

# Prophet Muhammad— The founder of Islam

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**Muhammad** is one of history's most important and influential figures. He is considered the Prophet of Islam, the world's second largest and fastest growing religion. Muhammad was born about AD 570 in Mecca, a city in Arabia. It is said that Muhammad believed that he was *chosen by God* to clarify the teachings of earlier Christian and Hebrew prophets and to establish a *common faith*.



Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca

## Early life

Muhammad lost both his parents at the age of six and was raised by his grandfather, Abd-al-Muttalib. After his grandfather died, he lived with his uncle, Abu Talib.

Muhammad belonged to a tribe that was very important in Mecca—the Quraish tribe. His own family was poor. He received no formal education and probably never learnt to read and write. As a boy, Muhammad worked



as a trader and travelled with caravans to Syria and Iraq. As a young man, he worked for a wealthy widow named **Khadija**, whom he later married. They had two sons but both died young. He also had four daughters.

After his marriage, Muhammad led a comfortable life. But he often thought about the problems of his people, who were constantly fighting and practising cruel and selfish acts.

**What were the conclusions that Muhammad arrived at?**

➤ Religion, with its greed, evil practices and many gods, was responsible for many of their problems.

➤ Like the Christians and Jews, who also lived in Mecca, he came to believe in a single God, who was all powerful and compassionate.

### Muhammad's Revelations

Muhammad often went to a cave outside Mecca and meditated alone. While mediating *one night*, when he was about 40 years old, he suddenly felt as if he were called to be **God's prophet**. According to Muhammad, angel—Gabriel—came and commanded him to recite the words of God to the Arabs in their own language—Arabic.

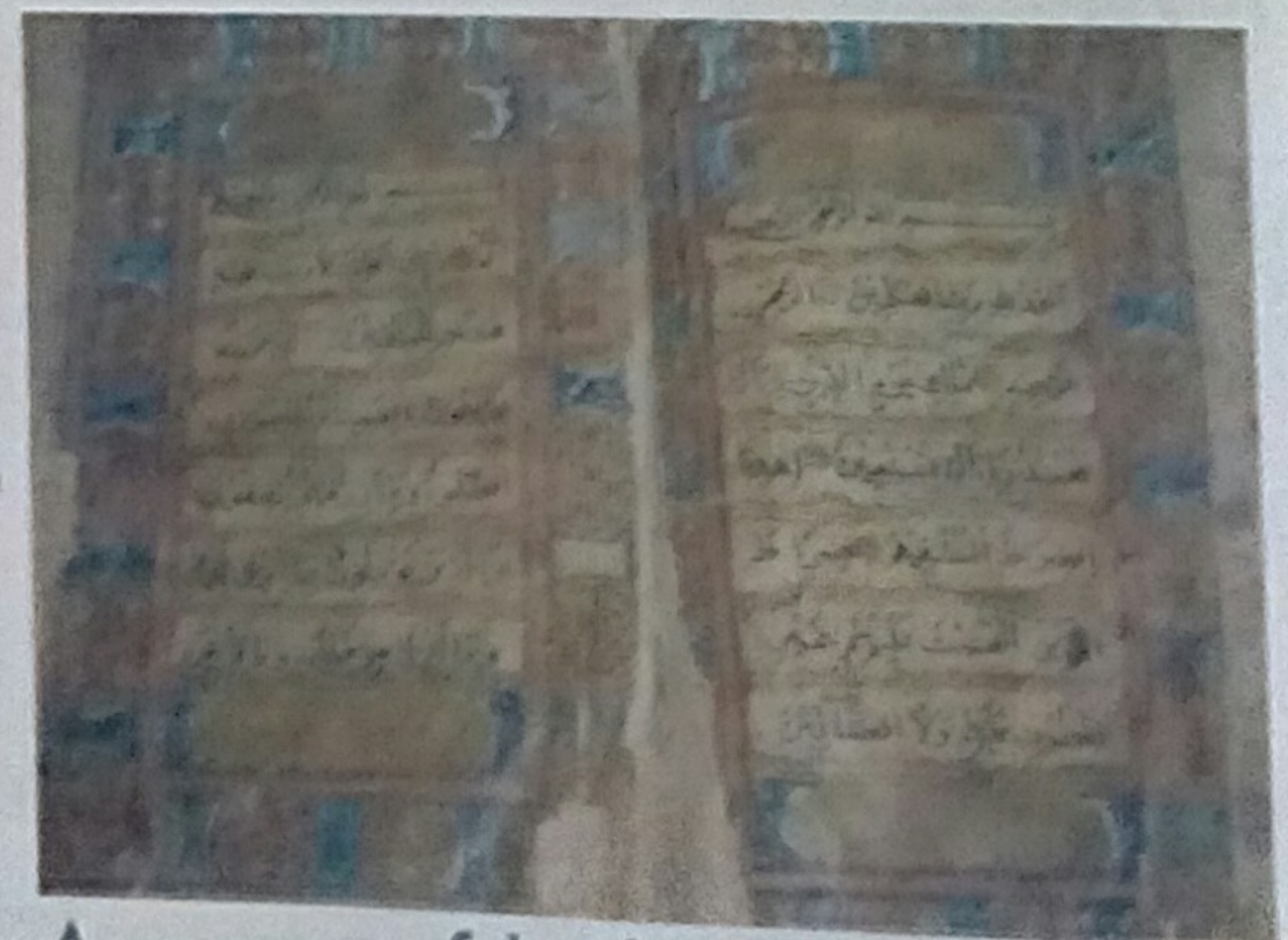
The angel told Muhammad **what words** to recite. These were the beginning of the **Quran—the book** that became the foundation of Islam.

