

Egypt was anciently divided into forty-two “nomes” or districts, which were little provinces or counties. It was also divided into Upper and Lower Egypt. Upper Egypt was called Thebais, from Thebes the capital, and extended south to the frontier of Ethiopia. Lower Egypt contained principally the Delta and the parts on the Mediterranean. The capital was Cairo.

The most common division, however, was into three parts, Lower, Middle, and Upper Egypt. In Lower Egypt, lying on the Mediterranean, were the cities of Pithon, Raamses, Heliopolis, etc. In this division, also, was the land of Goshen. In Middle Egypt was Moph, or Memphis, Hanes, etc. In Upper Egypt was No-Ammon, or Thebes, and Syene, the southern limit of Egypt.

The ancient history of Egypt is obscure. It is agreed on all hands, however, that it was the early seat of civilization; and that this civilization was introduced from the south, and especially from Meroe. The country in the earliest times was possessed by several kings or states, which were at length united into one great kingdom. Not long after the death of Joseph, it came into the possession of the Hyksos or Shepherd kings, probably an Arabian nomadic tribe. After they were driven out, the whole country came again under one sovereign, and enjoyed great prosperity. The first king of the 19th dynasty, as it is called by Manetho, was the celebrated Sesostris, about 1500 years B.C. His successors were all called by the general name of Pharaoh, that is, kings. The first who is mentioned by his proper name is Shishak (1Ki\_14:25-26), supposed to be the Sesonchosis of Manetho, who reigned about 970 years B.C. Gesenius says, that in the time of the Jewish king Hezekiah, there reigned at the same time in Egypt three dynasties; an Ethiopic (probably over Upper Egypt), a Saitish, and a Tanitish dynasty - of which at last sprung the dodekarchy, and whose dominion ultimately lost itself in the single reign of Psammetichus. The Ethiopic continued forty years, and consisted of three kings - Sabaco, Sevechus, and Tarakos, or Tearko - of which the two last are mentioned in the Bible, Sevechus under the name of So,  $\kappa\iota\omicron$  so probably  $\kappa\iota\omicron$  seve Sevechus - as the ally of Hosea, king of Israel (2Ki\_17:4, 722 B.C.), and Tarakos the same as Tirhakah, about the time of the 16th year of the reign of Hezekiah (714 B.C.) Instead of this whole dynasty, Herodotus (ii. 137, 139), and Diodorus (i. 65), give us only one name, that of Sabaco. Contemporary with these were the four, or according to Eusebius, five, first kings of the dynasty of Saite, Stephinates, Nerepsus, Nichao I, who was slain by an Ethiopian king, and Psammetichus, who made an end of the dodekarchy, and reigned fifty-four years.

Of the Tanitish dynasty, Psammus and Zeth are mentioned... Different accounts are given of the state of things by Herodotus and by Diodorus. The account by Diodorus, which is the most probable, is, that a state of anarchy prevailed in Egypt for two whole years; and that the troubles and commotions suggested to the older men of the country the expediency of assuming the reins of government, and restoring order to the state. With this view, twelve of the most influential men were chosen to preside with regal power. Each had a particular province allotted to him, in which his authority was permanent; and though independent of one another, they bound themselves with mutual oaths to concord and fidelity.

During fifteen years, their relations were maintained with entire harmony: but during that time Psammetichus whose province extended to the Mediterranean, had availed himself of his advantages, and had maintained extensive commercial contact with the Phenicians and Greeks, and had amassed considerable wealth. Of this his colleagues became jealous, and supposing that he meant to secure the government of the whole country, they resolved to deprive him of his province. They, therefore, prepared to attack him, and he was thrown upon the necessity of self defense. Apprised of their designs, he sent to Arabia, Caria, and Ionia, for aid, and having secured a large body of troops, he put himself at their head, and gave battle to his foes at Momemphis, and completely defeated them, drove them from the kingdom, and took possession of an undivided throne (Diod. i. 66). The account of Herodotus may be seen in his history (ii. 154). Psammetichus turned his attention to the internal administration of the country, and endeavored to ingratiate himself with the priesthood and the people by erecting splendid monuments, and beautifying the sacred edifices. There was a strong jealousy, however, excited by the fact that he was indebted for his crown to foreign troops, and from the fact that foreigners were preferred to office over the native citizens (Diod. i. 67). A large part of his troops - to the number according to Diodorus, of 240,000 - abandoned his service at one time, and moved off in a body to Ethiopia, and entered the service of the monarch of that country. His reign appears to have been a military despotism, and though liberal in its policy toward foreign governments, yet the severity of his government at home, and the injustice which the Egyptians supposed he showed to them in relying on foreigners, and preferring them, justified the appellation in Isa\_19:4, that he was a ‘cruel lord.’

Egypt was afterward conquered by Cambyses, and became a province of the Persian empire about 525 B.C. Thus it continued until it was conquered by Alexander the Great, 350 B.C., after whose death it formed, together with Syria, Palestine, Lybia, etc., the kingdom of the Ptolemies. After the battle of Actium, 30 B.C. it became a Roman province. In 640 A.D., it was conquered by the Arabs, and since that time it has passed from the bands of the Caliphs into the hands of the Turks, and since 1517 A.D. it has been regarded as a province of the Turkish empire. This is an outline of the principal events of the Egyptian history. The events predicted in this chapter will be stated in their order in the comments on the particular verses. **The two leading points which will guide our interpretation will be, that Psammetichus is intended in Isa\_19:4, and that the effects of Alexander's conquest of Egypt are denoted from Isa\_19:18 to the end of the chapter.** Keeping these two points in view, the interpretation of the chapter will be easy. On the history of Egypt, and the commotions and revolutions there, the reader may consult Wilkinson's “Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,” vol. i., particularly pp. 143-180.

## Egypt by Albert Barnes

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

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## **THEME: The burden of Egypt - through gloom to glory**

Chapters 13-23 present eleven judgments against nations that surrounded the nation Israel. The burden of Egypt is the sixth burden. Egypt is certainly one nation we would expect to find on this list. This is one of the greatest passages that illustrate the accuracy of the Word of God. Certainly, fulfilled prophecy is proof that the Bible is the Word of God. No nation figures more prominently on the pages of Scripture than Egypt in its relationship to Israel. Egypt has a longer history than any other nation mentioned in Scripture, including Israel. In fact, it was down in the land of Egypt that the nation Israel was born. Seventy souls from the family of Jacob journeyed there, and four hundred years later they left Egypt with at least a million and a half people. Egypt was an old nation at that time. It has had a continuous history right down to the present day. It is in existence today and plays a prominent part in world events. And it has a glorious future predicted in this chapter. This chapter contains all the elements which enter into the history of the nation - its past, present, and future.

