'From Beyond the Rivers of Cush': Negotiating Ethnic Identity and Cushite-Israelite Interrelations in the Hebrew Bible

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

It is almost axiomatic that the impetus to study the past is occasioned by contemporary paradigms and circumstances. In recent years the steady flow of critical investigations of ethnic sentiments in the biblical literature can be directly correlated to the salience of ethnic dynamics in our modern, multicultural context. It is reasonable to assert then that the biblical scholar's primary purpose for studying ethnic dynamics in Israel's past is to inform, in one way or another, the contemporary struggle for identity in an ethnically and racially fractured social landscape.

The primary objective of this work is to investigate representations of Cushites in the Hebrew Bible, and as such it is a study of the past. But relevant to the present, one of the main goals of this project is to provide a more balanced view of Cushite ethnographic representations in the biblical literature by consciously departing from accepted stereotypes of Africa and people of African descent which are largely a feature of the modern age. Varying degrees of racial stereotyping expressed in otherwise competent biblical interpretation tend to emphasize unfavourable portraits of the people the biblical writers called Cushites. Such views are revealed, for example, through a tacit assumption of the slave status of certain Cushites who appear in the pages of the Hebrew Bible.

It is a working assumption of this study that modern notions of race and ethnicity were understood differently in the ancient and biblical contexts. Thus, in contrast to racial assumptions, this work seeks to comprehend the *biblical* view of Cushites first by undertaking a comprehensive examination of comparative representations of Cushites in ancient Egypt and the Mediterranean, and second by a critical examination of the theological outlook of the biblical authors who wrote about them. This study contributes to a clearer understanding of the theological, historical, and ethnic dynamics underpinning representations of Cushites in the Hebrew Bible.

OPSOMMING

Dit is byna vanselfsprekend dat die impuls om die verlede te bestudeer deur kontemporêre paradigmas en omstandighede bepaal word. In onlangse jare kan die bestendige vloei van kritiese ondersoeke na etniese sentimente in die Bybelse literatuur direk in verband gebring word met die prominensie van etniese dinamika in moderne, multikulturele kontekste. Dit is dus ook redelik om te beweer dat indien die Bybelwetenskaplike se primêre doelwit is om die etniese dinamika in Israel se verlede te bestudeer, dit op een of ander manier die hedendaagse stryd om identiteit in 'n etniese en rasse-gebroke sosiale landskap sal belig. Die primêre doel van hierdie werk is om die voorstellings van die Kusiete in die Hebreeuse Bybel te ondersoek, en as sodanig is dit 'n studie van die verlede. Maar, een van die hoofdoelwitte van hierdie projek is om dit ook van toepassing te maak op die hede ten einde 'n meer gebalanseerde siening van Kusitiese etnografiese voorstellings in die Bybelse literatuur te bied. Daarvoor word bewustelik afgewyk van aanvaarde stereotipes van Afrika en mense van Afrika-afkoms wat 'n prominente kenmerk van die moderne era is. Verskillende grade van rasse-stereotipering wat uitgedruk word in andersins goeie Bybelinterpretasies, dra daartoe by om ongunstige voorstellings te maak van die mense wat deur die Bybelskrywers die Kusiete genoem is. Sulke sienings word byvoorbeeld versterk deur die stilswyende aanname van die slawestatus van sekere Kusiete wat in die bladsye van die Hebreeuse Bybel voorkom.

Dit is 'n aanname van hierdie studie dat moderne begrippe soos ras en etnisiteit verskillend verstaan is in die antieke en Bybelse kontekste. Die studie wil dus, in teenstelling met studies wat vooringenome standpunte oor ras het, probeer om die Bybelse sienings van die Kusiete te verstaan deur eerstens 'n omvattende ondersoek van vergelykende voorstellings van Kusiete in antieke Egipte en die Middellandse Seegebied te doen, en tweedens, deur 'n kritiese ondersoek te doen van die teologiese perspektiewe van die Bybelskrywers wat oor hulle geskryf het. Hierdie studie wil dus bydra tot 'n beter begrip van die teologiese, historiese en etniese dinamika wat die voorstelling van die Kusiete in die Hebreeuse Bybel ondersteun.

