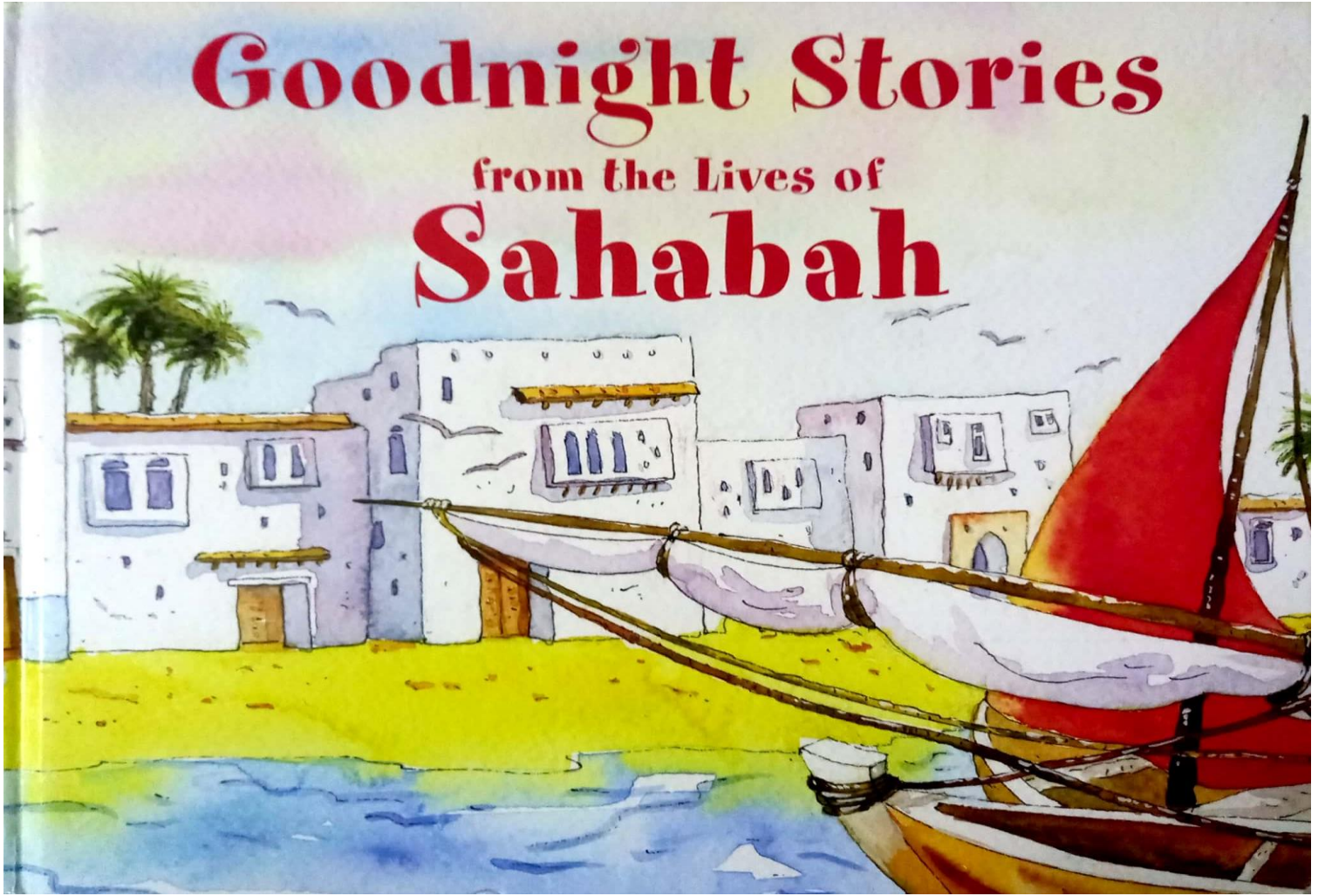
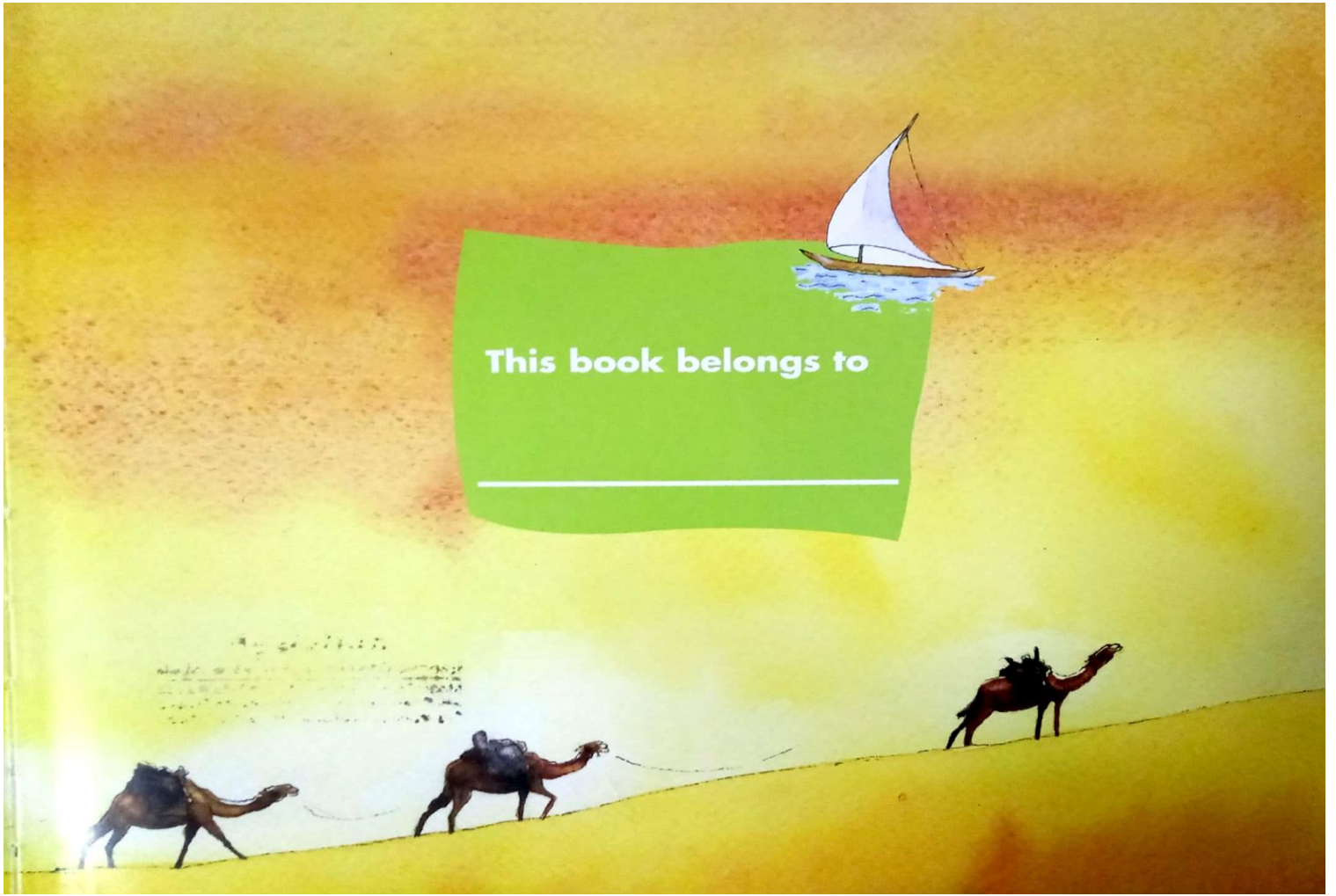
Goodnight Stories

from the Lives of

Sahabah

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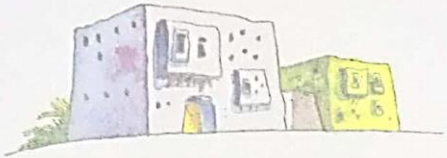

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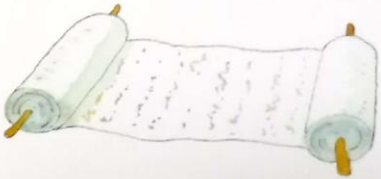
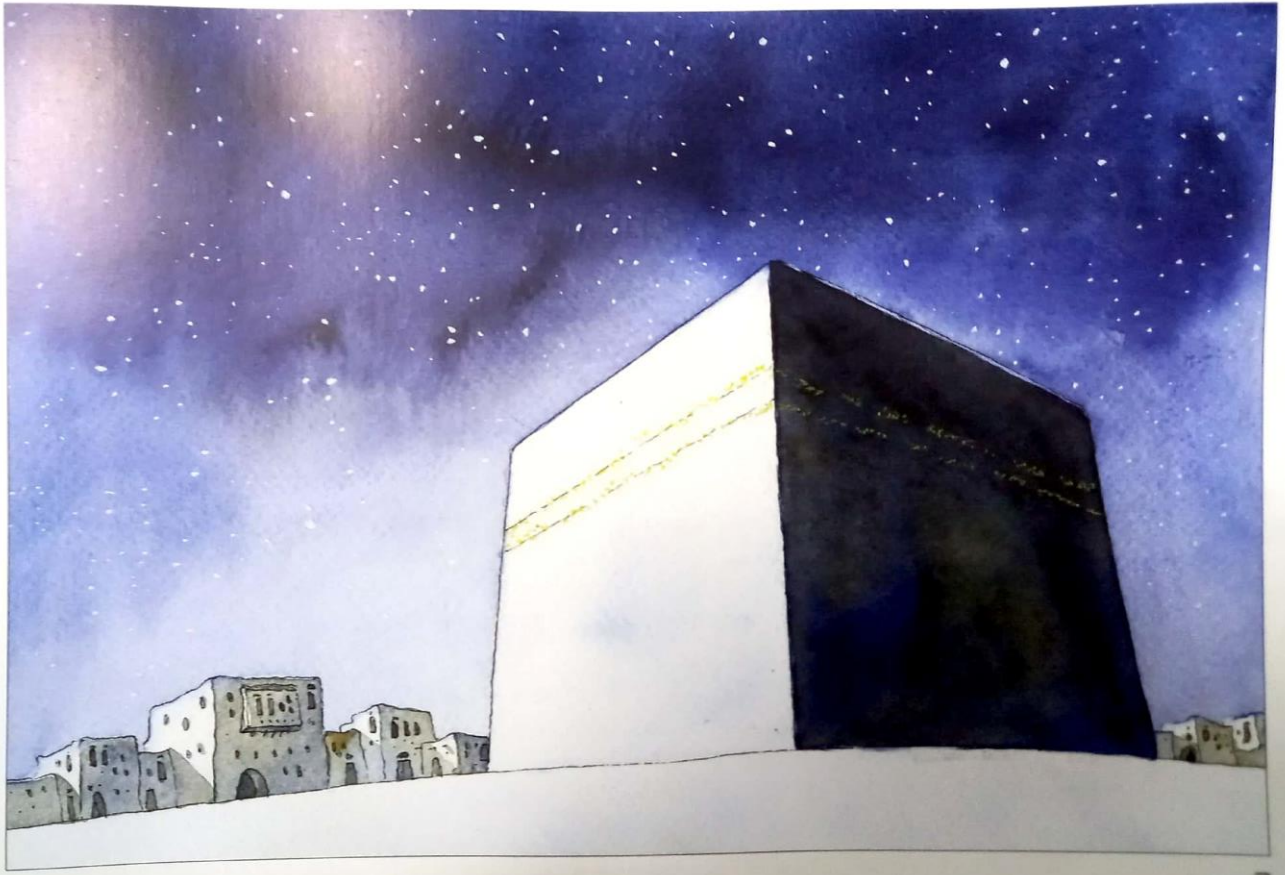


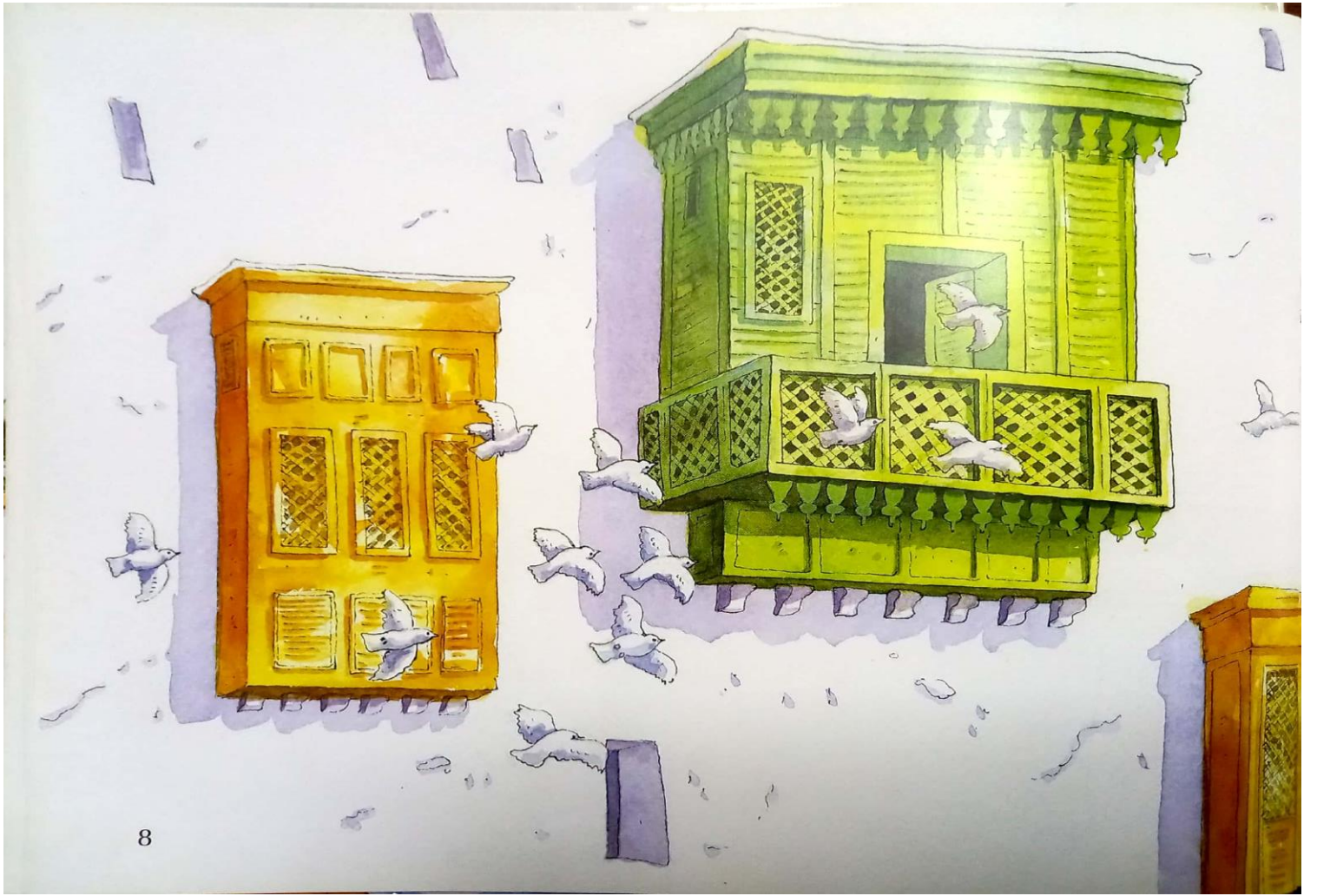
Companion of the Cave

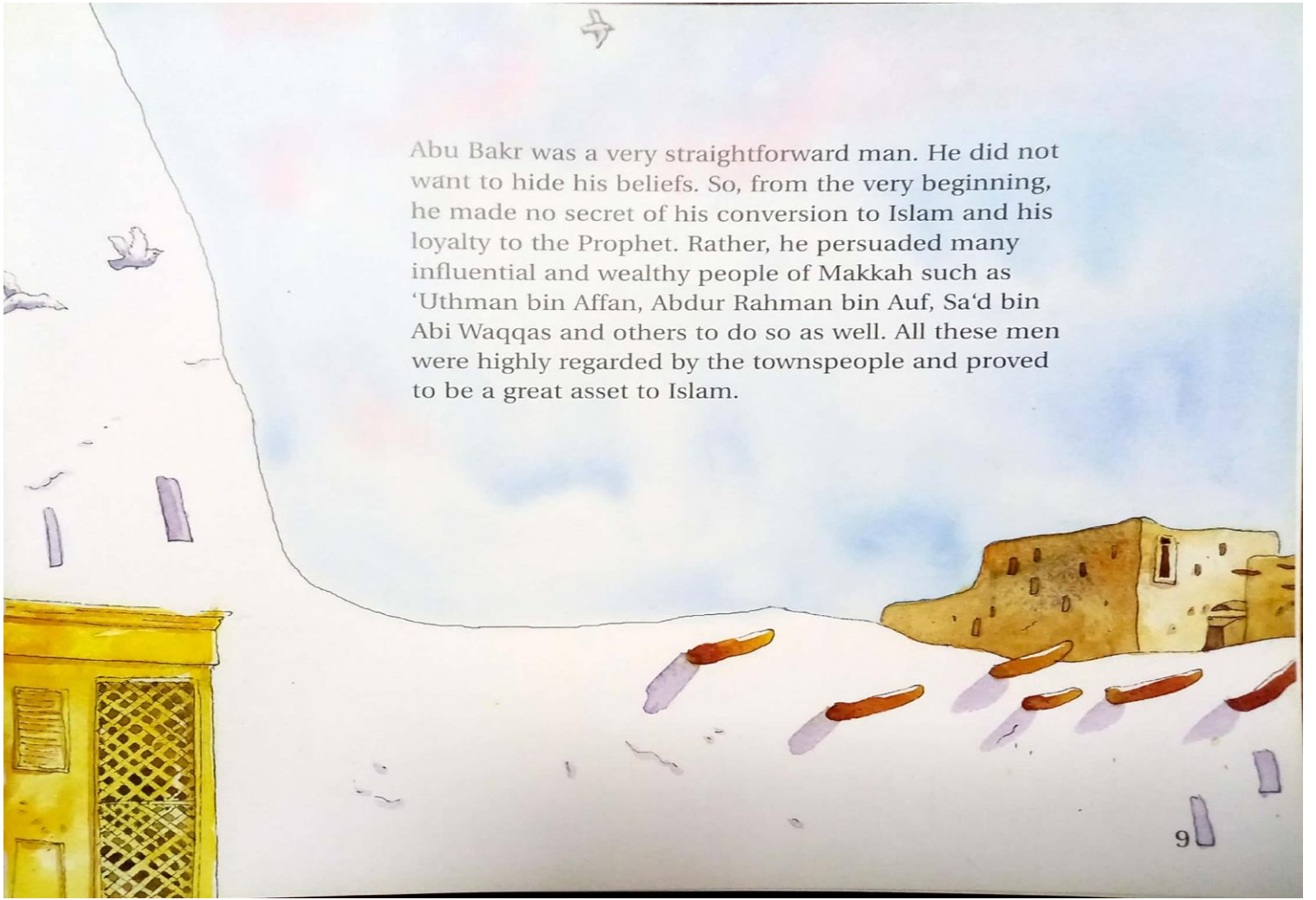
Abu Bakr, who was to become the best friend and companion of the Prophet, was born in Makkah. He was three years younger than the Prophet and both of them used to play together as children. As a child the Prophet was very fond of his younger playmate. Soon they became good friends and spent lots of time together. Over the years their friendship grew stronger and stronger and Abu Bakr remained the Prophet's closest companion till the end of his life.

Abu Bakr was known far and wide for his good character. He was honest and truthful as well as hardworking and fair in his dealings. He was extremely kind to all around him and always ready to help the poor and the sick. He was also very intelligent and his memory was legendary. His knowledge of family histories going back for generations was amazing. This was something which was highly valued by the Arabs.

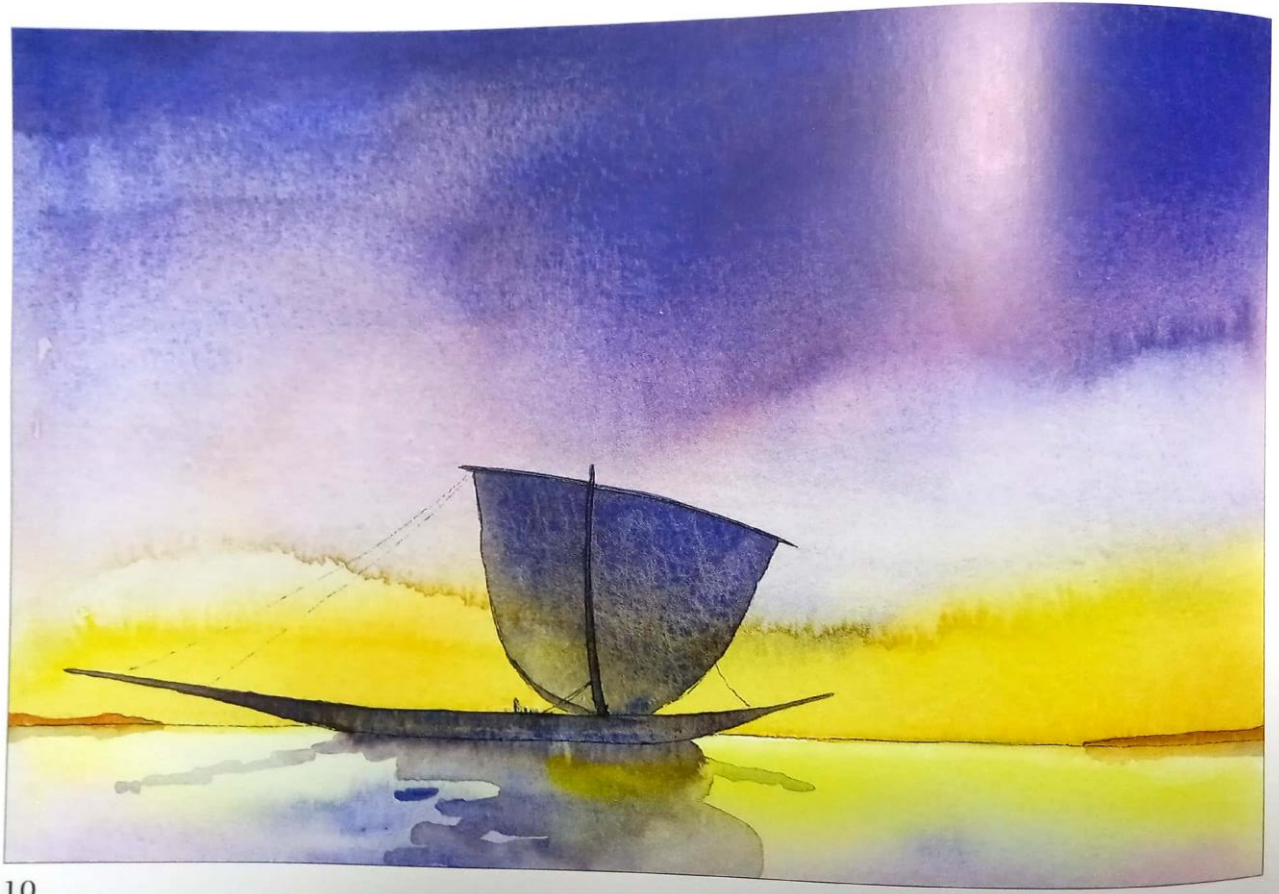
When the Prophet Muhammad began to receive the revelations, Abu Bakr was the first person to believe in him after Khadija, the Prophet's wife. He believed in the truth of the Prophet's message and without any hesitation converted to Islam, the religion of peace.







Abu Bakr was a very straightforward man. He did not want to hide his beliefs. So, from the very beginning, he made no secret of his conversion to Islam and his loyalty to the Prophet. Rather, he persuaded many influential and wealthy people of Makkah such as ‘Uthman bin Affan, Abdur Rahman bin Auf, Sa‘d bin Abi Waqqas and others to do so as well. All these men were highly regarded by the townspeople and proved to be a great asset to Islam.



When the Prophet received his first revelation of the Quran, Abu Bakr was already a rich and well-known merchant. He was always ready to spend money for a good cause and once he became a Muslim, he would purchase and set free slaves who had accepted Islam and were being persecuted and tortured by their owners.