Egypt came into prominence early in Scripture when Abraham ran away to Egypt and got into difficulties. Later Joseph was sold into Egypt, and during a famine Jacob and his sons went down into Egypt with their families. There Israel became a great nation as slaves in the brickyards. Later on, after the children of Israel returned to the Promised Land, two of their kings, Ahaz and Hezekiah, made an alliance with Egypt and found her an unreliable ally.

During the intertestamental period, between Malachi and Matthew, Israel suffered grievously at the hand of Egypt. When the Lord Jesus Christ was born, He was taken down into Egypt. The gospel made many converts in Egypt during the first three centuries of the Christian era. Out of that section of North Africa came three great saints of the church - Athanasius, Origen, and Augustine - and others also. In our day, Egypt has been a thorn in the side of the new nation of Israel.

**J. Vernon McGee**

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19:1	The oracle concerning Egypt.	Judgment on Egypt (19:1-15)
	Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud, and is about to come to Egypt; The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence, And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.	
19:2	"So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians; And they will each fight against his brother, and each against his neighbor, City against city, and kingdom against kingdom.	Civil War
19:3	"Then the spirit of the Egyptians will be demoralized within them; And I will confound their strategy, So that they will resort to idols and ghosts of the dead, And to mediums and spiritists.	Idols & Ghosts Mediums & Spiritists
19:4	"Moreover, I will deliver the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel master, And a mighty king will rule over them," declares the Lord GOD of hosts.	Tyranny

**Albert Barnes** - Dr. Newton supposes that this was Nebuchadnezzar, or more properly Cambyses, by whom Egypt was made subject to the authority of Persia, and who was eminently a cruel man, a madman. But the more probable interpretation is that which refers it to **Psammetichus**. Twelve kings were in contention, of whom he was one. He called in the aid of the Arabians, the pirates of Caria and Ionia (Herodot. ii. 152; see the Analysis of the chapter; Diod. i. 66). This was in the twentieth year of the reign of Manasseh. Psammetichus reigned fifty-four years and was succeeded by Necho his son, called in Scripture Pharaoh-Necho, and often mentioned under that name. Psammetichus, during a considerable part of his reign, was engaged in wars with Assyria and Palestine. He is here called a 'cruel lord;' that is, an oppressive monarch, probably because he secured the kingdom by bringing in to his aid foreign mercenaries - robbers and pirates, and because his wars made his government oppressive and burdensome.

**Adam Clarke** - "**Cruel lords**" - Nebuchadnezzar in the first place, and afterwards the whole succession of Persian kings, who in general were hard masters, and grievously oppressed the country.

**Keil and Delitzsch** - The prophecy does not relate to a foreign conqueror, so as to lead us to think of Sargon (Knobel) or Cambyses (Luzzatto), but to a native despot. In comparing the prophecy with the fulfilment, we must bear in mind that Isa 19:2 relates to the national revolution which broke out in Sais, and resulted in the overthrow of the Ethiopian rule, and to the federal dodekarchy to which the rising of the nation led. "Kingdom against kingdom." this exactly suits those twelve small kingdoms into which Egypt was split up after the overthrow of the Ethiopian dynasty in the year 695, until **Psammetichus**, the dodekarch of Sais, succeeded in the year 670 in comprehending these twelve states once more under a single monarchy. This very Psammetichus (and the royal house of Psammetichus generally) is the hard ruler, the reckless despot. He succeeded in gaining the battle at Memphes, by which he established himself in the monarchy, through having first of all strengthened himself with mercenary troops from Ionia, Caria, and Greece. From his time downwards, the true Egyptian character was destroyed by the admixture of foreign elements, and this occasioned the emigration of a large portion of the military caste to Meroe. The Egyptian nation very soon came to feel how oppressive this new dynasty was, when Necho (616-597), the son and successor of Psammetichus, renewed the project of Ramses-Miamun, to construct a Suez canal, and tore away 120,000 of the natives of the land from their homes, sending them to wear out their lives in forced labour of the most wearisome kind. A revolt on the part of the native troops, who had been sent against the rising Cyrene, and driven back into the desert, led to the overthrow of Hophra, the grandson of Necho (570), and put an end to the hateful government of the family of Psammetichus.

**A. R. Fausset** - "Sargon," in Hebrew it is lords; but plural is often used to express greatness, where, one alone is meant (Gen 39:2). The parallel word "king" (singular) proves it. Newton makes the general reference to be to Nebuchadnezzar, and a particular reference to Cambyses, son of Cyrus (who killed the Egyptian god, Apis), and Ochus, Persian conquerors of Egypt, noted for their "fierce cruelty." Gesenius refers it to Psammetichus, who had brought into Egypt Greek and other foreign mercenaries to subdue the other eleven princes of the dodekarchy.

**John Gill** - Not of Sennacherib king of Assyria, which way go many interpreters, both Christian and Jewish, as Aben Ezra, Jarchi, and Kimchi; nor of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, as in Jer 46:25 but either of the twelve tyrants that rose up after the death of Sethon above mentioned; for the word is in the plural number, "lords", though the adjective rendered "cruel" is singular; or else **Psammiticus, the father of Pharaoh Necho, that slew Josiah; and who conquered the other eleven tyrants, and ruled alone, for the space of fifty four years, with great rigour; and the same is designed in the next clause: and a fierce king shall rule over them;** it is reported of **Psammiticus, that he gave such offence to his subjects, that two hundred thousand of his soldiers left him, and went into Ethiopia.** Vitringa interprets this of the Persian emperors, into whose hands Egypt fell, as Cambyses and Ochus; and who, according to historians, were very cruel princes.

**J. Vernon McGee** - This "cruel lord" cannot be positively identified from history, as Egypt was attacked and subdued by a series of invaders who eventually reduced the nation to poverty.

19:5

And the waters from the sea will dry up,  
And the river will be parched and dry.

19:6

And the canals will emit a stench,  
The streams of Egypt will thin out and dry up;  
The reeds and rushes will rot away.

19:7

The bulrushes by the Nile, by the edge of the Nile  
And all the sown fields by the Nile  
Will become dry, be driven away, and be no more.

19:8

And the fishermen will lament,  
And all those who cast a line into the Nile will mourn,  
And those who spread nets on the waters will pine away.

