# The Year of the Elephant

A few months before the birth of prophet Mohammed ﷺ , in 570 A.D., a great army led by an Abyssinian travelled hundreds of miles to pull down the ancient house, called the Ka’ba in Makkah, after invading and capturing Yemen. The ancient house, last built by Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ishmael (Isma’il), had great repute among the Arabs. The Arabs travelled hundreds of miles from remote parts of the peninsula to visit it. Simple and austere, it had a strange spiritual beauty that drew men towards it. The church that the Abyssinian had built, at great cost, using the finest marble, gold and ivory could not compete with it, therefore the Abyssinian felt that the ancient house had to be pulled down so that people would visit the magnificent church that he has built.

When the Arabs heard of this, two different tribes together with other volunteers from other tribes, tried to block the Abyssinian way but were badly defeated. Against the Abyssinian’s great army, his war elephants and javelin throwers they did not stand a chance. Therefore, the Abyssinian continued making his way towards the Ka’ba in Makkah using a captive or prisoner as a guide.

When near Makkah, the Abyssinian sent a messenger to Abdul Muttalib, the ruler of Makkah and said, “I have not come to fight. I have only come to pull down the ancient house (the Ka’ba). This house has a strange attraction to men and women and so long as it remained, his church did not have a chance of stirring their hearts. If you do not resist me, then no life or property will be damaged only the ancient house will be pulled down.” Abdul Muttalib tried his best to convince the Abyssinian to take all the other treasures in Arabia and leave the ancient house which was only a cube with no roof made of clay but failed. Exhausted and with a heavy heart Abdul Muttalib returned to tell the people of Makkah that all was lost and to flee for their lives to the mountain heights. When questioned what would become of the ancient house, he said, “The Ka’ba has Allah to protect it.” When the Abyssinian tried to enter the boundaries of Makkah, the elephants refused to cross over. Then suddenly in the sky there appeared birds in large numbers. They swooped down upon the army of the Abyssinian and kept pelting them with small sharp stones until they began to flee back towards Yemen.

(Qur’an 105:1-5)