

## ISAIAH 18 | *Ethiopian Envoys*

### *Assignment for the Ethiopian Envoys*

1 Hoy (הוי), land [Egypt/Ethiopia] of whirring wings [whizzing sails/tsetse fly]<sup>1</sup> that is beyond the rivers of Cush [tributaries of the Nile], 2 which sends ambassadors (צִיר) by the [Mediterranean] sea, in vessels of papyrus on the waters! Go, you swift messengers (מְלָאָךְ), to a nation (גוי) [Assyria/Ethiopia] tall and smooth, to a people feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers [of the Euphrates and Tigris/Nile] divide.

### *Harvest Message*

3 All you inhabitants of the world/mainland/inhabited earth (תִּבְלָה), you who dwell (שֹׁכֵן) on the earth (אֶרֶץ), when a flag/standard/signal (נֹסֵף) is raised on the mountains, look! When a shofar/horn/trumpet (שׁוֹפָר) is blown, hear! 4 For thus Yahweh said to me [Isaiah]:

I will restfully/peacefully/quietly (שָׁקֵט) look across (נִבְטָה) from my place (מְכוֹן) like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

5 For before the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he *cuts off* (כָּרַת) the shoots with pruning hooks, and the spreading branches he *removes/cancels* (סוּר) and *clears away* (תִּזוּז). 6 They shall all of them be left to the birds of prey of the mountains and to the beasts of the earth. And the birds of prey will summer on them, and all the beasts of the earth will winter on them.

### *Zion Tribute*

7 At that time tribute will be brought to Yahweh of hosts from a people tall and smooth, from a people feared near and far, a nation [Assyria/Ethiopia] mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers divide, to Mount Zion, the place (מְקוֹם) of the name (שֵׁם) of Yahweh of hosts.

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<sup>1</sup> Whirring wings refers to locusts or the deadly “tsetse” fly. Egypt was known for its endemic profusion of flying insects (Alec J. Motyer, 161).

## Commentary

### 1. Isaiah at a Glance.

- a. Is 18 particularises the general statement made in Is 17:12-14. It is the same message in different words. Messengers are bearing the message of God's judgment on the Messianic kingdom to the ends of the earth.<sup>2</sup>
- b. This segment is not one of the oracles to the nations. No word of judgment is pronounced on the Ethiopians.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. Assignment for the Ethiopian Envoys (Is 18:1-2).

- a. **Is 18:1-2** 1 Hoy (הוי), land [Egypt/Ethiopia] of whirring wings [whizzing sails/tsetse fly]<sup>4</sup> that is beyond the rivers of Cush [tributaries of the Nile], 2 which sends ambassadors (צירי) by the [Mediterranean] sea, in vessels of papyrus on the waters! Go, you swift messengers (מלָצֵי), to a nation (גוי) [Assyria/Ethiopia] tall and smooth, to a people feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers [of the Euphrates and Tigris/Nile] divide.
- b. Cushite ambassadors are sent to Assyria (vv. 1-2).
  - (1) Cush included modern-day southern Egypt, Sudan, and northern Ethiopia.<sup>5</sup> About 715 bc a new dynasty began to rule in Egypt (the 25th). This dynasty was Nubian, or Cushite. The Ethiopian ruler, Shabaka (716-01 bc), likely sent envoys to Judah, Philistia, and Moab to incite them to the revolt against the Assyrian king Sargon, which brought on Sargon's punitive action against Philistia in 711.<sup>6</sup>
  - (2) The "nation tall and smooth" probably is the Assyrians, to whom the Ethiopian envoys are sent by Isaiah. When Pharaoh's envoys reach Jerusalem, Isaiah takes the opportunity to publicise what he would want these envoys to say to the world. He sends them on their way as if they were his envoys.<sup>7</sup>
- c. The Ethiopian eunuch of Ac 8 fulfilled, in a way, Is 18 and 56.
  - (1) **Is 56:3-5** 3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to Yahweh say, Yahweh will surely separate me from his people. And let not the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. 4 For thus says Yahweh: To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, 5 I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.
  - (2) **Ac 8:27-28** 27 And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

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<sup>2</sup> John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:359.

<sup>3</sup> John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:359.

<sup>4</sup> Whirring wings refers to locusts or the deadly "tsetse" fly. Egypt was known for its endemic profusion of flying insects (Alec J. Motyer, 161).

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Martin, *BKC*, 1:1065.

<sup>6</sup> John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:360.

<sup>7</sup> Alec J. Motyer, 162.

