

# **THE ARMY OF ELEPHANTS**

**Faqeer Mohammed Shakeel Qādirī Riḍawī**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*O Dear Prophet (Muhammad Sall Allahu Alaihi  
Wasallam)*

*Did you not see how your Lord dealt with the People of  
the Elephant ?*

*Did He not put their plans into ruin ?*

*And sent flocks of birds upon them*

*Which hit them with stones of baked clay*

*So he made them like broken straw eaten up*

*Surah Al Feel*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## TRANSLATORS NOTE

All Praise is due to Almighty Allāh, who sent the Ambiyā Alayhimussalaam as guidance to the people.

Peace, blessings and salutations upon the leader of all the Ambiyā, Sayyidunā Rasūlullāh Sall Allahu Alayhi Wasallam and His illustrious Companions Radi Allahu Anhum Ajmaeen, who are our stars of guidance as well as the best of all companions to have walked this Earth.

Upon the Ulamā e Haq Ahle Sunnat Wa Jamā'at, who are the manifestation of truth, and upon all those who follow and will continue to follow Maslak e Āla Hadrat, the path of recognition of Haq in this era.

Surah Al Feel is one of the commonly recited Surahs of the Holy Quran. It's background story is often told with many different variations. I have attempted to translate the story of the people of the elephants from authentic sources so that one can separate the facts from the fiction. This has been taken from Ibn Atheers Al Kaamil Fi Al Taarikh, and from a collection of works by Alahadrat Azeemul Barakat Imam Ahmad Rida Khan Alaihirrahmah which has been put together in the book named Seerat e Mustafa Jaan e Rahmat Sall Allahu Alaihi Wasallam.

I pray that Almighty Allāh accepts my humble effort in His Majestic and Divine Court. May Allah grant health to Huzoor Taajush Shariah Mufti Akhtar Raza Khan Qibla, and Huzoor Muhadith e Kabeer Hadrat Allama Zia al Mustafa Sahib Qibla and all the other great Scholars who have remained steadfast upon the way of our Salaf. May Allah Almighty preserve all of them.

Ameen Thumma Ameen.

I dedicate this translation to Huzoor Mujaahid e Ahle Sunnat Hadrat Allama Syed Shah Turab ul Haq Qadiri Noori Razawi Sahib Alaihirrahmah, May Allah Almighty raise his status.

Ameen.

**Faqeer Mohammed Shakeel Qādirī Riḍawī**

كَأَنَّهُمْ هَرَبًا أَبْطَالُ أَبْرَهَةَ  
أَوْ عَسْكَرُ بِالْحَصَى مِنْ رَّاحَتَيْهِ رُبِّي

*The shayateen in their flight seemed as if they were the warriors of  
Abrahah,*

*Or like the army of Quraish who were hit by the pebbles from your  
blessed hands.*

*( Qaseedah al Burdah Shareef )*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

One of the great incidents in the life of Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu was the march of the armies of Abrahah towards the Ka'bah.

The king of Abyssinia appointed Iryat as the Governor of Yemen after conquering it, and Abrahah was appointed the deputy Governor. Arguments quickly broke out between the two over greed for power, this escalated and they both gathered their armies against each other. Abrahah suggested to Iryat that rather than sending their armies to their deaths against each other, he challenged him to a duel, both armies would then unite under the flag of the victor. Iryat accepted this suggestion, Abrahah emerged alive from the encounter and became the sole viceroy. Gradually he usurped power and became ruler of Yemen.

Abrahah built a huge cathedral in the city of San'â, this church was so big that its roof could not be seen from the ground. He had it decorated with gold, silver and pearls and named it Al-Qullais. Abrahah wrote to the King of Abyssinia saying that nobody should travel to the Ka'bah anymore. Rather, they should all come to this cathedral to perform worship. If those who travel to the Ka'bah refuse to come here, then he would go and destroy the Ka'bah leaving them with no choice.

When the people of Arabia heard they were infuriated by this, a man from the Quraish tribe of Makkah came to the cathedral and vented his anger by relieving himself, soiled its walls and ran away. When Abrahah found out that this had been done by the Quraish, he swore that he would take down every brick of the Ka'bah and destroy it.

The Yemenis had great respect for the Ka'bah, so when Abrahah made this announcement, they became angry and decided to go to war against Abrahah. One of the Chiefs of Yemen, Dhu Naffar, came out to fight Abrahah; the latter defeated the former and took him as a prisoner. Upon being taken to Abrahah, Dhu Naffar said, "O king, do not kill me, for keeping me alive to help you is better for you than killing me." Abrahah spared him, but imprisoned him.