### What was the Quran?

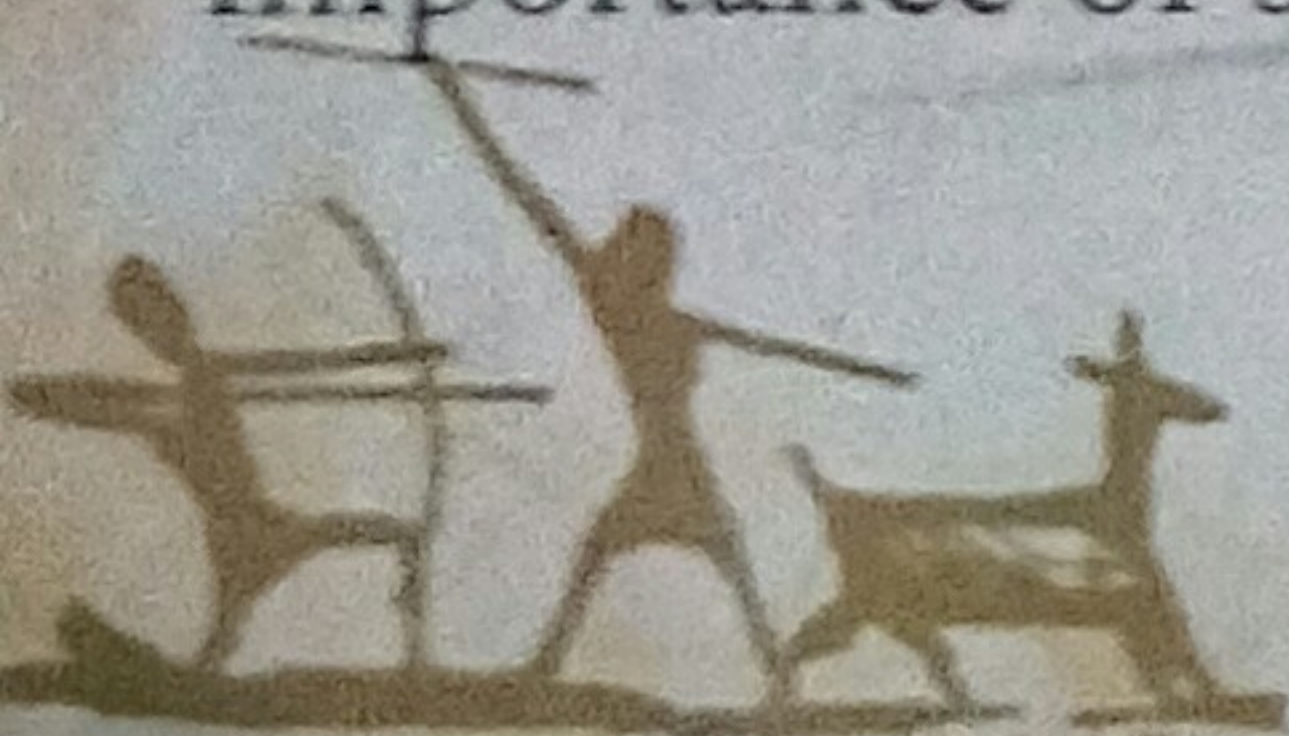
The Quran is the religious book followed by the Islamic faith. It is one of the world's most widely studied books, which speaks of a single God; the importance of submitting to His will; and a final



