

"A concise, readable and moving account of the key moments in the eventful life of the Prophet Muhammad"

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MUHAMMAD

THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET

based on original sources

Can people learn the wisdom of thinking about others, and not just about themselves?

Muhammad is an honest trader living in Mecca. He is happily married to a wealthy merchant, and they have lovely children. Life should be wonderful. But for Muhammad it isn't enough. He begins to spend long periods of time alone, thinking deeply about life and his relationship with God.

One day when he is in the mountains Muhammad receives a message from God. He must share it with all those around him, knowing that it will completely change the way in which people understand their lives. But will anybody believe in his message? What if some people don't want to listen?

This is the story of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the man who brought to the world the message of Islam, a religion that today has millions of followers around the globe.



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Ahmed Abo Kneġar



Retold by Ahmed Abo Kneġar
Illustrated by Mohsen Abou El Azm



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with calligraphy by Abdelghani Azzi

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THE CHARACTERS



The Prophet Muhammad

Muhammad has always been a well-respected man, but can he convince the people of Arabia that he is the Messenger of God?

Abu Talib

Abu Talib loves his nephew Muhammad dearly, but will he stand against the nobles of the Quraysh to protect him?



Khadija

Khadija always knew that her husband Muhammad was special. How can she help him in his task?

The picture next to each character's name shows their name in Arabic calligraphy. The Arabic language has always been very important to Muslims because it is the language of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, and decorative writing has always been a valued form of art in Muslim culture.

Ali

Ali was brought up by his older cousin, Muhammad, and has always admired him. But can Ali risk his own life for Muhammad?



Abu Bakr

Abu Bakr believed in the message of his friend Muhammad immediately. How can he encourage others to believe in it too?

Aisha

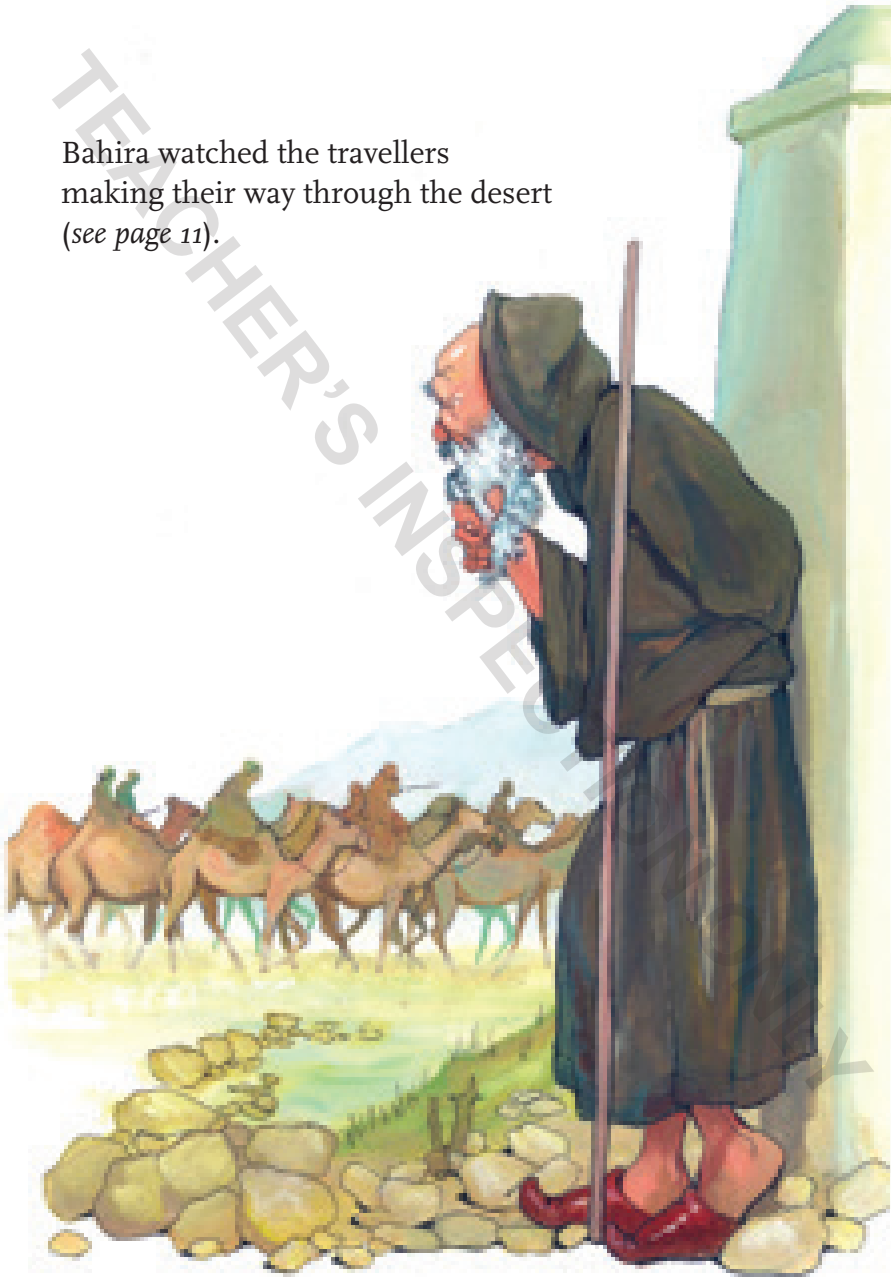
Muhammad's second wife Aisha, Abu Bakr's daughter, has an excellent memory. How will she help the Muslims?



