The Rise of Islam
Arabia

• Bedouin tribes
• Arabs, a **nomadic** people
• **Tribal** society
• Sheikh
• Shepherds and **caravan trade**; carriers of goods between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea;
• Polytheistic, spirits inhabit natural objects – mountains, trees, etc.
• Sacred stone - **Ka’aba** – black meteorite;
• **Mecca** – commercial town;
Geography
Trade Increases

• 5th and 6th centuries –
• Byzantine and Persian wars lead to new trade route; Mediterranean>Mecca>Yemen>Indian Ocean;
• Strained relations between desert Bedouins and wealthy merchant class in towns;
Muhammad (570-632)

Born in **Mecca**, merchant family, orphaned at 6; **caravan manager**; marries rich widow, Khadija; merchant in Mecca; troubled by growing gap between Bedouin values and values of the affluent commercial elites; **meditates** in the hills; believes he encounters the angel **Gabriel**; experiences a **revelation** from Allah; Allah already revealed himself in past through people like Moses and Jesus, but Muhammad would receive the final and **complete revelation**;
Muhammad

- **preaches** to residents in Mecca
- regarded as madman, charlatan or a threat to the social and political order;
- Muhammad and followers **persecuted**;
- **622 leaves Mecca** and retreats to Yathrib – later Medina; **Hegira** – first date on Islamic calendar;
- first Muslim community formed in Medina;
- returns to Mecca with a **military force** – conquers Mecca
- Converts townspeople; **630 -destruction of idols**;
Teachings

• Islam – submission to the will of God;
• Islam is monotheistic
• There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet – final and complete revelation;
• Allah – creator of the universe
• goal is salvation and eternal life
Quran

• sacred book of Islam
• 114 suras-chapters
• ethical guidebook
• code of law
• political theory
Fundamental Tenets

• Need to **obey the will of Allah**
• Basic ethical code consists of the **5 Pillars**
  1. **Belief** in Allah and Muhammad as his prophet;
  2. **Prayer** 5x day and public prayer on Friday;
  3. Holy month of **Ramadan**, **fasting** from dawn to sunset;
  4. **Pilgrimage** to Mecca-the Hajj
  5. Giving **Alms** – charity; **zakat**
Haj
Sharia Law

Regulates daily life:
No gambling
No pork
No alcohol
No dishonest behavior;
Strict sexual mores; limited contact between unmarried;
Women to keep themselves modest and covered;
Arranged marriages
No more than four wives;
The Arab Empire

• Muslims saw no separation between political and religious authority;
• Submission to Allah meant submission to the prophet;
• the problem of succession!
• Followers select Abu Bakr as caliph; temporal and religious leader of the Muslim community;
Jihad

At least two meanings:

• The struggle **against the passions** and against the evil within themselves;

• Violent action **against the enemies of Islam**; Holy War; the expansion of the world of Islam into the realm of the unbelievers;
Creation of an Empire

• Islam inspired a **zeal and fervor** among the Arab tribes; **conquest**;
• attack the neighboring Byzantine and Persian Sassanian Empires; 636 defeat Byzantine army at Yarmuk; 637 defeat Persian force;
• 640 conquer Syria and Cairo;
• by 650 conquered entire Persian Sassanid Empire;
• rest of Egypt and North Africa;
How to account for this remarkable expansion?

- channeling **energies of new converts**;
- prolonged drought on Arabian peninsula;
- Byzantines weakened by plague;
- Meccan desire to **extend their trade routes** and bring surplus-producing regions under their control;
How to account? cont.

• Byzantine and Persian empires weakened each other;

• strength and mobility of the unified Bedouin armies with their skilled cavalry;

*** Led by a series of brilliant generals, the Arabs assembled a large, unified, highly motivated army whose valor was enhanced by the belief that *Muslim warriors who died in battle were guaranteed a place in paradise;*
Muslim Administration of Conquered Areas

• pagans, polytheists put to the sword;

• conversion of Christians and Jews usually voluntary but **under pressure**; people of the Book; second class citizens, special tax;

• Those who chose not to convert were required to submit to Muslim rule and to **pay a head tax** in return for exemption from military service; required of all Muslim males;
Rise of the Umayyads

A. Main Challenge to Growing Empire: no agreement on successor to Muhammed;
Abu Bakr v. Ali
Umar
Uthman (assassinated)
Ali (assassinated)
Mu’awiya (hereditary caliphate)
Ummayyad Dynasty capital at Damascus, Syria
B. Continued Expansion: 8th century – across North Africa (Berbers);
710 southern Spain;
Jebral Tariq
Muslim state in Spain, center in Andalusia
Stopped in southern France by Franks under Charles Martel – Tours and Poitier
C. Main Adversary of Umayyad dynasty: the Byzantines;
717 attack Constantinople
Greek Fire; Byzantines save the Empire and Christian Europe;
D. Islamic Rule in the East: Mesopotamia and Persia

- tension between Arab and non-Arab Muslims;
- In Iraq, Hussein, Ali’s second son contested legitimacy of Ummayyad dynasty; supporters of Ali called Shiite; defeated
- Permanent schism between Shiite (partisans of Ali) and Sunni (orthodox);
Fall of Umayyad Dynasty

- described as increasingly decadent, morally corrupt behavior; one caliph allegedly swam in pool of wine;

- accurate or attempt to delegitimize the dynasty?

- similar to accusations about what other government we learned about?

- overthrown by Abu al-Abbas
Abbasids

A. Brought political, economic and social change to the world of Islam;
   • tried to break down distinctions between Arab and non-Arab Muslims; all may hold civil and military offices
   • helped open Islam to the influence of occupied civilizations;
   • Intermarriage

B. New capital in Baghdad on the Tigris R. river traffic to Persian Gulf and caravan route;
Abbasid Dynasty continued

• al-Ma’mun – patron of learning;

C. Growing Prosperity:
• controlled trade routes;
• Baghdad center of enormous commercial market:
• Paper from China, rice, sugar, sorghum, cotton from India and Southeast Asia;
• Glass, wine, indigo dye to China;
Fall of Abbasids

• political instability and division; rivalries and disputes over succession – civil wars;

• wealth contributed to financial corruption;

• luxury undermined strict moral code of Islam; sexual promiscuity, harems, widespread divorce, homosexuality, alcohol;