



Introduction

As the Prophet carried on with his mission in Makkah, slowly, people began to accept Islam. Some of them were already giving up the worship of idols and other deities, and when they heard the message of the oneness of God (or what in Islam is called *tawheed*), they immediately felt that this was the Truth. And so, they became believers in Islam. The early converts included the wife of the Prophet, Khadija; his childhood friend, Abu Bakr; his cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib; and Umar Ibn Khattab, who had once been a dire enemy of the Prophet. All these people took up the *dawah* mission of the Prophet seriously and played an important role in spreading the message of Islam.

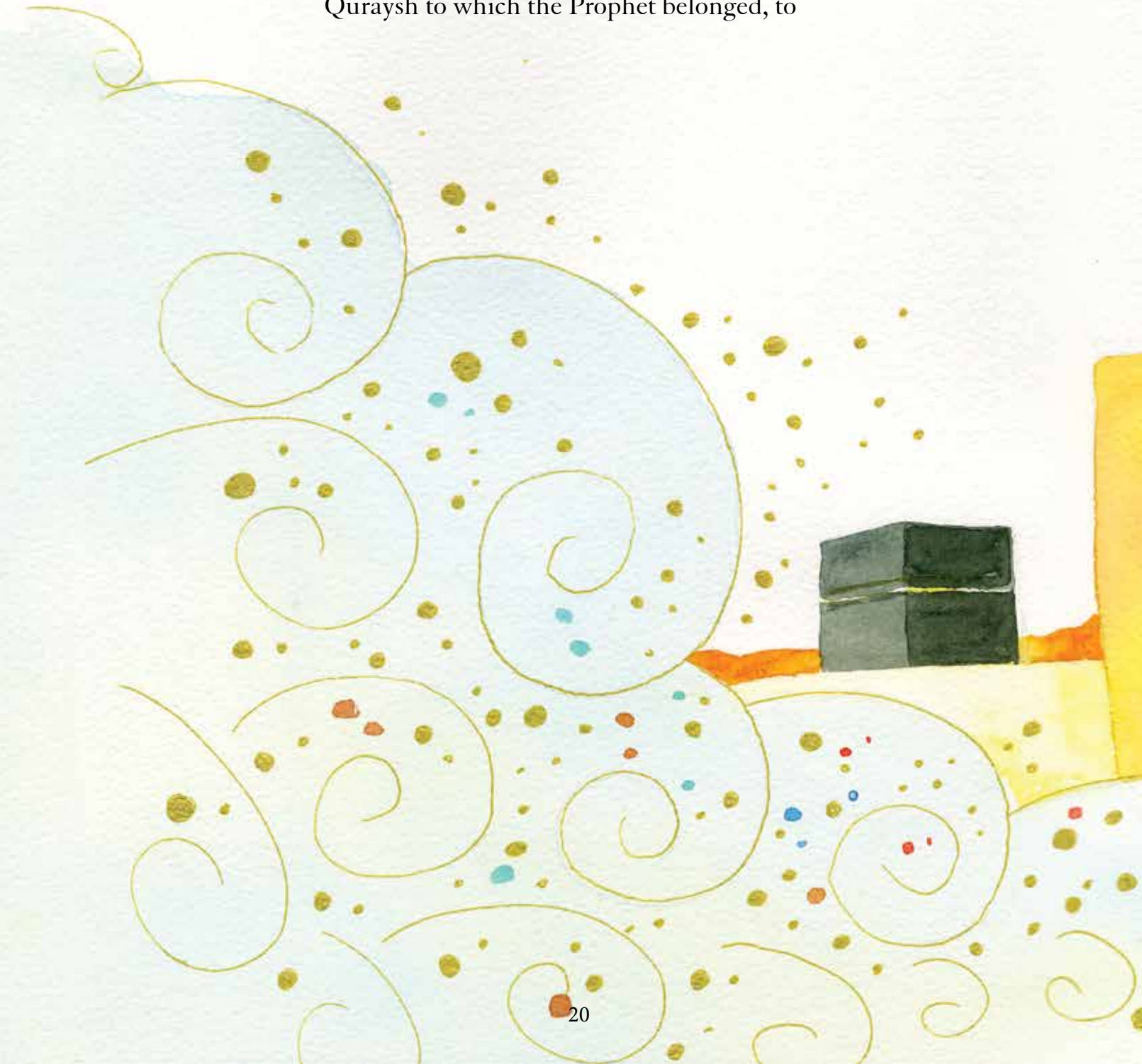
Open Preaching

Slowly, but steadily, Islam started spreading in Makkan homes. Everywhere, people started talking about it. According to Ibn Ishaq, the earliest biographer of the Prophet, the Prophet conveyed the message of Islam to people, one by one, on an individual basis, for three years. Later, when *Surah al-Muddaththir* was revealed, the Prophet was commanded by Allah to warn people publicly. This is how the Quran puts it: “O you, wrapped up in your cloak, arise and give warning.”