Abrahah defeated the armies of several Arab tribes along the way to Makkah. Nufail bin Habeeb a leader of the Arab tribes fought a fierce battle but again Abrahah was victorious. Nufail bin Habeeb was taken as a prisoner and brought before Abrahah, Nufail said, "O king, do not kill me, for keeping me alive to help you is better for you than killing me, for I will guide you throughout the lands of Arabia." Abrahah spared him, and used him as a guide whilst marching his troops towards Makkah.

As Abrahah approached Taaif, Masood Thaqafi gathered people from his tribe of Thaqeef and approached him saying, " O king we are your slaves, we will follow your every command, we hold no grudge in our hearts towards you. We have nothing to do with the Makkans, we will help you destroy the Kaaba and will send someone to guide you". In return Abrahah promised not to destroy their temple, which held the idol Laat. Laat would be worshipped by the tribe of Thaqeef and they would make tawaaf around the temple. They sent with him one of their leaders named Abû Righâl.

Abrahah reached with his army up to Al-Maghmas, a place close to Makkah. He rested the night there, Abû Righâl however, was swallowed up by the earth here and this is how he reached his end. Whenever the people of Arabia pass by this place they throw stones upon the grave of Abû Righâl.

From Al-Maghmas, Abrahah sent an Abyssinian man named Aswad ibn Maqsud to the forefront of his army. Al-Aswad was sent to Makkah, there were some camels feeding there, and the army overcame the herdsmen and captured these camels. Of these camels, 200 belonged to Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu, the Grandfather of the Prophet Sall Allahu Alaihi Wasallam, who was at that time the leader of the Quraish.

Then Abrahah sent Hubatah Al-Humairi to the people of Makkah, giving him the following instructions, "Ask for the most honourable one among them; then inform him that I have not come to fight, but only to destroy this House the Ka`bah." After Hubatah entered Makkah, he met Hadrat Abdul-Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu and said, "Verily, the king has sent me to you, to inform you that he has not come to fight, unless you fight him; rather, he comes only to destroy this house. As soon as he accomplishes his mission, he will leave you."

Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu, after listening to the message, said: "By Allah! We do not intend to fight. We do not have the strength to fight with him. This is the Sacred House of Allah and this was constructed by His Khalil Ibrahim Alaihis Salaam. He alone can protect it if He wills, if he allows Abrahah to destroy his house then it is his divine will. If Allah puts nothing in his way to stop him from reaching it, then, by Allah, we have no strength against him."

Hadrat Abdul-Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu along with some of his sons accompanied Hubatah back to the encampment of Abrahah's army. Upon reaching, Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu enquired about Dhu Naffar who was an old friend, he was taken to him. He asked Dhu Naffar is there any possibility that you could assist us in this time of need? Dhu Naffar replied " I am a prisoner, the king can put me to death whenever he wishes, in this state what assistance could I possibly offer you ? However, the person who trains the elephants for Abrahah is a personal friend, his name is Anees. I can introduce you to him, and he

will arrange a meeting with the king, maybe this may provide a solution to your problem."

Dhu Naffar called for Anees and introduced Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu, "This is the Chief of Quraish and the leader of the trade caravans of Makkah. His generosity is such, that his table is always full for everyone, never mind humans even the wild animals who live on the tips of the mountains come down and fill their bellies from this vast table. Some of the servants of the King have stolen 200 of his camels, please help him if you can." Anees promised to set up a meeting with Abrahah.

Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu, being the grandfather of the Prophet Sall Allahu Alaihi Wasallam, who is the best of creation, was himself a very handsome and striking personality, so when Abrahah saw him, he welcomed and honoured him. Disliking both for Hadrat Abdul-Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu to sit with him on his throne, and for Hadrat Abdul-Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu to sit beneath him, Abrahah descended to the carpet beneath the throne and sat down beside Hadrat Abdul-Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu. Through an interpreter, Abrahah asked what the chief of the Quraish wanted. Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu asked for the return of the two hundred camels that were taken from him.

Abrahah was very surprised. He said, "When I first saw you, I thought you were a very respectable and honourable man, but the first thing you have said has made me change my mind. I have come to destroy your Ka'bah and all you are worried about is your camels?"

Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu replied, "I am the owner of the camels and they are my concern; while Allah is the owner of the Ka'bah and He will defend it." Abrahah arrogantly replied, "No one can save it from me."

Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu said, “Then do as you wish.” So Abrahah gave back the camels and Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu returned to Makkah.

Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu went back to Makkah and told the Quraish about his conversation with Abrahah and ordered them to evacuate Makkah and move to the caves in the mountains. He then went to the Ka’bah, along with some men, and holding the ring of the Ka'bah, invoked Allah and prayed for victory against Abrahah and his troops.

At that time Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu invoked Allah Almighty with the following words:

لاهم ان العبد يمنع  
رحله فامنع حلالك

لا يغلبن صليبيهم  
ومحالمهم غدا محالك

ان كنت تاركهم  
وقبلتنا فامر ما بدالك

*O. Allah! Surely a man defends his own home,  
You are also the protector of your own House.  
It cannot be that their cross overcomes your house.  
If you are to let us and them roam free,  
Then you do as you will.*

Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu also retreated to the mountains after this.

Mullah Ali Qari Alahirrahmah writes in the praise of Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu:

من فضائل عبد المطلب ان قريشا خرجت من الحرم لما قدم عليهم اصحب الفيل وقال هو ( عبد المطلب) والله لا اخرج من حرم الله ابغى العز فى غيره ولا ابغى سواء عندالله

*When the people of Quraish left the Haram, and the Ashaab e Feel attacked, Hadrat Abdul Muttalib Radi Allahu Anhu said, " By Allah I will not leave the Haram seeking sanctuary and honour from anyone else, I am satisfied at the will and decree of Allah Almighty."*

The next morning, Abrahah prepared to attack the city of Makkah. He put Mahmûd, his elephant, in the front of the army. However, Nufail bin Habeeb, the captured Arab, secretly whispered into the elephant's ear:

ابرك محمود او ارجع راشدا من حيث جئت فانك فى بلد الله الحرام

*“Kneel down! - Return from where you have come, for you are in the Secure City of Allah .”*

Upon hearing this, the elephant immediately sat down and would not go forward. Nufail bin Habeeb made a dash for the mountains to safety. Abrahah's men tried to poke it and push it but it would not move. They struck it with a pickaxe in the head, but it still refused to move even an inch forward. They tried again to make it move, but it stood there, motionless.

They speared its stomach which left it pouring out blood, they finally turned it around to face Yemen and it began to run in that direction, but as soon as they faced it towards the Ka'bah it would sit down again. The Abyssinians tried everything to make the elephant stand again but in vain.

Allah the Almighty then sent birds (Ababeel) from the ocean. Each bird held three stones: one in its beak and one in each of its claws. The stones they carried were like chickpeas or lentils. They flew over Abrahah's army and dropped the pebbles. Each pebble went straight through the bodies of the men. The elephants started running and the troops were running back and forth in a frenzy trying to find their way back. The troops were calling out for Nufail bin Habeeb for him to show them the way, but he was in the safety of the mountain tops watching the punishment of Allah Almighty befall upon the enemies with his own eyes.

Apart from Mahmud there were 13 other elephants in Abrahah's army. All of them perished apart from Mahmûd who refused to set foot in the Blessed Haram Shareef, many of the troops also perished.

Abrahah was in a really bad state, his few followers carried him from the battlefield but his body began to tear apart, beginning with the fingers. After each fingertip fell off, it was followed by a discharge of pus and blood which gave off an unbearable stench. By the time he reached Sanaa he was like a puffed up baby bird, his chest exploded upon reaching Sanaa which ripped his heart out.

This incident happened in the Month of Muharram in the same blessed year in which the Most Beloved Prophet Sall Allahu Alaihi Wasallam was born, in the month of Rabî'-ul-Awwal.

May Allâh give us all the strength of Imân to learn all about the life of the Prophet Sall Allahu Alaihi Wasallam act upon the Sunnah and use it as an example in our lives.

Aameen Thumma Aameen

Mohammed Shakeel Qadiri Ridawi.

كَأَنَّهُمْ هَرَبًا أَبْطَالُ أَبْرَهَةَ

أَوْ عَسْكَرُ بِالْحَصَى مِنْ رَّاحَتِيهِ رُبِّي

*The shayateen in their flight seemed as if they were the warriors of Abrahah,*

*Or like the army of Quraish who were hit by the pebbles from your blessed hands.*

*( Qaseedah al Burdah Shareef )*

*Raham farma Khudaya Haram Paak ho*

*Tune taqdees bakhshi hai jis khaaq ko*

*Dafa farma wahaan par hai be baak jo*

*Aur giraa bijliyan qahar ki bar adu*

*( Huzur Mufti e Azam Hind Alaihirr Rahmah )*