially in religious nationalist circles who see Islam as having been first introduced into the region as a result of his conquest of Sind and the establishment of the first Muslim state that would endure for nearly three centuries. A new international seaport, Port Al-Qasim, near Karachi, has been named in his honor.

ALI ASANI

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MUHAMMAD, THE PROPHET (571–632 CE)

The last in the line of Abrahamic prophets—or the Seal of Prophets, as the Qur'an calls him—Muhammad was a descendant of Ishmael, son of Abraham. He fought against polytheism and revived monotheism, a legacy that quickly spread around the world after his demise. In the Qur'an, he is named a mercy to the worlds, a bringer of glad tidings, a warner, a lamp spreading light, a universal messenger, and a witness. He is described as compassionate, having a tender heart, and embodying an exalted standard of character, neither seeking reward from the people nor speaking according to his own desires.

The Qur'an explains that Muhammad's mission is not to bring a doctrine that is new among the Messengers of God but whose sole duty instead is to proclaim the divine message, to confirm that which was brought by the Messengers before him, and, through this, to confront religious hypocrisy. The Qur'an stresses that Muslims must obey him as the Messenger of God and greet him each time his name is mentioned by saying, "God's blessings and peace be upon him." Bearing witness that Muhammad is a servant and Messenger of God is a major pillar of faith in Islam, second only to faith in the oneness of God.

Muhammad was born in Mecca in the Year of the Elephant, 571 CE, when Abraha, the Abyssinian governor of Yemen, unsuccessfully attempted to destroy the Ka'ba with an army mounted on huge elephants, intending to divert pilgrims to the magnificent cathedral he built in Sana. Muhammad was born to his mother Amina six months after the death of his father Abdullah, who passed away at a young age. Following the Arab custom, he was sent as a small baby to the desert for four years to grow in good health, away from the epidemics that iteratively afflicted Mecca, and to learn the best and purest usage of the Arabic language from the desert Bedouins. During this time, a woman named Halima from the tribe of Bani Sa'd looked after him and served as his wet nurse. At the age of four, he was returned to his mother in Mecca. At the age of six, Muhammad's mother passed away, and he grew up first in the custody of his grandfather, Abdu l-Muttalib, for two years, and later in the home of his uncle, Abu Talib, with whom he stayed until his marriage.

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Muhammad was by ancestry a member of a highly esteemed family, the Sons of Hashim, and a tribe, the Quraysh, in a sacred city, Mecca, in which was found a holy sanctuary, the Ka'ba, which was symbolically the House of God. The Arabs had revered the Ka'ba as a pilgrimage site since Abraham, the Father of Prophets, and his first son Ishmael first built it in compliance with God's command. The economy of Mecca was based on caravan trade, because Mecca was a station on the trade route between Syria and Yemen. The Meccans also raised animals, but for their own need alone, which they pastured on the mountains nearby. The barren landscape of Mecca did not allow farming. Accordingly, the children of Mecca were raised to become merchants, as too was Muhammad.

As a young child, Muhammad's education included training in refined speech, care of animals, travel, martial arts, and trade. The cosmopolitan environment of Mecca, which was constantly visited by pilgrims and tradesmen, exposed him to varying economic, cultural, and religious practices. He learned the best usage of the Arabic language during the time he spent in the desert among the Bedouins, who were renowned for their excellence in poetry. He also spent time as a shepherd, and he later said that all Prophets had the experience in their lives of serving as shepherds.

At the age of nine (or perhaps twelve), Muhammad accompanied his uncle Abu Talib with a caravan to Syria as part of his training as a merchant and trader (such treacherous trips across the desert and the constant threat of armed conflict among neighboring tribes necessitated training in the martial arts; this was held to be another crucial part of the upbringing of the children of Mecca). During the course of this journey, the caravan passed the cell of a Christian monk named Bahira, who observed that Muhammad was continually shaded by a cloud that accompanied him and that the tree beneath which Muhammad took shelter lowered its branches to him. Recognizing in his appearance a description from a manuscript in his possession, Bahira asked to examine the boy's back, where he saw a birthmark confirming that the prophet so long awaited was indeed Muhammad.

