

**INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *Al-Fil*, 105.**

This early Makkan Sūra refers to an event that happened in the year of the birth of our holy Prophet, say about 570 A.D. Yaman was then under the rule of the Abyssinians (Christians), who had driven out the Jewish Ḥimyar rulers. Abraha Ashram was the Abyssinian governor or viceroy. Intoxicated with power and fired by religious fanaticism, he led a big expedition against Makkah, intending to destroy the Ka'ba. 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'ba 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.

*Al-Fil, or The Elephant.*

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. Seest<sup>6270</sup> thou not  
How thy Lord dealt  
With the Companions  
Of the Elephant?<sup>6271</sup>
2. Did He not make  
Their treacherous plan  
Go astray?
3. And He sent against them  
Flights of Birds,<sup>6272</sup>
4. Striking them with stones<sup>6273</sup>  
Of baked clay.
5. Then did He make them  
Like an empty field<sup>6274</sup>  
Of stalks and straw,  
(Of which the corn)  
Has been eaten up.<sup>6275</sup>

سُورَةُ الْفِيلِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ

وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ

تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارٍ مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ

6270. *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.

6271. These were the troops of Abraha the Abyssinian, who invaded Makkah with a large army, in which were some elephants. See Introduction to this Sūra.

6272. The miracle consisted in the birds coming in large flights and flinging stones at the army which destroyed the whole of Abraha's army.

6273. *Sijjil*: see n. 1579 to xi. 82. The word also occurs at xv. 74. Stones of baked clay, or hard as baked clay, are part of the miracle in the story.

6274. 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 Abraha,—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.

6275. The lesson to be drawn is twofold. For the Pagan Quraish 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'ba: 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'.