

## Section 2; The Rise and Spread of Islam

The religion of Islam teaches that in about A.D. 610, a man named **Muhammad** went into a cave in the desert to pray. Suddenly he heard the voice of an angel cry, “Proclaim!” Stunned, Muhammad asked, “What shall I proclaim?” The answer came quickly. He was to proclaim **the one true God.**

### I. Geography of the Arabian Peninsula

Mecca sits on the eastern edge of a large desert. **The desert makes up most** of the Arabian Peninsula

#### A. *An Avenue of Trade*

Mecca was a crossroads on a busy **avenue of trade** when Muhammad was growing up in the late 500’s. From Mecca, some caravans traveled northwest to markets in what today is Syria.

#### B. Bedouins and Merchants

The desert was home to many groups of Bedouins (BED oo inz), an Arab people. The Bedouins were **nomads**, or people who moved from one area to another. To make a living, they herded sheep, camels, and goats. In addition to **herding animals**, the Bedouins acted as **guides** for trade caravans.

### II. Muhammad’s Life

Though Muhammad’s **great-grandfather** was a wealthy merchant, Muhammad did not grow up rich. In addition to being

poor, Muhammad was also an **orphan**. When he was 25 years old, Muhammad married a wealthy widow named Khadijah (kha DEE jah).

#### *A. Muhammad's Mission*

God said through an angel that people had abandoned the **true faith**. Instead of worshipping God alone, they worshipped many idols, or false gods. People who accepted Muhammad's teachings became known as **Muslims**.

#### *B. The Hijra: From Mecca to Medina*

Few Meccans listened to Muhammad. They thought his teachings about the new religion threatened their old Gods. Muhammad also taught that all people were **brothers and sisters** in a community established by God. Muhammad and his followers were forced to flee Mecca and this forced migration is called the **"Hijra."**

### **III. Expansion of Islam**

By the time of Muhammad's **death in 630**, Islam had spread across the Arabian Peninsula. Within the next 100 years, Islam surged west to North Africa, Spain, and Southern France. How did Islam spread so far so fast? One reason was that people did not like nearby Byzantine and Persian Empires. Their rulers were harsh and oppressive. Another key reason was that Muhammad united the Arabs into one community. Islam also **respected Jews and Christians**. It also recognized Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others as earlier prophets.