

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER
CHAPTER 105
SURAH AL-FIL

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

www.quran.live

HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

105

SURAH AL-FIL

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

Introduction and Summary

This early Makkan Surah refer to an event that happened in the year of birth of our Holy Prophet, say about 570 A.C. Yemen was then under the rule of Abyssinians (Christians) who had driven out the Jewish Himyarite rulers.

Abraham Ashram was the Abyssinians governor or viceroy. Intoxicated with power and fired by religious fanaticism, he led a big expedition against Makkah, intending to destroy the Ka'bah. He had an elephant or elephants in his train.

But his sacrilegious intentions were defeated by a miracle. No defence was offered by the custodians of the Ka'bah as the Army was too strong for them. But a shower of stones, thrown by flocks of birds, destroyed the invading army almost to a man. The stones produced sores and pustules on the skin, which spread like a pestilence. (R).

C.285 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*Let not man be intoxicated with power
Or material resources: they cannot defeat
The Purpose of Allah. So Abrahah Ashram
Found to his cost. His sacrilegious attack
On the holy Fane of Allah brought about
His own undoing: what seemed but frail
Destroyed his mighty hosts in a day!*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ (١)

1. **Seest** thou not how thy Lord dealt with the Companions of the Elephant?

C6270. Seest thou not?-

i.e. with thy mental vision. The incident happened in the very year of the holy Prophet's birth, barely two months before it,

C6271. These were the troops of Abrahah the Abyssinian, who invaded Makkah with a large army, in which were some elephants. See Introduction to this Surah.

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضَلُّلٍ (٢)

2. Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray?

وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ (٣)

3. And He sent against them flights of Birds,

C6272. The miracle consisted in the birds coming in large flights and flinging stones at the army which destroyed the whole of Abrahah's army.

تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ (٤)

4. Striking them with **stones** of baked clay.

C6273. Sijjil: see n. 1579 to 11:82.

The word also occurs at 15:74.

Stones of baked clay, or hard as baked clay, are part of the miracle in the story.

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ (٥)

5. Then did He make them like an empty **field** of stalks and straw, (of which the corn) **has been eaten up**.

C6274. A field, from which all the corn has been eaten up and only straw with stalks or stubble is left, is a field dead and useless. And such was the army of Abrahah, -dead and useless.

Another possible rendering would be:

"like eaten straw and stubble found in the dung of animals".

The meaning would be the same, but much more emphatic.

C6275. The lesson to be drawn is twofold. For the Pagan Quraysh of Makkah it was:

Allah will protect His own; if you persecute the holy Prophet, he is greater than the mere building of the Ka'bah: will not Allah protect him?

For men in all ages it is:

'a man intoxicated with power can prepare armies and material resources against Allah's holy Plan; but such a man's plan will be his own undoing; he cannot prevail against Allah'.