This range of experiences in such a cosmopolitan environment fostered an informed perspective from which Muhammad was able to appraise the customary religious practices prevalent among his tribe and fellow citizens of Mecca. The people of Mecca were proud to be descendants of Abraham and servants of the House of God, although by the time Muhammad was born very little of Abraham's legacy remained intact. In particular, monotheism no longer stood unchallenged by polytheism and paganism. The

Arabs honored the Ka'ba as the House of God, but they filled it with idols that they expected to serve as intercessors between them and God. Even the place of the holy well, Zamzam, near the Ka'ba, had been long forgotten. The pristine monotheism of Abraham had been almost completely forgotten, although Muhammad was able to join the ranks of those few adherents who remained. These followers of Abraham refrained from worshiping idols, moral corruption, and injustice, but they had no power to reinstitutionalize monotheism. Among them, as among the Meccan community generally, Muhammad acquired a reputation for being singularly trustworthy and therefore became known by the Arabic epithet *al-Amin*.

At the age of twenty-five, Muhammad was approached for marriage by a wealthy widow, Khadija, who entrusted him with her trade caravans; at that time she was forty years old. This led to a marriage that lasted for twenty-five years, until Khadija's death in 619 CE at the age of sixty-five years. The bridegroom moved from the house of his uncle, Abu Talib, to the house of Khadija; she bore two sons and four daughters. Because their first child was Qasim, a son who died in infancy, Muhammad came to be known as Abu l-Qasim, the father of Qasim. The next child was a daughter, Zaynab, who was followed by three other daughters, Ruqayya, Umm Kulthum, and Fatima, and finally by another short-lived son, Abdullah.

When Muhammad reached the age of thirty-five, the tribes of Mecca decided to jointly undertake the physical restoration of the Ka'ba. They cooperated fully in its construction until it came to placing the sacred Black Stone, al-Hajar al-Aswad, back in its original place in one of the Ka'ba's walls: each tribe wanted the honor of this final task exclusively for itself. Tension rose, reaching the point at which outright warfare seemed inevitable. However, because his fairness was well known to all, the leaders of the tribes at length agreed to ask Muhammad to resolve the conflict. Muhammad placed the Black Stone on his cloak and asked a representative of each tribe to join together in raising the stone and carrying it to its place. This ingenious solution pleased all of the tribes and forestalled a civil war; furthermore, it was a significant test of Muhammad's capacity for leadership and peacemaking, which he successfully passed. Because of his commitment to resolving conflict peacefully and promoting justice, Muhammad also participated in an order of chivalry that was meant to aid the oppressed and promote social order and equality for all in Mecca, irrespective of their being dwellers of the city or aliens.

Disturbed by corruption in the city, Muhammad made it his practice to enter spiritual retreat in

isolated caves in the mountains surrounding Mecca. At the age of forty, he received the first revelation in a cave he frequented on the mountain of Hira, also known as the Mountain of Light. God sent him the Archangel Gabriel, who gave the following command: "Read: In the name of your Lord Who created, created the human being from a clot. Read: And your Lord is Most Generous, Who taught by the pen, taught the human being what he knew not" (Qur'an, Surat al-'Alaq, 96:1–5).

Receiving direct revelation from God left Muhammad in great anguish, astonishment, and awe. He left his place of retreat, hastening home in the most profound consternation. Khadija tried to comfort her husband and sought consultation with Waraqa, a blind, elderly Christian sage with profound knowledge of the Bible. Waraqa had (like the monk Bahira) long anticipated the coming of a new prophet, even suspecting that he might already be in the Arabs' midst. After listening to Muhammad's experience, Waraqa said: "Holy! Holy! By him in whose hand is the soul of Waraqa, the Angel of Revelation who came to Moses has come to Muhammad. Truly, Muhammad is the Prophet of this people. Bid him rest assured." Waraqa later told Muhammad: "You will be called a liar, and ill-treated, and they will cast you out and make war upon you; and if I live to see that day, God knows I will help His cause." The reassurances of Khadija and Waraqa were followed by reassurances from Heaven in the form of subsequent revelations, which arrived intermittently for twenty-three years until his death. The fact that the first person to embrace Islam was a woman and a merchant has left an enduring impression on the thought of Muslims, who continue to revere Khadija as the Mother of Believers.

The rise of a Prophet among the Arabs of Mecca came as a complete shock to the pagans and polytheists, who first ignored him, later tried to silence him by force, and at last tried to completely eradicate his message. However, Christians and Jews were more familiar with divine Revelation; some had been awaiting the arrival of the last Prophet in the form of the Messiah. Believers in the new revelation came from various ranks of society. Abu Bakr, a businessman and longtime friend, was the next person to embrace it, after Khadija. He was followed by Bilal, an Abyssinian slave, and Ali, the cousin of Muhammad, who was then a young child. Some of the notables of Mecca saw a threat to their power in the steady growth of the Muslim community. In response, they placed the nascent community under an economic boycott, and they also initiated a campaign of propaganda and torture; this led some Muslims to seek refuge in Abyssinia. At length the pagan Meccans

established an alliance among themselves to definitively sever all ties with the Muslims, placing them under siege in a section of the city with no contact with the outside world and no access to food. Despite unbearable pressure and a growing number of deaths under torture, none of the believers reverted back to polytheism.