19:9

**Moreover**, the manufacturers of linen made from combed flax  
And the weavers of white cloth will be utterly dejected.

## Judgment on Egypt (19:1-15)

Drought

Fishermen & Weavers Mourn

BBC - The first fifteen verses have already been fulfilled. Following the death of Tirhakah, who was ruling Egypt at the time of Isaiah's prophecy, the country was torn by civil strife. Egypt was split up into twelve kingdoms, all subject to Assyria. Finally the country was united again under Psammetichus, the "cruel master" of verse 4. The rest of the chapter is still unfulfilled.

**BKC - Isa 19:1-5** Some people wanted to look to Egypt for protection against the Assyrian threat. But Isaiah pointed out that Egypt would be no help, because she too would be overwhelmed by God's judgment.

### (1) Egypt's Internal Troubles.

Judgment was coming against **Egypt** from **the Lord**. God is pictured as riding on a **swift cloud** (cf. Psa\_68:4, 33; 104:3). In Canaanite mythology this same idea is used of Baal, the god of rain and fertility. However, the Lord, not Baal, is the true Giver of rain (something Egypt would sorely need, Isa\_19:5-10) and fertility. The gods of Egypt - of which there were many... would not be able to save their people from coming judgment. Their **idols** would **tremble before Him**, which would cause the people to be disheartened and depressed (Isa\_19:1). The coming judgment would cause **internal divisions** (Isa\_19:2) and **despair among the people** when they would realize that their gods, only mere **idols**, and their **occult practices** (cf. **mediums and... spiritists**, Isa\_8:19; Lev\_19:31; 20:6) could not save them. Now they would be overtaken by a **cruel master and a fierce king**, the Assyrian empire's king. **Egypt**, who centuries before had been a **cruel master over Israel** (Exo\_1:11-14), would now be the object of cruelty. This Assyrian king was **Esarhaddon**, who conquered **Egypt** in 671 B.C. This judgment would come from **the Lord, the Lord Almighty** (Isa\_19:4), Israel's Master and great covenant-keeping God.

### (2) Egypt's lack of fertility.

**Isa 19:5-10** To show that the judgment really would be from God, Isaiah said that **the destruction would affect nature**. A **drought** would ruin the economy and cause the people whose work depended on **the Nile** to be depressed. **The river** (Isa\_19:5) undoubtedly refers to the Nile, Egypt's "lifeblood," the source of the nation's agricultural growth. Without the Nile, Egypt could not have survived. The annual flooding of **the Nile** over the fields enriched the soil. With the drying up of the Nile (brought on by God, not by military conquest), papyrus **reeds... plants**, and **every sown field** would wilt (Isa\_19:6-7). **Fishermen** using either **hooks or nets** would not be able to pursue their livelihood (Isa\_19:8), and those who derived their income from working with **flax** (cf. Exo\_9:31; which depended on water for its growth), or **linen** made from flax, or other **cloth**, would not be able to ply their trade (Isa\_19:9-10). The entire economy depended on **the Nile River**.

### (3) Egypt's wisdom unable to help.

**Isa 19:11-15** **Egypt** was well known in the ancient world for its wisdom writings and its **wise men**. But Isaiah warned **Egypt** not to count on her **wise men** to save the nation from the coming destruction. **The officials of Zoan** (Isa\_19:11, 13; cf. Zoan, a city in Egypt's Delta, in Num\_13:22; Psa\_78:12, 43; 30:4; Eze\_30:14), **the wise counselors of Pharaoh** (Isa\_19:11), and **the leaders of Memphis** (Isa\_19:13; cf. Jer\_2:16; 44:1; 46:14, 19; Eze\_30:13, 16; Hos\_9:6) thought their wisdom might save them from their coming judgment. But their wisdom was foolishness compared with the wisdom of **the Lord Almighty** who was planning the onslaught. **No one in Egypt** could do anything to avert the destruction; they were like **staggering drunkards before the Lord**. Neither the leaders (the **head** and the **palm branch**) nor the populace (the **tail** and the **reed**; cf. Isa\_9:15) could hold back God's judgment. At one time **Zoan** was Egypt's capital city (ca. 2050-1800). Memphis, on the Nile about 20 miles north of Cairo, was the first capital of united **Egypt** (ca. 3200 B.C.) and one of the major cities during much of its long history.

Fishing produced a copious amount of food. Fish (dried or pickled) play an important role in providing nutrition in one's diet. They are inexpensive, even cheaper than cereal grains. Thus they are one of the chief sources of nutrition for the poorer classes. But the upper levels of society also valued fish as a dish, if they were prepared in a tasty way. In later times, Egyptian theology treated fish as an unclean food (see the Piankhy stele, lines 150f., in Breasted, ARE IV, §882; cf. Herodotus 2.37). (Hans Wildberger)



EGYPT/ETHIOPIA				PALESTINE		MESOPOTAMIA
22. DYNASTY	23. DYNASTY	24. DYNASTY	25. DYNASTY	JUDAH	ISRAEL	ASSYRIA
TANIS/ BUBASTIS	LEONTOPOLIS	SAIS	NAPATA			
		Early Saite Rulers:				
760—						
755—						
750—	OSORKON III 777–749		KASHTA ca. 760–747			
745—				UZZIAH 767–739 from 792/1 co-regent of Amaziah	MENAHEM 753/2–742/1	
740—	TAKELOT III. 754–734 initially co-regent of Osorkon III.	(OSORKON) (Ruler of Mā) (ca. 755–740)		JOTHAM 739–734/33	PEKAHIAH 742/1–740/39	
735—	SHESHONK V 767–730	(TEFNAKHTE) (I.) (Ruler of Mā) (ca. 740–727)		AHAZ 734/3–728/7 from 750/49 co-regent	PEKAH 740/39–731	
730—						
725—	RUDAMUN 734–731 or possibly –715	TEFNAKHTE I. 727–720			HOSHEA 731–722	
720—	IUPUT II. 731–720 or until 715		PIANKHI 747–716			TIGLATH- PILESER III. 744–727
715—	OSORKON IV. 730–715	BOCCHORIS 720–715				SHALMANESER V. 726–722
710—	SHESHONK VI. 720–715 (Existence doubtful)	Proto-Saite Dynasty				
705—			SHABAKA 716–702	HEZEKIAH 728/7–699		SARGON II. 722–705
700—		(AMERIS) (715–695)				
695—			SHABATAKA 702–690			SENNACHERIB 704–681

The dates for the reigns of the Egyptian rulers follow charts compiled by Kitchen; those for the rulers of Judah/Israel follow Pavlovský/Vogt (*Bib* 45 [1964] 321–347)

## Judgment on Egypt (19:1-15)

19:10 And the pillars of Egypt will be crushed;  
All the hired laborers will be grieved in soul.