When the Prophet told the people about his *Mi'raj,* or the Night Journey, they ridiculed him but Abu Bakr did not doubt the Prophet even for a moment. He said: "I have never heard Muhammad tell a lie. I believe in everything he says."

Thus he earned the title of al-Siddiq, or the Truthful.

By and by, when the persecution in Makkah became intolerable, the Muslims started migrating in batches, first to Abyssinia and later on to Madinah. The Prophet encouraged this migration. When all the Muslims, except the Prophet and his two close companions, Abu Bakr and Ali, had left for Madinah, Abu Bakr asked the Prophet to let him go to Madinah as well.

But the Prophet replied: "Don't be in such a hurry. Do you want to go alone? Wait, Allah might give you a travelling companion."

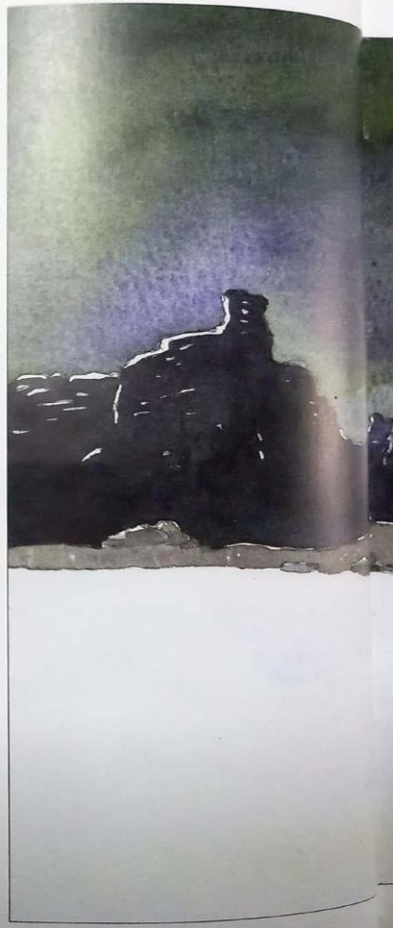
Abu Bakr understood that he must wait for the Prophet and that the day of leaving Makkah was coming near. Secretly, he began to plan for the dangerous journey. He chose two of his best camels and started to feed them well so that they would be ready for the long trek in the desert. His daughter Asma helped him to pack the food and water they would need on the way.

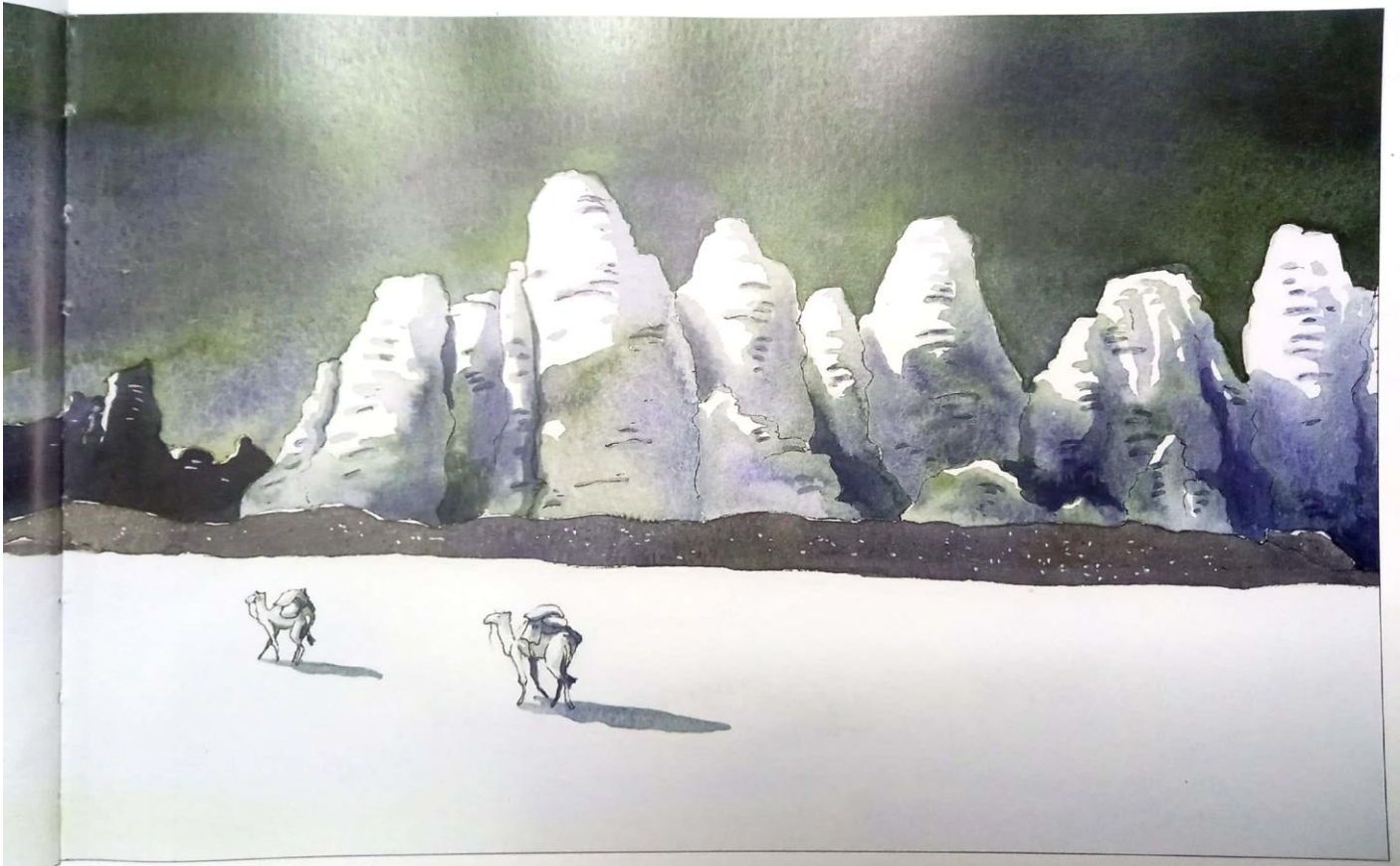
Meanwhile, the Quraysh were plotting to put an end to the Prophet's life. Allah, the All-Knowing, let the Prophet know of their wicked designs and instructed him to leave Makkah.

On receiving the divine commandment, the Prophet went immediately to Abu Bakr's house, though it was noon. The very time of the visit was very unusual, for the Prophet never visited Abu Bakr's house at that hour. Abu Bakr immediately understood that something important must have happened. And indeed, the Prophet told Abu Bakr in secret: "Allah has commanded me to leave."

So they made the final preparations for the journey.

The night the leaders of the Quraysh were planning to attack and kill the Prophet, the Prophet asked his young cousin, Ali, to lie down on his bed and wrap himself up in the cloak the Prophet





usually wore. Meanwhile, under the cover of darkness, the Prophet quietly came out of his house and went to the house of Abu Bakr. Together they left for Madinah.

Wisely, the Prophet and Abu Bakr did not go straight north, directly to Madinah. Instead, they took a longer, roundabout route to confuse the possible pursuers. They knew that the Makkans would be searching for them and, to start with, they would send their people to check the direct route to Madinah. So the Prophet and Abu Bakr went south, following the route to Yemen, and stopped at a mountain a short distance from Makkah. There was a cave there called Thawr. And that was where they hid.

The Prophet and Abu Bakr stayed in the cave for three nights and three days. Every night Abu Bakr's son Abdullah would come to meet them. He brought them news of what was happening in the city. He told them:

"The Quraysh of Makkah are very angry. They think the Prophet had hoodwinked them. So they are looking for the Prophet everywhere. They have sent search parties in all directions. They have even offered a reward of a hundred camels to the person who captures the Prophet."

One day the Prophet and Abu Bakr heard some voices, then sounds of steps approaching the cave. It was the Quraysh search party looking for them. Abu Bakr was overcome with fear. He thought: "We will be discovered any time now."

But the Prophet, as if reading his thoughts, said: "Do not worry, Allah is with us." (9:40).

And then he asked: "Do you really think anything would happen to two people who have Allah as their third companion?"

Meanwhile, the men looked around and moved away. Nobody had bothered to look into the cave. When the sound of retreating steps and voices had died down, the Prophet and Abu Bakr went to the opening of the cave.

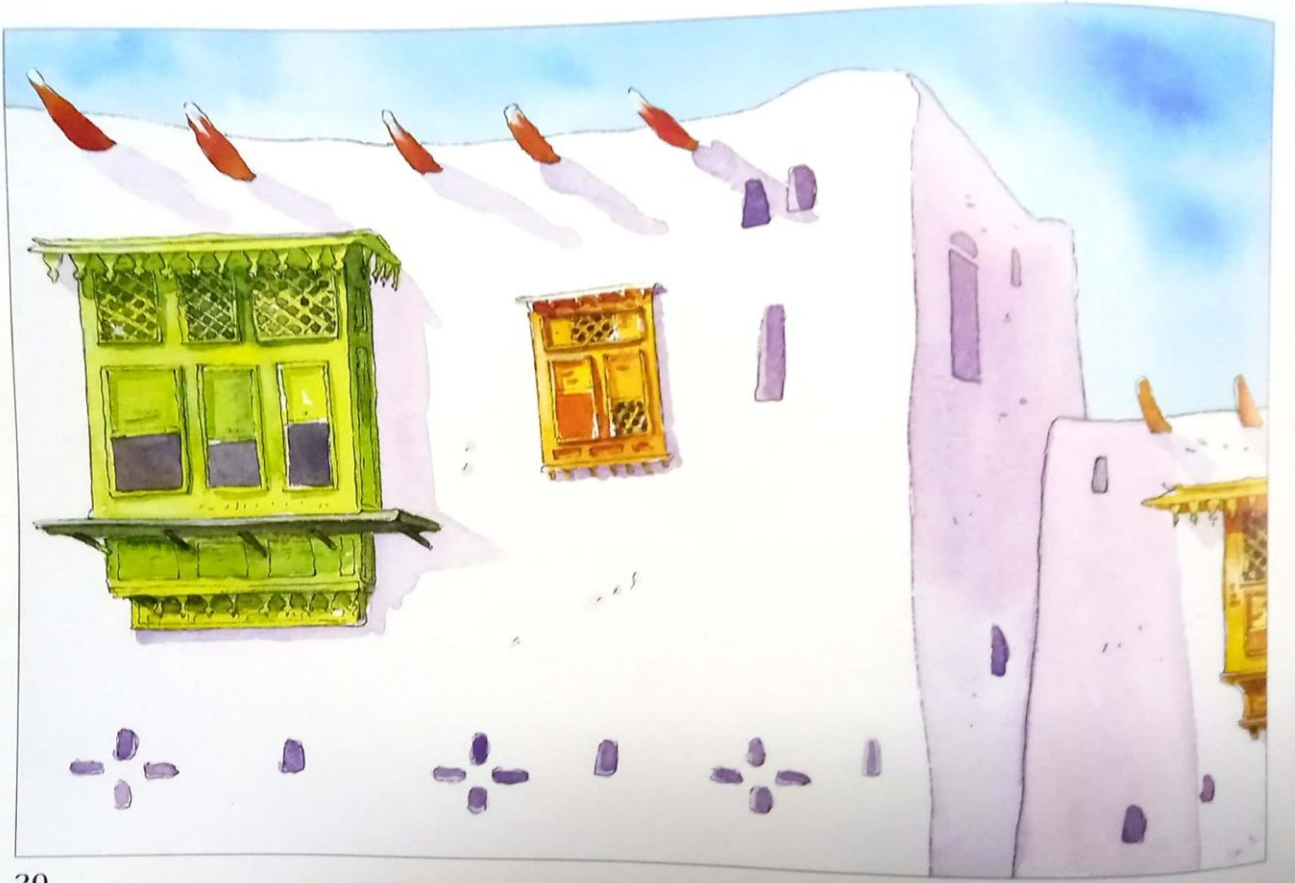
Offering thanks to Allah, the Prophet and Abu Bakr breathed a sigh of relief. But they remained in the cave yet for a while. When it was safe, they left the cave, and, with Allah's help, reached Madinah.

Allah Hears His Prophet's Prayer

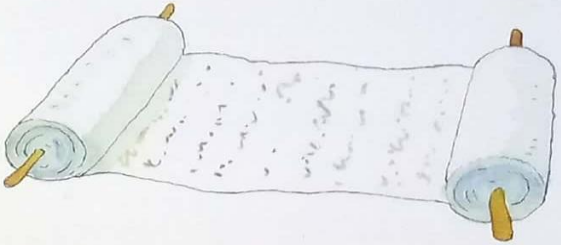
One day, in the sixth year after the beginning of the revelations, the Prophet, always keen to bolster the cause of truth, prayed: "Allah, strengthen Islam with 'Umar ibn al Khattab."

'Umar was a prominent citizen of Makkah and a member of the clan of 'Adi, one of the foremost clans of the Quraysh. He was held in great respect far and wide as he could speak well and the Arabs admired him immensely for this ability. He possessed tact and judgment, and was one of the few people in Makkah who knew how to read and write. This was certainly a great achievement for its time. He had also a vast knowledge of family histories, an accomplishment highly valued by the Arabs.

'Umar grew up to be a tall, handsome man with a very strong physique and an impressive personality. He was a champion wrestler, a great swordsman and an accomplished rider. He was also known to be a headstrong man who did not change his mind easily. But he was sincere and straightforward and not afraid to stand up for his beliefs.



When the Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation in 610 A.D. and later on started preaching Islam, the Quraysh were upset and angry. They did not like the idea that somebody was trying to lead people away from the beliefs of their forefathers. At first they began to shun the Muslims and later on started persecuting them in the most vicious ways.



'Umar, too, was well informed about the new religion and its messenger, but he was totally against them. He was then about twenty-seven years old and in love with the old ways. He used to get furious each and every time that anyone accepted Islam. He thought that the new faith insulted tribal traditions and, beliefs and being a young man of strong convictions, he took it upon himself to stop the spread of the new religion in every possible way.

One day 'Umar came to the conclusion that the only way to put an end to the whole trouble that was dividing the people of Makkah was to get rid of the man who was its cause. In a great fury he picked up his sword and headed for the Prophet's house. On his way he came face to face with a friend of his, who seeing 'Umar's grim expression, asked:

"Where are you going, 'Umar ibn al Khattab?"

'Umar replied: "I am going to kill Muhammad who is causing all this trouble among the Quraysh."

"'Umar!" Exclaimed his friend: "Why not first go to the people of your own house and set them right?"

"What do you mean? What people of my house?" asked 'Umar.

"Your sister Fatima and your brother-in-law Sa'id! Don't you know that both of them have accepted Islam?"

'Umar could not believe his ears. He thought:

"Could something like this have happened in front of my eyes and I have missed it? Not possible! Let me check what is going on."

Seething with fury, he decided to get to the bottom of the matter at once. Almost blind with anger, he ran to his sister's house, pushing people out of his way. The first thing he heard on crossing the threshold was Fatima's voice reciting some verses. Surprised to see him, Fatima quickly hid the pages she held in her hands. Khabbab ibn al Aratt, who often came to recite the Quran to Sa'id and Fatima, was also there. Hearing the sound of 'Umar approaching, he fearfully hid himself deep inside the house.

But 'Umar had already heard their voices and asked crossly: "What was that I heard?"

Trying to put him off, Fatima and her husband said: "It is nothing. We were just talking among ourselves."

But 'Umar was not convinced. Angrily, mocking them, he shouted at the top of his voice:

"Let's hear it! For all I know the two of you might have changed your religion!"

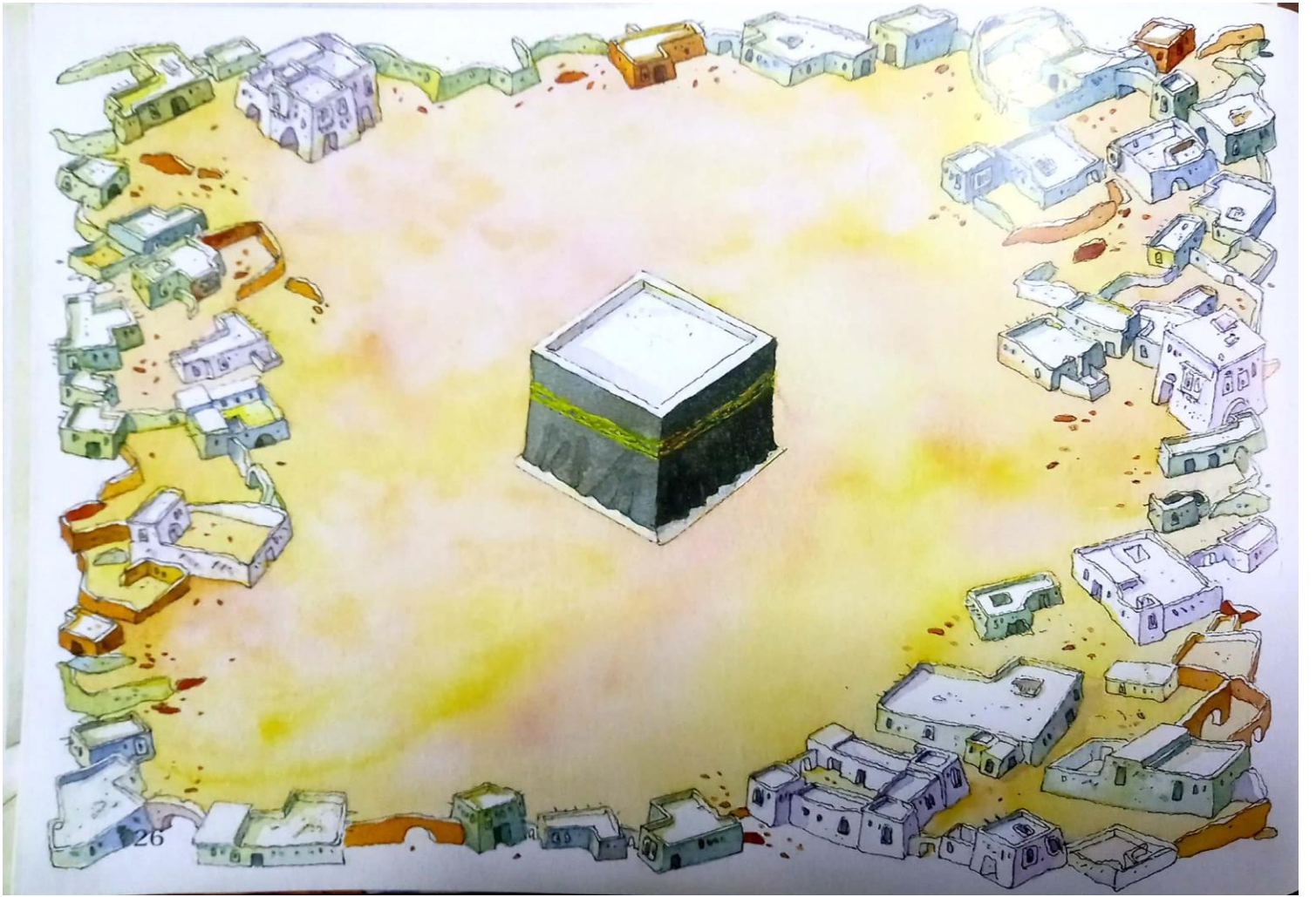
To which his brother-in-law replied: "And if the truth is in a religion which is different from yours?"

These words enraged 'Umar so much that he hit his brother-in-law and his sister, who tried to defend him. Ignoring to the blows, Fatima repeated her husband's words in a strong voice:

"And suppose the truth is in another religion! Not yours! I say, there is no deity except God and Muhammad is His messenger!"

"Show me that scroll so that I may read it myself!" exclaimed 'Umar, exasperated by their obstinacy.

"Out of the question! You are impure! Only a pure person may touch it. Go and wash yourself and only then can you have it," replied Fatima.



'Umar washed himself and then she handed over the page on which the opening verses of Surah *Ta Ha* were written. He began to read and when he reached the verse: 'I am Allah, there is no deity save Me; so worship Me alone, and say your prayers in My remembrance,'(20:14) he trembled, for he felt as if the verses were addressed personally to him and Allah was speaking to him Himself. Overcome by emotion, his eyes swimming with tears, he turned to his sister Fatima and brother-in-law Sa'id and said in a breaking voice: "Tell me where Muhammad is."

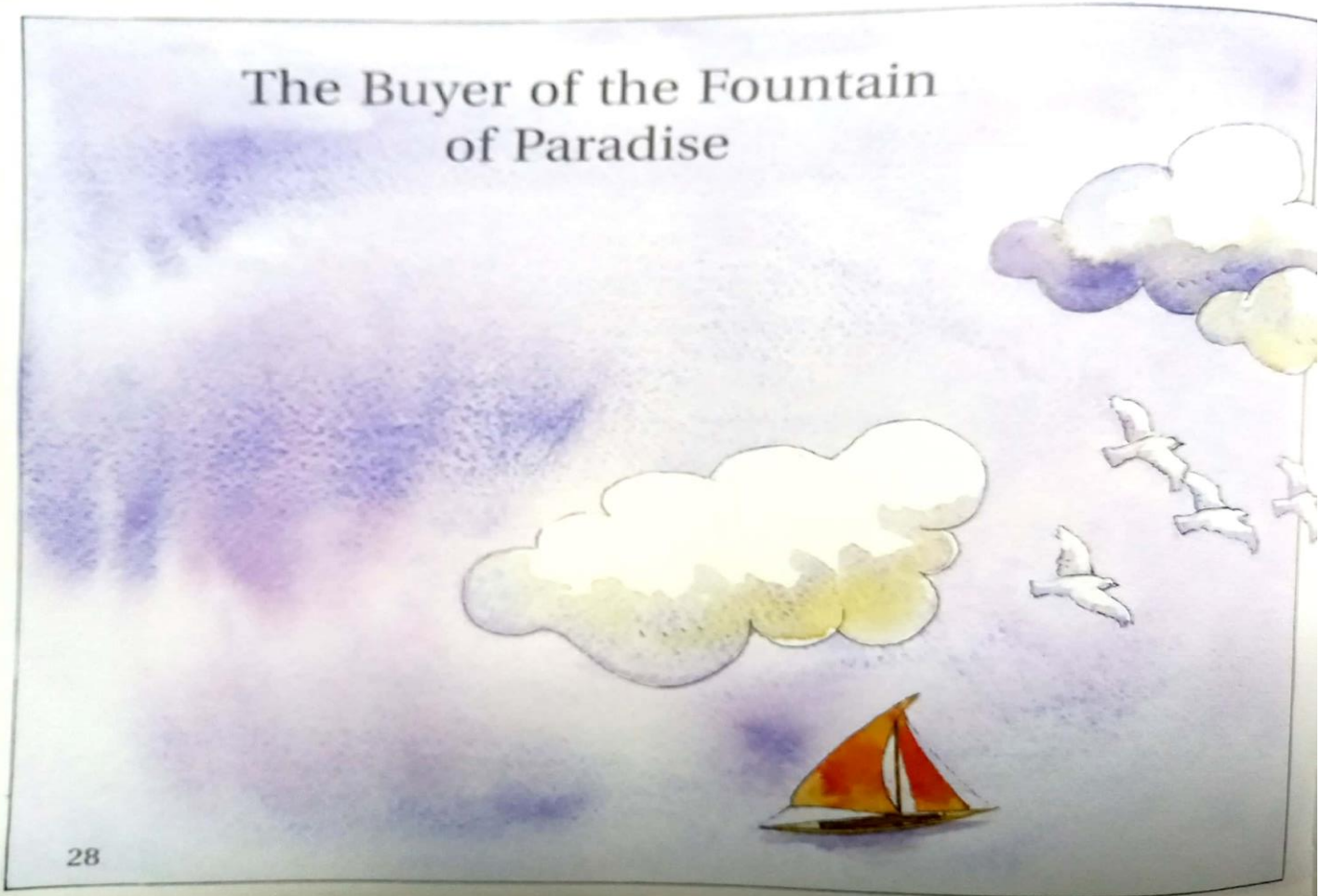
Fatima and Sa'id, seeing his changed face and his altered manner, cried in one voice: "*Allahu Akbar!*"