As despair escalated among the believers, the Archangel Gabriel one night awakened the Prophet Muhammad from his sleep and led him on a Night Journey from Mecca to Jerusalem. Together they rode on a beast with white wings named Buraq, whose every stride reached as far as the eye could see. From the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, they ascended together to the Seven Heavens, where the Prophet of Islam conversed in the spiritual realm with the Prophets who brought the earlier revelations. Finally, he was accepted to the Divine Presence, where he spoke with God. On this occasion, God gave him a number of commandments that are comparable with the Ten Commandments of Moses, including the following:

"And your Lord has decreed that you worship none save Him, and that you treat your parents with goodness. If one of them, or both of them, reach old age with you, do not say 'oof' to them, and do not reject them, but speak honorable words to them. And lower to them the wing of humility, out of compassion, and say, 'My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up when I was small.' Your Lord is best aware of what is in your souls. If you are righteous [He will forgive you], for surely, He is Ever-Forgiving to those who frequently return in repentance. And give the one near to you his right, and the poor, and the wayfarer, and do not squander your wealth in frivolous squandering. Truly, those who squander are brothers of the devils, and the devil was always ungrateful to his Lord. But if you must turn away from them, seeking the mercy you hope for from your Lord, then speak to them a gentle word. And neither let your hand be tied to your neck [in avarice] nor expand it so wide [in extravagance] that you sit there blamed or destitute. Surely your Lord expands the provision to whomever He wishes or cuts it. Surely He is Fully Aware, All-Seeing. And do not kill your children from fear of poverty. We provide for them and We provide for you. Truly killing them is a great sin. And do not come near to illicit sexual intercourse; surely it is a monstrous obscenity and an evil way. And do not kill any human being whose life Allah has willed to be sacred—save by the right of law. And whoever is killed unjustly, We have given authority to his heir, but let him not exceed the limits [set by law] in taking life. Surely he shall be helped [by God]. And do not come near to the wealth of the orphan save with that which is better, until he comes to strength, and keep the contract. Surely you will be asked about the contract. And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a straight balance. That is

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better and more excellent in the end. And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Surely the hearing and the sight and the heart—all of these will be questioned. And do not walk arrogantly upon the earth. Surely you cannot tear the earth apart, and you will never be taller than the mountains. All of that is distasteful in the sight of your Lord.”

(Qur’an, Surat al-‘Isra 17:23–38)

These verses from the Qur’an summarize the basic teachings given to the Prophet Muhammad during the Meccan period of revelation, which are also reflected in his numerous non-Qur’anic sayings, which are known as *hadith* (tradition). The significant overlap with the Ten Commandments is striking. During the Night Journey and Ascension, God also commanded Muslims to pray five times a day (*salat*), a ritual that embodies the ascension of the believer to the Divine Presence.

As the number of Muslims grew, the efforts of the notables of Mecca to suppress their movement increased. The escalating tension between these groups and the deteriorating conditions under which the Muslims lived forced the Prophet to search for a place of refuge for his community away from his birthplace. The small yet also rapidly expanding community of Muslim believers in the city of Yathrib, today known as Medina, invited the Prophet and his followers to join them. Finally, in 622 CE, the community of believers undertook the emigration from Mecca to Medina. This is known as the *hijra*, and it was accepted during the time of Caliph Umar as the beginning of the Islamic (*hijri*) lunar calendar.

However, this was only the outer *hijra*, as the Prophet reminded his followers; the inner *hijra* takes place in the heart of the person who moves from evil to goodness. Without the inner *hijra*, the outer one would be meaningless, he instructed, thereby making *hijra* obligatory for his followers. At length, the entire Muslim community relocated to Medina physically, just as every believer since that time is to make *hijra* in the heart.

The economy of Medina depended on farming. Initially it was not easy for the Immigrants, who were merchants by profession, to adjust themselves to their new setting. However, their brothers and sisters in Medina, known as the Helpers, made great sacrifices to support them.