### 3. Harvest Message (Is 18:3-6).

- a. **Is 18:3-6** 3 All you inhabitants of the world/mainland/inhabited earth (תְּבִלָּה), you who dwell (שָׁכַן) on the earth (אֶרֶץ), when a flag/standard/signal (נֵס) is raised on the mountains, look! When a shofar/horn/trumpet (שׁוֹפָר) is blown, hear! 4 For thus Yahweh said to me [Isaiah]: I will restfully/peacefully/quietly (שָׁקֵט) look across (נִבַּט) from my place (מְכוֹן) like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. 5 For before the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he *cuts off* (כָּרַת) the shoots with pruning hooks, and the spreading branches he *removes/cancels* (סִיר) and *clears away* (תִּזַּז). 6 They shall all of them be left to the birds of prey of the mountains and to the beasts of the earth. And the birds of prey will summer on them, and all the beasts of the earth will winter on them.
- b. When a banner is seen and a shofar heard, look out (v. 3)!
- (1) **Ex 17:15** 15 Moses built an altar and called the name of it, Yahweh Is My Banner.
- (2) **Jo 6:20** 20 The people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.
- (3) Could this verse have something to do with the feast of Trumpets, when a shofar is blown 100 times?
- c. Yahweh quietly looks from heaven upon the nations (v. 4).
- (1) The quiet look of the Sovereign is of greater importance than the mightiest of the world's armies. To him to do nothing but merely look on is of greater significance than all the deliberations in all the world's chancelleries.<sup>8</sup>
- (2) We are to wait for God's time of direct intervention in history with confident patience, assured that all our experiences are under his absolute control. Trials and difficulties are sent to cast us on God in simple and unwavering dependence on him.<sup>9</sup>
- d. As the harvest nears, Yahweh will act (v. 5).
- (1) The image here refers to the practice of cutting of tendrils and leaves not bearing fruit. Like the farmer, God will not act too soon or too late. Once the fruit is formed and there is no doubt, God's pruning knife will go into action.<sup>10</sup>
- (2) God's intervention is precisely timed. When the harvest is ready, he will intervene. He chooses the moment when his harvest is ready.<sup>11</sup>
- (3) God's inaction does not indicate his indifference. He often waits for a situation to mature before he acts.<sup>12</sup>
- e. The unfruitful shoots and branches will feed the birds and beasts (v. 6).
- (1) **Eze 39:17-22** 17 As for you, son of man [Ezekiel], thus says Lord Yahweh: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field: Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great

<sup>8</sup> John N. Oswalt, *NICOT* 1:362.

<sup>9</sup> W. E. Vine, 60.

<sup>10</sup> John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:362.

<sup>11</sup> Alec J. Motyer, 156, 62.

<sup>12</sup> Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, 212.

sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. 18 You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs, and of he-goats, of bulls, all of them fat beasts of Bashan. 19 And you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. 20 And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors, declares Lord Yahweh. 21 And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. 22 The house of Israel shall know that I am Yahweh their God, from that day forward.

- (2) **Re 19:19-21** 19 I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him [Jesus] who was sitting on the horse and against his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. 21 And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

#### 4. Zion Tribute (Is 18:7).

- a. **Is 18:7** 7 At that time tribute will be brought to Yahweh of hosts from a people tall and smooth, from a people feared near and far, a nation [Assyria/Ethiopia] mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers divide, to Mount Zion, the place (מִקְוֵה) of the name (שֵׁם) of Yahweh of hosts.
- b. Assyria/Ethiopia will bring tribute to Yahweh at Zion (v. 7).
- (1) The poem ends with a different kind of embassy in view than the one with which it began. Instead of incitement to revolt by envoys from the Ethiopian king of Egypt, Isaiah envisions a day when that mighty imaginary people who sum up all the world's power will come to Jerusalem bearing homage to her God.<sup>13</sup>
- (2) Assyria will enter the Messianic kingdom, along with Egypt. From north and south, the nations will pay tribute to Messiah Jesus at Jerusalem.
- (a) **Is 19:23** 23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.
- c. Zion is the place of Yahweh's name (v. 7).
- (1) **Dt 12:5** 5 You shall seek the place that Yahweh your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go....
- (2) **Is 2:2-3** 2 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of Yahweh shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be lifted up above the hills, and all the nations shall flow to it, 3 And many peoples shall come and say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.

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<sup>13</sup> John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:363.

The two great powers of western Asia, in the days of Isaiah, were Assyrian, and Egypt or Ethiopia, the last two being wholly or partially united under Taharqa, whose name and exploits are recorded in Egyptian monuments still extant.