'Ma Sha'a Allah' — 'It is God's will,' Ottoman-era tile, 19th century



A page of holy Quran



**Day of Judgement.** It also features many stories found in the Hebrew and Christian Bible and discusses social justice, politics, law, individual relationships and the natural world.

### The Spread of the Islamic Faith

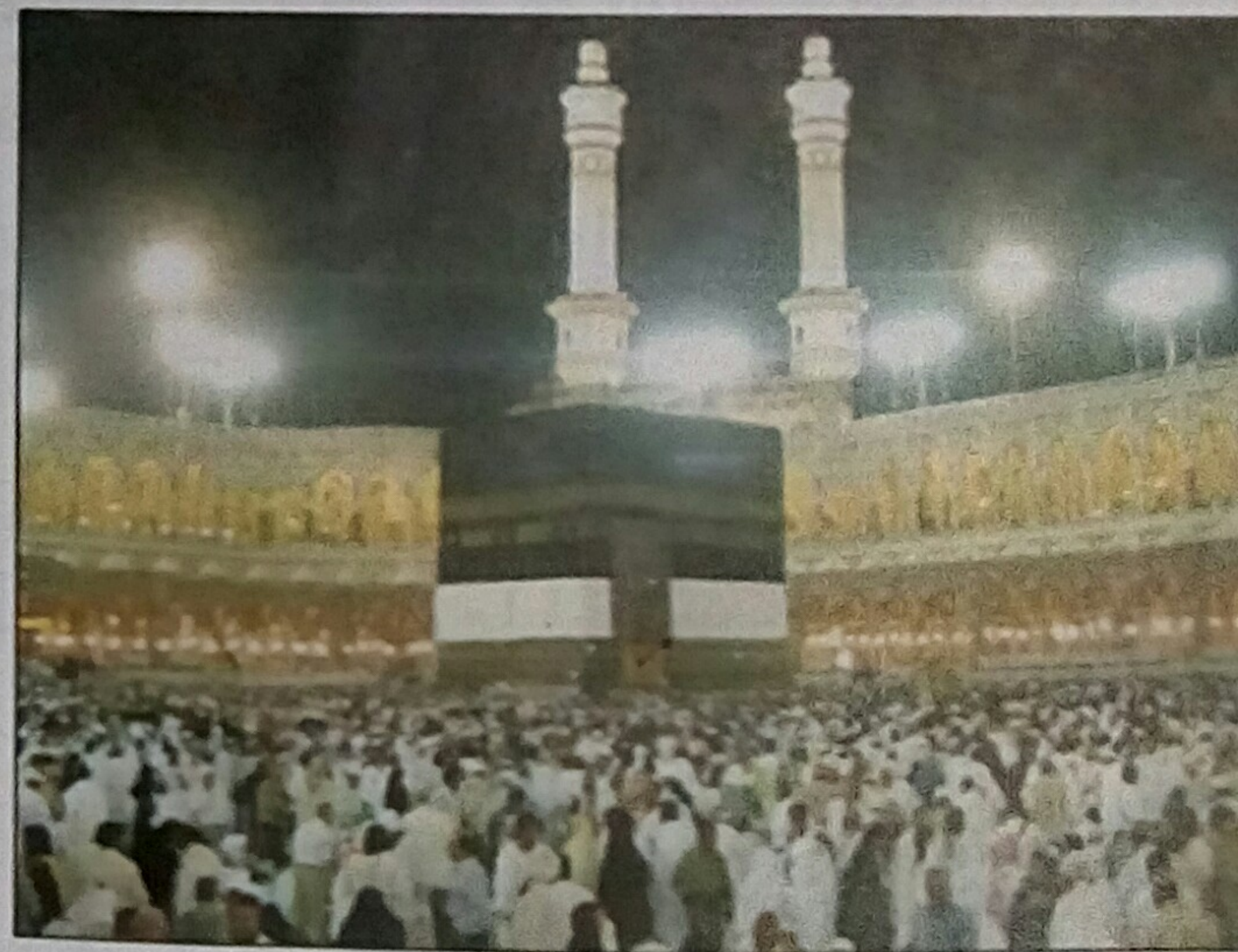
At first Muhammad was unsure of his revelations and did not discuss them openly. His wife, **Khadija**, was the first to believe in his message. She even encouraged him in his work of preaching. With time, he began to preach in public and attracted followers. Slowly he gathered some disciples around him. When **Abu Bakr**, an important man joined the movement, it became very strong.