19:11 The princes of Zoan are mere fools;  
The advice of Pharaoh's wisest advisers has become stupid.

How can you *men* say to Pharaoh,  
"I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings"?

19:12 Well then, where are your wise men?  
Please let them tell you,  
And let them understand what the LORD of hosts  
Has purposed against Egypt.

Mac - 19:11 Zoan. This major city of northern Egypt E of the Nile Delta region was the first large city a Semite would encounter in traveling toward the Nile. "Tanis" was also a name of this city that was a capital of northern Egypt at one point when the country split into two parts.

**Egypt's Leaders Deluded**

19:13 The princes of Zoan have acted foolishly,  
The princes of Memphis are deluded;

Mac - 19:13 Memphis. The capital of northern Egypt at one time. This city had leaders who were in a state of confusion regarding a true perspective on Egypt's crisis. **cornerstone of her tribes.** If the cornerstones of a society suffer from delusion, they can do nothing else than delude the people they lead.

**Distortion**

Those who are the cornerstone of her tribes  
Have led Egypt astray.

**Egypt Led Astray**

19:14 The LORD has mixed within her a spirit of distortion;  
They have led Egypt astray in all that it does,  
As a drunken man staggers in his vomit.

נֹפֶחַ, "Noph," is Memphis (or On or Heliopolis), at the head of the delta, a city that often served as Egypt's northern capital. Pianchi conquered Memphis in 728 B.C.E., but then he withdrew to Napata. It remained for his brother Shabaka to control it effectively from 715 B.C.E. onward. (John D. W. Watts)

19:15 And there will be no work for Egypt  
Which its head or tail, its palm branch or bulrush, may do.

**No Work**

19:16 In that day the Egyptians will become like women, and they will tremble and be in dread because of the waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which He is going to wave over them.

19:17 And the land of Judah will become a terror to Egypt; everyone to whom it is mentioned will be in dread of it, because of the purpose of the LORD of hosts which He is purposing against them.



## Conversion of Egypt (19:16-22)

19:18

In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will be speaking the language of Canaan and swearing allegiance to the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.

Allegiance to Yahweh

19:19

In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border.

Altar to Yahweh

19:20

And it will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Champion, and He will deliver them.

Savior Sent

Clarke - Isa 19:18 The city of destruction "The city of the sun" - עיר החרס *ir hacheres*. This passage is attended with much difficulty and obscurity. ... The reading of the text being so uncertain, no one can pretend to determine what the city was that is here mentioned by name; much less to determine what the four other cities were which the prophet does not name. I take the whole passage from the 18th verse to the end of the chapter, to contain a general intimation of the future propagation of the knowledge of the true God in Egypt and Syria, under the successors of Alexander; and, in consequence of this propagation, of the early reception of the Gospel in the same countries, when it should be published to the world. ...

19:21

Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it.

Worship of Yahweh

Fausset - Isa 19:18-22 In that day, etc. - Suffering shall lead to repentance. Struck with "terror" and "afraid" (Isa 19:17) because of Jehovah's judgments, Egypt shall be converted to Him: nay, even Assyria shall join in serving Him; so that Israel, Assyria, and Egypt, once mutual foes, shall be bound together by the tie of a common faith as one people. So a similar issue from other prophecies (Isa 18:7; Isa 23:18).

**five cities** - that is, several cities, as in Isa 17:6; 30:17; Gen 43:34; Lev 26:8. Rather, *five definite cities* of Lower Egypt (Isa 19:11, 13; 30:4), which had close intercourse with the neighboring Jewish cities [Maurer]; some say, Heliopolis, Leontopolis (else Diospolis), Migdol, Daphne (Tahpanes), and Memphis. **language of Canaan** - that is, of the Hebrews in Canaan, the language of revelation; figuratively for, They shall embrace the Jewish religion: so "a pure language" and conversion to God are connected in Zep 3:9; as also the first confounding and multiplication of languages was the punishment of the making of gods at Babel, other than the One God. Pentecost (Act 2:4) was the counterpart of Babel: the separation of nations is not to hinder the unity of faith; the full realization of this is yet future (Zec 14:9; Joh 17:21). The next clause, "swear to the Lord of Hosts," agrees with this view: that is, bind themselves to Him by solemn covenant (Isa 45:23; 65:16; Deu 6:13).

**city of destruction** - Onias; "city of the sun," that is, On, or Heliopolis; he persuaded Ptolemy Philometer (149 B.C.) to let him build a temple in the prefecture (nome) of Heliopolis, on the ground that it would induce Jews to reside there, and that the very site was foretold by Isaiah six hundred years before. The reading of the Hebrew text is, however, better supported, "city of destruction"; referring to Leontopolis, the site of Onias' temple: which casts a reproach on that city because it was about to contain a temple rivaling the only sanctioned temple, that at Jerusalem. Maurer, with some manuscripts, reads "city of defense" or "deliverance"; namely, Memphis, or some such city, to which God was about to send "a savior" (Isa 19:20), "to deliver them."

Gill - Isa 19:18 In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt,.... Here opens a scene of mercy, a prophecy of good things to the Egyptians in future times; ... and its five cities either intend just so many principal ones, as some think, namely, Memphis, Tanis, Alexandria, Bubastis, and Heliopolis... and the prophecy respects the conversion of them, which some think was fulfilled in some little time after; either by some Jews fleeing to Egypt when Judea was invaded, and Jerusalem besieged by Sennacherib, who making known and professing the true religion there, were the means of converting many of the Egyptians; or, as the Jews think, it had its accomplishment when Sennacherib's army was destroyed, and what remained of them, consisting of Egyptians and other people, were dismissed by Hezekiah, and being used kindly by him, embraced the true religion, and carried it with them into Egypt, and there professed and propagated it; but it seems most likely to refer to later times, the times of the Gospel, when it was carried and preached in Egypt by the Evangelist Mark, and others, to the conversion of them, which is expressed in the following words:

**one shall be called the city of destruction**; not one of the five cities before mentioned; ... but the sense is, that one and all, and everyone of these cities, and all such persons in them as speak not the language of Canaan, who neither embrace the Gospel, nor become subject to Christ, shall be devoted to destruction: though there is a *Keri and Cetib* of these words; it is written "heres", destruction, but it is read "cheres", the sun; and there was a city in Egypt called Bethshemesh, the house of the sun (Jer 43:13), and by the Greeks Heliopolis; and by the Latins Solis Oppidum; and so the Vulgate Latin version renders it, "and one shall be called the city of the sun"; that is, Heliopolis, where the sun was worshipped, and from whence it had its name; and so the words are a display of the grace of God, that in that city, which was the seat of idolatrous worship, there the sun of righteousness should arise, and there should be a number of persons in it that should profess his name. The Targum takes in both the writing and reading of this passage, and renders it, "the city of Bethshemesh, which is to be destroyed, shall be called one of them."