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PART II

CUSHITE ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Problem Statement and Outline

1.1 INTRODUCTION

It is almost axiomatic that the impetus to study the past is occasioned by contemporary paradigms and circumstances. As Bruce Trigger makes clear, the past is never studied for its own sake, but to a significant degree is influenced by the students' own historical horizon, values and beliefs.[1] In recent years the steady flow of critical investigations of ethnic sentiments in the biblical literature can be directly correlated to the salience of ethnic dynamics in our modern, multicultural context.[2] The politicization of ethnicity in the present and its expression in nationalist, colonialist, and imperialist ideologies almost always draw upon constructions of the past in order to legitimize some existent power relations.[3] As scholars begin to look more critically at modern discourses of power, however, the pasts upon

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[1] Bruce G. Trigger, "Egyptology, Ancient Egypt, and the American Imagination," in *The American Discovery of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Nancy Thomas, Gerry D. Scott and Bruce G. Trigger (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1995), 21.

[2] James C. Miller, "Ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible: Problems and Prospects," *Currents in Biblical Research* 6 (2008): 171-172; Sian Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1.

[3] For example, Gábor Klaniczay, Michael Werner and Ottó Gecser, "Introduction," in *Multiple Antiquities, Multiple Modernities: Ancient Histories in Nineteenth Century European Cultures*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay, Michael Werner and Ottó Gecser (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2011), 9, describe the interface between past and present in nineteenth century epistemology in the following way: "There was hardly any project on modernity that was not accompanied by images, representations and constructions of the past, just as, on the other side, there was hardly any reconstruction of Antiquity without reference to the projects of modernity and concepts related to the present or the future." Similarly, Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 6, argues that archaeological reconstructions of the past are too frequently deployed to serve the interests of the present: "[M]any case studies have been undertaken which demonstrate that the use of archaeology in the construction and legitimation of national identities and territorial claims is far more extensive than has been generally assumed." On the past-present dialectic in archaeology and Western epistemology more generally, see further, Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Neil Asher Silberman and David B. Small, eds., *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Margarita Díaz-Andreu et al, eds., *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Junko Habu, Clare P. Fawcett and John M. Matsunaga, eds., *Evaluating Multiple Narratives: Beyond Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist Archaeologies* (New York: Springer, 2008); George C. Bond and Angela Gilliam, eds., *Social Construction of the Past: Representation as Power* (London: Routledge, 1994).

which such discourses are based also become projects for critical scrutiny.[4]

Contemporary sociological dynamics vis-à-vis the question, *who is a Jew?*, serves as a pointed illustration of how present realities shape the interpretation of the past, and conversely how interpretations of the past shape contemporary realities. While the idea of Jews as a race of people distinguishable by phenotypic and cultural traits has been abandoned by scholarship, being "Jewish" is frequently understood to be a racial classification by both Jews and outsiders.[5] For this reason, the implicit and recursive assumption of a Jewish race by common descent has had enormous political implications for the modern state of Israel as well as for Jewish identity in a global context.[6]

With the arrival in Israel of the first waves of Ethiopian Jews (known as the Beta Israel) between 1980 and 1991 new questions regarding "race" and the ethnic identity of Jews became the focal point of discussions in Israel and beyond its borders. That "Blacks" could be included among the "Children of Israel," came as a great surprise to contemporary observers.[7] At least in the modern context, being "Jewish" has become synonymous with being "White," and the Jewish State, established in 1948 by European powers, is perceived as a "White" nation.[8] What kind of racial dynamics would obtain from the insemination of Africans into Jewish stock?

To further complicate the picture, in recent years several black African groups have made claims to Jewish identity, often emphasizing similarities between Jewish practice and

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[4] Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Sam Lucy, "Introduction," in *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity and Religion*, ed. Margarita Díaz-Andreu et al (New York: Routledge, 2005), 9-10.

[5] Steven Kaplan, "If There Are No Races, How Can Jews Be a 'Race'?," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 2 (2003): 79. Cf. Doron M. Behar et al, "Counting the Founders: The Matrilineal Genetic Ancestry of the Jewish Diaspora," *PLoS ONE* 3 (2008): 1-16.

[6] Kaplan, "How Can Jews Be a 'Race'?" 79-91.

[7] Daniel Lis, *Jewish Identity Among the Igbo of Nigeria: Israel's "Lost Tribe" and the Question of Belonging in the Jewish State* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2015), viii; Jonas Zianga, "Black Jews in Academic and Institutional Discourse," in *Race, Color, Identity: Rethinking Discourses about "Jews" in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Efraim Sicher (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 182-84.

