

Section 1, continued

Others led a settled life. Towns sprang up in oases along the trade routes. Merchants and craftspeople traded with groups of traders who traveled together in **caravans**. Most towns had a market or bazaar. Both nomads and caravans used these centers of trade.

A NEW RELIGION

A man named **Muhammad** brought a new religion to Arabia. Much of what we know about him comes from religious writings. Muhammad was born in the city of Mecca around 570. As a child, he traveled with his uncle's caravans. As an adult, Muhammad managed a caravan business.

Muhammad was upset that rich people did not help the poor. He often went to a cave to meditate on this problem. According to Islamic belief, when Muhammad was 40, an angel spoke to him. These messages form the basis of a religion called **Islam**. They were written in the **Qur'an** (kuh-RAN), the holy book of Islam. A follower of Islam is called a **Muslim**.

Muhammad taught that there was only one God, Allah. The belief in one god was a new idea for many Arabs. Before this time, Arabs prayed to many gods at shrines. The most important shrine was in Mecca. Many people traveled to Mecca every year on a **pilgrimage**. Muhammad also taught that the rich should give money to the poor. But rich merchants in Mecca rejected this idea.

Slowly, Muhammad's message began to **influence** people. The rulers in Mecca felt threatened by him. Muhammed left and went to Medina. His house there became the first **mosque**, or building for Muslim prayer. After years of conflict, the people of Mecca finally gave in and accepted Islam.

Circle the name of Islam's prophet and founder.

Where did Muhammad first hear from an angel of God?

Why do you think the rich merchants disliked being told they should give money to the poor?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences If you lived in Arabia, would you choose a nomadic or sedentary life? Write a one-page description of what your life would be like.