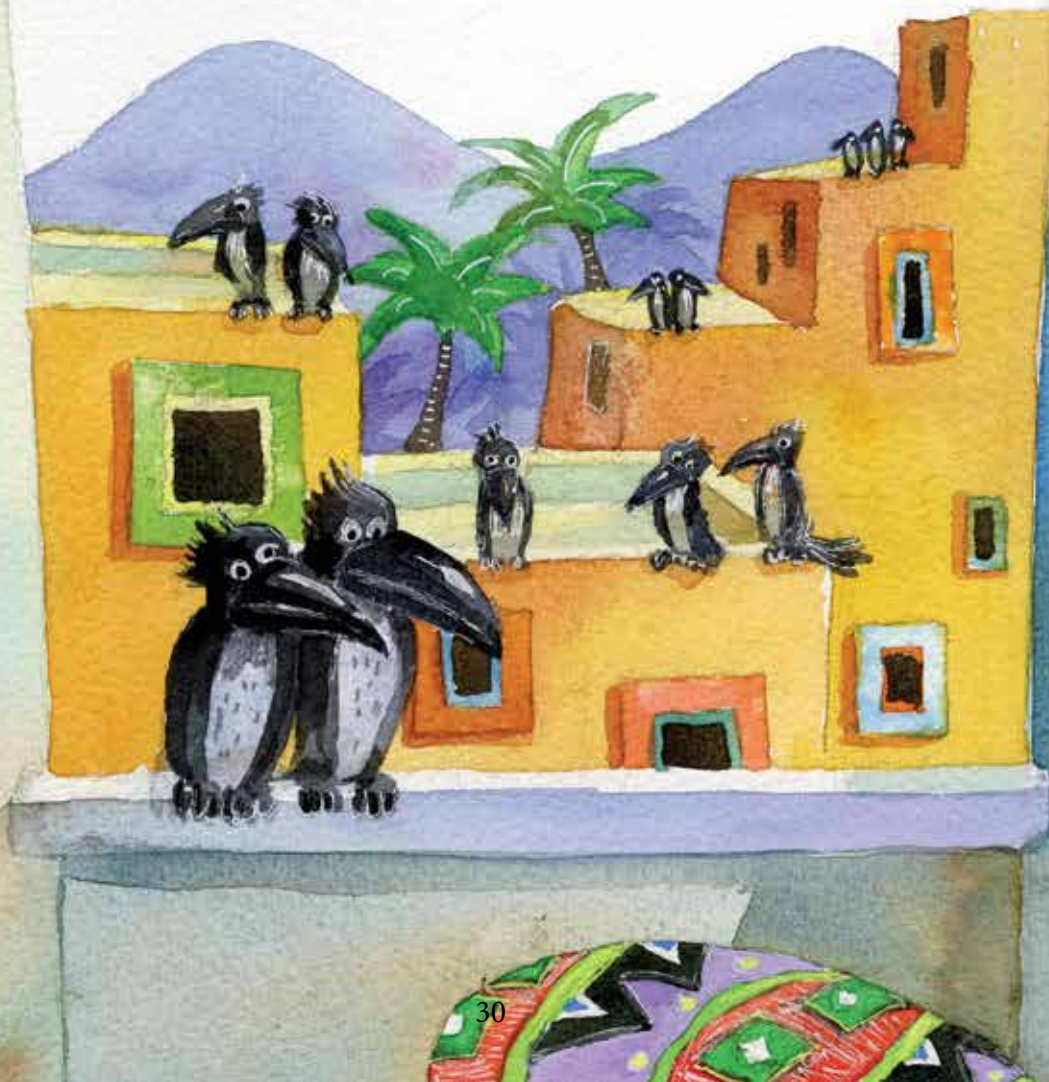
“I swear by God!” replied Abu Talib, “The Quraysh have not done me justice. You have firmly decided to go against me. So, go and do whatever you want!”

Seeing the hostile attitude of the Quraysh towards the Prophet, Abu Talib called on the Banu Hashim, the clan from among the Quraysh to which the Prophet belonged, to



Utbah's Cruelty

One day, when the Prophet was praying in front of the Kabah, a man named Utbah slowly entered the Kabah. He had some sheets of cloth in his hand. He was barefoot, and so he did not make any sound. He slowly tiptoed to where the Prophet was praying. The moment the Prophet touched his head to the ground in prostration, Utbah flung the sheets over his head. Then, he started hitting the Prophet so hard that blood started oozing out from his face and nose.



The first group of Muslims who left Makkah for Ethiopia consisted of 11 men and five women. The group included Uthman ibn Affan and his wife, Ruqayyah, a daughter of the Prophet. They left Makkah secretly and finally reached the nearby seaport of Jeddah. In Jeddah, they found two ferries ready to leave for Ethiopia. They boarded the ferries, paying a sum of five dirhams each.

When the Makkans came to know about their escape, they sent their men on horses to arrest them. But when they arrived at the port of Jeddah, the ferries had already set sail with the Muslims for Ethiopia!