## Conversion of Egypt (19:16-22)

19:21 **Thus** the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it.

Worship of Yahweh

19:22 And the LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them.

Healing

## Glorious Future of Egypt (19:23-25)

19:23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.

19:24 In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth,

19:25 whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."

Blessing

### Egypt's Present and Future

Isa 11:15-16; Dan 11:40-12:3; Joel 3:19-21;  
Micah 7:9-17; Zeph 3:8-10; Zech 10:6-12;  
14:16-21; Ezek 29:1-16; 30:1-19

13:1-5 Prophecies against Babylon

13:6-16 Judgment in the Day of Yahweh

13:17-22 Babylon Falls to the Medes

14:1-23 Israel's Taunt against Babylon

14:24-27 Judgment on Assyria

14:28-32 Judgment on Philistia

15:1-9 Judgment on Moab

16:1-14 Prophecy of Moab's Devastation in 3 years

17:1-14 Prophecy of Damascus' Destruction

18:1-7 Judgment then Blessing on the Land of Whirring Winds (Ethiopia)

19:1-15 Judgment on Egypt

**19:16-22 Egypt Swears Allegiance to Yahweh**

**19:23-25 Egypt & Assyria & Israel = 3 Blessed Nations**



## Egypt in Prophecy

The Bible gives us panoramic views of ancient cities and kingdoms through prophecies that extend from the time that the prophecy is being written until the end of time. One such prophecy sequence is in the nineteenth chapter of Isaiah. This prophecy is about the land of Egypt. We recommend that you read this chapter after asking the Father to give you the enlightening of the Holy Spirit, asking in the name and Blood of Jesus Christ. We will look at the verses that we can find secular historical references to and archaeological remains from.

The first such text is the fourth verse of this chapter: *ISA 19:4 And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.*

During the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Egypt was conquered by Mahomet and his followers. Seldom has so cruel a person appeared upon the stage of history as Mahomet. He ordered the brutal death of all those who refused to accept his new god, Allah, and to accept him (Mahomet) as this god's only prophet. The result was that he killed the honest and truthful persons and spared the liars and dishonest persons.

The following verses reflect the loss of the clever use and development of water management systems that had for centuries produced great agricultural wealth along with the production of dried fish for marketing and the production of Egyptian papyrus that was used throughout the ancient world.

*ISA 19:5 And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up. 6And they shall turn the rivers far away;... 7The paper reeds by the brooks,...and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither,... and be no more. 8The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. 9Moreover they that work in fine flax, and they that weave networks, shall be confounded. 10And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish.*

For all practical purposes, Egypt then reverted back to a pastoral way of life and became a base nation.

History tells us that after the downfall of the Moslem powers, Egypt became the vassal of several world powers, such as France and Britain. It then fell under the influence of the Soviet Union and participated in several futile and destructive wars against Israel, but they would not be successful:

*ISA 19:17 And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts, which he hath determined against it.*

The "land of Judah" "terrorized it [Egypt]" and would have conquered and occupied it except for the intervention of the U.N. in 1967-73.

*ISA 19:18 In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction.* This verse reflects the fact that Arabic, which is closely akin to Hebrew and is related to the ancient Canaanite language, became the dominant language of Egypt and its five major cities of the country. The city of Memphis, which had been the capital of Egypt from the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, didn't survive when the Moslem conqueror, 'Amr ibn el 'Asi founded a new capital, El-Fustat, on the east bank of the Nile at the south end of present-day Cairo. The Moslems pillaged the Giza-Sakkara plateau and stripped away the marble and polished limestone from the pyramids and temples and used it in building their own mosques and palaces.

The nineteenth verse is the most significant in relationship to the present time and to the amazing archaeological revelations the Lord is providing us as proof of the reliability of His word.

*ISA 19:19 In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD.*

Let's discuss the "altar" here mentioned. First of all, the term "altar" does not have to signify something upon which sacrifices are offered:

*JOS 22:26 Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice: 27 But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, ...28 Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you.*

An altar can be a monument of some type.

Today, there is a "stepped pyramid" at Sakkara. This is the remains of a very impressive complex built by the order of Djoser, a pharaoh of the third dynasty of Egypt, designed and built under the supervision of Imhotep. The "steps" were constructed of stone, which were then filled in with mud brick. Then, the entire outer surface of the pyramid was finished off with a wind and water-proof layer of polished limestone, giving it the familiar "pyramid" shape instead of its present "stepped" shape. (See color photo)

But when the Moslems came, they continued a practice they were well known for they stripped this pyramid of its outer covering of smooth limestone and used it in building their mosques and other buildings, leaving the mud-brick filler exposed. Because mud-brick is extremely vulnerable to long-term wind and weather, this filler in time disintegrated and was dug through and tossed aside while pillagers searched for treasure. None was found, and the remains of these mud bricks were hauled away in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when this area was excavated. There are historical references to farmers hauling these mud brick away for use as fertilizer. See *SAQQARA: The Royal cemetery of Memphis* by Jean-Philippe Lauer, pub. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, pp 75. This left the "stepped" appearance that we now see- the shape of an altar similar to the ziggurats of Mesopotamia, except - without steps.

Joseph was obviously very close to God and acted under Divine influence when he constructed this monument. Djoser may have ordered its construction to honor himself, but regardless of his motivation, in God's time it became evident as the monument it was - "an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt", marking the location of the grain storage pits in the land in which God provided a safe haven for Israel to grow and develop into a great nation.

