



The Year of the Elephant

Abraha had plans to build a great Christian cathedral in Yemen, making it the centre of pilgrimage in Arabia. However, as we learned, Mecca was already the main religious centre where everyone went to visit the Ka'ba. When Abraha found out about this, he realised that this growing city of Mecca would compete against his own capital, and so he decided to march onto Mecca and destroy the Ka'ba, eliminating any rivalry. Abraha set out with an army that included war elephants. When the expedition reached Mecca, Abraha met with the chief of the Quraysh, 'Abd al-Muttalib.

'Abd al-Muttalib was the grandfather of the Prophet ﷺ and chief of the Quraysh tribe. Being the chief meant that he was the leader of a community of people related by blood and connected by family ties. 'Abd al-Muttalib was therefore an elder respected by all members of the tribe. All major decisions were made by him, and he was responsible for protecting everyone in the tribe. The chief had to be brave and wise so he could lead his people, and 'Abd al-Muttalib had both of these attributes. As the chief of the Quraysh, 'Abd al-Muttalib had to meet with Abraha, who was invading his city.