The Immigrants and the Helpers constituted the two branches of the Muslim community in Medina. The Prophet Muhammad was not only their leader but also, as the duly appointed ruler of Medina, the leader of the Jews, the pagan polytheists, and the Christians who lived there. These communities joined him in signing the newly drafted constitution of the

city-state. The fact that Islam numbered merchants and farmers among its early adherents contributed to its future spread to communities elsewhere that exhibited a range of types of social and economic organization. Likewise, the peaceful experience of the Muslim community in joining with other religious communities as citizens of a single state united under one leadership made a lasting impact on Islamic political philosophy and state structure. The Constitution of Medina, which was concluded jointly among the Prophet and the leaders of other religious communities in Medina, is still available today for study, and it is commonly regarded as the first written constitution for a pluralist society.

The *hijra* from Mecca to Medina entailed for Muslims not only a change of location but also a change in political and social organization. Whereas they had lived as a violently oppressed minority in Mecca, they became the ruling element in Medina, charged with the protection of other minority groups. This also meant that the Prophet Muhammad joined in his person both religious and political leadership. Like Jesus, he was a supreme spiritual leader; like Moses, David, and Solomon, he was equally a ruler and a law-giving Prophet. In Mecca, he prohibited fighting even in self-defense by his followers, although in Medina the revelation authorized him to permit it. However, all the while—and despite the growing resources under his control as the head of an ever-expanding state—he led the same devout and ascetic life that he always had.

In Medina, the Prophet Muhammad placed the different areas of social life under laws and moral norms, from family to commerce, inheritance to warfare. His Mosque served not only as a place of worship but also as a school, court, and parliament. He devoted special attention to consultation when making decisions: unless there was a clear divine command transmitted to the Prophet through revelation, choices of crucial importance to the community (e.g., whether to wage war) were reached in the Mosque only after a public consultation and debate. He adjudicated cases brought before him in the Mosque not only between Muslims but also occasionally between non-Muslims as well. He even accepted foreign ambassadors in the Mosque, which was, to their astonishment, an extremely humble place. Because the floor had no carpet, worshippers prostrated on the sand; it was roofed over in palm fronds, and no sculpture or picture adorned the walls. The Prophet Muhammad sat on the ground; he never possessed a chair, a throne, or a crown.

His home was also extremely humble, consisting of small rooms attached to the Mosque and entirely without the luxury so commonly thought to befit leaders of such stature. In his home, the Prophet

always slept on the floor on a simple mat, as he refused to sleep in a comfortable bed. He frequently fasted and usually ate only one meal a day without completely filling his stomach. He did not wear silk or gold, and he allowed them only for the women in his community. His custom was to carry a silver ring. He helped his wives with the housework, assisting in such matters as milking the goats, sweeping the floor, and sewing his own clothes. He spent at least one-third of the night in solitary prayer. In addition to the congregational prayers mandated for five specific times each day, he constantly offered voluntary prayers. For the Prophet, the highest level of worship of God was "to worship Him as if you see Him; for even if you do not see Him, He sees you." He preached that Muslims must live in constant awareness of the Divine Presence and act accordingly in daily life.

This high degree of piety did not prevent him from active involvement in family and community affairs and leadership by example in even the most mundane aspects of life. The first Muslims in Mecca were mostly merchants. The Prophet's early career as an international tradesman provided him the experience he needed when legislating about commercial relations. Later, this was coupled with laws governing agrarian economy as befit the new environment of Medina with its traditionally agrarian economy.

At the beginning of his mission, the Prophet Muhammad practiced and preached a steadfast commitment to pacifism. This continued for fourteen years, until in the second year of the hijra polytheists from Mecca attacked Medina in a violent campaign to uproot Islam from its new sanctuary. Only then were the Muslims permitted by divine command to defend themselves and join the aggressors in battle. For the first time, a small Muslim army engaged in armed struggle with the disproportionately larger and more experienced army of polytheists at a location near Medina, known as Badr. This encounter became the first military victory in Islamic history as Muslims triumphed over the polytheists. The defeated army in turn reorganized and attacked Medina for the second time the following year, this time defeating the Muslims at Uhud.

Despite this victory, the polytheists were not happy with the result, because their goal was not just military victory but total eradication of the new religion from the face of the earth. Accordingly, they attacked Medina again with a still greater army. Upon receiving the news of the approaching army, the Prophet Muhammad gathered his Companions in the Mosque for consultation. Eventually, they adopted the proposal of Salman Farisi, a Persian convert who advised the community to dig trenches around Medina and defend the city instead of directly confronting the

polytheist army that was approaching with overwhelming numbers. This strategy succeeded, as the polytheist army, attacking in the expectation of a quick victory, stalled in the trenches and grew increasingly impatient. Finally, they ended the siege and returned to Mecca.