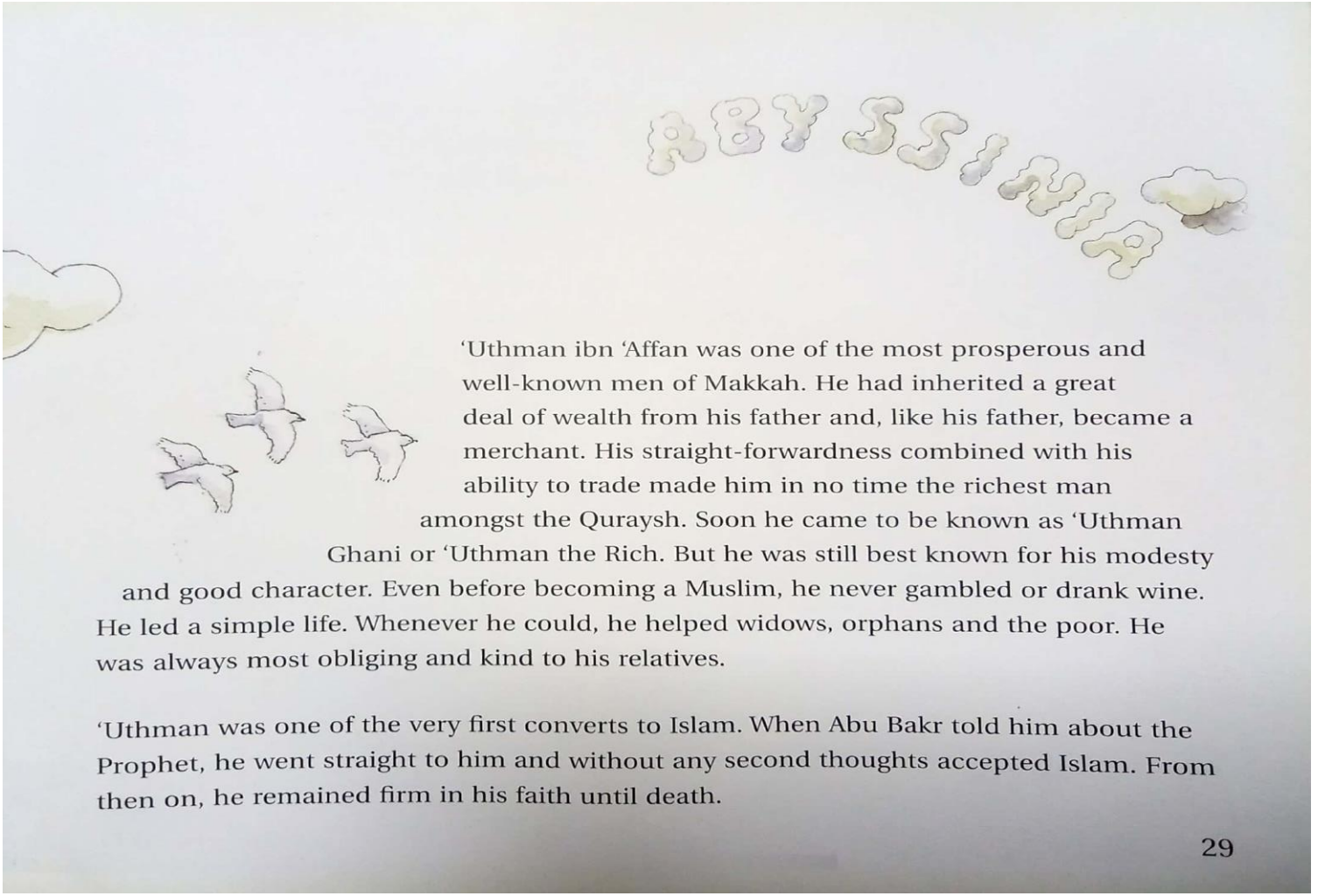
Leaving them, 'Umar hastily made his way to the house of Arqam where the Prophet was sitting with some of his companions. Seeing 'Umar, they were overcome with fear and prepared for the worst but the Prophet went out and embraced 'Umar, who there and then declared:

"I testify that there is no deity except God and you are the servant of God and His Messenger."

Until then the Muslims had kept their faith private and prayed in secret. But after 'Umar had converted to Islam, the Prophet led the prayer publicly in the Kabah for the first time.

The Buyer of the Fountain of Paradise





'Uthman ibn 'Affan was one of the most prosperous and well-known men of Makkah. He had inherited a great deal of wealth from his father and, like his father, became a merchant. His straight-forwardness combined with his ability to trade made him in no time the richest man amongst the Quraysh. Soon he came to be known as 'Uthman Ghani or 'Uthman the Rich. But he was still best known for his modesty and good character. Even before becoming a Muslim, he never gambled or drank wine. He led a simple life. Whenever he could, he helped widows, orphans and the poor. He was always most obliging and kind to his relatives.

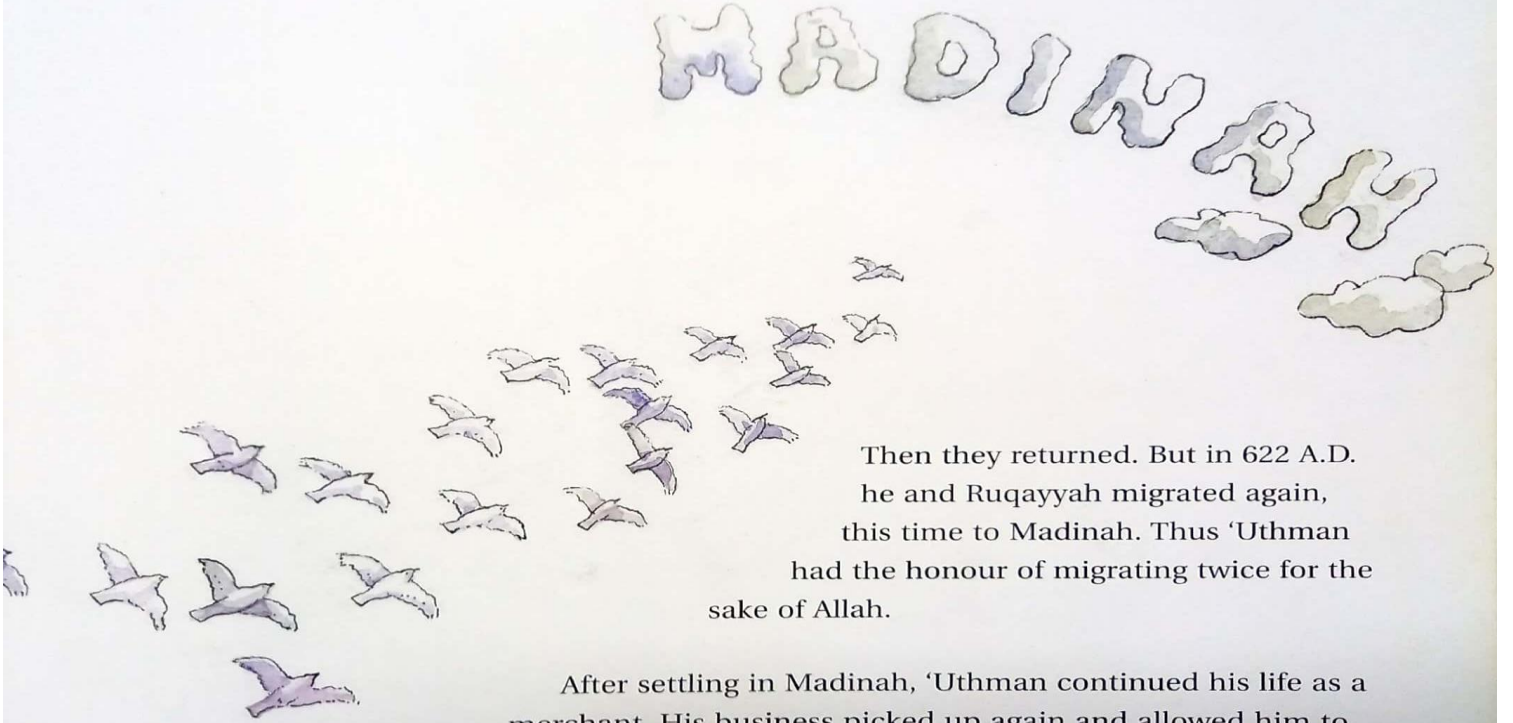
'Uthman was one of the very first converts to Islam. When Abu Bakr told him about the Prophet, he went straight to him and without any second thoughts accepted Islam. From then on, he remained firm in his faith until death.

The Prophet valued 'Uthman's dedication and steadfastness, and gave him his daughter Ruqayyah, and after her death, Umm Kulthum in marriage. Thus 'Uthman earned the title of "Dhun Nurayn" or "the Possessor of Two Lights".

When the living conditions in Makkah became very difficult for the Muslims and they began to be persecuted by the Makkans in the most vicious ways, 'Uthman and his family faced the same treatment from the deniers of truth as all the other hapless followers of Islam. Seeing the plight of his followers the Prophet gave many of them his permission to leave for Abyssinia. 'Uthman and Ruqayya were among them. Seeing them off, the Prophet declared proudly:

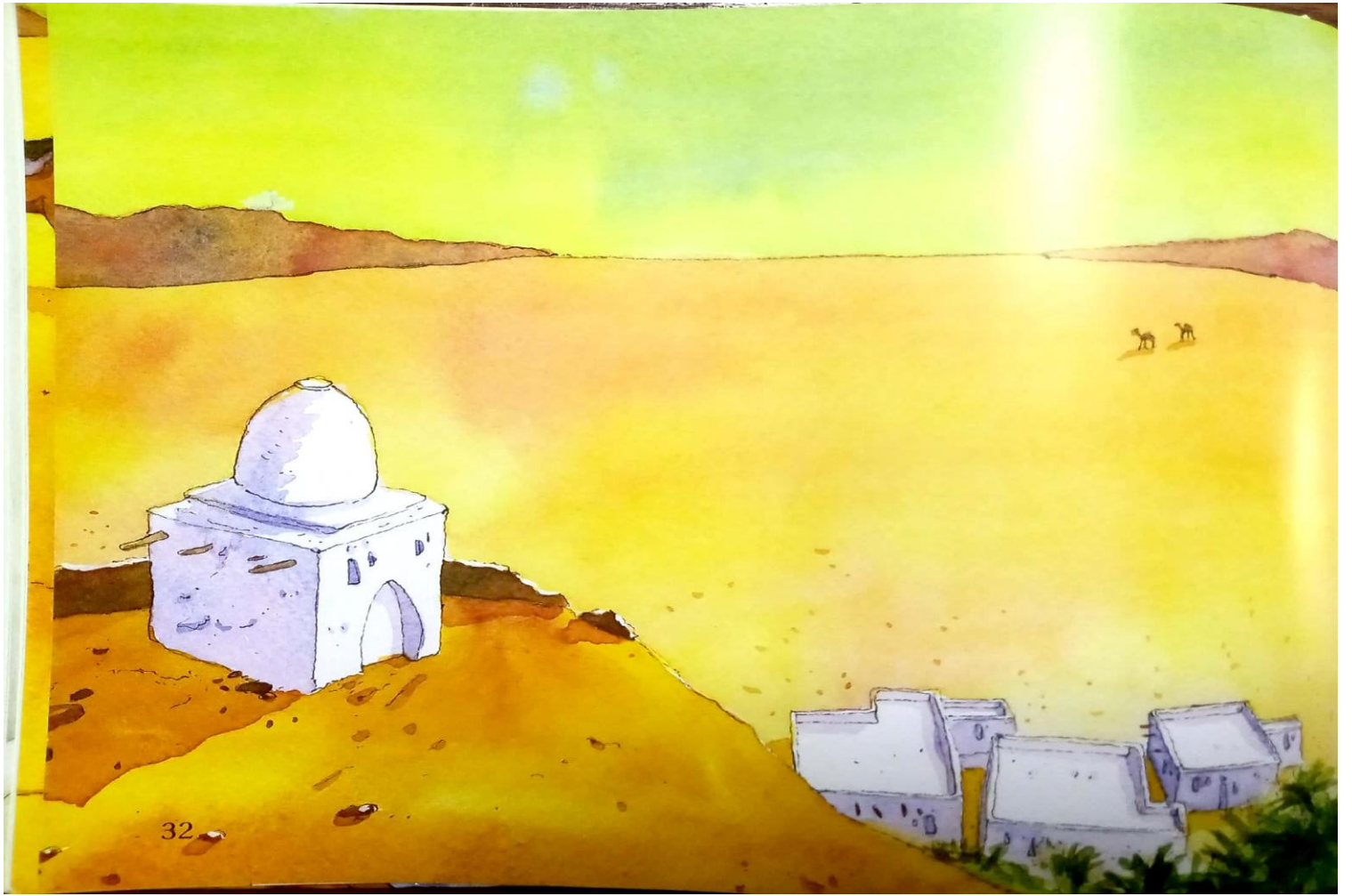
"'Uthman is the first person after Lut to migrate with his family in the way of Allah."

'Uthman and his family stayed in Abyssinia for about two years until the Muslims in Makkah became stronger.



Then they returned. But in 622 A.D. he and Ruqayyah migrated again, this time to Madinah. Thus 'Uthman had the honour of migrating twice for the sake of Allah.

After settling in Madinah, 'Uthman continued his life as a merchant. His business picked up again and allowed him to lead a comfortable life. But he always spent generously for the cause of God.



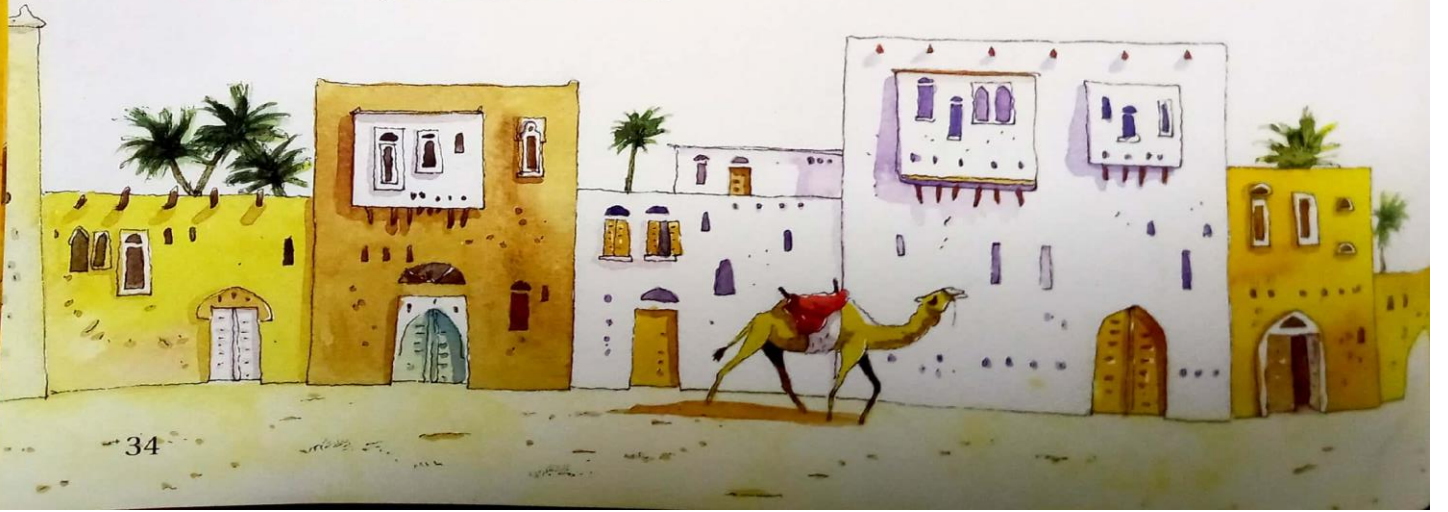
When the Makkan Muslims came to Madinah and settled there, they faced great difficulty in getting drinking water. There was just one well in their locality and its owner was a Jew. He did not allow the Muslims to draw water unless they paid him a high price. One day, the Prophet saw that he was selling water to the Muslims for an even higher price than usual. This grieved him and he declared to one and all: "If any Muslim buys that well and hands it over to the Muslims, he will be rewarded by Allah with a fountain in Paradise."

'Uthman heard the Prophet's words and, always mindful of the needs of his brothers in faith, hurried to buy the well. He tried to persuade the owner to sell it to him outright, but the owner would only agree to let him use the well on alternate days for 12,000 *dirhams*. 'Uthman agreed to the arrangement which meant that 'Uthman would use the well one day and the Jew the next day and so on. When it was 'Uthman's turn, the Muslims drew all the water they needed for that day and the next day. The Jew did the same when it was his turn. This continued for a while until the Jew realized that 'Uthman had outwitted him, so he decided to sell the well to him outright. 'Uthman happily availed of this offer and so the Muslims could use it any time they wanted.

A Unique Piece of Justice

Ali was a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad and later on he also became his son-in-law. Living in the Prophet's household from early childhood, he was brought up by the Prophet who personally taught him good morals and manners.

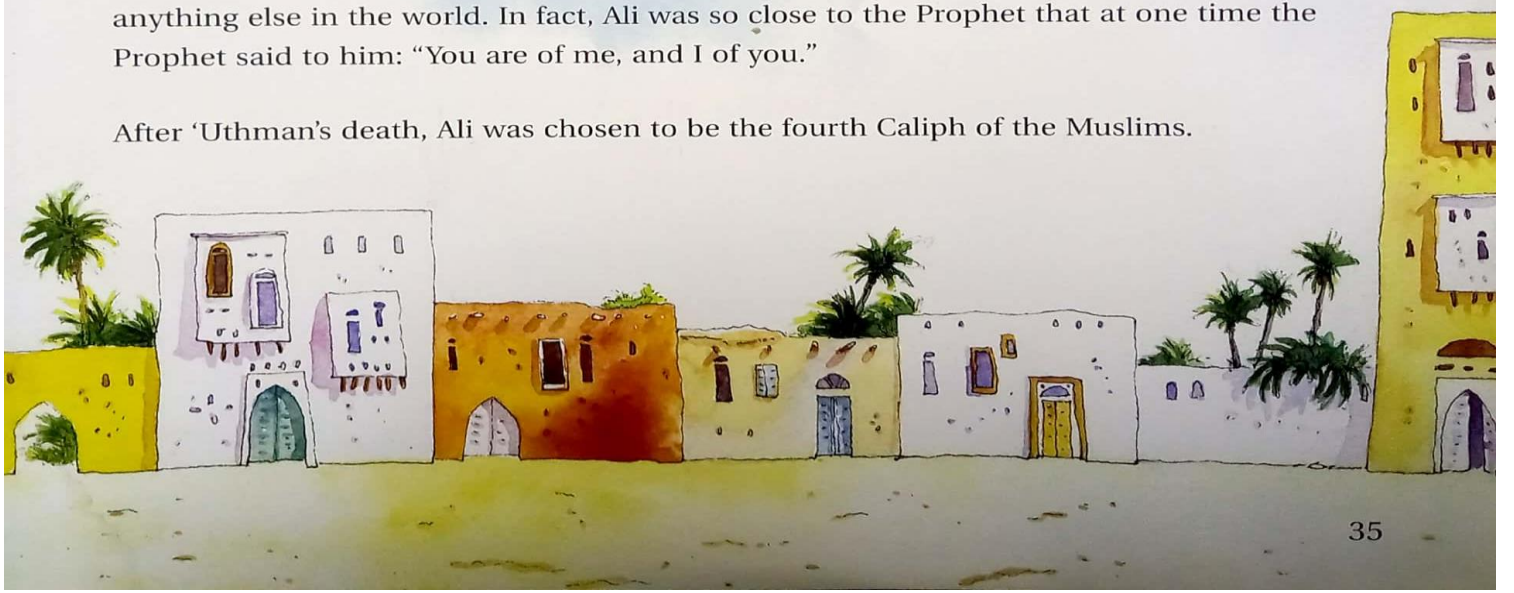
When Allah sent His first revelation and made Muhammad His messenger, Ali was the first child to accept Islam. He always accompanied the Prophet to all the meetings to learn as much as possible about Islam.



On the night when the Prophet left Makkah for Medinah, he asked Ali to lie down in his bed and wrap himself in the Prophet's cloak. The men who kept a watch on the Prophet's house to make sure he did not escape then mistook Ali for the Prophet. Reassured that he was asleep, they went on chatting to each other and did not pay much attention to what was happening in the neighbourhood. This allowed the Prophet to slip away and leave the town along with Abu Bakr.

After the migration to Madinah, the Prophet gave his youngest daughter, Fatima, to Ali in marriage. Ali and Fatima had two sons. The Prophet loved his grandsons more than anything else in the world. In fact, Ali was so close to the Prophet that at one time the Prophet said to him: "You are of me, and I of you."

After 'Uthman's death, Ali was chosen to be the fourth Caliph of the Muslims.



Ali loved and obeyed God and his Messenger so much that he was given the title of *al-Murtada*, or the one with whom God is pleased. He was the most just of men and a perfect judge. He resolved matters connected with religion and gave many judgments on legal issues. He was well known among the companions for his deep knowledge and understanding of the Shariah and for his expertise in various religious matters.

It happened that once when he was already the Caliph, Ali somehow lost a piece of his armour. Soon after the incident he was walking about in the market of Kufa when he noticed a Jew selling a piece of armour, which looked very much like his. Imagine his surprise when on close inspection he found that it was the very same piece of armour which he had lost. At that point of time Ali was the ruler of a vast and strong Muslim empire. If he had so desired, he could have taken possession of the armour right there and then. But he did not think that his position allowed him to consider himself above the law and merely said to the man trying to sell his armour: "This piece of armour belongs to me. Let's go to the Qazi (Judge) and he will decide the case between us."

So both the Caliph and the Jew presented themselves before the judge. After listening to both sides, the Qazi asked Ali: "Can you provide me with some proof that the armour belongs to you?"

Ali presented two witnesses in support of his claim. One was his servant, Qambar, and the other, his son, Hasan.

The Qazi replied: "A son cannot be accepted as a witness testifying in favour of his own father."

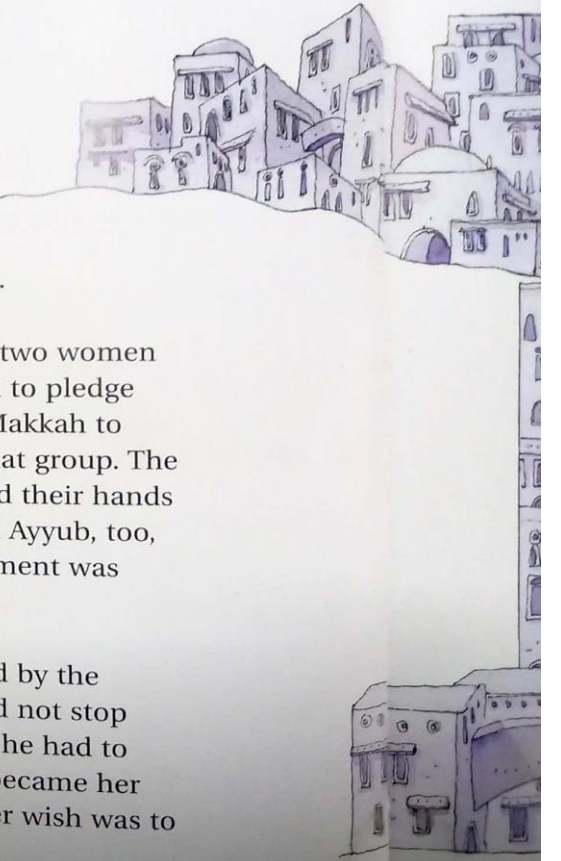
Ali, being the Caliph, had the power to dismiss the Qazi. But he surrendered before his judgment and withdrew his own claim regarding the coat of armour.

Seeing all this, the Jew could not get over his astonishment. He exclaimed: "I bear witness it is by God's commandments that the leader of the believers comes to the court of law like a common man and the Qazi gives a verdict against him. I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship save God, and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."

Then he explained: "The coat of armour actually belongs to Ali. One day I saw it fall off Ali's camel and I picked it up."

Ali was so pleased with this turn of events that he gave the coat of armour back to the Jew and on top of that rewarded him with seven hundred dirhams.

