

## **Understanding Islam**

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**As-salamu alaikum** “Peace be upon you” or “Peace be with you.”

**Wa alaikum-us-salaam** “And with you as well.”

These words tell us how far humanity has advanced since those early days.  
What was the Arabian Peninsula like during the mid 7<sup>th</sup> century?

It was a hostile environment.

Little water or arable land.

People depended on flocks and trade.

The only identity available to anyone was his or her identity within the clan or tribe.

Without a tribal identity, you did not exist and would not survive in that environment.

Patriarchy tribalism was the only source of protection.

Men and women had been allowed to be polygamous.

Widows and orphans marginalized.

Infanticide, particularly female infanticide.

Code of traditional Arab tribal conduct (**murawah**) included:

Bravery

Honor

Hospitality

Strength in battle

A concern for justice

Assiduous dedication to the tribe/ shared values

Tribal tradition and history was kept orally

**The law of retribution.**

Tribes constantly in a state of vendetta with each other.

Cattle rustling.

Raiding caravans

Stealing cattle, valuables, slaves

Stealing the watering holes of other tribes.

Crimes within the tribe were punished/ crimes outside the tribe were not considered crimes.

Tribal law's principle governing figures were;

**Shaykh** – “One who bears the marks of old age”

**Qa'id** – A war leader

**Hakam** – Settler of disputes

**Most powerful tribe in the Arabian Peninsula was the Karash.**

The **Karash's** major city was **Mecca**.

One of the major trade cities between east and west

The controlled the **Kaa'ba** (cube).

Ancient black granite structure.

The **Karash** had controlled the **Kaa'ba** since the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

This made them the **ahl Allah** (The Tribe of God)

An ancient stone structure that contained the idols of each of the tribes on the Arabian Peninsula. (360 idols)

Also: Pagan, Christian, Jewish, Nabataean, Animists, etc.

Representing deities that were feared, not respected.

All believe the **Kaa'ba** to be associated with Abraham and Ishmael.

Grounds surrounding the **Kaa'ba** were sacred.

On the grounds surrounding the **Kaa'ba**, nobody could carry weapons.

Tribes in conflict could trade. It was a place of peace.

Around the **Kaa'ba**, the **Law of Retribution** was suspended.

**Kaa'ba** was a great source of power and revenue for the **Karash**.

Trade routes, taxes, market fees, and access to the **Kaa'ba** made the **Karash** rich and powerful.

This was the period of **Jahiliyyah** (The Time of Ignorance)

Muhammad (Messenger of God)      Was born into this environment.

Born in 570 ACE.

Father died before he was born.

Mother and grandparents were dead by the time he was 6 years old.

Adopted by his uncle, who was the head of the powerful clan in the **Karash**.

Sent to live with the Bedouins (keepers of the **Muruwah**) and worked as a shepherd.

Became a merchant in later years & began working the caravans.

Eventually leading caravan

Extensive travel and contact with people from outside the Saudi Peninsula.

Developed a reputation as an honest skilled leader.

**El-Amin** "The Trusted One"

Many conversations with Christians, Jews, and likely Zoroastrians.

Ishmael and Hagar outside of the story of Abraham and Isaac.

Told that if God thought anything of him and his people,

He would have sent you a messenger and given you a book.

A wealth widow, who employs him recognizes his gifts and proposes marriage.

**Khadija** is 40 and he is 25.

She becomes his partner and mentor.

Their 24-year marriage was monogamous/ they had 6 children.

Often contemplates his relationship with God.

**In 610 ACE, He visits to Mt. Hira.**

**Icra** = recite

**Recite!**

**Recite in the name of they Sustainer.**

**Recite in the name of He whom made man from the dust,  
Who created him from a germ seed.  
Recite in the name of your God, who is the most generous  
Who taught man what he did not know,  
Who taught him the use of the pen.**

Angel Gabriel

He would recite until his death in 632 ACE.

Those recitations would become the **Qu'ran**.

The voice that comes out of him is radical, powerful, and lyrical.

**Qu'ran** does not speak about God but speaks as God.

Constantly shifting pronouns so the reader cannot anthropomorphize God's nature.

It becomes the best of the Arabic language.

**It is the miracle of Muhammad's life.**

Read, spoken, chanted

Shares his vision of.

**Allah** = The One God

Strong sense of social justice.

**Khadija** accepted his revelations.

Begins to collect followers **Banu Hashim** (The Companions)

A tribe that is descended from Ishmael and a Tribe of Israel.

He identifies with Jewish and Christian prophets, particularly Abraham –

Who all Meccans – pagan or otherwise – regard as divinely inspired.

**Muhammad becomes the "New Abraham."**

In 613 ACE he creates the **Shahadah**. (5 Pillars)

**"There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His Messenger."**

He comes to realize the **Karash's** economic and social power lays in the **Kaa'ba**.

Not as the monotheists **Abraham** taught them to be.

Points out the **Karash** for their polytheists.

He is a threat to the **Karash**.

His uncle is asked to withdraw his protection of Muhammad, he refuses.

The **Karash** issue orders to deny food and water to the **Banu Hashim**.

In 621 ACE, **Kahadija** dies.

He primary source of physical and emotional support ceases.

Invited by two small tribes locked in conflict to mediate.

Two small tribes having heard of his reputation for honesty and fairness offers him protection in exchange for Him becoming the head of their tribe.