But where was the "pillar at the border thereof"? King Solomon erected inscribed pillars on each side of the Red Sea crossing site, and built a shrine at the foot of Mt. Sinai in Arabia. This was done in the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. We found them in 1978-84. The pillar on the Egyptian side of the crossing site had fallen into the water when we found it in 1978 (during the time Israel had control of the Sinai). We showed this to the Israeli military and they erected it in concrete very near where it was found, which would be exactly "at the border thereof" of the land of Egypt, for the Sinai soon reverted back to Egypt.

<http://www.wyattnewsletters.com/Ron/egypton.htm>

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## Bible Prophecy: The Aswan High Dam

### AN EGYPTIAN NIGHTMARE - DISASTER AT ASWAN

There are many prophecies in the Bible about Egypt, which is a near neighbour of Israel.

Some of these relate to the present time. The prophecies concerning Egypt recorded in the books of EZEKIEL and ISAIAH, have turned out to be amazingly accurate. As we will see, some are being fulfilled through the efforts of the Egyptians themselves to modernise their nation.

The accuracy of their description of the unhappy course of events that has overtaken that country is indeed a proof of God's inspiration of Scripture.

**One such example refers to the River Nile**, and has been brought about by the mighty Aswan High Dam project.

#### BACKGROUND TO THE DAM

The building of the Aswan High Dam, was a project promoted by Colonel Nasser, the soldier turned politician, who helped to oust King Farouk in a military coup in 1952. He became Prime Minister of Egypt in 1954. Because he accepted military support from Communist Bloc nations, in 1956 the USA and Great Britain withdrew offers made the previous year to build the dam.

Nasser then nationalised the Suez Canal and blocked Israeli ships from using it. Israel invaded Egypt, and Great Britain and France sent in troops to "protect the Canal Zone." But pressure from the UN and USA forced them to withdraw leaving Nasser triumphant and in charge of the Canal.

#### THE ASWAN HIGH DAM

Because of the tensions the World Bank refused to fund the dam and the USSR provided the money and know-how for the dam, which Nasser claimed would revolutionise and enrich Egyptian society. To repay the loan from the USSR, Egypt was required to turn over all revenues from the Suez Canal to the USSR. The High Dam is up-river from another smaller dam, the Aswan Dam, completed in 1902. The High Dam is a massive earth and rockfill structure, 3 miles long and 350 feet high. Lake Nasser, formed by the dam, is 300 miles long and 6 miles wide. The Temples of Abu Simbel, built by Pharaoh Ramses II in the 1200's BC near the river bank, had to be moved to higher ground during the construction.

#### FROM DREAM TO NIGHTMARE

A special feature entitled "Dam Dream Turns Sour" was published in the Melbourne "Herald" a number of years ago. It included the following statement:

"The Egyptians have at last acknowledged that something is very wrong with the Aswan High Dam. The gigantic project which brought the world to the brink of atomic war in the 1950's is now the subject of a million-dollar survey into its environmental effects on the Nile. The dam has created grave problems."

Ironically, among the thousands engaged on the Nile survey are many American biologists and chemists.

## THE ASWAN CONTROVERSY

What went wrong? The flooding of the Nile used to bring millions of tonnes of silt on to the arable land along the banks of the Nile and into the Nile Delta area where the river discharged in to the Mediterranean Sea. Today most of this is trapped in the dam at Aswan, while the Mediterranean which used to be kept at bay by the full force of the river, and the fresh silt deposits every year, is eating up the coastline around the delta.

The loss of a nutrient supply from the river has killed the sardine industry in the South East Mediterranean Sea. The stagnant waters in the Nile Delta area at the entrance to the Sea have encouraged a plague of disease-bearing snails called "bilharzia" here and in the irrigation canals. The dam has halted the yearly supply of silt that farmers relied upon to fertilise their crops and brick-builders used to make their bricks. It has hastened the flow of peasants from the countryside to the towns, where their sprawling shanty towns compete with valuable agricultural land. The sardine industry, cotton industry and agriculture of the Nile valley have all been damaged by the damming of the water, and there have been no great advantages to offset these losses.

#### EVENT FORETOLD

The prophet Ezekiel, writing about 2,600 years ago, made the following predictions:

Egypt, from Migdol in the north to Syene (Aswan) in the south would become "desolate and waste" (EZEKIEL 29:10). Wealthy Egyptians like the Fayed family that owns Harrods in London have fled the country. (EZEKIEL 29:12)

God said: "I will make the rivers (of Egypt) dry... and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers" (EZEKIEL 30:12-13).

"I will also destroy the idols, (Abu Simbel?... the entire "god-worship" of idols) and I will cause their images to cease out of the land of Noph... and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt" (EZEKIEL 30:13).

Isaiah wrote as follows: "And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river (of Egypt) shall be wasted and dried up... the reeds and flags shall wither..."

The fishers also shall mourn... they that work in fine flax... they that weave networks shall be confounded... Neither shall there be any work for Egypt... In that day shall Egypt... be afraid and fear because of the shaking by the hand of the Lord of hosts" (ISAIAH 19:5-16).

For centuries the Nile has been the lifeline of the once powerful Egyptian civilisation. With the failure of its productive potential Egypt certainly had much to fear!

#### FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY

Although this project has become a tragedy for Egypt, it is a source of encouragement and even excitement for believers in the Bible.

Here is another prophecy which has been fulfilled. As the Bible says, against all odds, one of the world's great rivers has ceased to flow as before, bringing devastation to many people.

This is one less prophecy to be completed before Jesus returns! Perhaps His Coming is closer than we imagine.

**Even so, Come Lord Jesus!**

<http://www.cai.org/bible-studies/bible-prophecy-aswan-high-dam>

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## Prophecy against Egypt and Cush (Ethiopia) (20:1-6)

Mac - The Assyrians captured Ashdod in 711 B.C., and so frightened the Egyptians that they backed away, thus teaching Judah the folly of reliance on a foreign power such as Egypt for protection.

20:1 **In the year** that the commander came to Ashdod, **when** Sargon the king of Assyria sent him and he fought against Ashdod and captured it,

20:2 **at that time** the LORD spoke through Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "**Go and loosen the sackcloth from your hips, and take your shoes off your feet.**" And he did so, going naked and barefoot.

20:3 And the LORD said, "**Even as My servant Isaiah** has gone naked and barefoot **three years** as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush,

20:4 **so** the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

20:5 "**Then** they shall be dismayed and ashamed **because** of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast.

20:6 "**So** the inhabitants of this coastland will say **in that day**, '**Behold**, such is our hope, where we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; and we, how shall we escape?'"

Mac - Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, fulfilled this prophecy in 671 B.C. (cf. 37:38; 2Ki 19:37; Ezr 4:2).