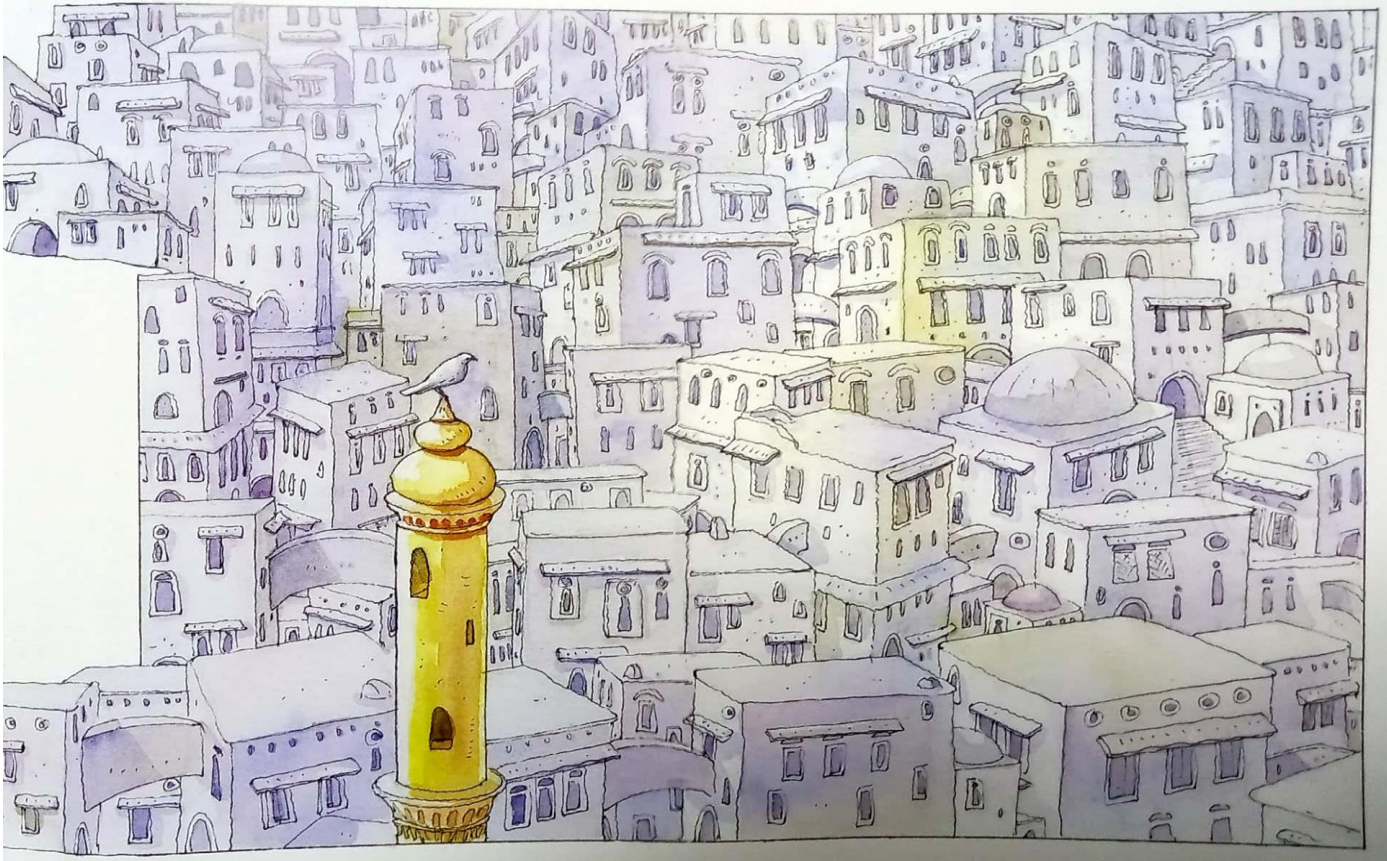
The Prophet's Host

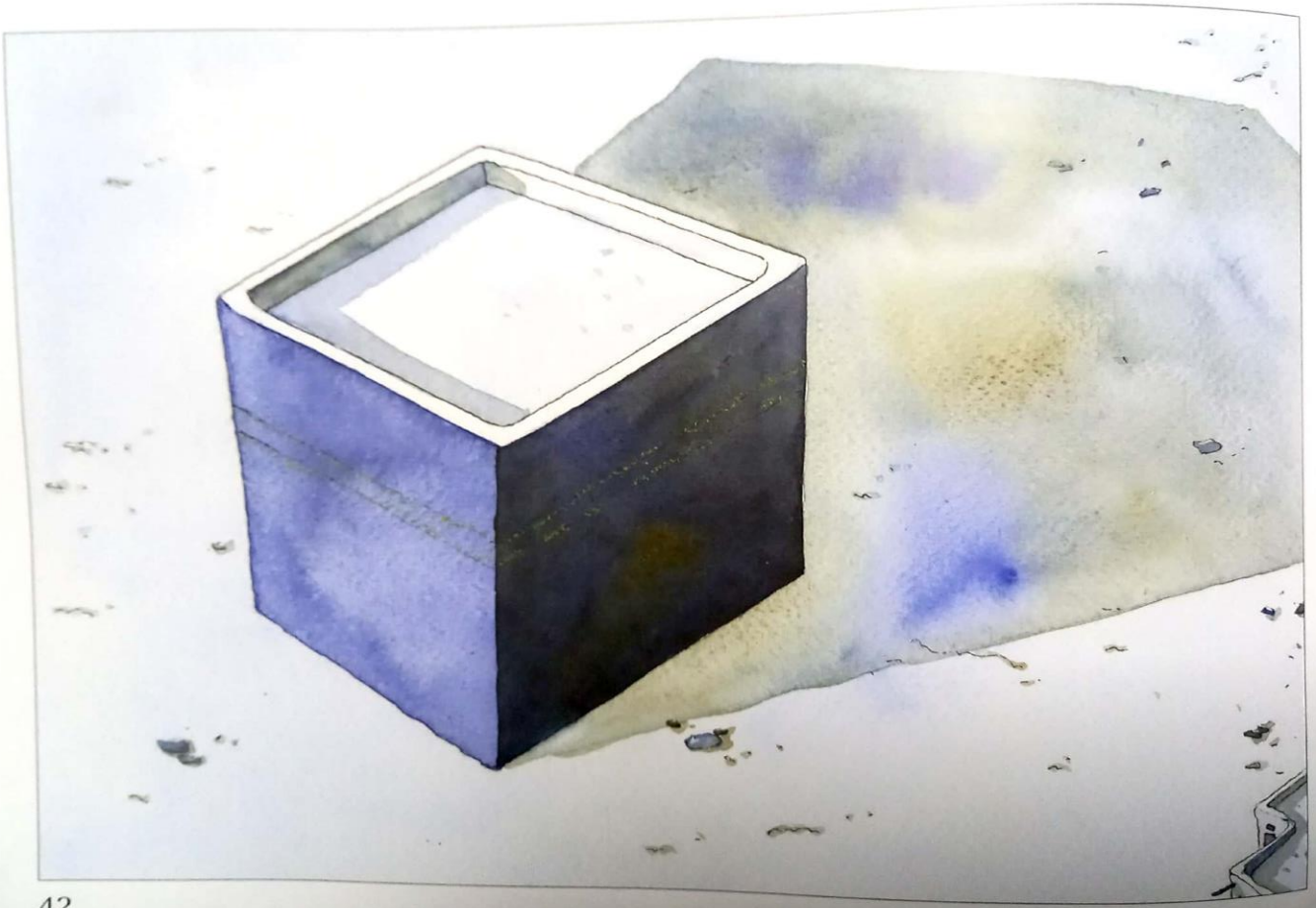


Khalid bin Zayd, better known in Islamic history as Abu Ayyub Ansari, was one of the citizens of Medinah who embraced Islam early on, having been impressed by its teachings when the Prophet sent Mus'ab bin 'Umayr to teach the citizens about Islam.

On the occasion of the Second Pledge of Aqaba seventy men and two women from Madinah went to meet the Prophet in Makkah. They wanted to pledge their loyalty to Islam and invite the Prophet and the Muslims of Makkah to come and live in Madinah. Abu Ayyub Ansari was a member of that group. The Prophet accepted their offer and, one by one, all of them extended their hands in the traditional Arab fashion to seal their allegiance to him. Abu Ayyub, too, placed his hands on the hands of the Prophet and thus the agreement was made.

When Abu Ayyub returned home to Madinah, his heart gladdened by the secret visit to Makkah and the meeting with the Prophet, he could not stop talking about Islam and its Messenger to his wife. Listening to all he had to say, day in and day out, his wife's curiosity grew so much that it became her greatest desire to meet the Messenger of Allah in person. Soon her wish was to be granted.





It was at this time that the persecutions in Makkah were becoming more and more difficult to bear. More and more Muslims, with the Prophet's permission and encouragement, were migrating to Madinah. Before long only the Prophet, his closest friend, Abu Bakr, and his cousin, Ali, remained in Makkah. Any day now it would be their turn to migrate. Finally, Allah commanded His Messenger to leave Makkah and go to Madinah. Immediately, on receiving the divine commandment, the Prophet, accompanied by Abu Bakr, left Makkah.

Before long the Muslims of Madinah got the happy news that the Prophet was on his way. They began waiting eagerly for his arrival. Every day, from dawn till dusk, they would stand on their rooftops and gaze in the direction of Makkah.

One afternoon, a Jew who was working on a hill-top saw two men approaching from afar. He recognized the Prophet and his companion Abu Bakr. He rushed back to the city and shouted loudly so that all the Muslims might hear him:

"Your leader has come! Your leader has come!"

On hearing his cry, all the Ansar, all the men and woman, both young and old, all their children, all of them came out of their houses and hurried to greet the Prophet and his companion. Their hearts were full of a strange joy and a love such as they had never experienced before. They were chanting:

"The full moon has risen above us from the direction of Thaniyyah al Wada."

They formed a circle around the Prophet and made way as the Prophet's camel moved forward. Each and every one of them wanted the Prophet to stay in his house and be his guest. But the Prophet, without refusing or accepting anybody's offer, simply pointed to his camel: "Let her choose her way. She has been ordered by Allah."

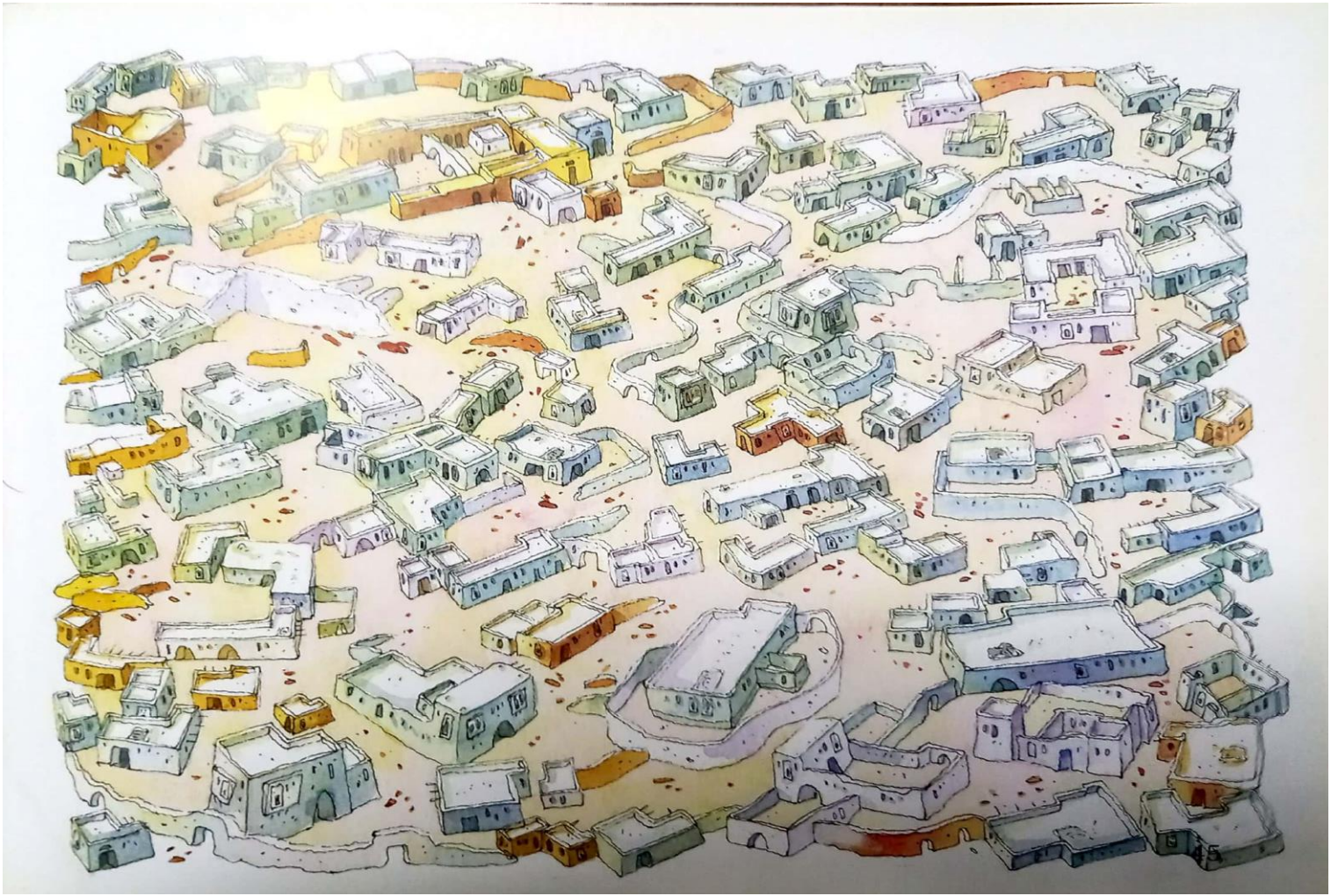
Each of the Ansar was hopeful that the camel would stop outside his house and he would have the honour of having the Prophet as his guest. As the Prophet's camel plodded down the streets, the Ansar would call out to the Prophet again and again:

"Stop here, O Messenger of Allah! Stop here, O Messenger of Allah!"

But the Messenger of Allah would only say:

"Let my camel choose her own way, for she has been ordered. She will stop on her own at the spot where Allah wants me to descend."

The camel kept its steady pace as if it knew where to go and where to stop. As it passed by the wall belonging to two orphan boys of Bani Najjar, named Sahl and Suhayl, the camel knelt down only to get up again. Then it moved in a circle near the wall until it spotted a small house next to it where it knelt and made its final halt. Seeing all that was taking place Abu Ayyub pushed his way through the crowd surrounding the Prophet till he found himself right in front him. He greeted the Prophet and invited him and his companion into his house. The Prophet accepted his invitation.



As soon as the guests entered his house, Abu Ayyub took them upstairs, to the room he had prepared for them. It was the best room in the house. Abu Ayyub and his family lived there. But the Prophet did not like the idea of turning Abu Ayyub and his wife out of their own room and, in spite of their protests, he insisted on sleeping downstairs.

However, Abu Ayyub and his wife could not sleep well that night. All the time they thought of the Prophet who was sleeping in the uncomfortable, common room downstairs.

The following morning, Abu Ayyub went to the Prophet and said:

"I cannot sleep upstairs. Last night I was tossing and turning all the time. You must sleep in my room and we will move down."

At first the Prophet refused and said: "I cannot turn you out of your room."

But Abu Ayyub pleaded with him:

"My family will be unhappy unless you move to our room upstairs."

So the Prophet moved upstairs and Abu Ayyub and his family shifted down.

Abu Ayyub's love and devotion for the Messenger of Allah was so deep that he would not eat till the Prophet finished the food he had sent for him. If the Prophet had left anything in the dish, Abu Ayyub would finish it himself. He would try to put his fingers in the marks left by the Prophet's fingers. He also loved to do small favours for the Prophet, trying to ensure that the Prophet was comfortable at all times.

The Prophet stayed with Abu Ayyub and his family for about a month. By then the Prophet's mosque was completed. It had an apartment meant for the Prophet attached to it and the Prophet moved to stay there.

The Search for Truth

Abu Dharr al Ghifari was one of the Prophet's companions and the Prophet used to say of him: "The earth does not carry nor do the skies shadow a man more true and faithful than Abu Dharr."

Abu Dharr was a member of the tribe of Ghifar, who lived in the area to the north-west of Makkah, in the Waddan valley, which connects Makkah to the outside world.

The tribe of Ghifar supported itself on the meagre earnings picked up while hanging around the caravans of the Quraysh, which regularly crossed their lands while traveling between Makkah and Syria. It is quite likely that sometimes they also ended by raiding these caravans, when they were not given enough to satisfy their needs. But Abu Dharr differed from his kinsmen. He was known for his courage, calmness and far-sightedness as well as for his dislike of the idols his people worshipped.

While he was in the Waddan desert, news reached Abu Dharr that a new Prophet, who called people to worship One God, had appeared in Makkah. Without wasting any time, he summoned his brother Anis and instructed him: "Go to Makkah and get whatever news you can of this man who claims to be a Prophet and says that revelation comes to him from heaven. Listen carefully to what he says, so that you can repeat everything to me when you come back."

Anis went to Makkah and met the Prophet. He listened to what he had to say and returned to the Waddan desert. Abu Dharr met him anxiously and asked him about the Prophet.

"I have seen a man," reported Anis, "who call upon people to behave nobly and there is more to it than mere poetry in what he says."

"What do people say about him?" asked Abu Dharr.

"Some say he is a magician, others that he is either a soothsayer or a poet."

"My curiosity is not satisfied. I am not finished with this matter. I must see this man with my own eyes and hear what he says with my own ears. Will you look after my family while I go and have a close look at this Prophet's mission myself?"

"Yes. But beware of the Makkans."

Abu Dharr set out for Makkah. Reaching the town, he went about with great caution, for the Quraysh were very angry over the denunciation of their gods. Having heard of the viciousness and cruelty with which they treated the believers, he did not ask anyone about Muhammad.

When night fell, Abu Dharr went and lay down near the Kabah. Just by chance Ali ibn Abi Talib passed by and, realizing that he was a stranger in the city, asked him to come to his house. Abu Dharr spent the night at Ali's house and in the morning returned to the open space near the Kabah. He had asked no questions and no questions were asked of him.

He spent the following day in a similar way without being able to meet the Prophet. In the evening he again settled himself for the night near the Kabah. It happened that Ali again passed by and said: "Isn't it time that a man should know his house?"

Abu Dharr accompanied Ali to his house and stayed there a second night. Again neither made any enquiry about the other.

On the third night, however, Ali asked him: "Aren't you going to tell me why you have come to Makkah?"

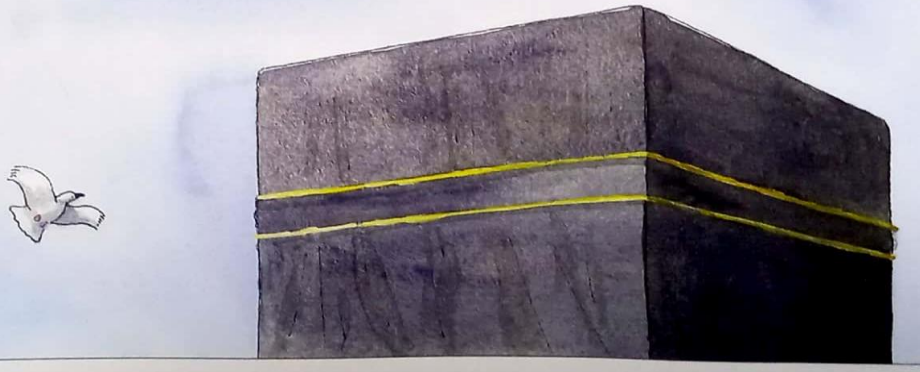
"Only if you make me a promise that you will guide me to what I seek," replied Abu Dharr.

Ali agreed and Abu Dharr told him: "I came to meet the Prophet and see for myself if he is really the messenger of God."

Ali's face lit up with happiness as he heard these words and he exclaimed with joy:

"By God, he is really the messenger of God," and then added, "When we get up in the morning, follow me wherever I go. But remember, if I see anything that frightens me for your sake, I will stop. Then you stop too. If I continue, follow me until you enter the place I have entered."

In the morning, Abu Dharr followed closely in Ali's footsteps until they found themselves in the presence of the Prophet. The Prophet welcomed Abu Dharr and invited him to Islam. Abu Dharr could not believe his luck. He became a Muslim then and there.



The Prophet warned him: "Don't tell anyone in Makkah that you have accepted Islam. They might kill you."

But Abu Dharr refused to heed the Prophet's advice.

"By Him in whose hands is my soul, I will not leave Makkah until I go to the Kabah and proclaim the call of Truth," vowed Abu Dharr.

The Prophet remained silent.

Abu Dharr went to the Kabah and called out: "O People of the Quraysh! I testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."

Hearing this, people pounced on him and beat him up mercilessly. Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, was passing by and recognized Abu Dharr. He bent over him and protected him from the mob. He shouted at the people who were beating him: "Would you kill a man from the Ghifar tribe when your caravans must pass through their territory?"

Seeing the logic in Abbas' words, the mob released him and let him go. Abu Dharr left Makkah and went back to his people and invited them to Islam.

A Ruler's Acceptance of Islam

Thumamah was one of the most powerful leaders of pre-Islamic Arabia. This was not at all surprising, for he was a chieftain of the powerful Banu Hanifa and one of the rulers of al-Yamamah. Nobody dared to challenge or disobey his word.

In the 6th year after the Hijra, the Prophet decided to send letters to all the rulers of the Arabian Peninsula and the surrounding areas, inviting them to join Islam. One of those rulers was Thumamah ibn Uthal.

When Thumamah received the Prophet's message, he was overcome with anger. In a fit of fury, he crumpled the letter and cast it aside. He felt so insulted that he refused even to consider the invitation to embrace truth and goodness. What's more, he was filled with an overwhelming urge to go and kill the Prophet and bury his mission with him.

In the pursuit of his evil designs against the Prophet, Thumamah sought out and mercilessly killed a group of the Prophet's companions. The Prophet was very grieved when he heard the sad news and declared Thumamah a wanted man who could lawfully be killed at sight.

Some time later, Thumamah expressed a desire to go for Umrah. He wanted to perform *tawaf* around the Kabah and make a sacrifice to the idols there. So he left al-Yamamah for Makkah. As he was passing by Madinah, it happened that he was captured by a group of Muslims who were patrolling the city and the outlying areas on the lookout for suspicious strangers and miscreants bent on causing trouble. However, the men who captured him did not know who he was. They took him to Madinah and tied him to a column in the mosque. Then they waited for the Prophet to come, question him and decide what was to be done.

The Prophet was about to enter the mosque, when he noticed Thumamah. He recognized him at once and asked his companions:

"Do you know whom you have captured?"

"No, Messenger of God," they replied.

"This is Thumamah ibn Uthal al-Hanafi," he said. "You have done well in getting hold of him and bringing him here."

The Prophet then went back home and told his family members: "Get whatever food you can and send it to Thumamah ibn Uthal. He has been captured and is in the mosque."

Returning to the mosque, the Prophet approached Thumamah hoping to persuade him to accept Islam.

"What do you have to say for yourself?" he asked.

"If you want to kill me in revenge," Thumamah replied, "you are welcome to kill me. If you are generous enough to want to forgive me, I shall be grateful. If you want money in compensation, I shall arrange for any amount you might ask."

Without a word the Prophet turned on his heel and left the mosque. He did not go to meet the prisoner for two days, though he personally made sure that food and water were sent to him.

When two days had passed the Prophet went back to meet Thumamah and asked him again: "What do you have to say for yourself?"

Thumamah repeated what he had said earlier. The Prophet left him again and did not return until the following day.

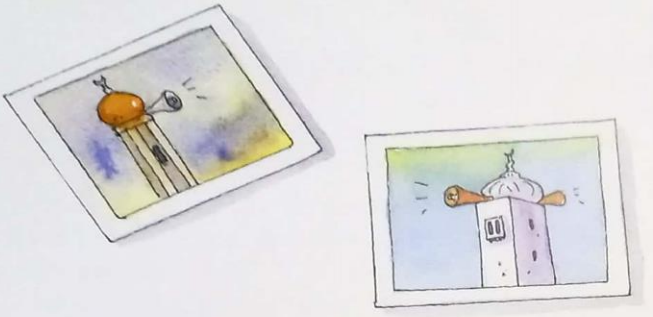
"What do you have to say for yourself?" he asked for the third time and for the third time Thumamah repeated what he had already said twice before.