[8] See Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1-7, 11-32; Melanie Kantrowitz, *The Colors of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 1-32; Lis, *Jewish Identity*, viii; Steven Kaplan, "Ethiopian Immigrants in Israel: The Discourses of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Racism," in *Race, Color, Identity: Rethinking Discourses about "Jews" in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Efraim Sicher (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 167-181; Zianga, "Black Jews," 183-184. Cf. Bruce D. Haynes, "A Member of the Club? How Black Jews Negotiate Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism," in *Race, Color, Identity: Rethinking Discourses about "Jews" in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Efraim Sicher (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 147-66.

African traditions. Such identifications, however, are usually dismissed as either being inspired by the case of the Beta Israel or as attempts by such groups to improve their social and economic circumstances.[9] Among such claimants are the Igbo of Nigeria, estimated at over 30 million people;[10] a large proportion of the Malagasy of Madagascar;[11] the House of Israel of Ghana;[12] the Abayudaya of Uganda;[13] and the Lemba of South Africa, estimated at around 50,000.[14]

In spite of many of these groups having oral traditions supported by historiographic reports in some cases (some sources going back to the ninth and twelfth centuries), and in the case of the Lemba, having strong genetic links with "authentic" Jewish populations,[15] none of these Sub-Saharan African groups have been officially recognized as authentic Jewish communities—their claims denied on ethnic or religious grounds.[16] Indeed, in Israel such Black African groups are known derogatorily as *Cushim*—a term the Beta Israel has vehemently protested against being used to refer to themselves.[17]

Going back to the association of past and present, it is not surprising that constructions of Jewish ethnic identity in the present are usually undergirded by assumptions of ethnic homogeneity, objectivity, and continuity with the past. It is reasonable to assert then that the

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[9] This is one of the main arguments for scholars researching this problem. See for example, Edith Bruder, "The Descendants of David of Madagascar: Crypto-Judaism in Twentieth-Century Africa," in *Race, Color, Identity: Rethinking Discourses about "Jews" in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Efraim Sicher (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 196-213; Edith Bruder, *The Black Jews of Africa: History, Religion, Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Cf. Zianga, "Black Jews," 184, and Lis, *Jewish Identity*, who argue otherwise.

[10] See Lis, *Jewish Identity*; Daniel Lis, "Ethiopia Shall Soon Stretch Out Her Hands: Ethiopian Jewry and Igbo Identity," *Jewish Culture and History* 11 (2009): 21-38; William F. S. Miles, *Jews of Nigeria: An Afro-Judaic Odyssey* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2013).

[11] Bruder, *Black Jews of Africa*; Bruder, "Crypto-Judaism," 196-213.

[12] Karen Primack, *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1998).

[13] Arye Oded, *The Bayudaya: A Community of African Jews in Uganda* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1973).

[14] Mark G. Thomas et al, "Y Chromosome Traveling South: The Cohen Modal Haplotype and the Origins of the Lemba—the 'Black Jews of Southern Africa'," *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 66 (2000): 674-86. Cf. Magdel Le Roux, *The Lemba: A Lost Tribe of Israel in Southern Africa* (Pretoria: UNISA, 2003).

[15] Thomas et al, "Y Chromosomes Traveling South," 685.

[16] Zianga, "Black Jews," 183, 193.

[17] Steven Kaplan, "Can the Ethiopian Change His Skin? The Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) and Racial Discourse," *African Affairs* 98 (1999): 10-11. Cf. Hagar Salamon, "Blackness in Transition: Decoding Racial Constructs through Stories of Ethiopian Jews," *Journal of Folklore Research* 40 (2003): 3-32; Lis, *Jewish Identity*, viii.

biblical scholar's primary purpose for studying ethnic dynamics in Israel's past is to inform, in one way or another, the contemporary struggle for identity in an ethnically and racially fractured social landscape. While the primary purpose of the present work, as outlined below, is to contribute to the study of Cushites in the Hebrew Bible, this work is also envisioned in a secondary sense as a contribution to the wider discourse of identity construction and the power of representation. As a study of "African" identity in the past, this project aims to contribute to the re-evaluation of discourses about race and ethnicity which have been deployed in the modern age for the purpose of marginalizing people of African descent through distorted representations of the past and self-serving constructions of the present. Even a small contribution in this regard means this secondary objective would have been achieved.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary objective of this work is to investigate the representations of Cushites in the Hebrew Bible, and as such it is a study of the past. Yet based on the interface between past and present introduced above, the study of Cushites in the biblical past cannot be adequately apprehended without a related investigation of the ways in which African identity has been constructed in the recent present.

