

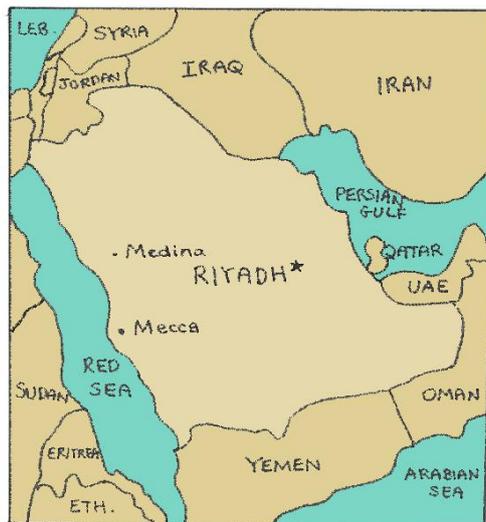
The Story of Mecca

MECCA – 'THE MOTHER OF TOWNS'

MECCA IS NOT SIMPLY A HISTORIC PLACE, BUT IT IS INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT TO MUSLIMS BECAUSE IT WAS THE BIRTH PLACE OF THE HOLY PROPHET (PBUH) AND IT WAS FROM HERE THAT THE HOLY PROPHET (PBUH) WAS GOING TO ESTABLISH HIS MISSION AND BRING THE COMPLETE AND TRUE RELIGION OF ISLAM TO THE WORLD.

WHERE IS MECCA?

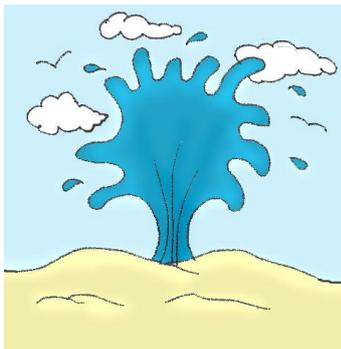
Mecca is situated between mountains (Safa and Marva), in northern Arabia. The city is 277 m above sea level, and approximately 80 km inland from the Red Sea. Unlike other Saudi Arabian cities, Mecca is extremely warm, and even in winter the temperature can be from 17 °C at midnight to 25 °C in the afternoon. Summer temperatures are considered very hot and can be above 40°C in the afternoon. Rain usually falls in Mecca in small amounts between November and January. Mecca is surrounded by land, apart from one boundary which borders onto the Red sea.



HISTORY OF MECCA

ABRAHAM

Let us go back four thousand years - imagine a desolate, desert land with no sign of water anywhere. Imagine a young mother frantically running between two hills (Safa and Marva) searching for water, for her crying child. This was Hadhrat Hajrah, wife of Prophet Abraham.



On Allah's command, Hadhrat Abraham left his wife and son- Hadhrat Ismail - in the desert, this place was called Mecca. He left them with some rations of water and dates, but they soon ran out. Hadhrat Hajrah ran between the two hills seven times in search for water for her thirsty child, she raised her eyes to God and prayed. Her prayers were soon answered, she heard a voice, 'God has heard thee'. Hadhrat Hajrah ran back to her child and saw a spring of water close to his feet. She quickly put stones around the spring; this spring

was named **ZAMZAM**. This was the beginning of the establishment of Mecca, now that there was water in this desert land, tribes began to settle there. The first tribe to settle in Mecca was Banu Jurham who came from Yemen. When Hadhrat Ismail grew up he married a girl from this tribe.

THE KAABA

Hadhrat Abraham used to visit Hadhrat Hajrah and Hadhrat Ismail often. Allah the exalted commanded Hadhrat Ismail and Hadhrat Abraham to build a Holy House of God, this was the Ka'aba. It was built on a spot where there had once already been a house of God. It was a simple structure of stone with no roof –only later, during the time of the Holy Prophet was a roof built over the Ka'aba by the Quraish and six pillars were erected inside.

The Ka'aba was built and rebuilt many times over the years by different tribes and keepers of the Holy house. When the Holy Prophet (saw) was about 35 years old, the Quraish of Mecca decided to rebuild the Ka'aba after some cracks had appeared in its walls. All the families of the Quraish helped. As the time came to replace the sacred black stone in its place, a quarrel broke out. Each of the four main families of the Quraish wanted this honour and the construction of the Ka'aba ground to a halt. After many days the Quraish had a meeting and decided that the first person to enter the Ka'aba's courtyard will be chosen to settle the dispute. Muhammad (saw) happened to be the first person to pass through. He was told about the dispute, quickly solved the problem and placed his cloak on the ground and asked that the Black Stone be placed on it. He then asked the four families of the Quraish to hold each corner of the cloth and put the stone to its place. So, through his wisdom, he managed to stop the conflict and resolved the dispute in a manner that all were satisfied with.



At one time however Arabs gave up the worship of the one true God. They began instead to worship idols, and 360 idols were to be found in the Holy house.

If you look at the Ka'aba today it has a covering over it with Qur'anic verses on it. This custom started after a King of Yemen, called Tuba Asad dreamt that he was putting a covering over it. So in fulfilment of his dream he had a large covering made to cover the Ka'aba. This covering is called the Kiswah.

In the second year of the Hijra. Muslims were commanded to turn their faces to the Ka'aba, the Holy House at Mecca, instead of Bait-ul-Muqaddus, the Holy Place in Palestine. The **Qibla** was thus changed.