After patiently hearing him out, the Prophet turned to his companions and said: "Set him free."

Thumamah left the mosque of the Prophet, got on to his camel and rode out of the city. When he came to a palm grove on the outskirts of Madinah, he stopped his camel and dismounted. He went to the well, watered his camel there and then washed himself well. Having done that, he turned around and made his way back to the Prophet's mosque.

He entered the mosque, stood before the congregation and declared: "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger."

Then he went to the Prophet and said: "O Muhammad, by God, there was never on this earth a face more detestable than yours. Now, yours is the dearest face of all to me."



The First Mu'azzin of Islam

We hear beautiful *adhan* from the mosque five times a day. But do we ever think about the person who gave the first *adhan* and called people to prayer for the first time?

His name was Bilal al-Habashi and he was a great companion of the Prophet. Bilal was born in Abyssinia (Ethiopia). That is why he is known as Bilal al-Habashi, for the old name of Abyssinia was Habash.

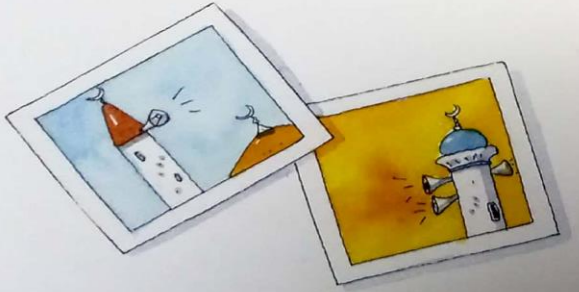
At a young age Billal came to Makkah as a slave of a Makkan woman. When the Prophet Muhammad began calling people to worship the One God, Bilal heard him and accepted Islam. But after he became a Muslim, the deniers of truth started to mistreat him. He

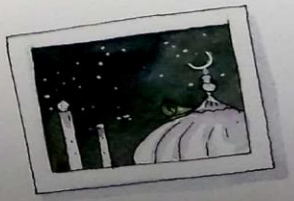
was harassed at every opportunity and was often beaten by the people. Sometimes one person would get tired of hitting him and then another would take his place. Sometimes it was Abu Jahl's turn and sometimes it was Umayyah bin Khalaf's. Then others would take a turn. Each one of them would beat him mercilessly until he got tired and no mercy was ever shown to him.

If it was day time and the sun was hot, they would force Bilal to lie on the scorching sand of the desert with a huge rock holding him down. His body would soon be covered with bruises and festering wounds. Prodding him with their feet they would then ask:

"So tell us now, Bilal, will you give up the religion of Muhammad?"

In reply Bilal would only weakly cry: "*Ahad, Ahad*... The One, the One... Allah."





And if it was night when they waylaid him, they would tie him up with chains and lash him with sticks. The deniers of truth showed such cruelty in torturing Bilal that it easily surpassed the ruthlessness of many ignorant Arabs.

One day Abu Bakr was passing by while Bilal was being tortured in this way. Abu Bakr was greatly outraged to see Bilal's plight and the cruelty of his tormentors. He asked his torturers: "Don't you fear Allah? How long will you torture this poor man?"

"It is you who have spoiled him by teaching him Islam. If your heart bleeds for him ,free him yourself!" Retorted Umayyah.

Abu Bakr bought Bilal there and then, and set him free.

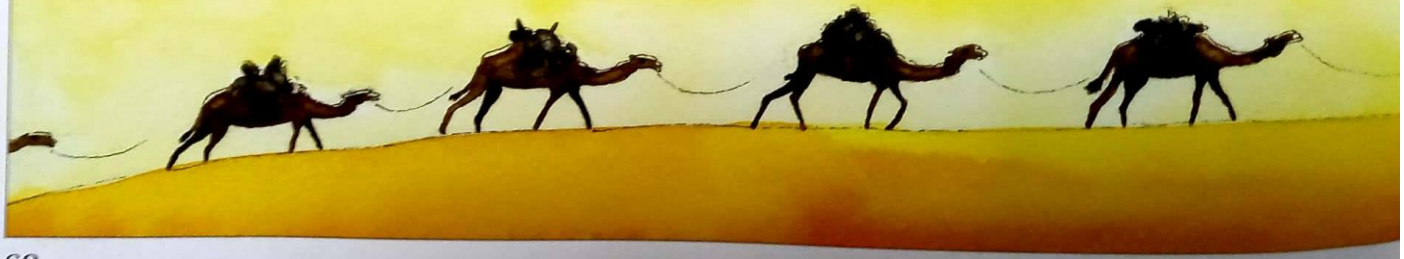
When the Prophet migrated to Madinah, Bilal also migrated like many other of the Prophet's other companions.

In Madinah it soon became a custom for the Muslims to gather and wait for the Prophet to declare that it was the time for prayer. But with their numbers increasing day by day, it was becoming more and more difficult for them to keep track of the prayer time as some of them lived far away from the mosque or used to work in

the fields on the outskirts. The Prophet therefore asked the Muslims to devise a way to summon them for prayers five times a day. Everybody tried to think of something. Some suggested lighting up a big fire on top of the mountain. Others thought it would be a good idea to ring a bell, while yet others suggested blowing a horn. The Prophet did not like any of these suggestions.

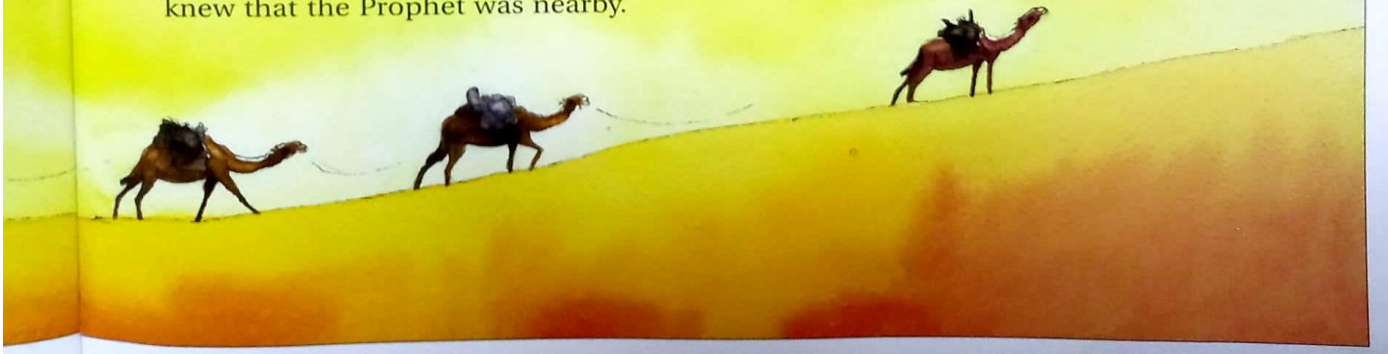
One morning the Prophet was sitting in the mosque with some of his companions. A companion called Abdullah ibn Zayd walked into the mosque, greeted the Prophet and announced: "Last night I had a dream, a beautiful dream. In all my life I have never seen a dream more beautiful than this."

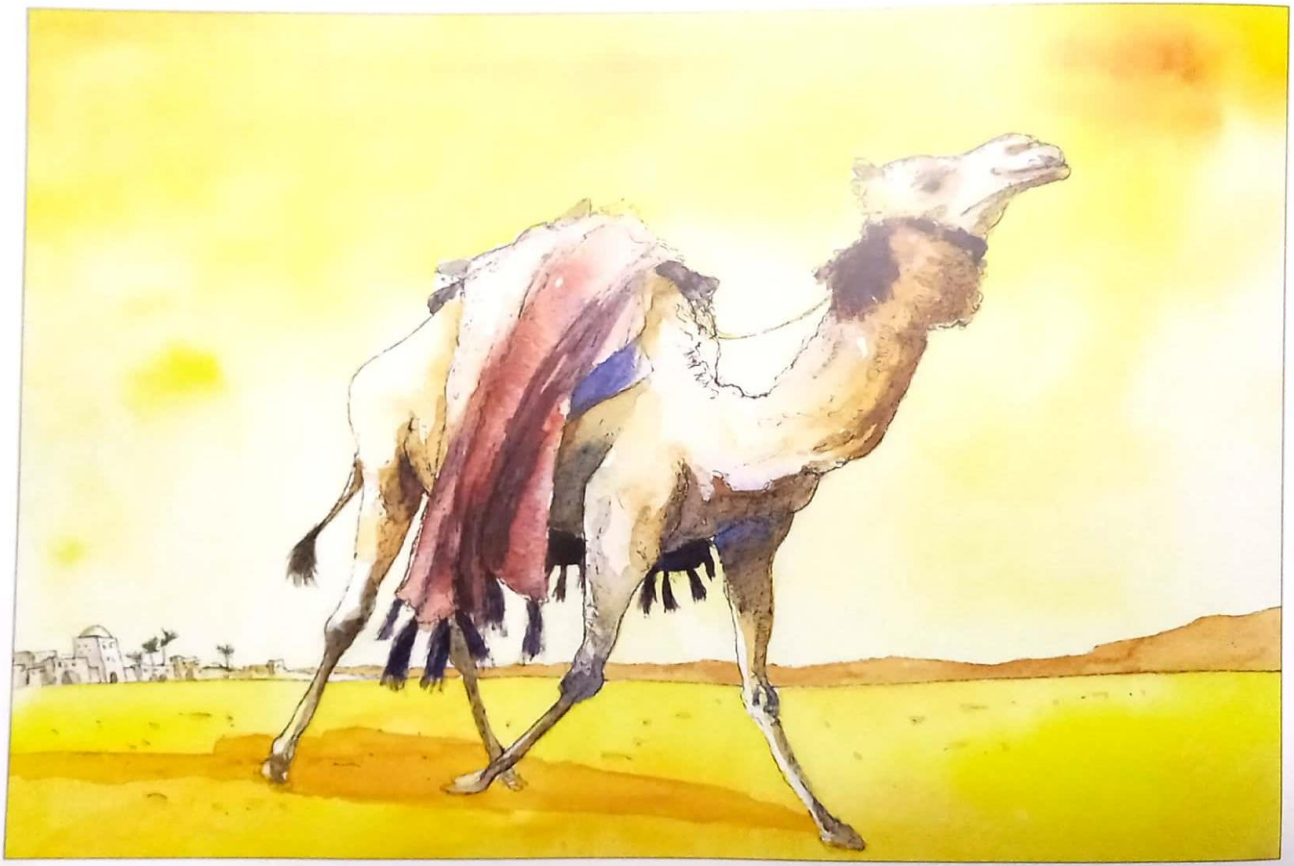
"Tell us about your dream, Abdullah!" said the companions.



"In my dream I saw a man in green garments, carrying a bell. I asked him: 'Would you sell me your bell?' 'What do you need a bell for?' he asked. 'We need it to call the people for prayers,' I replied. 'You don't need a bell. Let me teach you something better than ringing a bell.' Then he taught me the words of the *adhan*: *Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar*..."

The Prophet and his companions were delighted with Abdullah's dream. Immediately, the Prophet called Bilal, because he had a beautiful voice, and taught him the words of the adhan. Thus Bilal became the first *Mu'azzin* of Islam. Since that day Muslims all over the world use the *adhan* to call people to prayer. Bilal acted as the *Mu'azzin* of the Prophet, even when the Prophet was travelling. Whenever people would hear Bilal's voice calling out the *adhan*, they instantly knew that the Prophet was nearby.





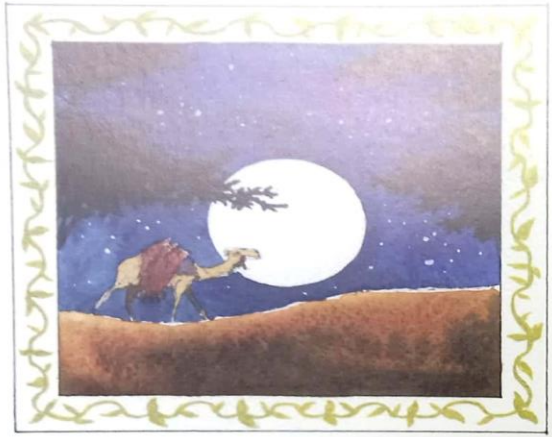
In the Court of Khusro

In the sixth year of the Hijrah, the Prophet thought it was time to carry the message of Islam beyond the Arabian Peninsula. He decided to send some of his companions to neighboring countries with letters addressed to their rulers, inviting them to Islam.

The mission was very risky for a number of reasons. First of all, the messengers were going to far away countries with which there were no agreements or treaties to protect them. Secondly, they did not know the languages spoken in those countries, nor did they have any knowledge of the ways and attitudes of their rulers. To invite the rulers to give up their own religion and accept the religion of the people who, just a short time ago, were nothing better than their subjects, was really amazingly courageous. Besides, asking them to give up worldly power and glory for the sake of Islam was not an easy task.

The Prophet appointed six of his companions to act as his messengers. Abdullah ibn Hudhafa was among them. He was chosen to take the Prophet's letter to Khusro Parvez, the king of Persia.

Abdullah ibn Hudhafa got his camel ready and bade farewell to his wife and son. Then he set out, alone, on a long journey to an unknown land. Travelling for weeks on end through the desert, then strange, green mountains and valleys, he reached the land of Persia.



Having arrived at his destination, Abdullah told the guards at the royal castle about the letter he was carrying and sought permission to meet the king. Khusro Parvez agreed to meet him and ordered his servants to make ready the audience hall. Meanwhile he summoned his prominent aides. When the royal advisers had assembled, the king called to Abdullah to enter. Abdullah went in and saw the king of the Persians dressed in resplendent robes. And there was a gorgeous, beautifully arranged turban on his head.

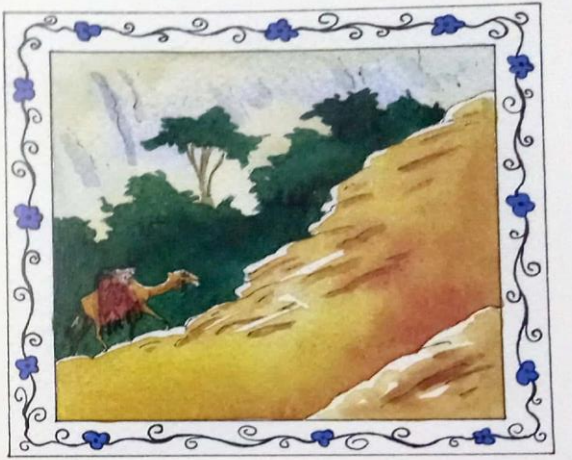
Abdullah, on the other hand, was dressed in the plain coarse clothes of a Bedouin, the nomad of Arabia. But the honour of Islam and the flame of faith in his heart helped him to hold his head high and keep his feet steady.

The king scrutinized Abdullah and then signaled to one of his men to take the letter from him. But Abdullah refused, saying:

"No, the Prophet commanded me to hand the letter directly to you and I will not go against a command of the Messenger of Allah."

"Let him approach me," said Khusro to his guards. Abdullah walked up to the king and gave him the letter. Khusro looked at the letter but could not read it for it was in Arabic.

So with a gesture of his hand he summoned an Arab clerk and ordered him to read the letter. The clerk looked at the letter and began translating:



"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to Khusro the ruler of Persia.

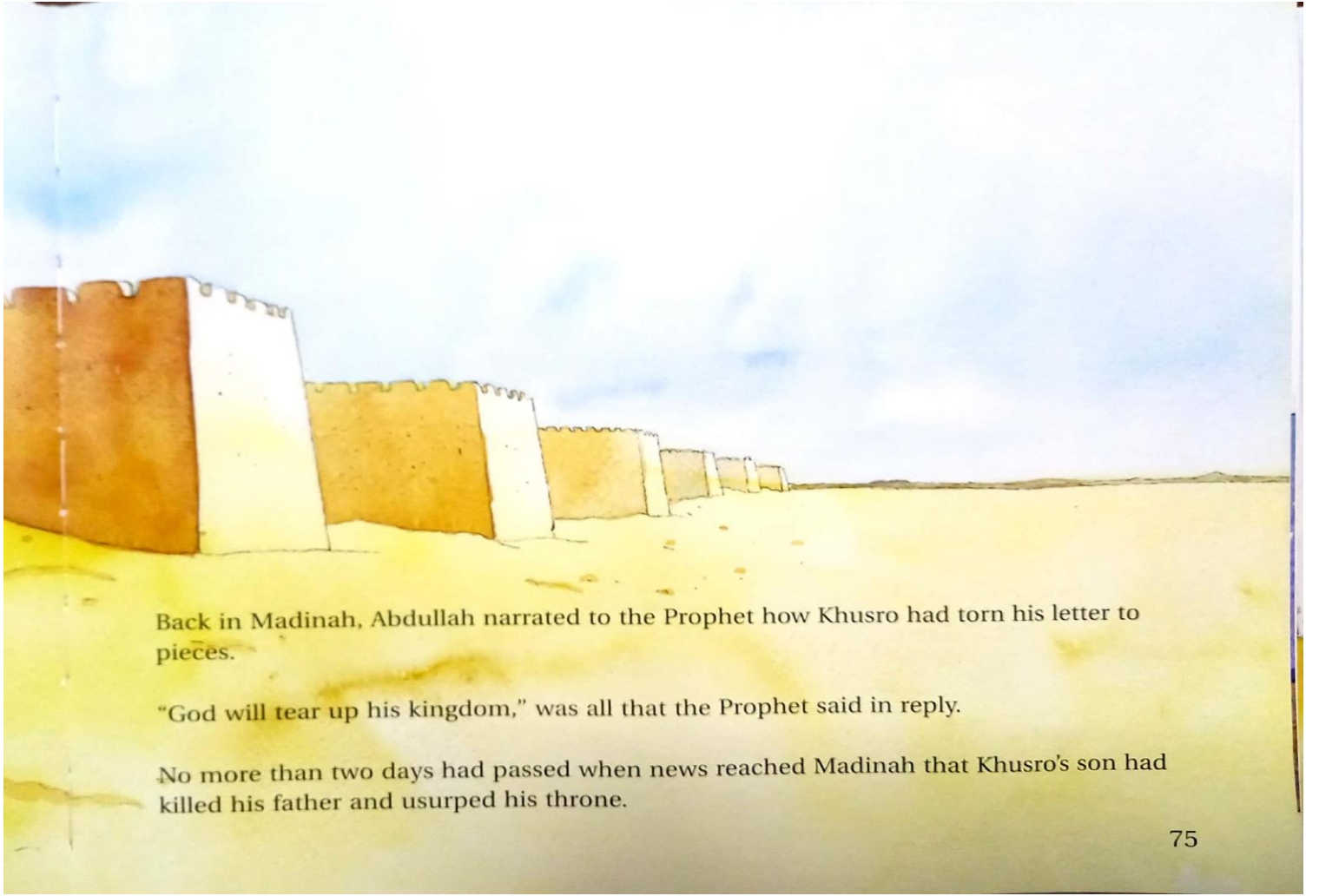
Peace on whoever follows the guidance..." Here he was cut short by the king's raised voice.

The king's face became red with anger. With one impatient gesture he snatched the letter from the clerk and tearing it to pieces, shouted:

"How does he dare to write to me like this, he who is my slave?"

He was furious that the Prophet had not given him due importance in his letter. He promptly ordered the guards to expel Abdullah from his assembly hall.

Abdullah was taken away, not knowing what would happen to him next. Would he be killed? Would he be imprisoned? Would he be allowed to leave? But he did not want to wait to find out. Once outside the palace, he somehow managed to get to his camel and speedily rode off.



Back in Madinah, Abdullah narrated to the Prophet how Khusro had torn his letter to pieces.

"God will tear up his kingdom," was all that the Prophet said in reply.

No more than two days had passed when news reached Madinah that Khusro's son had killed his father and usurped his throne.

A Profitable Bargain

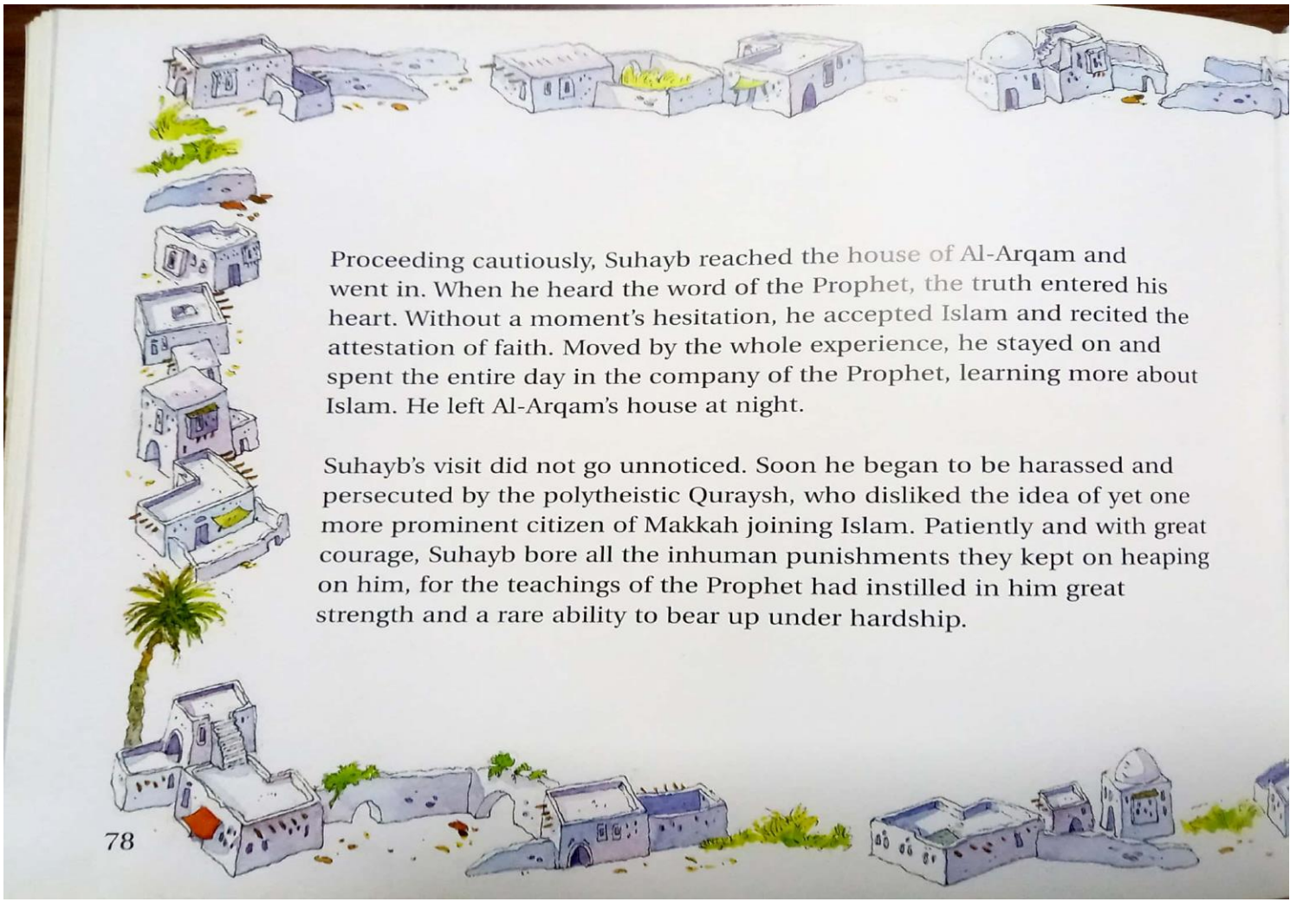
Suhayb was the son of Sinan bin Malik, the governor of Basarah, who ruled the city on behalf of the Persian emperor. His father loved him very much and he was accustomed to living in luxury. But it happened that one day the soldiers of the Byzantine empire, at war with Persia, attacked the city and took many people prisoner. Suhayb ibn Sinan was one of them.

