



The Birth of Islam



Muhammad was born in the town of Makkah in Arabia on the 12th of the month of A'am al-Feel (roughly April 20, 571). His father died before Muhammad's birth, and his mother died when he was six years old, so Muhammad was raised by his uncle, Abu Talib, a shepherd and tradesman. Arabia, during Muhammad's childhood, was in a low state; gambling, sin, and idol worship was commonplace. Even the Kaaba, the house that the Prophet Abraham had built with his son Ishmael, housed 360 pagan idols.

Muhammad grew to be honest, fair, and humble, so he was called "Al-Ameen, The Trustworthy," but he did not become "The Prophet" until later. Muhammad began to receive visions, including one from the angel Gabriel. At first he was afraid, but he came to understand that he was being commanded to spread the message of Allah (God). He began preaching openly about Islam around 613 and gained many followers, particularly the poor, since his message was one of charity and kindness.

Yet, not all accepted Islam. The leaders of Makkah sought to quiet Muhammad and persecuted his followers. Muhammad and the Muslims, as his followers were called, were subjected to physical abuse and torture for many years, but nothing could turn them from the Faith. When the torture became unbearable, Muhammad authorized his followers to leave Makkah. Some went to the nearby city of Madinah, where they began to spread the Word of Allah and the religion of Islam. The people of Madinah embraced the Muslims and the Faith, and they longed for the arrival of the Prophet.

Muhammad and some of his followers had chosen to remain in Makkah, where Muhammad continued to receive revelations and continued to teach what was revealed to him. Despite the punishment and torture the Muslims endured in Makkah, their numbers continued to increase, and they continued emigrating from the persecution in Makkah to Madinah, where they were welcomed. Eventually, only Muhammed and two of his followers remained in Makkah. The leaders of the city decided that the time had come for Muhammad to die, and they devised a plot to kill him. But Gabriel visited Muhammad and informed him of the plot, so Muhammad and his friends fled the city for Madinah. This flight is called the Hejira, and it is used to mark time.

Muhammad arrived in Madinah on the 12th of Safir. He was fifty-three years old. People clamored onto their rooftops to greet the Prophet, singing and crying, "God is great! God's messenger has come! Muhammad has arrived!" For many years the Muslims had borne abuse and torture at the hands of the nobles in Makkah, and the time had come to reimburse the Muslims for the wealth which had been stolen from them.

In the second year after the Hejira a great battle took place outside of the cities. In the holy book, the Qur'an, it is called "Yawm al-Furqaan - the Day of Discerning and Decisiveness." With the help of Allah, Muhammad's army of 313 men, two horses, and seventy camels, defeated an army of 900 to 1000 men. Other battles ensued, until eight and a half years after the Hejira, Muhammad and his followers marched victorious into Makkah. Muhammad bowed his head in humility as he took control of the city. He then commanded that all idols and statues be removed from the Kaaba and destroyed. From that time forth, only Allah was to be worshipped, and Makkah was to be the holy city.