Far from being a suitable object of Judah's trust, mighty Egypt will go off in shame.

Fausset - In the reign of Sargon (722-715 B.C.), the successor of Shalmaneser, an Assyrian invasion of Egypt took place. Its success is here foretold, and hence a party among the Jews is warned of the folly of their "expectation" of aid from Egypt or Ethiopia. At a later period (Isa. 18:1-7), when Tirhakah of Ethiopia was their ally, the Ethiopians are treated as *friends*, to whom God announces the overthrow of the common Assyrian foe, Sennacherib. Egypt and Ethiopia in this chapter (Isa. 20:3, 14) are represented as *allied together*, the result no doubt of fear of the common foe; previously they had been at strife, and the Ethiopian king had, just before Sethos' usurpation, withdrawn from occupation of part of Lower Egypt. Hence, "Egypt" is mentioned *alone* in Isa. 19:1-25, which refers to a somewhat earlier stage of the same event: a delicate mark of truth. Sargon seems to have been the king who finished the capture of Samaria which Shalmaneser began; the alliance of Hoshea with So or Sabacho II of Ethiopia, and his refusal to pay the usual tribute, provoked Shalmaneser to the invasion. On clay cylindrical seals found in Sennacherib's palace at Koyunjik, the name of Sabacho is deciphered; the two seals are thought, from the inscriptions, to have been attached to the treaty of peace between Egypt and Assyria, which resulted from the invasion of Egypt by Sargon, described in this chapter; 2Ki. 18:10 curiously confirms the view derived from Assyrian inscriptions, that though Shalmaneser began, Sargon finished the conquest of Samaria; "they took it" (compare 2Ki. 17:4-6). In Sargon's palace at Khorsabad, inscriptions state that 27,280 Israelites were led captive by the founder of the palace. While Shalmaneser was engaged in the siege of Samaria, Sargon probably usurped the supreme power and destroyed him; the siege began in 723 B.C., and ended in 721 B.C., the first year of Sargon's reign. Hence arises the paucity of inscriptions of the two predecessors of Sargon, Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser; the usurper destroyed them, just as Tiglath-pileser destroyed those of Pul (Sardanapalus), the last of the old line of Ninus; the names of his father and grandfather, which have been deciphered in the palace of his son Sennacherib, do not appear in the list of Assyrian kings, which confirms the view that he was a satrap who usurped the throne. He was so able a general that Hezekiah made no attempt to shake off the tribute until the reign of Sennacherib; hence Judah was not invaded now as the lands of the Philistines and Egypt were. After conquering Israel he sent his general, Tartan, to attack the Philistine cities, "Ashdod," etc., preliminary to his invasion of Egypt and Ethiopia; for the line of march to Egypt lay along the southwest coast of Palestine. The inscriptions confirm the prophecy; they tell us he received tribute from a Pharaoh of "Egypt," besides destroying in part the Ethiopian "No-amnon, or Thebes (Nah. 3:8); also that he warred with the kings of "Ashdod," Gaza, etc., in harmony with Isaiah here; a memorial tablet of him is found in Cyprus also, showing that he extended his arms to that island. His reign was six or seven years in duration, 722-715 B.C. [G. V. Smith].

Tartan - probably the same general as was sent by Sennacherib against Hezekiah (2Ki. 18:17). Gesenius takes "Tartan" as a title.

Ashdod - called by the Greeks Azotus (Act. 8:40); on the Mediterranean, one of the "five" cities of the Philistines. The taking of it was a necessary preliminary to the invasion of Egypt, to which it was the key in that quarter, the Philistines being allies of Egypt. So strongly did the Assyrians fortify it that it stood a twenty-nine years' siege, when it was retaken by the Egyptian Psammetichus.

sent - Sargon himself remained behind engaged with the Phoenician cities, or else led the main force more directly into Egypt out of Judah [G. V. Smith].

Isa 20:2 sackcloth - the loose outer garment of coarse dark hair-cloth worn by mourners (2Sa. 3:31) and by prophets, fastened at the waist by a girdle (Mat. 3:4; 2Ki. 1:8; Zec. 13:4).

naked - rather, "uncovered"; he merely put off the outer sackcloth, retaining still the tunic or inner vest (1Sa. 19:24; 2:16; Joh. 21:7); an emblem to show that Egypt should be stripped of its possessions; the very dress of Isaiah was a silent exhortation to repentance.

Isa 20:3 three years - Isaiah's symbolical action did not continue all this time, but *at intervals*, to keep it before the people's mind during that period [Rosenmuller]. Rather, join "three years" with "sign," a *three years' sign*, that is, a sign that a three years' calamity would come on Egypt and Ethiopia [Barnes], (Isa. 8:18). This is the only instance of a strictly symbolical act performed by Isaiah. With later prophets, as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, such acts were common. In some cases they were performed, not literally, but only in prophetic vision.

wonder - rather, "omen"; conveying a threat as to the future [G. V. Smith].

Isa 20:4 buttocks uncovered - Beizoni says that captives are found represented thus on Egyptian monuments (Isa. 47:2, 3; Nah. 3:5, 8, 9), where as here, Egypt and Ethiopia are mentioned as in alliance.

Isa 20:5 they - the Philistine allies of Egypt who trusted in it for help against Assyria. A warning to the party among the Jews, who, though Judah was then the subordinate ally of Assyria, were looking to Egypt as a preferable ally (Isa. 30:7). Ethiopia was their "expectation"; for Palestine had not yet obtained, but *hoped* for alliance with it. Egypt was their "glory," that is, boast (Isa. 13:19); for the alliance with it was completed.

Isa 20:6 isle - that is, coast on the Mediterranean - Philistia, perhaps Phoenicia (compare Isa. 23:2; 11:11; 13:22; Psa. 72:10).

we - emphatical; if Egypt, in which we trusted, was overcome, how shall we, a small weak state, escape?

BKC - Isa 20:1 Isaiah interposed a narrative section here to drive home what had been said in Isa. 18:1-7 against Cush and in Isa. 19:1-17 against Egypt.

Some in Judah wanted to form an alliance with these two nations to help stave off the Assyrian threat. Isa. 20:1-6 shows the foolishness of such a course of action. In 711 B.C. Ashdod, a Philistine city, was captured by the commander-in-chief of the Assyrian king Sargon II (722-705). The capture of Ashdod was to signal to the Judahites that they could not count on foreign alliances to protect them, for the Assyrians believed their advances could not be stopped.