Nobles of the Quraysh

The Quraysh are the ruling class of Mecca, and receive lots of money from pilgrims coming to worship. Why do they reject the message that Muhammad brings?

Bahira watched the travellers making their way through the desert (see page 11).



MUHAMMAD

A gentle breeze blew over the town of Mecca, at the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, as Abd al-Muttalib approached the sacred shrine of the Kaaba. Old Abd al-Muttalib was pensive, thinking about his beloved son Abdullah, who had died seven months earlier, only two months after marrying Amina. Yet Abdullah had left a memory in Amina's womb, and this was the night she would deliver her baby.

Abd al-Muttalib reached the Kaaba, where he asked God to grant him a fine grandson to make up for the loss of his son. As dawn broke, he heard hurrying footsteps. He looked up to see Amina's maid rushing towards him.

'My lady has given birth to a boy!' she exclaimed joyfully.

When he reached Amina's house, Abd al-Muttalib congratulated Amina on the delivery of her baby, and leaned to kiss his little forehead.

‘What name should he be given?’ asked Amina. Abd al-Muttalib gave no answer, but rose with the baby in his arms. Blissfully cradling his grandson, he went immediately to the Kaaba and walked around it, thanking God for the wonderful gift. Many possible names came to his mind, but eventually he heard the child’s name in his heart: Muhammad. This would be the baby’s name. The name had never been used by the Arabs before, but now Muhammad had entered the world.



Wet nurses from the desert came to Mecca seeking babies to look after. It was normal for wealthy city



families to give their babies to women from the desert to nurse them and bring them up. Both families gained from this custom – the desert family received gifts and good treatment from the baby’s father, and the child was brought up in the clean desert environment, away from pollution and diseases. What’s more, everybody admired the Bedouin from the desert for their strong, independent character and their mastery of the beautiful classical Arabic language. The city families wanted their children to absorb this traditional culture.

One of the wet nurses was Halima, a poor woman from the tribe of Bani Saad. The Quraysh, the wealthy ruling tribe in Mecca, didn’t want to give any of their babies to Halima because they were worried about entrusting their children to such a poor woman, and none of the other wet nurses wanted to take Muhammad because they knew that, as his father had died, they would not receive anything in return. Having no other choice, Halima took Muhammad.

Although images of the Prophet Muhammad have never been allowed by the main Muslim authorities, in the past some Persian, Turkish and Indian Muslims have created pictures of him. When they did so, they used the styles of pictures that were common in their countries before Islam came.

Recently some non-Muslims have drawn pictures and cartoons of Muhammad. They say that they are free to write, draw and say whatever they want to. They believe that if there are limits on what you can think and say and draw, it can be dangerous, and that other people do not have the right to say what you can and can't make pictures of. After all, they say, pictures are only pictures.

When non-Muslims draw images of the Prophet Muhammad, many Muslims are upset and angry because they feel that the artists are laughing at their prophet, and indirectly at Muslims themselves. They believe that non-Muslims should respect what is important to Muslims even if it isn't important to them.

Life in the time of the Prophet Muhammad



Muhammad lived in the Arabian Peninsula, an enormous area of harsh desert. Dotted here and there in the expanses of sand were a few oases, which were the only places with water. Some people lived permanently in these oases, and



some lived in the desert as nomads, travelling from place to place. Each person belonged to a tribe, and the tribes often fought each other violently.

Luxury goods such as spices, ivory and fabrics were carried across the desert by camels to be sold in Syria and Byzantium, to the north-west of Arabia. Mecca was a major city on this trade route, so it was always full of merchants and their camels.