### Teachings of Muhammad

- 🦌 There is only One God—Allah—and Muhammad is His Prophet.
- 🦌 In the Quran, lay the instructions of God to mankind that were revealed to Muhammad to be preached by him.
- 🦌 Quran says God is the creator of 'Heavens' and Earth.
- 🦌 It demands obedience to the Almighty and describes a final judgement in which all mankind must answer to God for their deeds.
- 🦌 Standards of behaviour are derived from the Quran and set down as Islamic law, known as the **Shariat**.
- 🦌 **Five** pillars of Islam (a) Repetition of the **Shahada** (b) Five times

### Know This

The Quran is divided into 114 surahs, or chapters, containing 6,236 verses. And there are millions of Muslims called *Hafiz*, or 'preservers', who memorise the Quran from beginning to the end.



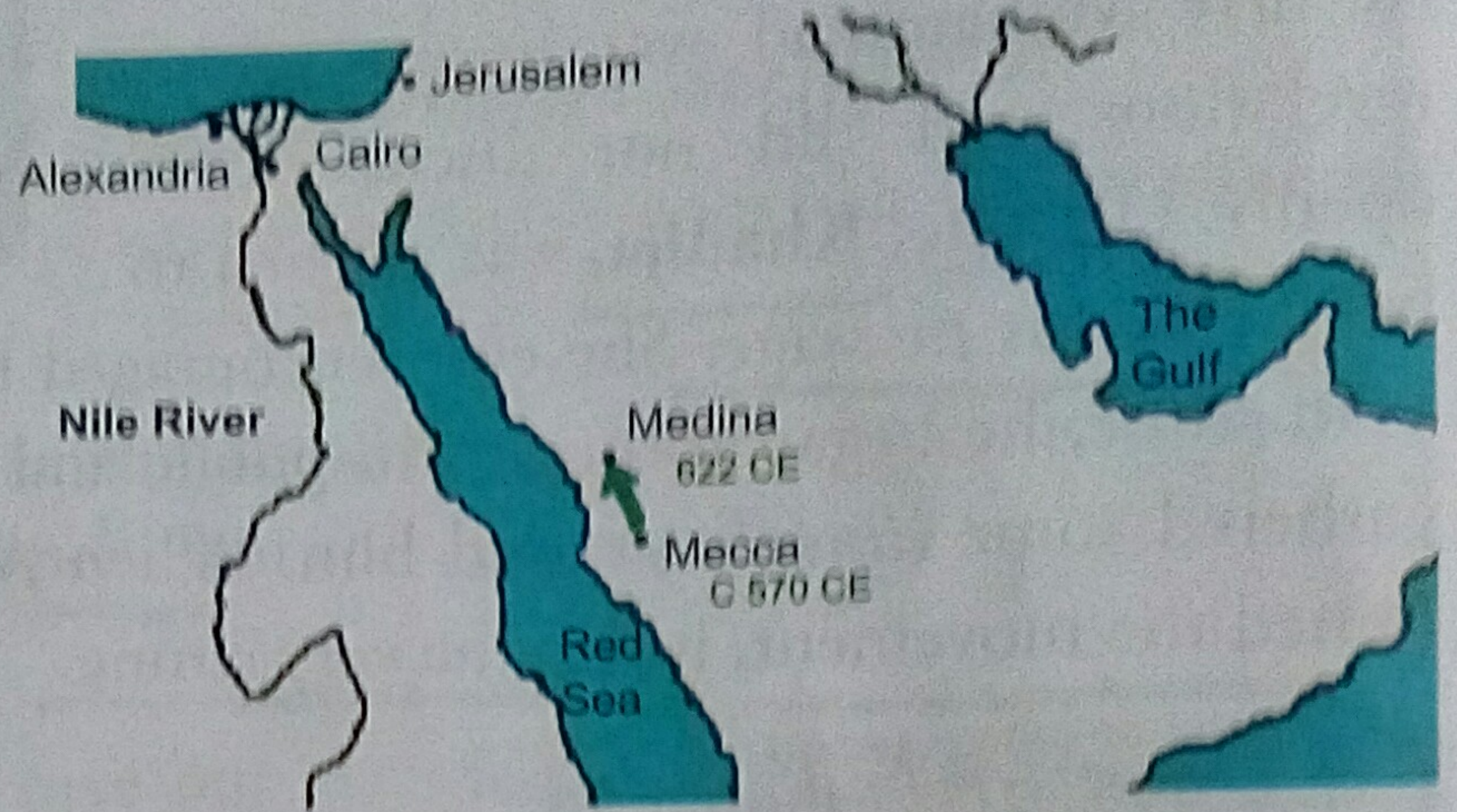
Pilgrims in the Great Mosque of Mecca



daily prayers (c) Distribution of alms (d) Fasting during the holy month of Ramadhan (e) Pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime, if affordable.

## The Hegira

These ideas of Muhammad made many people in Mecca very angry. The Arabs joined together and decided to kill Muhammad. In the middle of the night, angel Gabriel warned Muhammad not to sleep in his usual bed. Thus, Muhammad escaped from being murdered. Fearing more trouble, some followers of Muhammad left the city. Then a *fortunate* opportunity arose. Two important tribes in **Medina** had been fighting for years. Some tribe members had heard Muhammad preach and asked him to solve their disputes. Secret arrangements were made, and Muhammad and many of his followers fled to Medina.



The Hegira from Mecca to Medina in 622

Muhammad's flight to Medina is called the **Hegira** and was the true beginning of the Islamic era. In Medina, Muhammad transformed his religion into one that formed the basis for a world religion, a powerful state, and finally, a powerful world empire.

At Medina, Muhammad became a law giver, a political leader and a religious leader of his people. He established the *Islamic community* with its own system of government, laws and institutions. He succeeded in getting many people to accept and follow the teachings of Islam. Muhammad's greatest hope was to make Mecca the **sacred capital of Islam**. Finally in **AD 630**, Mecca became the centre of Muslim worship. Shortly after 632, Muhammad died.