**"Come, O Messenger of God, to a settlement which has many defenders and is well provisioned and impregnable."**

In 622 ACE **He departs Mecca** for **Yathrib**, 210 miles north of Mecca.

This is the **Hijrah**,

Becomes year 1 AH (**After the Hejrah**) beginning of the Muslim calendar.

He is followed by a small group of family, friends, and followers.

Muhammad prophet and law-giver,

New Idea – He becomes the **Shaykh, Qa'id, and Hakam** of this community,

**Yathrib** becomes:

First Muslim community.

Archetype for Islamic democracy and Muslim militancy.

He begins to revolutionize the tribal social structure of the Arabian Peninsula.

Those who submit to God will become **Muslims**.

Those who join His **Muslim** community become the **Ummah**.

Builds the first **Masque**.

**Implements the 5 Pilars of Islam.**

**Shahadah** – Statement of Faith/14 times per day.

He implements **Salat** – Mandatory community prayer/5 times per day.

He implements **Zakat** (Purification)– The mandatory giving of alms/ to be distributed among the most needy.

A reminder that everything comes from God.

He implements **Sawn** – Fasting.

He implements the **Hajj** – Pilgrimage to the **Kaa'ba**

Most revolutionary (Changes Tribal Law)

He makes all members of the **Ummah** equal.

He accepts those born into other clans who wish to become part of the **Ummah**.

Retribution is maintained but Muhammad urges forgiveness.

Creates a society built on moral principles rather than utilitarian principles.

Extends rights to women/Far exceed those found in Christian communities.

A woman may inherit property, for the first time.

A woman keeps her dowries throughout marriage.

A woman takes her dowries with her after a divorce.

A woman has the right to divorce her husband, immediately if need be.

Men must wait for three months before their divorce will take effect.

Muhammad accepts polygamy, within limits.

**Qu'ran** indicates that monogamy is the preferred model.

Especially after war when there are widows and orphans.

This is a means of community protection.

The community of **Yathrib** would have been doomed without polygamy.  
Women in a family must all be treated equally.

Muhammad believes strongly in women's rights.

Several of his wives become religious and political leaders and on one occasion a war leader.

During his time in Yathrib, Muhammad begins to realize that his message is not simply for the people of Mecca but is a **“mercy to all creatures of the world and the Message to all of humanity.”**

### **Challenge to Mecca**

Muhammad declares Yathrib to be a sanctuary city (**Haram**), free of conflict.

Tax-free market.

A pilgrimage center.

Still raids caravans from Mecca but offers some protection.

Caravans begin to seek safety in Yathrib.

### **Threat to the Karash of Mecca**

Ambushed at the **Battle of Badr**.

Routes a much larger force.

### **I 624 ACE, Muhammad writes the Constitution of Medina.**

**Yathrib becomes Medina.**

Nonaggression pact between Medina, immigrants seeking sanctuary, and anyone assisting those immigrants.

A new power on the Arabian Peninsula.

### **In 627 ACE, the Karash tire of Muhammad and the growing power of Medina.**

**Battle of Uhad**

Large Bedouin force attacks Medina.

Defensive trench around Medina.

**Vast numbers see his success** and begin to seek membership in the **Ummah**.

### **Muhammad sees Islam as a logical extension of the Abrahamic tradition.**

**“Our God and your God are the same; and it is to Him we submit.”**

The Torah, Gospel, and Qu'ran make up a logical sequence.

Adopts many Jewish dietary restrictions and purification rights.

Initial prays facing Jerusalem.

Urges followers to marry Jews, as He does himself.

Sets His community to meet at noon on Fridays, so as not to interfere with Jewish Sabbath.

Recognizes Christ as the Messiah and accepts His miracles.  
 Accepts Christ's judgment of humanity at the end of time.

Contradicts Biblical teachings

Does not accept "the Trinity" as a true teaching. (Augustine 417 ACE)  
 Christ never claimed divinity, nor asked to be worshipped. (Council of Nicaea 325 ACE)

Teaches that men and women were created simultaneously from the same cell.  
 Does not accept the notion of "Original Sin."

**In 628 ACE, Muhammad declares He is making a pilgrimage to Mecca.**

Takes 1,000 followers.  
 Stopped outside of Mecca.  
 Offered to treaty to come back in one year.  
 To everyone's surprise He accepts.  
 People of Mecca see the respect He is given.

**One year later (629 ACE), He returns with 10,000 supporters.**

**Karash** bow to His authority.  
 The city agrees to never wage war against Him again.  
 He issues amnesty to everyone in Mecca.  
 Fees all the slaves in Mecca.  
 Nobody is asked, or forced to convert.

**Publicly washes the Kaa'ba before a large crowd.**

Smashes all the idols except the statues of Christ and His Mother.  
 Hacks idol of **Hubal** to pieces with his sword and uses it as a step into the **Kaa'ba**.

Declares the **Kaa'ba** to be the seat of Islam.

Directs Muslims to pray in the direction of the **Kaa'ba**.  
 Initiates the **Haj** as the 5<sup>th</sup> Pillar of Islam.

**He would recite until his death in 632 ACE.**

Growth  
 Succession  
 Muslim Empire 7<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century  
 Scientific principles.  
 Jurist prudence.  
 Saves the classics – Greek, Rome  
 Medicine  
 Optics  
 Government  
 Italian Renaissance