The following year, during the time of the pilgrimage, the Prophet Muhammad and his followers went to Mecca for pilgrimage. Customarily, all Arab tribes agreed that, during the period of pilgrimage, fighting was prohibited, and the Ka'ba would be open to anyone who wished to visit it. However, the rulers of Mecca broke this rule for the first time and did not allow Muslims to enter Mecca and perform pilgrimage to the Ka'ba. As an alternative, they proposed a peace treaty with the Muslims; according to the terms of the treaty, the Muslims agreed to return to Medina with the understanding that, during the following year, they would be able to perform pilgrimage in Mecca. The Prophet Muhammad accepted this seemingly humiliating concession, later known as the Treaty of Hudaibiyya. Paradoxically, the treaty worked to the advantage of the Muslims by enabling them to spread Islam more easily among Arab tribes in the newly peaceful environment. It also fostered the consolidation of the Muslim community in Medina. During the following year, Muslims made their first pilgrimage to the Ka'ba under the leadership of Abu Bakr. However, the truce did not last for long, because the polytheists nullified it by violating its conditions.

In response to the termination of the truce, the Prophet decided to enter Mecca, by force if necessary. After lengthy negotiations, the Muslims were able to conquer Mecca peacefully and purge the Ka'ba of its many idols. The House of God and enduring symbols of true monotheism were restored once again according to the Prophet Abraham's initial vision. The Prophet Muhammad and his Companions did not retaliate against those long-time enemies who had tortured them, boycotted their livelihood, harmed their families, expelled them from their homeland, and even pursued and attacked them after they had immigrated to another city. In other words, the final conquest of Mecca was bloodless.

During the following year, the Prophet made his last pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, which was known as the Farewell Pilgrimage. On this occasion, he delivered the so-called Farewell Sermon from the back of his camel to about a hundred thousand Muslims. The message of this sermon has made it one of the most highly esteemed texts of the Islamic tradition to this very day. In this sermon, the Prophet summarized basic tenets of Islamic law, particularly the rights and duties of men and women. For generations, the

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Arabs had considered the property and person of the pilgrims inviolable and the time and place of pilgrimage sacred. The Prophet generalized this sanctity as a fundamental rule applicable to all persons, times, and places: "O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust."

He also reminded the community of the prohibition of usury and interest, women's rights, the five daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan, pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, and payment of zakat (an annual charity). He emphasized to them their accountability on the Day of Judgment: "Remember, one day you will appear before God and answer your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone."

And he ended his sermon as follows:

"O People, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new religion will be born. Reason well, therefore, O People, and understand the words that I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example, the *Sunna*, and if you follow these you will never go astray. All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness, O God, that I have conveyed your message to your people."

In the following year, 632 CE, the Prophet passed away. His death caused a short-lived state of confusion and deep consternation among his Companions, who did not want to face the necessity of assuming stewardship of the community in his place. Finally, the Companions decided to appoint Abu Bakr as his successor, the Caliph.

The Qur'an, the Book of God, which contains verbatim revelations from God revealed piecemeal to Muhammad over twenty-three years, was Muhammad's legacy to humanity. His own sayings and the stories about him, known as hadith, have been collected in a separate literature and passed down through generations.

The Prophet Muhammad was husband, father, tradesman, teacher, founder and president of a state, judge, and commander—but he was first and foremost the servant and Messenger of God, who called for monotheism and the restoration of the universal and primordial principles of morality and justice.

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MULLA SADRA (d. 1641 CE)

Sadr al-Din Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Shirazi, also known as Mulla Sadra, is the most significant Islamic philosopher after Avicenna. Born into a courtly family in Shiraz in 1571, his interest in intellectual pursuits was indulged by his father. He moved first to Qazvin and then to Isfahan, the successive capitals of the Safavids, to pursue his studies with the two preeminent teachers of his age, Mir Damad (d. 1621) and Shaykh Baha al-Din al-'Amili (d. 1621), who was Shaykh al-Islam in Isfahan during the reign of Shah 'Abbas I. After completing his training, Mulla Sadra returned to Shiraz to work and teach, but, failing to find an adequate patron, he retreated to Kahak near Qum to meditate and initiate the composition of his works. He acquired the patronage of Imamquli Khan (d. 1612), a notable Georgian ghulam who was in charge of the Safavid military administration and the governor of Sadra's home province of Fars, and