Suhayb was sold in the Byzantine market along with the other slaves. Thus began the twenty-years-long story of his slavery in Byzantine lands. During that time he was sold many times over, passing from the hands of one master to another. Thus his boyhood and a part of his youth were spent as a slave. But Suhayb never forgot that he was the son of the desert and kept on waiting for the day he would regain his freedom and return to his own people.

When an opportunity presented itself, Suhayb escaped and headed straight for Makkah, which was known as a place of asylum and refuge. Life was good for him there. Abdullah ibn Ju'dan, a wealthy merchant, made him his *halif*. Suhayb engaged in trade and it brought him prosperity. Before long, he became quite rich.

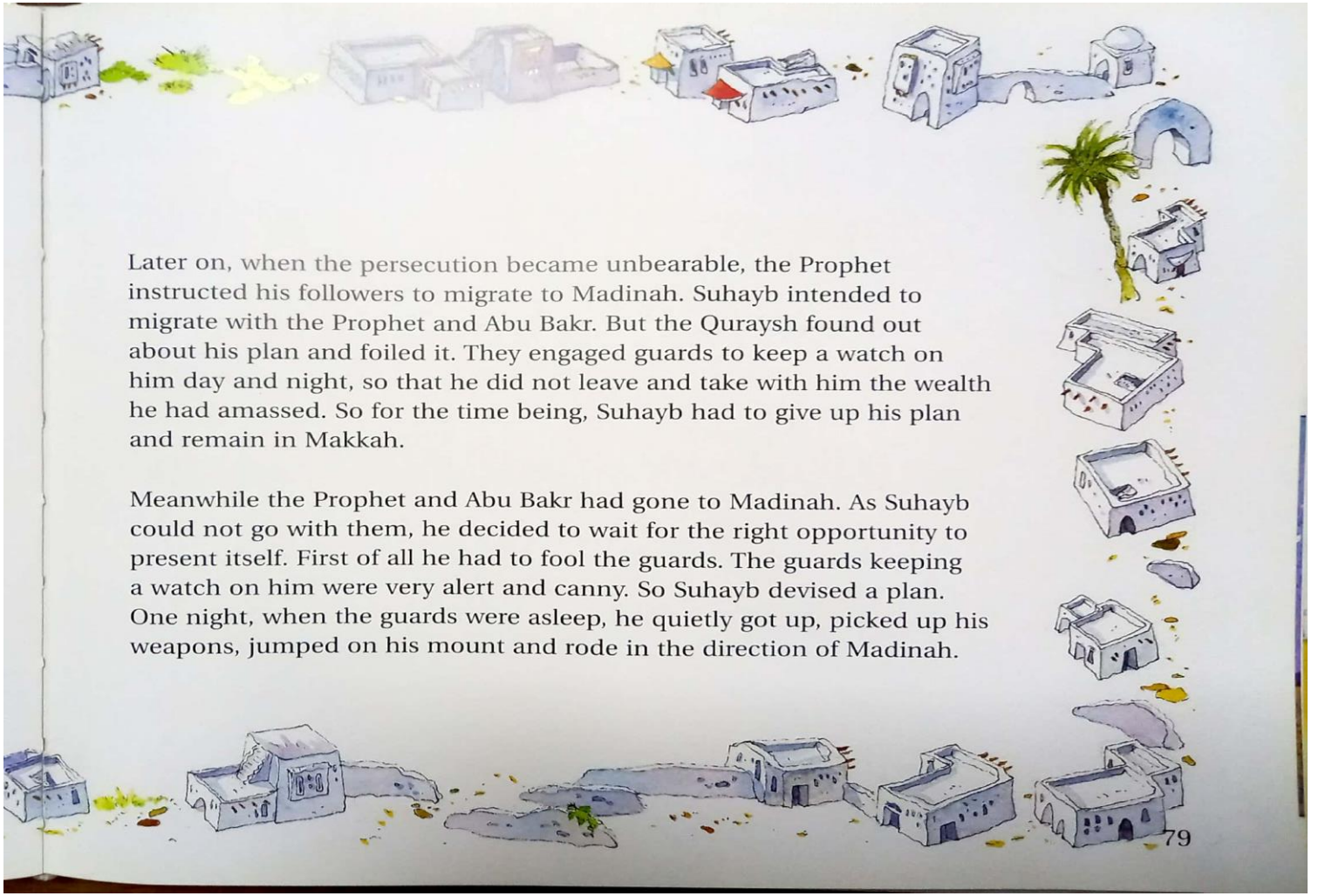
One day, on returning to Makkah from one of his usual trading journeys, Suhayb came to know that Muhammad was now calling himself the Messenger of God. He also heard that he was inviting people to follow the path of truth, to believe in the One God, to do good works and to abstain from shameful and forbidden deeds.

His curiosity aroused, Suhayb wanted to learn more about the Prophet and immediately made inquiries about his whereabouts. He was informed that he could meet the Prophet in the house of Al-Arqam. He was warned to be careful not to alert the Quraysh when he went there.



Proceeding cautiously, Suhayb reached the house of Al-Arqam and went in. When he heard the word of the Prophet, the truth entered his heart. Without a moment's hesitation, he accepted Islam and recited the attestation of faith. Moved by the whole experience, he stayed on and spent the entire day in the company of the Prophet, learning more about Islam. He left Al-Arqam's house at night.

Suhayb's visit did not go unnoticed. Soon he began to be harassed and persecuted by the polytheistic Quraysh, who disliked the idea of yet one more prominent citizen of Makkah joining Islam. Patiently and with great courage, Suhayb bore all the inhuman punishments they kept on heaping on him, for the teachings of the Prophet had instilled in him great strength and a rare ability to bear up under hardship.



Later on, when the persecution became unbearable, the Prophet instructed his followers to migrate to Madinah. Suhayb intended to migrate with the Prophet and Abu Bakr. But the Quraysh found out about his plan and foiled it. They engaged guards to keep a watch on him day and night, so that he did not leave and take with him the wealth he had amassed. So for the time being, Suhayb had to give up his plan and remain in Makkah.

Meanwhile the Prophet and Abu Bakr had gone to Madinah. As Suhayb could not go with them, he decided to wait for the right opportunity to present itself. First of all he had to fool the guards. The guards keeping a watch on him were very alert and canny. So Suhayb devised a plan. One night, when the guards were asleep, he quietly got up, picked up his weapons, jumped on his mount and rode in the direction of Madinah.

After a while the guards woke up with a start and realized that Suhayb was gone. Losing no time, they leaped on their horses and rode out to look for him. Soon they caught up with him.

"By God, we will not let you escape from us with your life and money! You came to Makkah weak and poor and it is here that you have put together all that you have..."

began one of the Quraysh guards. Seeing his opportunity, Suhayb interrupted the guard sharply: "What would you say if I were to leave you my wealth? Would you then get out of my way and let me go?"

"Yes," they readily agreed, their greed getting the better of them.

They let him go after Suhayb had described to them in great detail the place in his house in Makkah where he had hidden the money.

The guards, keen to get their hands on the money, sped back to Makkah. Turning quickly the other way, Suhayb set off in the direction of Madinah. He had a long and tiring journey ahead of him. But his desire to be with the Prophet and to be able to worship Allah freely and in peace led him on. Whenever he felt tired, his eyes were about to close and he was about to fall off his saddle, he would think of the Prophet and console

himself that he would be with him in a day or two. These soothing thoughts wiped away his tiredness and kept him riding onwards.

At the time when Suhayb reached the city, the Prophet was at the Quba. Though immensely tired, Suhayb went straight to him. The Prophet was extremely happy to see him and greeted him, beaming with joy. He said, "You have made a most profitable bargain!"

He repeated these words no less than three times.

Love for God Conquers Love for One's Mother

Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas was born into a rich and noble family of Makkah. He was very attached to his parents and very fond of his mother.

Though not yet twenty years old, Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas was dissatisfied with the religion of his people and their way of life. He was getting restless, seeing the old tribal ways getting more and more sinful and ungodly. And so it happened that, around the same time, Muhammad received his first revelation and began calling people to follow the path of the One and Only God.

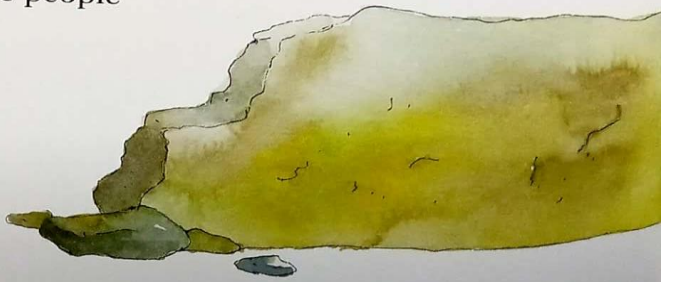
One day Abu Bakr, who knew Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas well and was very fond of the young man, decided to take him to meet the Prophet. It was already late afternoon and the Prophet had just performed the *Asr* prayer in one of the valleys around Makkah. The Prophet gave Sa'd a long searching look, spoke to him kindly and invited him to join Islam. Sa'd, convinced in his heart about the truth of the Prophet's message, happily agreed.

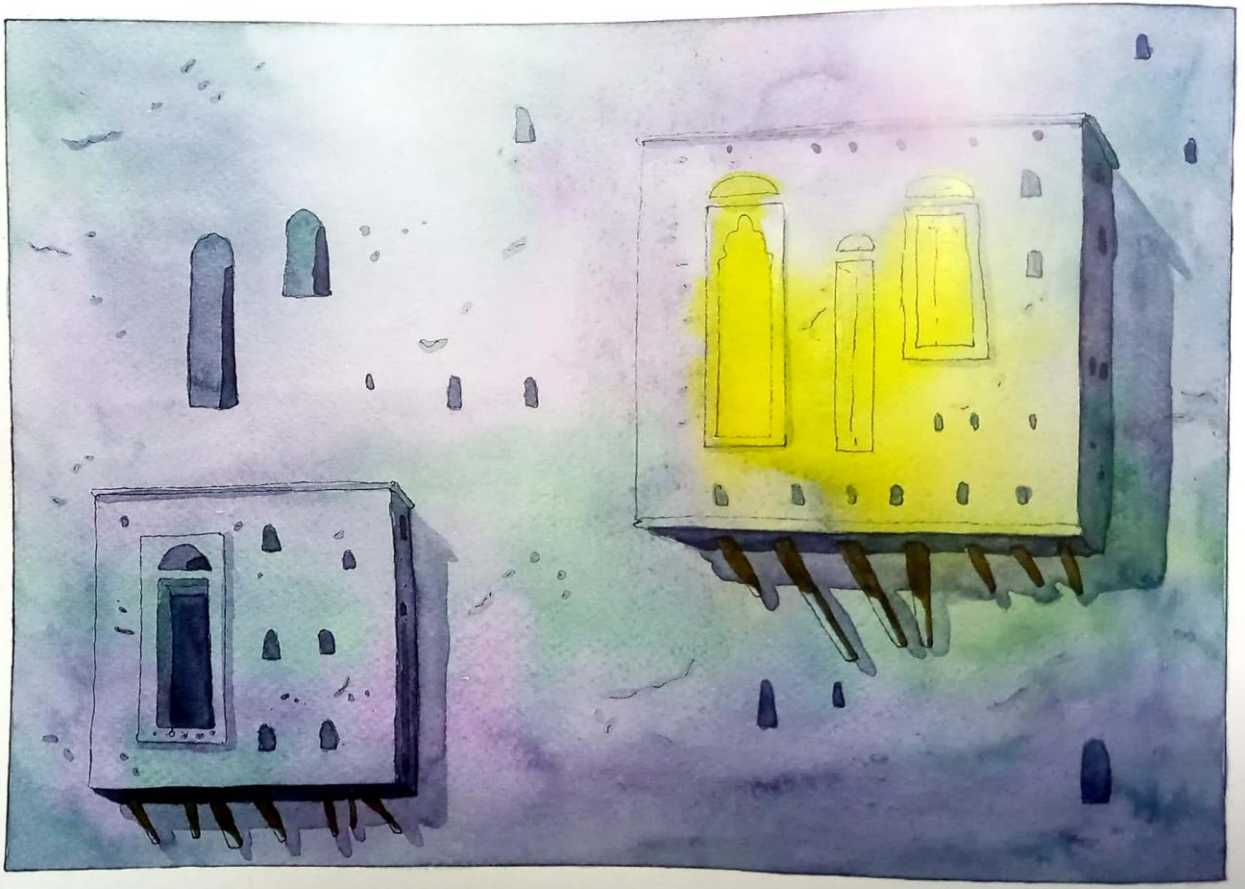
The Prophet was extremely pleased with Sa'd becoming a Muslim. He could see that Sa'd was a fine young man with the promise of a great future before him. Perhaps other young people of Makkah would follow his example, including some of his relations.

However, nobody in Sa'd's house was pleased that he had converted to Islam. Rather Sa'd's mother became so angry that all the neighbours could hear her shouting at her son. Burning with rage she screamed:

"Sa'd! What is this religion that you have embraced, which has taken you away from the religion of your mother and father...? I tell you, either you give up your new religion or I'll not eat or drink till I die! And when I die, let your heart break with grief! Let remorse give you no rest! And may the people shun you forever!"

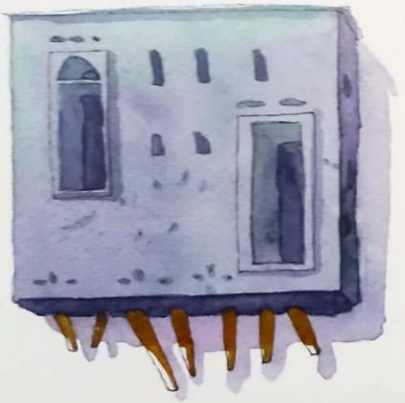
"Mother! Don't do that! And don't threaten me! I'll not give up my religion for anything on earth, not even for you!" retorted Sa'd, full of resolve.





Sa'd's mother, however, would not change her mind. She went on with her threat. For days on end she neither ate nor drank. She became very weak and could not even get up from her bed. Sa'd tried time and again to persuade her to have some food and to drink some water, but she stubbornly refused.

In the end, Sa'd went to her room and said: "Mother! I love you a lot! But what can I say? My love for God and His messenger is even greater. By God, if you had a thousand souls and one soul after another were to leave your body and depart, I would still not abandon my religion."



Sa'd's mother understood how determined he was and that he was never going to change his mind. She relented and unwillingly began to eat and drink.

The following verses of the Quran were revealed commenting on Sa'd's love for his mother.

"We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents— for his mother bears him, in hardship upon hardship..." (*Luqman*, 31:14-15)

Abu Darda's Acceptance of Islam

Abu Darda was a successful merchant and a fervent idol-worshipper of Yathrib (Madinah).

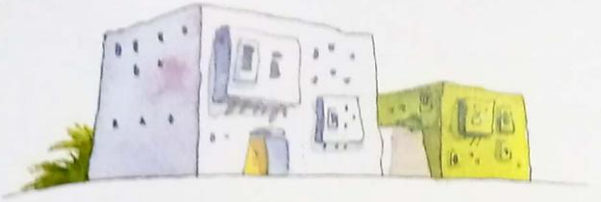
One day as usual, Abu Darda woke up early in the morning and went straight to his idol, which he kept in the best part of the house. He greeted it respectfully and bowed to it. Then he anointed it with the best perfume he had in his shop and dressed it in a beautiful new silk robe, which a merchant had brought to him the day before from Yemen.

When the sun was high in the sky, Abu Darda left the house and began walking in the direction of his shop. It so happened that on that day the streets and alleys of Madinah were crowded with the followers of Muhammad returning from Badr. With them were several prisoners of war. Abu Darda surveyed the crowds and then went up to a Khazraji youth whom he knew slightly, and asked him about the fate of Abdullah ibn Rawaha.

"He was put through the most severe tests in the battle but he has come out safely" was the reply.

Abu Darda was clearly worried about his close friend Abdullah ibn Rawaha. Everyone in Madinah knew of the bond of brotherhood that had existed between them from the old days. When Islam came to the city, Ibn Rawaha readily embraced it but Abu Darda refused to have anything to do with it. This, however, did not break up their friendship. They kept on meeting as before and remained the best of friends. Abdullah kept on urging Abu Darda again and again to listen to him and see the virtues of Islam. But Abu Darda did not want to leave the religion of his forefathers.

Relieved that nothing untoward had happened to his friend, Abu Darda went to his shop and busied himself with buying and selling as usual.



At that very same time Abdullah ibn Rawaha arrived at his friend's door in a determined frame of mind. Taking permission from Abu Darda's wife, he entered the house and went straight to the room where Abu Darda kept his idol. He took out an axe he had brought with him and began striking the idol repeating again and again in a loud voice: "Isn't it forbidden to worship anything besides Allah?"

When the idol was completely smashed and scattered in pieces all over the floor, he left the house.

Abu Darda's wife entered the room shortly after Abdullah ibn Rawaha left and was aghast at what she saw. When Abu Darda returned home, he immediately noticed that his wife was in a state of fright.

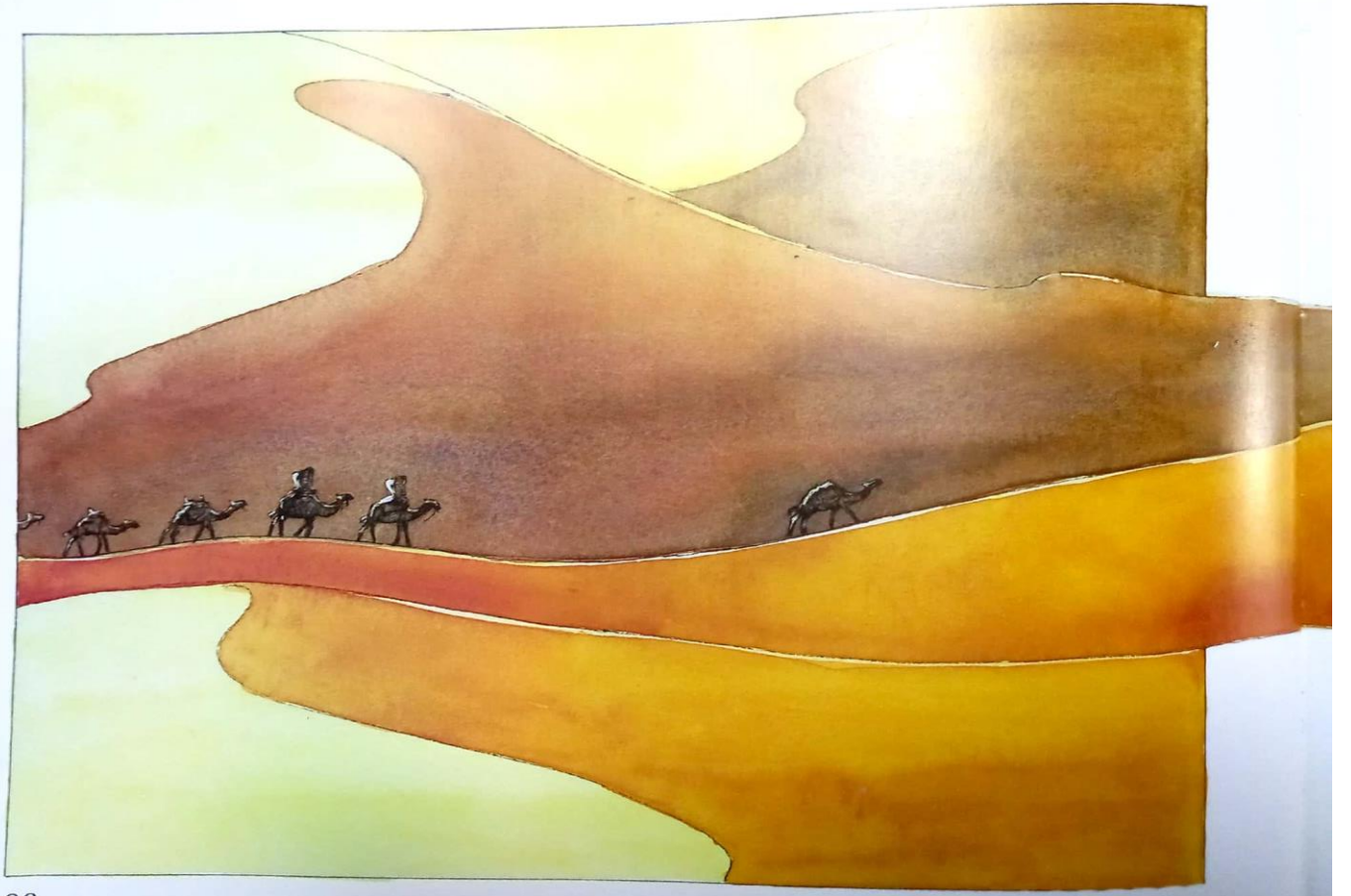
"What's wrong with you?" he asked.

"Your brother, Abdullah ibn Rawaha, visited us in your absence and see what he did to your idol," replied his wife.

Abu Darda went in, had one look at the broken idol and was horrified by what he saw. He was filled with anger and made up his mind to take revenge. He sat down to plan what to do next but not much time had passed that his anger began to subside and the thoughts of avenging the idol disappeared. Instead he began reflecting on what had happened and said to himself:

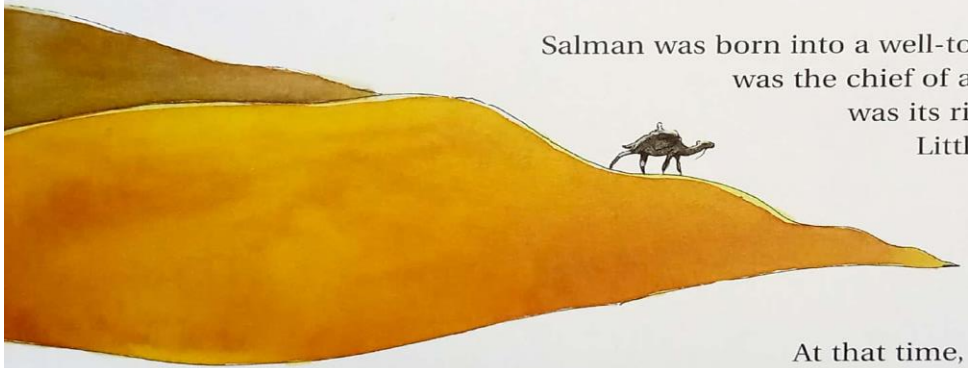
"Had there been any good in this idol, surely he would have defended himself against any injury."

He then went straight to Abdullah and together they went to the Prophet. There he announced his acceptance of Islam.



A Long Journey in Search of Truth

There was a Companion of the Prophet named Salman. He was originally from Persia and was best known as Salman Al-Farsi or Salman the Persian.



Salman was born into a well-to-do household. His father was the chief of a village named Jayyan and was its richest inhabitant as well. Little Salman was the apple of his father's eye and both the son and father loved each other dearly.

At that time, the people of Persia followed the religion of Zoroastrianism. They worshipped fire. But the religion of his people left Salman unsatisfied. He could not find any rational answers to all those questions popping up in his mind. He was determined to find out the real truth and was untiring in his search for it all around him.

One day Salman went by chance into a church and was impressed by the way the Christians were praying. He was immediately drawn to their religion. Salman's father was deeply shocked to learn of his son's interest in Christianity. He feared that his beloved Salman would leave his own religion. To make sure that Salman would not go anywhere, he locked up Salman in the house.

However, Salman managed to free himself and run away. He joined a caravan going to Syria. There he met a bishop who was a high official of the Christian church and became a Christian himself. He began to serve the bishop and spent a long time in his company.

After the bishop died, Salman left Syria. He visited Mosul in Iraq and many other places where he met a number of learned men from among the Christians. One of them told him about a Prophet mentioned in the Bible, who would appear in the land of the Arabs. The Prophet would have a reputation for strict honesty. He would never solicit charity for himself but would accept gifts. Salman wanted to know more about the whole matter, so he decided he must go to Arabia.

One day Salman found that a group of Arab leaders from the tribe of Kalb was passing through Ammuriyah, where he was at that time. He offered them all the money he had to take him with them to the land of the Arabs. They agreed and he handed the money over to them.

The caravan set off for Arabia. When it reached a spot somewhere halfway between Syria and Madinah, the Arabs broke their agreement and sold Salman to a Jew. Salman became a slave. Later on, his Jewish owner sold him to a nephew of his who belonged to the tribe of the Banu Qurayzah in Yathrib. In this way Salman found himself in Yathrib.

