civilians, especially women, children, and the elderly. Military jihad is required when people are attacked or are evicted from their home. One who dies in legitimate jihad is considered a martyr (shahid [sha-HEED] or shahida [f]). Although today some terrorists call their actions jihad, they are not considered martyrs, since terrorism does not meet the requirements for legitimate jihad. Terrorism is waged without warning, without governmental authority, and often targets civilians. It is condemned by Islamic law. You may wish to explore the meaning of jihad with students so that they have a better sense of the true meaning of the word.

Islam spread rapidly in the Arabian Peninsula. In the time of Muhammad and for some time afterward, Arabia was home to wandering tribes of Bedouins [beh-DO-ins] (desert nomadic herders) who raided one another and the desert towns. After Muhammad's opponents in Mecca were defeated and joined the Muslim community, Islam spread quickly among the tribes. Muhammad and his immediate successors commanded loyal tribes that conquered other Bedouin tribes, ended the fighting among the groups, established law and order, and united the peninsula in an Islamic community.

The leaders of Islam then turned their attention outward and began to raid the Byzantine and Persian Empires, driven by the desire to spread Islam. These two empires had been at war with each other for years. Their power was waning, and some of their subjects were dissatisfied with religious persecution. Finding these empires vulnerable, the Muslims pushed forward and began to take large portions of their territory.

By the late 700s CE, Muslims were encouraging people in the lands they conquered to convert, and many found Islam an attractive religion. The principles were simple, easy to understand, and simple to follow. There were no intermediary priests and saints to pray to—only God (Allah). The Third Pillar of Islam—which focuses on acts of charity toward those less fortunate—especially appealed to the poor and those concerned with social responsibility.

**Mecca, Mosques**

A mosque is a Muslim place of worship. It usually has one or two towers called minarets [mihn-uh-REHT], and it is from there that a muezzin [moo-EH-zuhn] calls the faithful to prayer five times a day. The main prayer area of a mosque faces the holy city of Mecca.

Islam has no priests and no hierarchy. Any Muslim man may lead the community of faithful in prayer. He is called the imam, or prayer leader. In Shi`i Islam, an imam is more than a prayer leader; he is the authoritative interpreter of the Qur'an.

**Five Pillars of Islam**

Islam has five basic practices, known as pillars:

- the declaration of faith: There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.
- prayer five times a day, every day, facing the Ka`bah in the holy city of Mecca
- charity, the payment of a portion of one's wealth, which is used to help the needy

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**Teaching Idea**

Create an overhead and make copies for students of Instructional Masters 19a–19b, *The Expansion of Islam, 750 ce*. Begin the lesson with the overhead, and use it to introduce the locations of the Arabian Peninsula, Mecca, and Medina so that students will have a frame of reference when you teach about Muhammad's life. Ask students to locate Medina and Mecca in relation to each other.

**Teaching Idea**

The purpose of teaching about Islam is to explain its fundamental religious practices and how the adherents of this faith, acting on their beliefs, defeated huge empires and created a great civilization. Explain that all religions have common elements but that they differ in their beliefs. It is important to understand and respect differences.

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III. The Spread of Islam and the “Holy Wars”

Teaching Idea
To help students understand the notion of fasting, it may be worthwhile to make an analogy between Ramadan for Muslims and Lent for Christians or Yom Kippur for Jews. Once again, explain that all religions have common elements but differ in their beliefs.

Teaching Idea
It is a good idea when teaching the pillar about pilgrimage to show students modern pictures of the hajj. Reinforce that hajj for Muslims focuses on the idea that all people are equal before God (Allah), regardless of race, ethnicity, class, political power, etc.

Teaching Idea
Teachers might like to share with students some of the tales from A Thousand and One Arabian Nights (see More Resources). They might enjoy telling the adventure story of Sinbad, or the tale about Charlemagne, who asked Harun for an elephant as a gift since he thought they were fine animals and there weren’t any in Europe. (Harun sent Charlemagne the elephant, but it did not survive long in the harsh European climate.)

Islam Spreads
Muhammad and his followers had converted much of the Arabian Peninsula to Islam. After Muhammad’s death, leadership of the Muslim community passed into the hands of four of Muhammad’s closest associates, or companions. They were highly respected, and people believed they ruled in accordance with the Qur’an and the example set by Muhammad. For that reason they were called “rightly guided” (Rashidun) caliphs. A caliph is a successor to the prophet Muhammad.

Islam continued to spread rapidly. By 100 years after Muhammad’s death, the Islamic empire extended from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Indus River in the east. Between the years 632 CE, when Muhammad died, and 661 CE, when the last of the Rashidun caliphs died, Muslim control expanded from the Arabian Peninsula eastward through what are now the countries of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Iraq, and Iran. Some of this area was wrested from the slowly weakening Byzantine Empire.

In 661 CE, a family known as the Umayyads took control of the caliphate (leadership of the Muslim community) and moved the capital to Damascus, in Syria. From there, they expanded Muslim sovereignty west across North Africa. Between 661 CE and 750 CE, they took control of what are today the nations of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. From North Africa in the early 700s CE, Muslims swept across to the Iberian Peninsula (which they called Al-Andalus) and captured large parts of what are today Portugal and Spain. From there, they continued into France.

In 732 CE, Charles Martel (the grandfather of Charlemagne), leader of the Franks, defeated Islamic troops between the cities of Poitiers and Tours in modern-day France. The confrontation is known as both the Battle of Poitiers and the Battle of Tours. It was the end of Islamic expansion into Europe and a pivotal battle that, had the outcome been different, would certainly have changed the history of the Western world. It is possible that all, or most, of Europe might have become Muslim territory had the Islamic troops been victorious. Even after the defeat at Poitiers/Tours, Islamic kingdoms remained in Spain and all across North Africa.

In 750 CE, another family, the Abbasids, took control of the Islamic caliphate and moved the capital to Baghdad, in Iraq. The empire continued to grow and prosper, and Baghdad became famous for its wealth and sophistication. One of the greatest Abbasid caliphs was Harun al-Rashid, whose splendid court is depicted in the tales of A Thousand and One Arabian Nights. Harun was a contemporary of Charlemagne, with whom he corresponded and from whom he received gifts.