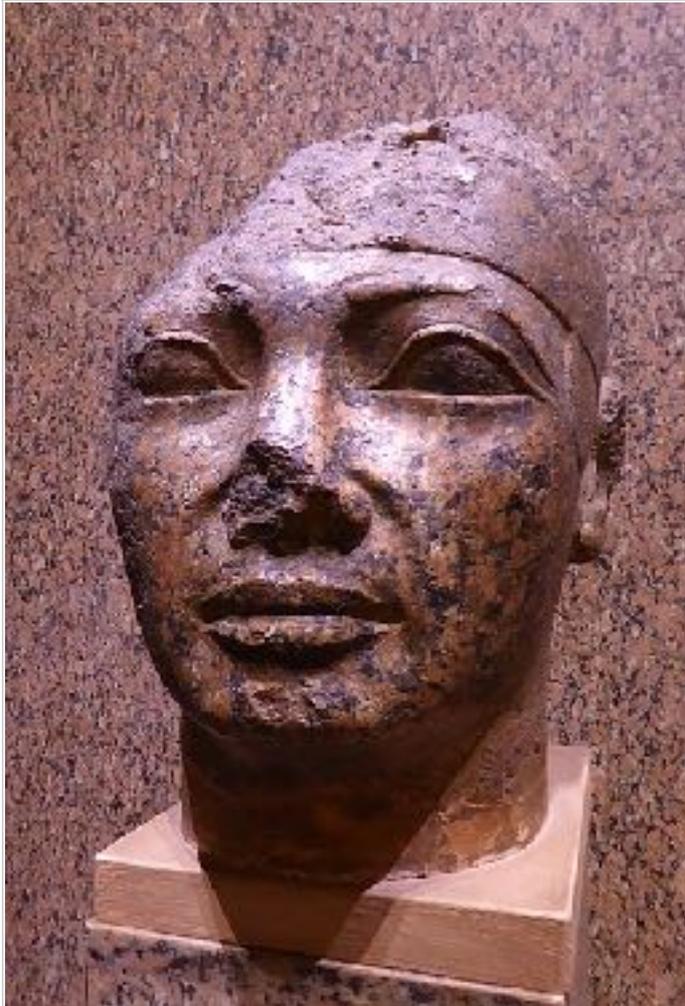
The **Twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt** (notated **Dynasty XXV**, alternatively **25th Dynasty** or **Dynasty 25**), also known as the **Nubian Dynasty**, the **Kushite Empire** and the **Black Pharaohs**,<sup>[1][3]</sup> was the last dynasty of the **Third Intermediate Period of Egypt** that occurred after the **Nubian** invasion.

The 25th dynasty was a line of pharaohs who originated in the **Kingdom of Kush**, located in present-day northern Sudan and **Upper Egypt**. Most of this dynasty's kings saw **Napata** as their spiritual homeland. They reigned in part or all of Ancient Egypt from 747–656 BC.<sup>[4][5][6][7]</sup>

The 25th Dynasty's reunification of **Lower Egypt**, Upper Egypt, and Kush created the largest Egyptian empire since the **New Kingdom**. They assimilated into society by reaffirming Ancient Egyptian religious traditions, temples, and artistic forms, while introducing some unique aspects of Kushite culture.<sup>[8]</sup> It was during the 25th dynasty that the Nile valley saw the first widespread construction of pyramids (many in what is now **Sudan**) since the Middle Kingdom.<sup>[9][10][11]</sup>

After the emperors **Sargon II** and **Sennacherib** defeated attempts by the Nubian kings to gain a foothold in the **Near East**, their successors **Esarhaddon** and **Ashurbanipal** invaded, defeated and drove out the Nubians. War with Assyria resulted in the end of Kushite power in Northern Egypt and the conquest of Egypt by the Neo-Assyrian Empire. They were succeeded by the **Twenty-sixth Dynasty**, initially a puppet dynasty installed by and vassals of the Assyrians, the last native dynasty to rule Egypt before the **Achaemenid Empire** invaded them. The fall of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty also marks the beginning of the **Late Period of ancient Egypt**.