Salman found life in Yathrib very hard. His new master burdened him with many harsh tasks and treated him worse than an animal. One day Salman was working in a palm orchard when he heard that a man who claimed to be a Prophet was coming there.

Salman could wait no longer. That evening, he took some dates that he had gathered and went to the Prophet's place. He met the Prophet and said: "I have heard that you are a righteous person and that you have companions with you who are strangers here and are in need. Here is something from me as *sadaqah* (charity). I see that you deserve it more than others."

Salman immediately noticed that the Prophet asked his companions to eat the dates but he himself did not eat any.

When the Prophet left Quba for Madinah, Salman again gathered some dates and went to the Prophet and said: "I noticed that you did not eat of the *sadaqah* I gave. This, however, is a gift for you."

This time both the Prophet and his companions ate the dates Salman brought. Salman, seeing the rigorous honesty of the Prophet, then and there acknowledged him as the true Prophet and accepted Islam.

When the time of confrontation with the deniers of truth was imminent, it was Salman who suggested that Muslims use a Persian military tactic to defend Madinah. The idea was to dig a ditch around Medina to keep the Quraysh army at bay (that is why the ensuing clash came to be known as the Battle of Khandaq, or the Trench). When the Makkan leader, Abu Sufyan, saw the ditch, he commented that this strategy had not been used by the Arabs ever before and that he had been outwitted by the Muslims.

The Living Encyclopedia of Hadith

There was a land named Tihamah, which stretched to the north-west of Makkah, along the coast of the Red Sea. There lived a tribe named Daws. The chieftain of the tribe was called Tufayl ibn 'Amr.

Tufayl had met the Prophet early on and had become a Muslim in the early years of the Prophet's mission. Later, he had returned to his village and began calling others to the true path of Islam. Abu Hurayrah was one of the first members of the tribe to respond to his call. However, the majority of the Daws remained stubborn in their old beliefs for a long time.

When Tufayl next went on a visit to Makkah, Abu Hurayrah accompanied him. There he met the Prophet for the first time. After that Abu Hurayrah went back home and stayed in Tihamah for several years.

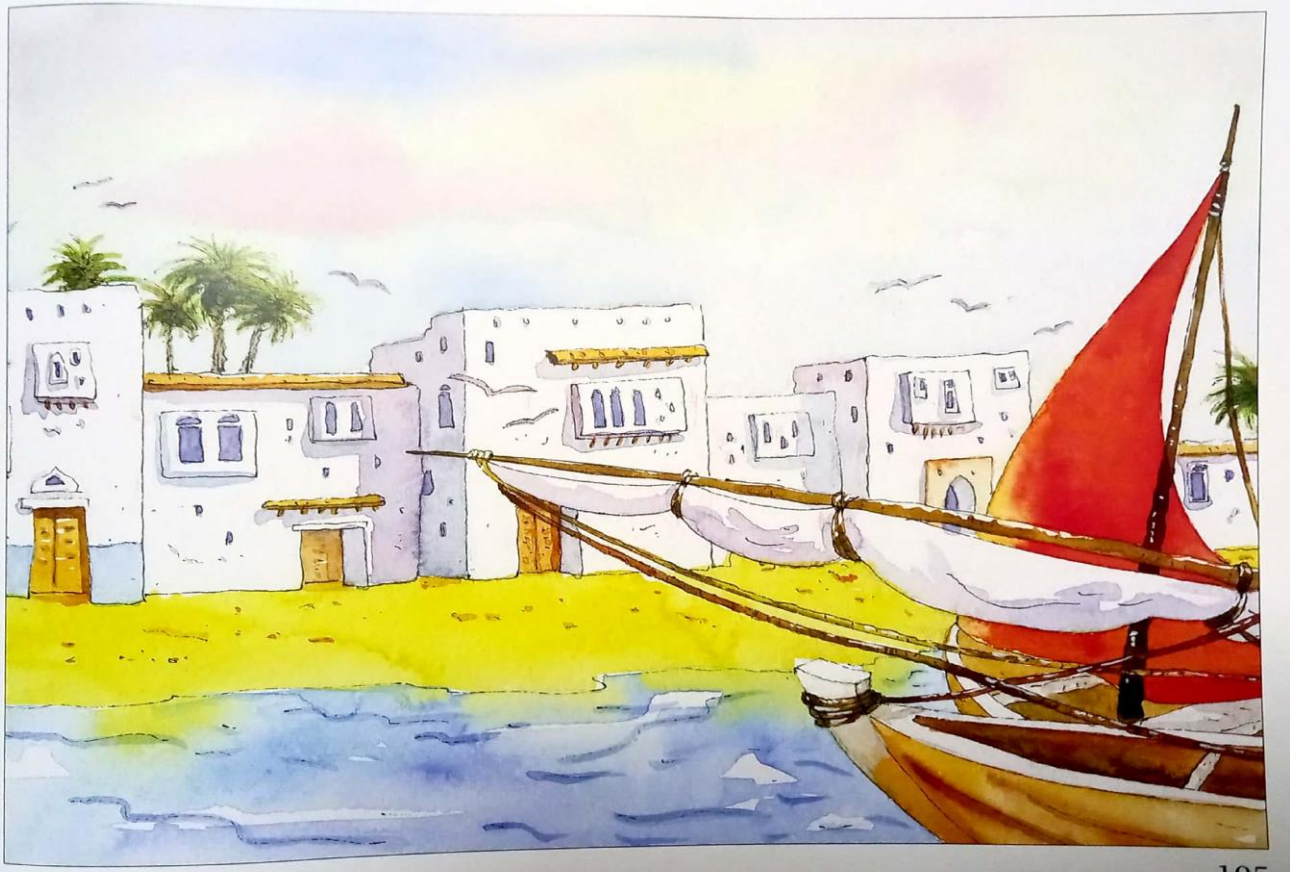
At the beginning of the seventh year of the Hijrah, Abu Hurayrah arrived in Madinah with other members of his tribe. He took up his place in the Mosque of the Prophet with others of the People of *Suffah*, who were in close and regular contact with the Prophet. The Prophet had a special love and concern for them. He took care to teach them about Islam and looked after all their needs.

At that time, Abu Hurayrah was not married and lived with his mother, who still did not believe in the Prophet. One day, Abu Hurayrah invited her to join him in his faith in the One and Only God but she retaliated with some abusive words about the Prophet, which saddened Abu Hurayrah greatly.

Abu Hurayrah went and told the Prophet what had happened and requested him to pray for his mother. When Abu Hurayrah returned home he found that his mother had surrendered to Islam. Abu Hurayrah was overjoyed.

In Madinah, Abu Hurayrah devoted himself to the pursuit of knowledge. One day, Abu Hurayrah, Zayd bin Thabit and another friend of theirs were engaged in prayer and remembrance of Allah, when the Prophet arrived there. Zayd and the other friend made a supplication to God before Abu Hurayrah did. The Prophet began to say *Ameen* to their *dua*. After they had finished. Abu Hurayrah began a supplication saying:

"O Lord, I ask You for what my companions have asked and I ask You for knowledge which will not be forgotten."



The Prophet said: "*Ameen*".

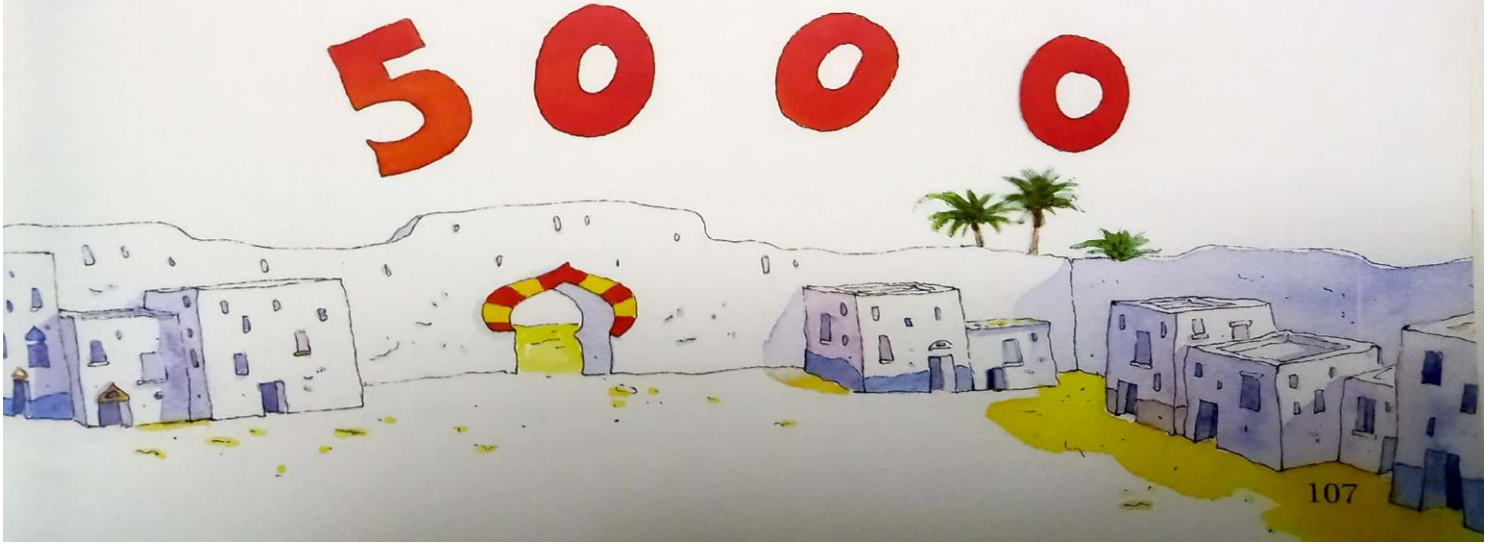
Then Zayd and the other companion continued: "...and we ask Allah for knowledge which will not be forgotten."

"The Dawsi youth has already asked for this before you did," said the Prophet.

Indeed, Abu Hurayrah was blessed with a formidable memory. He memorized countless gems of wisdom emanating from the Prophet's lips in the four years he had spent with the Prophet. He made full use of this great gift in the service of Islam.

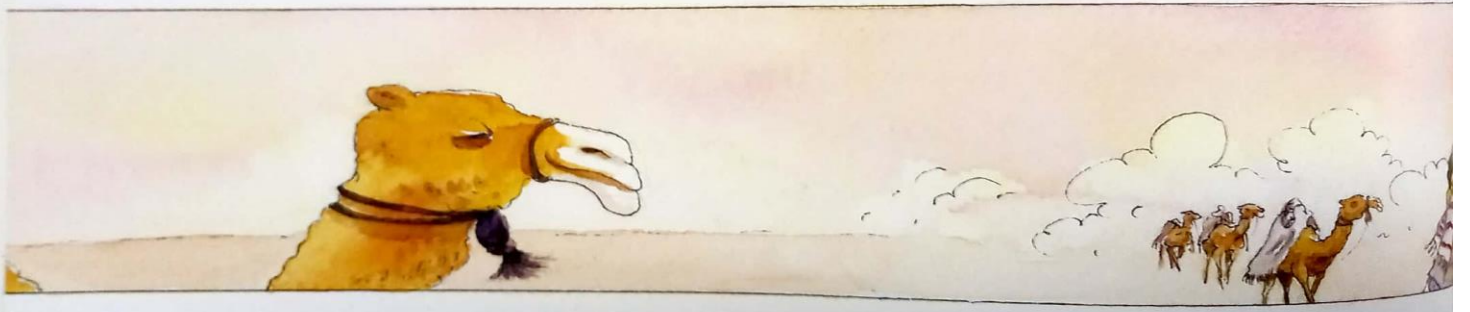
Abu Hurayrah did not keep himself busy in the market places with buying and selling like the other immigrants. He neither had land to cultivate nor crops to take care of like the Ansar. He was often hungry and destitute. He endured many hardships and difficulties in his quest for knowledge. He stayed with the Prophet in Madinah and went with him on his journeys and expeditions.

Abu Hurayrah loved the Prophet a great deal. He was never tired of listening to him. Many companions were amazed at the number of *hadiths* he had committed to memory. They often questioned him about a given *hadith*, as to when he heard it and under what circumstances. It is said that more than five thousand *hadiths* had been narrated by him.



The Prophet's Words Pierce the Piece of Cotton

Tufayl ibn 'Amr was the chief of the Daws tribe. He was a distinguished Arab known for his virtues and good works. He fed the hungry, comforted those in distress and granted asylum to those seeking refuge.



One day, Tufayl left his village in Tihamah in the south of the Arabian Peninsula and set out for Makkah. At that time the struggle between the Prophet and the Quraysh was at its peak. The Quraysh resisted the Prophet's message in every way they could. They tried to keep people away from Islam by all means at their disposal.

Tufayl was not aware of the struggle that was taking place. When the Quraysh leaders saw Tufayl in Makkah, they came up to him and gave him their heartiest welcome. Warning him about the Prophet they said: "Tufayl, don't speak to this man or listen to anything he has to say. He has the speech of a wizard. It causes division between father and son, between a brother and brother, and between a husband and wife."

Tufayl made up his mind not to approach this man nor speak to him, and not to listen to anything he had to say.

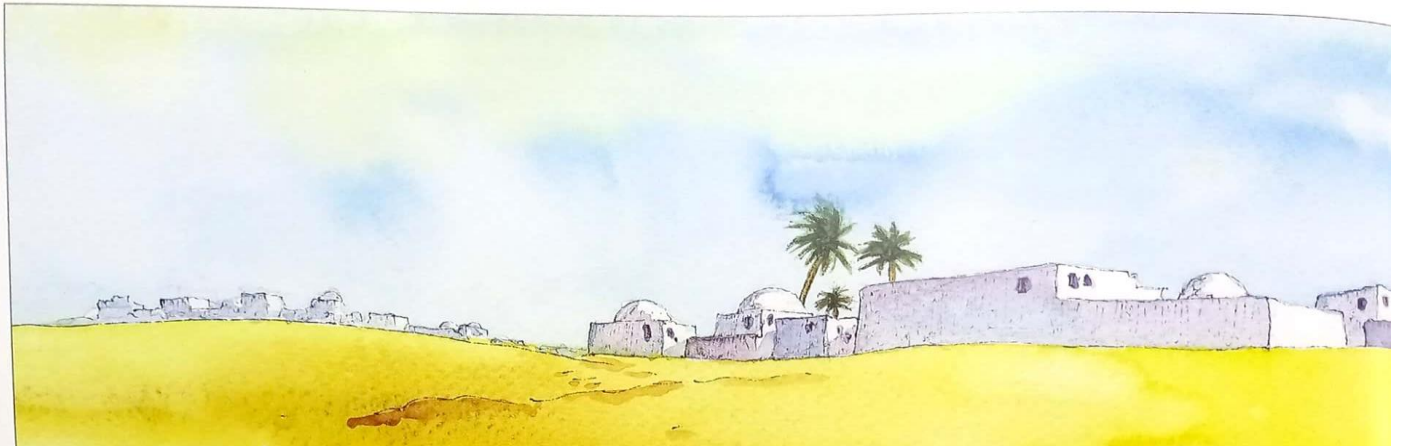
The following morning Tufayl went to the sacred Mosque to make *tawaf* of the Kabah as an act of worship to the idols. He inserted a piece of cotton in each ear for fear that something of the speech of Muhammad might reach his ears.

As soon as he entered the Mosque, Tufayl saw the Prophet standing near the Kabah. He was praying in a fashion that was different from the way the Arabs usually prayed. The scene captivated Tufayl and he could not tear his eyes away. He felt drawn to the Prophet in spite of himself. And God willed that some of what the Prophet was saying reached his ears. Tufayl heard a speech that was so beautiful that he said to himself:

"What are you doing, Tufayl? You are an accomplished poet yourself. You can distinguish between the good and the bad in poetry. What stops you from listening to what this man is saying? If what comes from him is good, accept it, and if it is bad, reject it."

Tufayl remained near the Kabah until the Prophet left. Then he followed the Prophet up to his home. He went in, introduced himself and narrated to the Prophet all the bad things that the Quraysh had said about him and the religion he taught. Then Tufayl asked the Prophet to tell him about his mission.

The Prophet recited to him Surah *al-Ikhlas* and Surah *al-Falaq*. Tufayl had never heard such beautiful words in his life before. Neither was a more noble or just mission ever described to him. Without giving it a second thought Tufayl stretched out his hand to the Prophet in allegiance and testified to the article of faith.

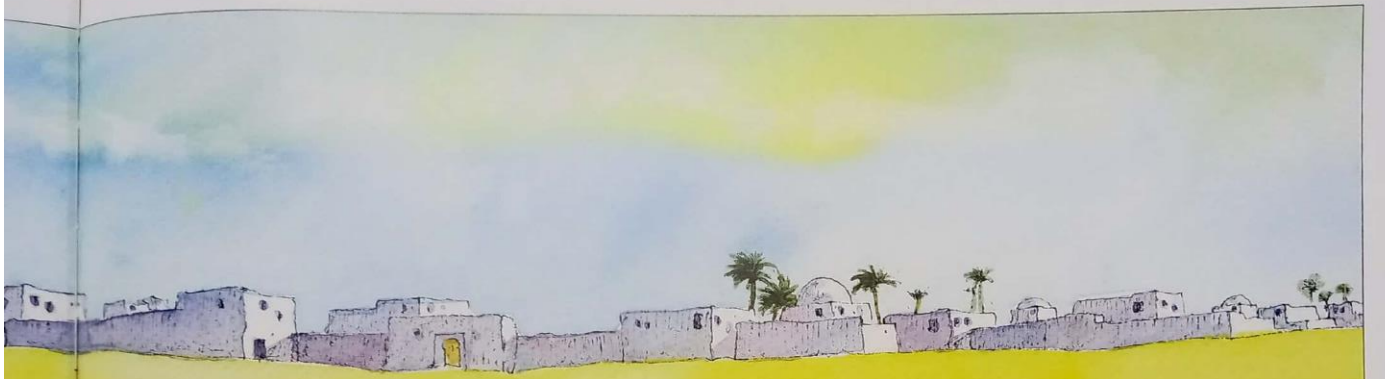


Tufayl stayed on for some time in Makkah to learn more about the teachings of Islam and then returned to his people. He first invited his old father and wife to join Islam. They immediately accepted it. Then they invited the Daws as a whole to become Muslims. But, except for Abu Hurayrah, they were slow in responding. He was the quickest to accept the invitation to join Islam.

The next time Tufayl went to Makkah, Abu Hurayrah was with him.

"What have you left behind?" The Prophet asked Tufayl.

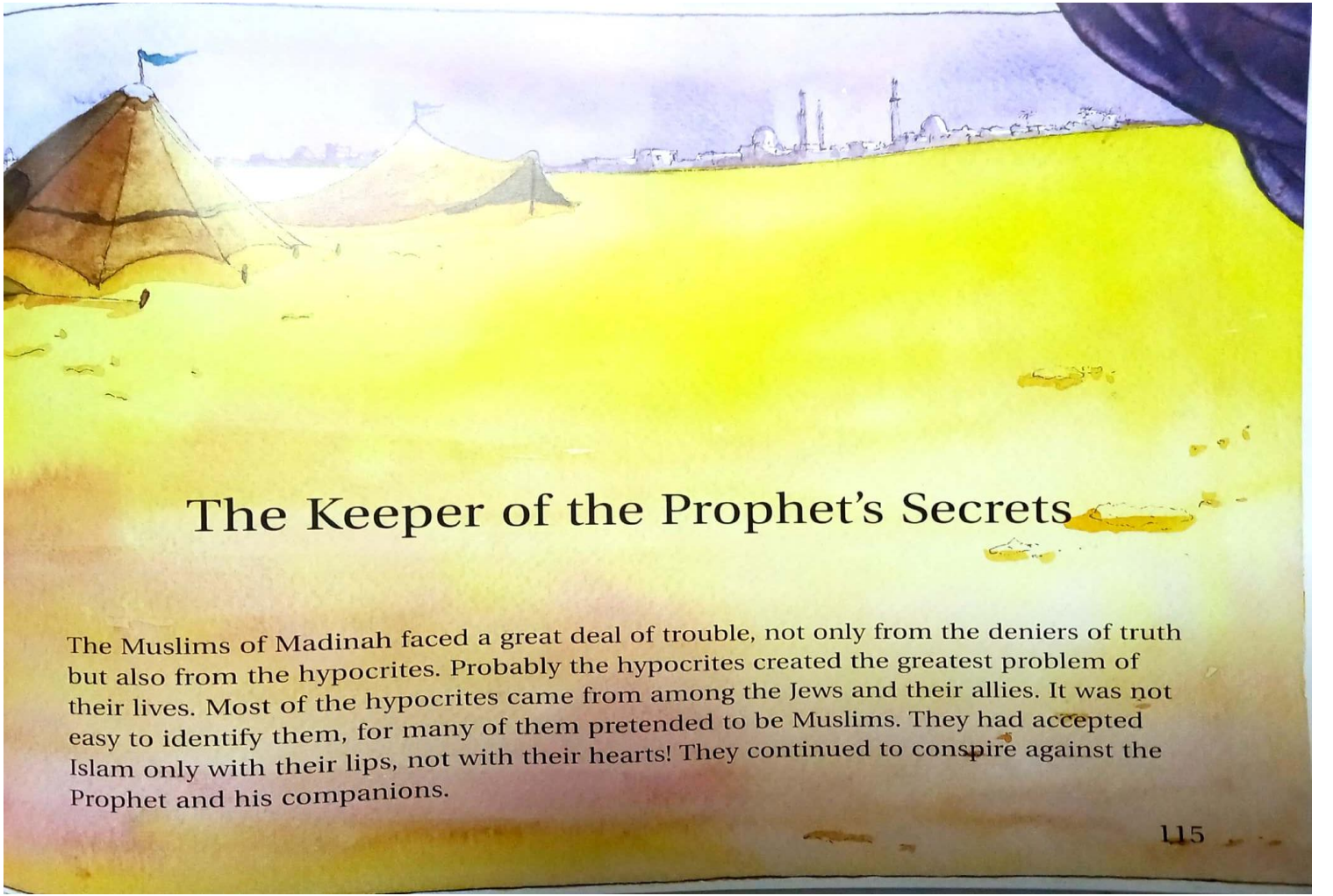
"Hearts with veils over them obscuring the Truth," replied Tufayl.



This time the Prophet prayed for the Daws: "O Lord, guide the Daws, guide the Daws, guide the Daws."

Then he turned to Tufayl and said: "Go back to your people, befriend them, treat them gently and invite them to Islam."

Tufayl remained in the land of Daws inviting people to Islam until after the Hijrah of the Prophet to Madinah. Then he returned to stay near the Prophet. With him were eighty families who had become Muslims and who were strong in their faith. The Prophet was pleased to see them.



The Keeper of the Prophet's Secrets

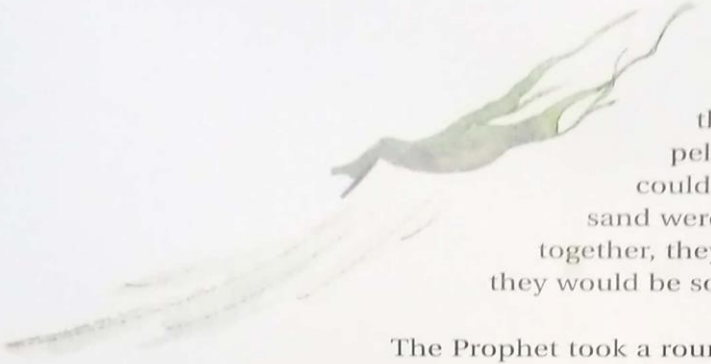
The Muslims of Madinah faced a great deal of trouble, not only from the deniers of truth but also from the hypocrites. Probably the hypocrites created the greatest problem of their lives. Most of the hypocrites came from among the Jews and their allies. It was not easy to identify them, for many of them pretended to be Muslims. They had accepted Islam only with their lips, not with their hearts! They continued to conspire against the Prophet and his companions.