ABRAHAMS PRAYER AND THE CALL TO HAJJ

When the house of God was ready, Hadhrat Abraham prayed to the Lord to look after his child and his children's children and great-grand children. He prayed that they may become His loyal servants. He also prayed that Allah would raise a Great Prophet from among them and feed them with fruits. Who was this Great prophet? It was The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Then God ordered Hadhrat Abraham to call men to Hajj (pilgrimage) every year to the Ka'aba.

MECCA- A BIG CITY

As time passed, Mecca became a big centre. People would come from every part of Arabia for Hajj. As time went by, Hadhrat Ismail's children and their children grew in numbers. Hadhrat Ismail's children were later known as Quraish. They were the keepers of the Holy Kaaba. They became rich and powerful. Mecca attracted settlers from all parts of Arabia and it became an important city for trade. The trade caravans would meet the Indian trade ships at Aden, then transport all their goods, first to Mecca and sell them at the fairs held during the pilgrimage- then to Syria , Gaza or Egypt. From a desert land with no water Mecca had become a big, busy city and a centre for trade.



ABRAHA 'S ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THE KAABA

Abraha, the Governor of Yemen, wanted to break the power of Mecca. He built a cathedral at Sana'a and wanted people to do pilgrimage there instead of the Ka'aba .His plans were unsuccessful, as the people of Arabia remained loyal to their Holy house. He was very angry and decided to attack Mecca and destroy the Ka'aba. He came with a large army and sent a message to the Meccans that that he would not harm anyone, all he wanted was to destroy the Ka'aba. His men seized some camels of Hadhrat Abdul Muttalib, a Chief of the Quraish. He was the Grandfather of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Hadhrat Abdul Muttalib was chosen by the tribes of Mecca to reason with Abraha. But all he said was that he wanted his camels returned to him. Abraha gave back the camels but was rather astonished,

"Abdul Muttalib, you seem to care more for your camels, than for the Holy House!"

Hadhrat Abdul Muttalib replied:

"I am the master of the camels only. There is a Master of the Holy House. He would take care of it."

Abraha was outraged; he immediately set out to destroy the Ka'aba, saying:

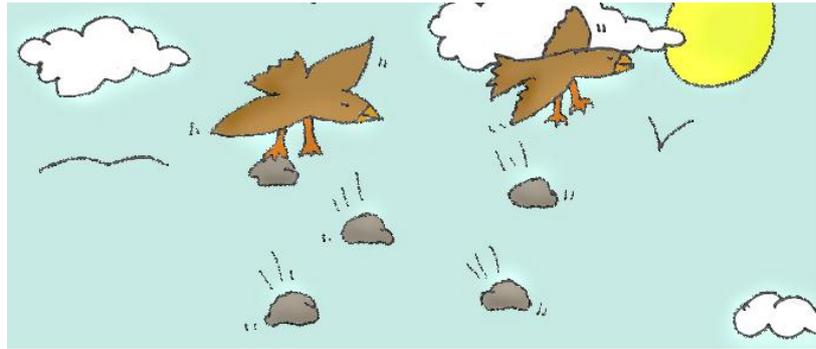
"I will see how this master of the House stops me."

But his elephant would not move. Then a large number of birds flew over his army and as they passed, they dropped dust and pebbles. Soon Abraha's men were smitten with smallpox. They all perished. The year is known as "**the Year of the Elephant**".

This event is mentioned in the Holy Quran, where it is said (105:2-6):

‘Dost thou not recall how thy Lord dealt with the People of the Elephant? Did He not destroy them and thus cause their design to miscarry? Then

He sent upon their corpses swarms of birds, which beat them against hard lumps of clay, and thus made them like broken straw, left over.’



This event is very important as it marked the approaching birth of the child whom God had intended to become the prophet who would be the guide for all of mankind. Through him, the Ka’aba would be restored to the worship of the One True God for which it had been originally built. God Almighty would not let any harm come to the Ka’aba or to Mecca.

A PROPHET IS BORN IN MECCA

In 570 AD on the 20th April, a blessed child was born in Mecca. As soon as Hadhrat Abdul Muttalib-Muhammad’s grandfather was informed of the blessed event, he visited Amina (his daughter in law), took the baby in his arms, went to the Ka’aba and, standing beside the Holy House, gave thanks to God. The child was called Muhammad (PBUH), according to a dream of Amina. The word means ‘one greatly praised’.

When Muhammad (PBUH) was born, Mecca was in a terrible state. There were tribal wars, idol worship, gambling, drinking and women had no rights. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) came to reform mankind. It was in Mecca that the Holy Prophet received his first revelation from Allah, and it was here in a period of 23 years that the Quran was gradually revealed to him, bit by bit. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) faced much persecution from the people of Mecca. For ten years he and his followers suffered at the hands of the Meccans. Those who saw the true light of his mission stood firm and strong. Eventually the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was forced to leave the place of his birth, Mecca and migrate to Medina. But Allah had promised that he would be victorious and after a series of wars, Mecca finally fell to the Muslims and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) entered his city, victorious. The first thing he did was to break the idols in the Kaaba and restore it to its true purpose; **the worship of one God**. This was just the beginning of the Holy Prophet’s (PBUH) mission. Mecca was only the first conquest; the light of Islam was to spread throughout the whole world.

MECCA TODAY

Today Mecca is still a thriving and affluent city. It is a place where millions of Muslims gather each year for Hajj. Allah has blessed it with peace and has kept it under his protection, as it is the place where the Ka’aba, his house of worship, still stands.