

Al-Fil [The Elephant] **Makkan Period**

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

[1] Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the people of the elephants?

[2] Did He not bring their plan to naught?

[3] And He sent against them swarms of birds

[4] which smote them with stones of baked clay,

[5] and made them like straw eaten up (by cattle).¹

*1. This refers to an incident that took place only 50 days before the Prophet's birth. Abrahah, the Christian ruler of the Abyssinian kingdom of Yemen, led an expedition to Makkah with 60,000 troops. He was fired with the resolve to destroy the Ka'bah. His army had also brought along some elephants. When Abrahah reached a place that lies between Muzdalifah and Mina, there suddenly appeared swarms of birds carrying stones in their beaks and claws, which they pelted upon the Abyssinian army. Anyone who was hit by these stones soon started to rot, his flesh would start falling away from his bones. Thus the whole army was destroyed. This incident was well known in Arabia. At the time of the revelation of this **surah** there were still thousands of people in Makkah who had personally witnessed this incident. The Arabs accepted that the destruction of the "people of the elephants" had been brought about by God's will and power.*