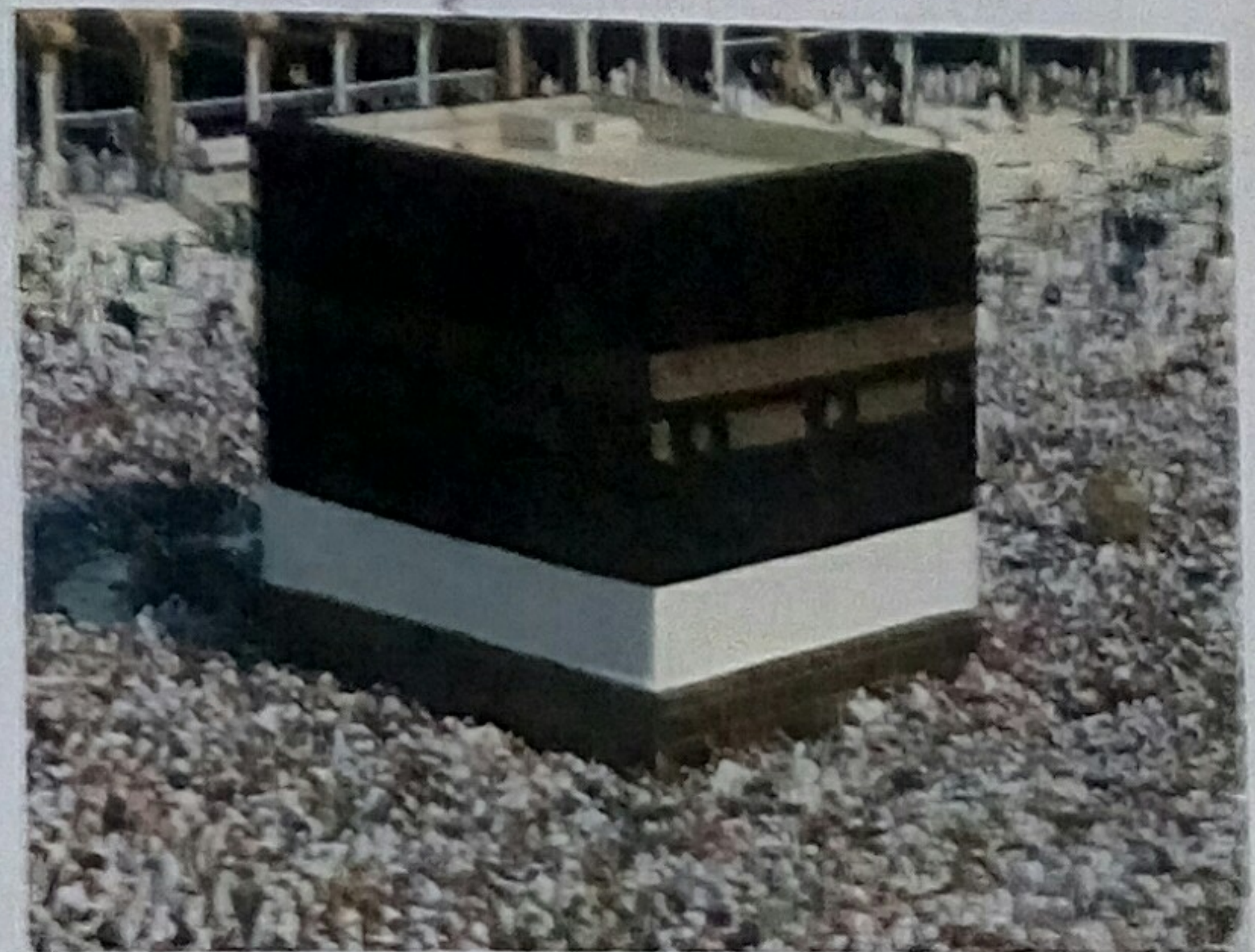
The teachings of Muhammad—the Quran—was later compiled into a book form. Islam had spread to many parts of the world and has influenced many people.

### What is the Kaaba?

Kaaba in Arabic mean cube, and it refers to the cuboid building in Mecca around which the Masjid-al-Haram is built. Muslims pray in the direction of the Kaaba. The black stone is in one corner of the Kaaba.



The Prophet's Mosque in Medina



The Kaaba

### New words learnt

recite

foundation

revelations

obedience

almighty

transformed

sacred

clarify

caravans

mediated

faith

flight