**Shebitku**



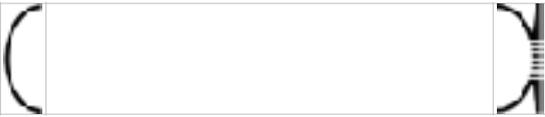
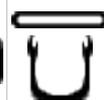
Shebitku's statue in the [Nubian Museum](#)

**[Pharaoh](#)**

<b>Reign</b>	714–705 BC <sup>[1]</sup> ( <a href="#">25th Dynasty</a> )
<b>Predecessor</b>	<a href="#">Piye</a>
<b>Successor</b>	<a href="#">Shabaka</a>
	<a href="#">show</a>
	<b><a href="#">Royal titulary</a></b>
<b>Consort</b>	<a href="#">Arty</a>
<b>Died</b>	705 BC

š3 b3 t3 k3 (Shabataka)

[Egyptian hieroglyphs](#)

<i>nomen</i> or birth name		
		
		
		
		

**Shebitku** (also known as **Shabataka** or **Shebitqo**, and anglicized as **Sethos**) was the second pharaoh of the **Twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt** who ruled from 714 BC – 705 BC, according to the most recent academic research. He was a son of **Piye**, the founder of this dynasty. Shebitku's **prenomen** or throne name, Djedkare, means "Enduring is the Soul of **Re**."<sup>[2]</sup> Shebitku's queen was Arty, who was a daughter of king Piye, according to a fragment of statue JE 49157 of the High Priest of Amun Haremakhmet, son of Shabaka, found in the temple of the Goddess **Mut** in Karnak.<sup>[3]</sup>

**Shabaka**<sup>[edit]</sup>



### Shabaka

According to the traditional chronology, **Shabaka** "brought the entire Nile Valley as far as the Delta under the empire of Kush and is 'reputed' to have had Bocchoris, dynast of Sais, burnt to death."<sup>[9][6]:166–167</sup> There is no direct evidence that Shabaka did slay Bakenranef, and although earlier scholarship generally accepted the tradition, it has recently been treated more skeptically.<sup>[20]</sup> Initially, Shabaka maintained good relations with Assyria, as shown by his extradition of the rebel, Iamani of Ashdod, to Assyria in 712 BC.<sup>[6]:167</sup> Shabaka supported an uprising against the **Assyrians** in the **Philistine** city of Ashdod, however he and his allies were defeated by **Sargon II**.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> **Shabaka** "transferred the capital to Memphis"<sup>[6]:166</sup> and restored the great Egyptian monuments and temples, "unlike his Libyan predecessors".<sup>[6]:</sup>

<sup>167–169</sup> Shabaka ushered in the age of Egyptian archaism, or a return to a historical past, which was embodied by a concentrated effort at religious renewal and restoration of Egypt's holy places.<sup>[6]:169</sup> Shabaka also returned Egypt to a theocratic monarchy by becoming the first priest of [Amon](#). In addition, Shabaka is known for creating a well-preserved example of Memphite theology by inscribing an old religious papyrus into the [Shabaka Stone](#).

Shabaka succeeded his uncle [Shebitku](#) on the throne, and adopted the throne name of the [Sixth Dynasty](#) ruler [Pepi II Neferkare](#). Shabaka's reign was initially dated from 716 BC to 702 BC by [Kenneth Kitchen](#). However, new evidence indicates that Shebitku died around 705 BC because [Sargon II](#) (722–705 BC) of Assyria states in an official inscription at Tang-i Var (in northwest Iran)—which is datable to 706 BC—that it was Shebitku, Shabaka's predecessor, who extradited Iamanni of [Ashdod](#) to Shebitku as king of Egypt.<sup>[16][17]</sup> This view has been accepted by many Egyptologists today such as Aidan Dodson,<sup>[18]</sup> Rolf Krauss, David Aston, and Karl Jansen-Winkel<sup>[19]</sup> among others because there is no concrete evidence for coregencies or internal political/regional divisions in the Nubian kingdom during the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. This point was also stressed by Dan'el Kahn in a 2006 article.<sup>[20]</sup> All contemporary records suggest that the Nubian Pharaohs ruled Egypt with only a single king on the throne, while [Taharqa](#) states explicitly on one of his [Kawa](#) steles that he assumed power only after the death of his brother, Shebitku.<sup>[21]</sup>

“Many students of the Word consider the ‘ensign’ [“standard”] mentioned here [v. 3] to be the ark of the tabernacle, which was later transferred to the temple. It disappeared at the time of the Babylonian captivity, and there is a tradition which says it was carried to Ethiopia. I have been told that there is a church in that land that claims to have the ark. I don't know if that is true or not, but an ensign will come out of that land.”<sup>14</sup>

**Psalm 68:29-31** 29 Because of your temple at Jerusalem kings shall bear gifts to you. 30 Rebuke the beasts that dwell among the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples. Trample underfoot those who lust after tribute; scatter the peoples who delight in war. 31 Nobles shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God.

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<sup>14</sup> J. Vernon McGee, 3:240-41.

