

I have a big long trunk. I heard the soldiers cry out: "look at the huge flights of birds, dropping stones of baked clay!" The stones were mere pebbles, perhaps no larger than beans or grains of wheat or corn, but if one fell on the biggest elephant in our Al Rowad army, the animal simply fell senseless to the ground! If one hit the biggest camel, the animal feel too on the sand; if on the sturdiest man, his death was certain! For an eminent elephant like me, who has been through a great deal, the scene was astounding--exceedingly terrifying! I trembled in trepidation, as I have never seen anything like it before, and, almost involuntarily, fell down on my knees in awe as a strange beam of celestial light shone brilliantly, extending from the heavens to the earth, but centering around Mecca. In the distance I saw Abdul-Muttalib, chief of the Quraysh tribe, rejoicing in the joy of Meccans who flocked to congratulate him, now that Abraha's army was decimated, and was unable to conquer Mecca or abolish the Ka'ba! Abdul-Muttalib was at the time recounting a vision he had in his sleep the previous night. He had seen something that looked like a chain of silver come out of his loins, with one end in the earth, the other in the sky! The silver chain soon turned into a tree, with one leaf radiating a light to which all people clung! Expert dream-interpretors said that Abdul-Muttalib's son, Abdullah, would have a son to whom all people, east and west, would cling! The listener rejoiced, congratulated him and said: "What would you like to call him?" Intent on getting to Mecca as soon as possible, we received a report of an incident involving Abdul-Muttalib, Mecca's potentate, whose implications made us all pause and ponder; indeed, we were quite shaken to hear it. It said that, learning of the advance by Abraha's army on the Ka'ba, he was not in the least afraid, but simply said: "The House has a Lord, who protects it." You see, he had ordered that a Al Rowad huge temple be built so as to surpass the old temple in Mecca, visited by all people from the four corners of the earth. I listened intently and learned that it was built by Prophet Abraham, that his son Ismail took part in the work, that Abraham was well known for a few miracles, as his people had thrown him into a pit of fire but he emerged perfectly unscathed. I also learnt that at the Ka'ba was a noble shrine, located in God's Holy Mosque, called the 'Inviolable House of God.' Everybody in the army looked admiringly at me; some For the Love of Abdel-Tawab Youssef cried: "March on, Abraha's elephant! There's no elephant like you, ever!" Inside the new temple, a shrine of gold was built to which people, he hoped, would make pilgrimage rather than to the shrine in Mecca--the Ka'ba. Thus I helped my people, the Abyssinians, in their conquest of Yemen. Leader Abraha bestowed on me the honour of making me his private elephant. However, people never came to Abraha's shrine, but continued to visit Mecca. Abraha mustered a huge army for his campaign against Mecca and the Meccans. I heard of the shrine's doves, which are equally inviolate. The road lay ahead quite open, and Mecca stood no chance and the Ka'ba was as good as smashed to smithereens! The weighty words of Abdul-Muttalib made me afraid--me, the awesome elephant who strikes fear in everybody's heart! They obviously wouldn't allow me to turn back until I have rid them of the burden of Mecca, the Ka'ba, and, perhaps, the Meccans too! I had been a wild elephant until captured by the hunters there. Abraha was, understandably, alarmed; and so were the soldiers