Among the companions of the Prophet there was a man called Hudhayfa ibn al Yaman. The Prophet, who was well aware of who the hypocrites were, confided to him the names of all the hypocrites, as Hudhayfa was known far and wide to be able to keep a secret. He also entrusted to Hudhayfa the task of keeping watch on their activities, so as to protect the Muslims from their low scheming. As the hypocrites knew well that the Muslims were on their guard, they conducted themselves with great secrecy. Thus Hudhayfa had a difficult task.

The Prophet shared the very sensitive information about the hypocrites only with Hudhayfa and not with any other of his companions. So except for Hudhayfa and the Prophet himself nobody knew who they were.

During the Battle of Khandaq, the Muslims had to face prolonged hardships and difficulties. They were exhausted by the long siege carried on by the deniers of truth and some of them even began to despair. The Prophet decided to send someone into the enemy camp at night to check out the mettle and morale of his enemies, as he suspected they might be breaking down.

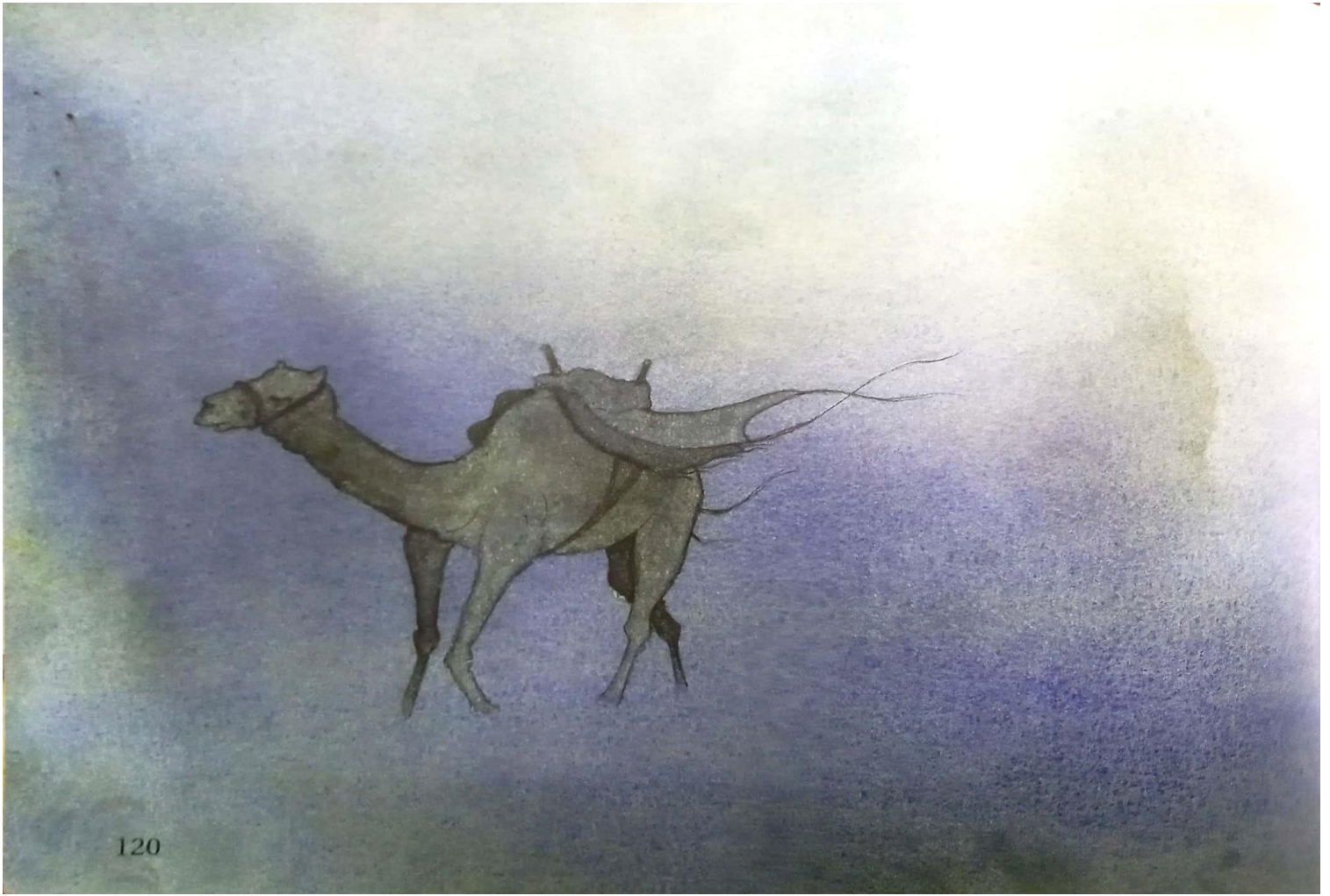
It was a very dark night. It was, in fact, so dark that if one were to stretch out one's hand, one would not be able to see one's own fingers! For days the weather was exceptionally cold and wet. A fierce wind was blowing from the desert, bringing torrential rains. The gusts of the wind and rain lashed at men and animals with terrible force. The Muslims were both cold and hungry. They longed for the ordeal to be over.



Matters were no better in the camp of the deniers of truth. The fierce gusts of wind put out their fires, overturned their tents and pelted them with sand and dust. They could not see anything, for grains of sand were getting into their eyes. Huddling together, they sat close to each other and hoped they would be soon able to go home.

The Prophet took a round of inspection of the Muslim camp. He wanted to put courage into the hearts of his dejected followers and make sure they were all right. When he reached Hudhayfa, he said to him: "Something is happening among the people of Abu Sufyan. Go secretly into their encampment and bring me the news of what is going on there."

Following the Prophet's command, Hudhayfa sneaked out across the trench, crawled into the enemy camp and melted into the crowd. He saw overturned tents, dejected men talking in whispers and frightened animals. When dawn was near, Abu Sufyan got up and addressed his men: "People of the Quraysh, I say, you are not in a safe and secure place. Our shelters have been destroyed. Our horses and our camels are dying. Our allies have failed us and we have been told that they are planning to betray us. On top of that, we are battered by this bitterly cold wind. So, get moving! Let's go home! I am leaving!"



Finishing his speech, Abu Sufyan went to his camel and mounted it. He struck it and it stood up. His men followed.

Hearing this speech and seeing that the Quraysh are ready to leave, Hudhayfa returned to the Prophet and told him that their enemies are about to go home. The Prophet was very happy to hear the good news and the Muslims were relieved that God has heard their prayers.

Hudhayfa faithfully kept the pledge he had made to the Prophet about not disclosing the hypocrites' names. After the Prophet passed away, when both Abu Bakr and 'Umar became Caliphs, they often came to talk to him, trying to find out more about the movements and activities of the hypocrites. But Hudhayfa remained tight-lipped and cautious. He did not betray the secret entrusted to him by the Prophet. Only 'Umar was sometimes able to find out something about the hypocrites in an indirect way.

Once ‘Umar asked Hudhayfa: “Tell me if any of my governors is a hypocrite?” “One,” replied Hudhayfa.

“Point him out to me,” ordered ‘Umar.

“I won’t do that,” replied Hudhayfah.

Whenever a Muslim died, ‘Umar would ask: “Is Hudhayfa attending his funeral prayer?”

If the answer was “Yes”, ‘Umar would attend the prayer and if the answer was “No”, he would refrain from joining in the prayer.

A Matter of Great Honour

Ubayy ibn Ka'b was an Ansar of the Khazraj tribe. He was one of the first inhabitants of Yathrib (Madinah) to have accepted Islam, as he had pledged his allegiance to the Prophet at Aqabah. This took place in the 10th year of the Prophet's mission and three years before the Hijrah. He took part in the battle of Badr and many other engagements fought by the Muslims. For many years, acting as a scribe to the Prophet, he used to write down the letters dictated by him.

Ubayy ibn Ka'b was one of the few people who had written down the Quranic revelations and had a scroll, or *mushaf* of his own. At the time of the Prophet's death, he was one of the twenty-five or so people who had learnt the complete Quran

by heart. His recitation was so beautiful and his understanding of the sacred text was so deep that the Prophet encouraged his companions to learn the Quran from him. Later on, 'Umar too often told the Muslims:

"Whoever wants to ask anything about the Quran, let him go to Ubayy ibn Ka'b..."

Ubayy enjoyed a special honour among the Muslims with regard to the Quran. One day, the Prophet told him: "Ubayy ibn Ka'b! I have been commanded to lay open the Quran to you."

Ubayy was overjoyed. He knew of course that the Prophet received his commands from on high. Unable to control his excitement, he hesitatingly asked: "Messenger of God... Have I been mentioned to you by name?"

"Yes," replied the Prophet, "By your own name and by your family history."

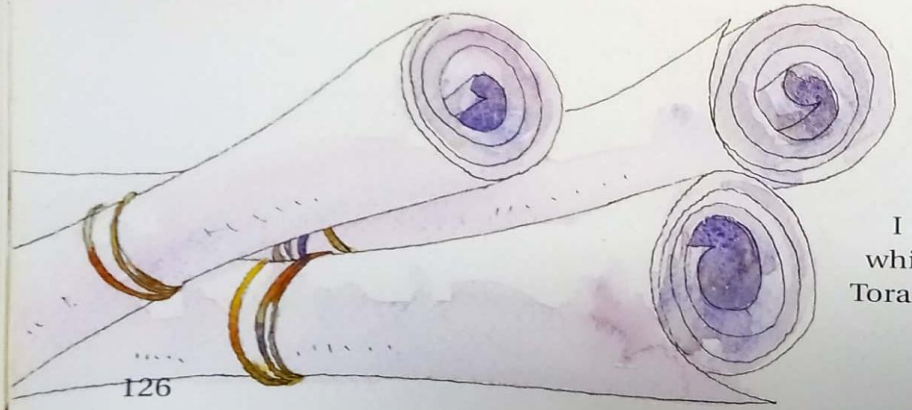
Any Muslim whose name had been conveyed to the heart of the Prophet in this manner must certainly have been a man of great ability and of very great virtue.

It is narrated that one day the Messenger of God asked Ubayy ibn Ka'b: "Which verse of the Book of God is the greatest?"

"Allah and His Messenger know best," came the reply.

The Prophet repeated his question and Ubayy ibn Ka'b answered in these words:

"God: there is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal One. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. His is what the heavens and the earth contain..." (*al-Baqarah*, 2:255) and most likely he went on to complete the Verse of the Throne, or *Ayat al-Kursi*. Hearing his reply the Prophet was greatly pleased.



Ubayy related that the Prophet once asked him: "Shall I teach you a *surah* the like of which has not been revealed in the Torah nor in the Injil or Zabur?"

"Certainly," replied Ubayy.

"I hope you will not leave before I tell you what it is?" asked the Prophet, lovingly teasing Ubayy and prolonging his suspense. At the same time he kept on walking as if to leave the room. When the Prophet was almost at the door, Ubayy, fearing that the Prophet would leave without telling him about the *surah*, reminded him:

"O Messenger of God! You promised to tell me about the *surah*..."

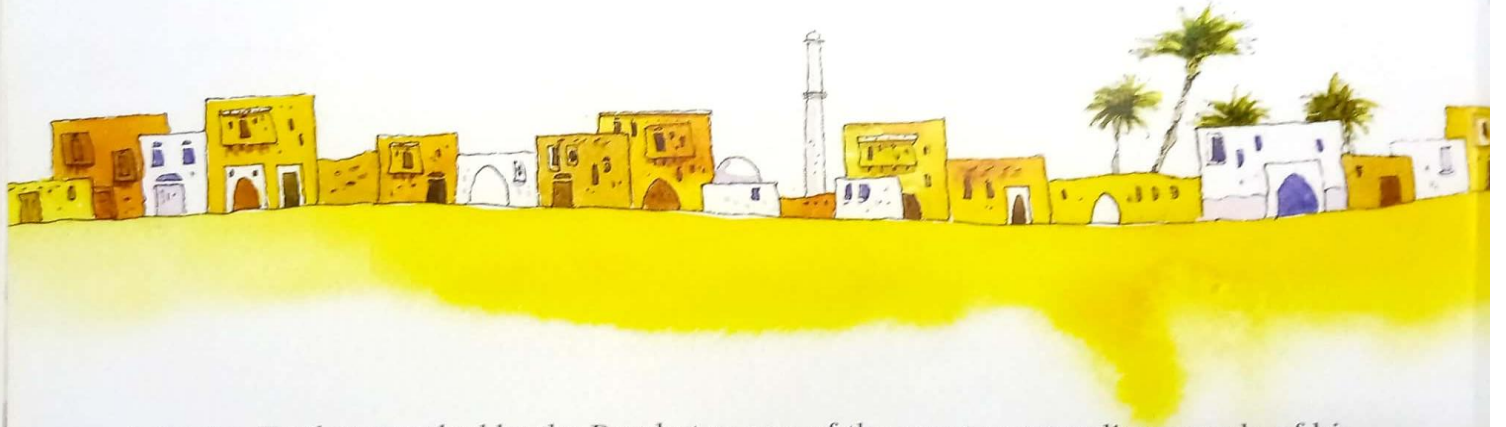
In reply the Prophet enquired: "What do you recite when you stand for *Salat*?"

"Surah Fatihah", Ubayy replied.

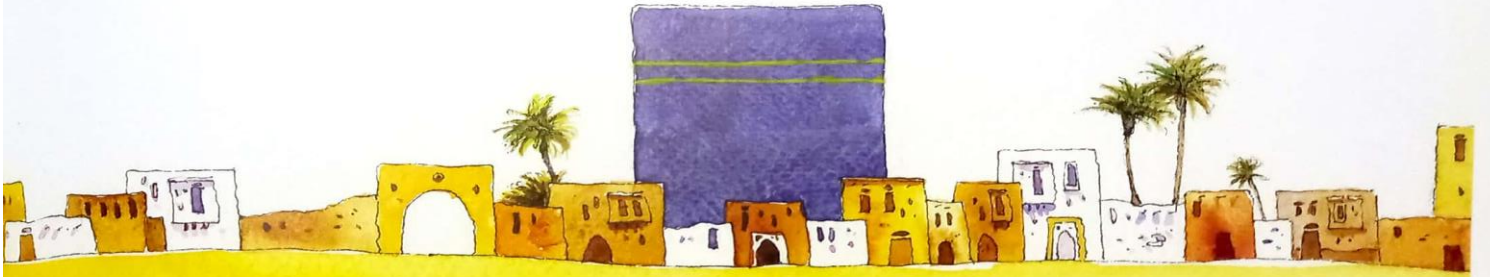
The Prophet, pleased with Ubayy, joyfully exclaimed:

"That's it! That's it! They are the seven oft-repeated verses of which God Almighty has said: 'We have given you the seven oft-repeated verses and the mighty Quran.'"

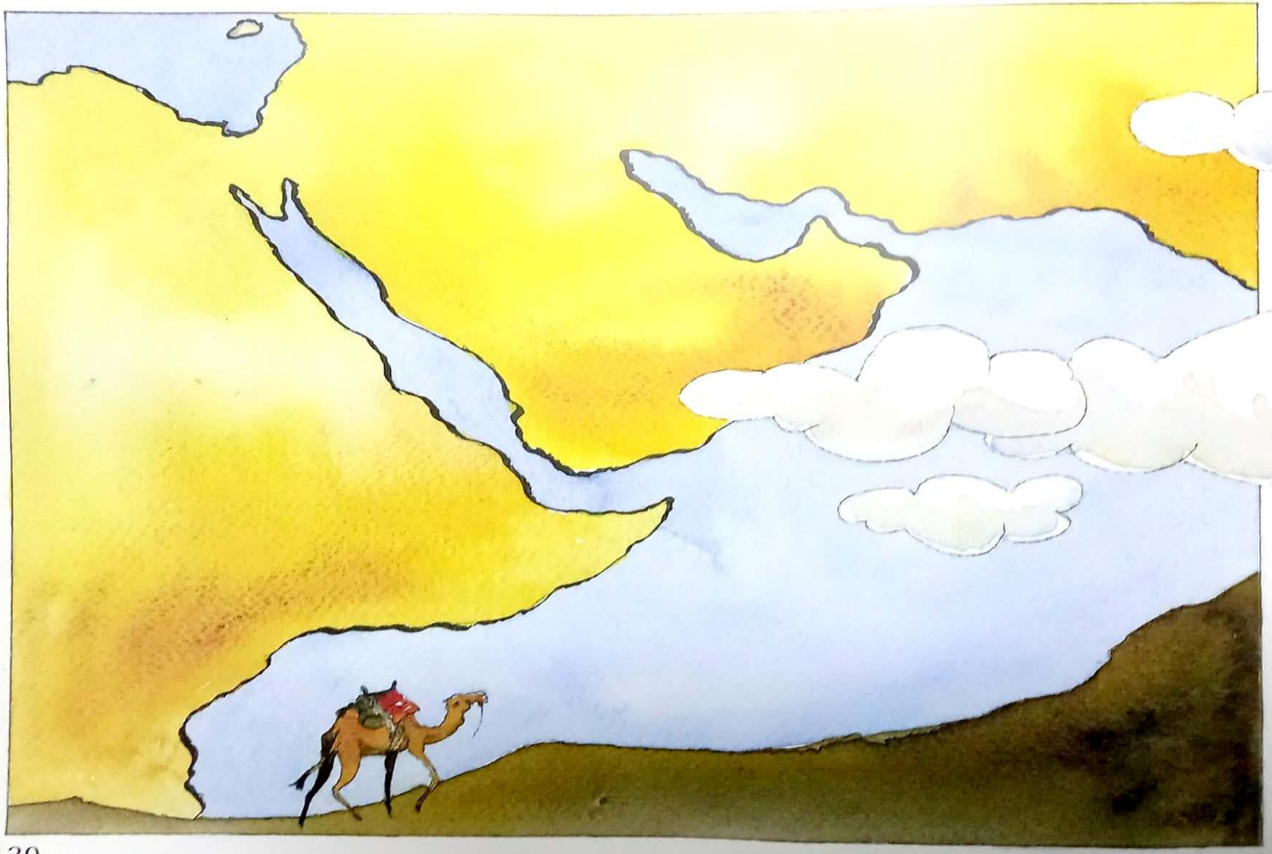
God Accepts Father's Prayer for his Son



Sa'id ibn Zayd was ranked by the Prophet as one of the most outstanding people of his generation. He was one of those companions of the Prophet to whom the Prophet had promised Paradise.



Sa'id's father, Zayd ibn Amr, was a *hanif*. *Hanif* were men who believed in one God but had lived before the Prophet Muhammad was charged with his mission and had no opportunity to become Muslims. They included Waraqah ibn Nawfal, Abdullah ibn Jahsh, 'Uthman ibn Harith, Umaymah bint Abdul Muttalib and Zayd ibn Amr, among others.



Zayd ibn Amr travelled to many far off places in search of true religion but he could not find it anywhere. One day as he was sitting dejected in front of a church in Syria, thinking about what to do next, a monk approached him and told him that the religion he was looking for was no longer to be found. However, the time was now near when God would send forth a Messenger from among his own people, who would revive the religion of Ibrahim.

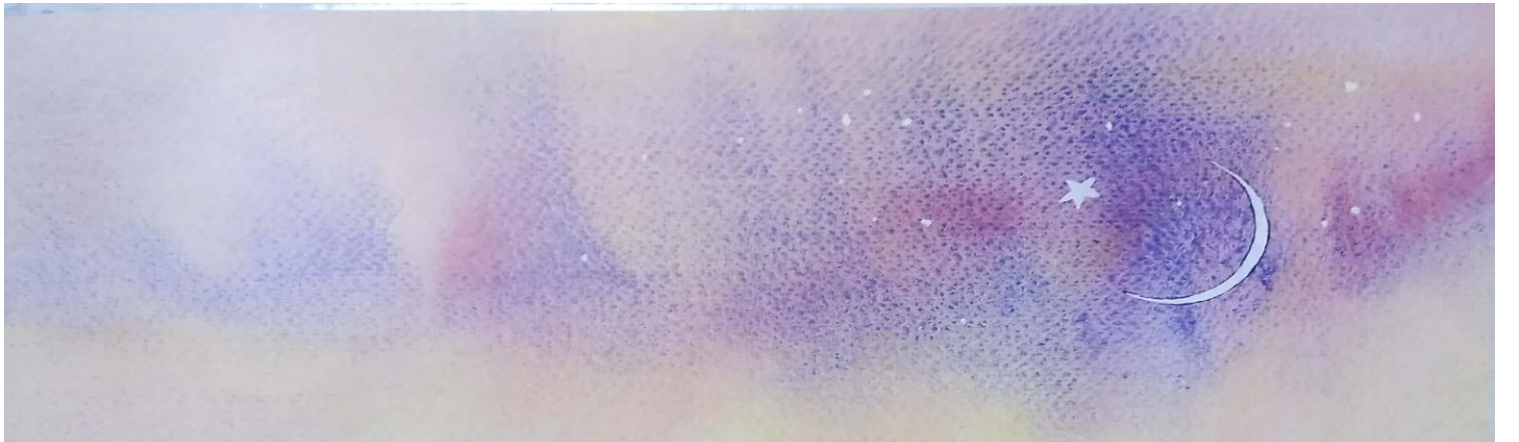
Zayd returned home and lived his life piously, waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. When Zayd's life was near its end and he was about to breathe his last, he raised his eyes to the heavens in hope and prayed:

"O Lord, if you have kept me away from attaining this good, do not keep my son from attaining it."

God, the All-Hearing, heard Zayd's prayer. When Muhammad the Messenger of God rose up among the Arabs and began inviting people to Islam, Zayd's son, Sa'id, was in the forefront of those who testified to the oneness of God and proclaimed their allegiance to Muhammad. This was only to be expected, as Sa'id had grown up in a household that had rejected the polytheistic ways of the Quraysh and had for his father a man who had spent his lifetime searching for the truth and died in its pursuit.

Sa'id was not yet twenty years old when he embraced Islam. His young and faithful wife Fatimah, 'Umar's sister, also accepted Islam early on. She was terrified that either her father or her brother 'Umar, both known for their quick temper, might come to know about their commitment to Islam. Both Sa'id and Fatimah somehow managed to conceal their conversion from the Quraysh and especially from Fatimah's own family for quite some time.

Yet, it was they who were ultimately responsible for the strong-minded and determined 'Umar finally converting to Islam. But this only happened after the Prophet had prayed to God to bring about a change in 'Umar's heart. His conversion increased the power and prestige of this faith which was just coming into existence.



Sa'id was totally devoted to the Prophet and the service of Islam. He took part in all the major campaigns and battles along with the Prophet, though he could not take part in the battle of Badr, as the Prophet had sent him elsewhere. It is said that Sa'id always shielded the Prophet from his enemies by keeping himself ahead and in front of him in battle and always standing behind him in prayers.

After the death of the Prophet, Sa'id was one of the people whom Abu Bakr consulted on the Prophet's succession. His name is often linked with such companions as 'Uthman, Abu Ubaydah and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas in the campaigns that were waged on behalf of Islam. He was well known for his courage and bravery.

Sa'id lived for many more years and continued to play an important role in the Muslim community till his death.

Goodnight Stories
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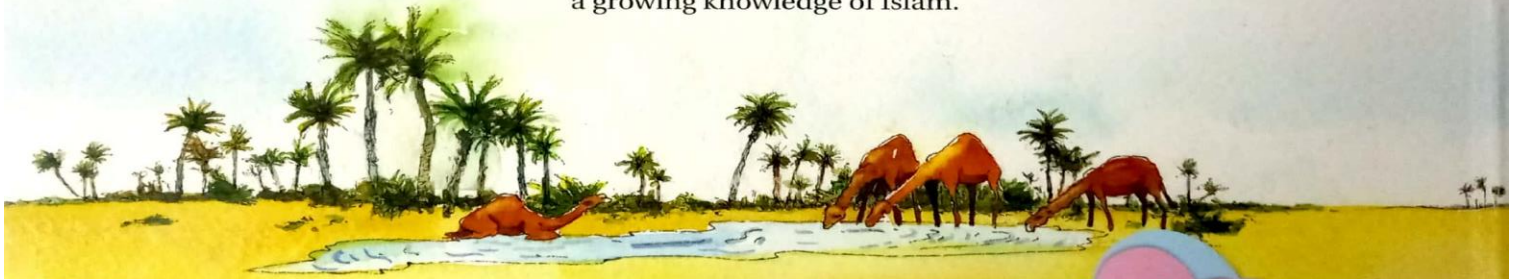

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