Isa 20:2-6 For three years Isaiah did not wear his outer garment of sackcloth (also the attire of Elijah, 2Ki. 1:8), or his sandals. (He was not completely naked.) This object lesson was to show how the Egyptians and Cushites would be treated by the victorious Assyrian forces. When those nations (Egypt and Cush) would fall to the Assyrians (Isa. 20:4), the Judahites who thought an alliance with those countries would help them would be afraid and ashamed (Isa. 20:5). People would realize that if Egypt and Cush had fallen to Assyria, then they had no chance for escape (Isa. 20:6). Judah, then, should trust in the Lord for protection rather than in the foreign alliance they were contemplating.



1 שנה, “the year,” is apparently 712 or 711 B.C.E. Sargon has not been active in Palestine since one year after Samaria’s destruction, 721 B.C.E, when a residual rebellion of Israelites and Philistines was put down. Assyrian texts report that Azuri, king of Ashdod, withheld tribute and tried to organize a coalition of states to rebel (ANE7, 286, 249–62). This could well have taken place over several years and may have included contacts with Hezekiah. This brought Sargon’s forces back into the area.

The Assyrian military action was thorough. Ashdod and its allies, including Gath, were defeated. A new king, approved by the Assyrians, was soon deposed by a Greek, lamani. The Assyrians intervened again, reorganized the government, and deported some of their people, bringing in others from the east. The same report mentions friendly notes from the king of Ethiopia.

Sargon’s accounts claim personal credit for the victory. This account, probably more accurately, speaks of an officer sent to represent the king, i.e., the tartan. Not since chap. 7 has the Vision presented an event with such precise dating. Sargon ruled from 722 to 705 B.C.E. He was a strong and effective king.

2 בעת ההיא, “in that period,” broadens the time span of “in that year” in v 1 to make room for the “three years” of v 3. It is intentionally locating the following events in the period immediately before the invasion in 711 B.C.E.

The words from God order Isaiah to act out a prophetic sign, like Hosea’s marriage (Hos 1–3) and Jeremiah’s yoke (Jer 27). The literal translation “spoke by the hand of Isaiah” is most fitting. YHWH’s message is delivered by Isaiah’s actions: taking off his clothes and sandals. השק, “the sackcloth,” is probably the basic undergarment worn by the men. The text reports that Isaiah obeyed.

3–4 A word from God interprets the sign that had now been acted out for some three years (i.e., 714–711 B.C.E.). It is a prediction that Assyria will conquer the peoples of Egypt and Ethiopia, leading many of them captive back to Assyria along the highways of Palestine.

Political changes had occurred in Egypt during this period. Shabaka, the Ethiopian king, consolidated his hold on Egypt’s delta. The scheming kings of the delta cities who conspired to keep the Palestinians in revolt against Assyria were gone. No effective help would be forthcoming from Egypt in that period.

4 There is no record of an Assyrian invasion of Egypt until the reign of Esarhaddon. In 671 B.C.E. he defeated Tirhaka, occupied Memphis, and installed Assyrian governors over local Egyptian princes. A second rebellion was crushed by Ashurbanipal in 667 B.C.E. with Manasseh’s participation. On this occasion the rebel princes were marched to Nineveh, much in the way this verse pictures the march of captives.

5 “They” refers to Palestinian rebels who had counted on the new Ethiopian dynasty to continue the policies of the kings of the Lower Egyptian cities. Shabaka apparently sought a diplomatic accommodation with Assyria to replace the confrontation that had existed (cf. 18:2 and Sargon’s report of a message from the Ethiopian king). During this period a refugee ruler from Ashdod who sought political asylum in Egypt was extradited at Assyria’s request. This policy effectively stripped Ashdod and Jerusalem of substantial support from that side in 712 B.C.E. During Shabaka’s lifetime, Egypt kept peace with Assyria. However, when his successor Shebtako came to the throne in 702 B.C.E., he promptly sent his brother Taharga to aid Hezekiah against Assyria. He was decisively defeated at Eltekeh in 701 B.C.E. (K. A. Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period in Egypt*, 383–86). The policy of confrontation was again in force, and it was only a matter of time before Assyria undertook a serious invasion of Egypt.

6 The chorus of the Philistines says it all. If the Egyptian might can be so stripped away, the might that had fed their own hopes and dreams, what hope do they have?

## Explanation

The grim narrative of chap. 20 with its disturbing acted-out sign brings the beautiful vision back to stark reality. Jerusalem’s leaders have agreed to join the so-called Ashdod rebellion of 714–12 B.C.E. This means that they have cast their lot with the delta kings of Egypt (Twenty-Second, Twenty-Third, and Twenty-Fourth Dynasties) against Ethiopia and Assyria. The prophet’s protest underscores a fact well known to the readers of the Vision: this flies in the face of the expressed plan of YHWH. The rebellion by the Philistine cities with Hezekiah’s support prevented the prompt implementation of Shabaka’s search for support on that northern border or, in a way, made it unnecessary.

Isaiah’s sign opposes an actual or potential royal policy of dependence on Egyptian support, that is, from the delta kings, against Assyria. Ashdod’s messengers had visited Jerusalem, and Hezekiah was tempted to join the revolt.

Isaiah’s protest is thoroughly consistent with his counsel to Ahaz (7:4) and his evaluation of the Assyrian’s destiny (7:17; 10:5–6). This is no private advice to the kings and his counselors but a public demonstration intended to catch the attention of the nation. It is not a prediction of a specific event but an evaluation of Egypt’s long-term inability and lack of will to counter Assyrian pressure.

But Judah stubbornly leaned toward an anti-Assyrian and pro-Egyptian (i.e., the cities of the delta, not the Ethiopian dynasty) stance that was short-sighted and unrealistic. It involved a fateful miscalculation of Assyria’s power and will. Hezekiah’s ministers had involved Judah in the Ashdod rebellion from the very beginning of his reign. It broke out fully by 714 B.C.E. and was suppressed by Sargon’s forces in 712 B.C.E. (cf. *MBA*, 149). Judah apparently lent its support in the early stages but sought Assyria’s amnesty before the fighting started. Of course, hopes for Egyptian support were fruitless. Egypt was being overrun by Ethiopian forces friendly to Assyria.

Through the following years, Shabaka (716–702 B.C.E.) maintained correct, almost friendly relations with Assyria, thus gaining external peace for Egypt during his reign (Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period in Egypt*, 380)

# John Watts

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