As we shall see, the construction of African identity inextricably binds past and present, and presents at the same time an inescapable paradox; namely, that the primary site of this construction is the intellectual tradition of Western epistemology. It is in this conceptual space that a rationale for an "African" identity was first necessitated, and it is still here that the greatest interest in the forging of such identity was served.

1.2.1 A Blind Spot in Western Epistemology

It is widely understood that scholarship, quite apart from being an objective, value-free intellectual pursuit, is motivated by contemporary ideological, political, economic, and other interests.[18] The seedbed of Western scholarship in the modern period was sown in an era of

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[18] Cf. Peter R. Schmidt and Jonathan R. Walz, "Re-Representing African Pasts through Historical Archaeology," *American Antiquity* 72 (2007): 53-74; Neil Asher Silberman and David B. Small, "Introduction," in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, eds. Neil Asher Silberman and David B. Small (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 17-21; Neil Asher Silberman, "Structuring the Past: Israelis, Palestinians, and the Symbolic Authority of Archaeological Monuments," in

colonialism and imperial domination of Africans and other groups by Western powers. Consequently, the construction of the histories of the conquered peoples by scholars working from an essentially European perspective necessarily corresponded to present realities.[19] With the cognizance of the power imbalance between colonizer and colonized and the specter of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade looming large in collective memory, the marginalization and denigration of people of African origins in Western epistemology was all but secure.

Scholarly constructions of an "inert" African past was employed to legitimize Western imperialism and the appropriation of the African continent on the pretext that Africans, by virtue of some supposed biological determinism, were incapable of cultural development.[20] Any semblance of "civilization" in the African past, such as the Great Zimbabwe, were explained away through "diffusionary" paradigms.[21] As will become evident in short course, in virtually every field of inquiry, history, classics, Egyptology, archaeology, anthropology, among others, African heritage was either ignored, outrightly dismissed, or treated with condescension.[22]

The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present, ed. Neil Asher Silberman and David B. Small (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 62-81; László Török, "A Periphery on the Periphery of the Ancient World: The Discovery of Nubia in the Nineteenth Century," in *Multiple Antiquities, Multiple Modernities: Ancient Histories in Nineteenth Century European Cultures*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay, Michael Werner and Ottó Gecser (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2011), 365-80; Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought 2*, 17-26, 39, 195-210.

[19] See for example, the essays in David B. O'Connor and Andrew Reid, eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2003); Daniel Orrells, Gurminder K. Bhambra and Tessa Roynon, eds., *African Athena: New Agendas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Neil Asher Silberman and David B. Small, eds., *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). Many of these essays argue for a reassessment of Western historical discourses which are based on racist and imperialist ideologies. Cf. Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Török, "A Periphery on the Periphery," 365-80.

[20] See David B. O'Connor and Andrew Reid, "Introduction - Locating Ancient Egypt in Africa: Modern Theories, Past Realities," in *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, ed. David B. O'Connor and Andrew Reid (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2003), 1-21; Trigger, *Archaeological Thought*, 195-207; Török, "A Periphery on the Periphery," 365-80. Cf. László Török, *Herodotus in Nubia* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1-7.

[21] O'Connor and Reid, "Egypt in Africa," 2-10; Trigger, *Archaeological Thought*, 202-205.

[22] This is one of the main arguments which Martin Bernal has made in his provocative 1987 monograph. See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 3 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Martin Bernal, "Afrocentrism and the Historical Models for the Foundation of Ancient Greece," in *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, ed. David B. O'Connor and Andrew Reid (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2003), 23-29. Cf. Robert J. C. Young, "The Afterlives of *Black Athena*," in *African Athena: New Agendas*, ed. Daniel Orrells, Gurminder K. Bhambra and Tessa Roynon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 175-176; Maghan Keita, "Africans and Asians: Historiography and the Long View of Global

A brief digression by way of example anticipates the discussion in the following chapter. The field of Egyptology, founded as it was upon racialized taxonomies and relying heavily upon archaeology, constructed a picture of ancient Nubia wherein the "primitive" Negroes were colonized and acculturated by the civilizing forces of "Hamitic" Egypt.[23] Even the Nubian rulers of the 25th Egyptian Dynasty were theorized to be descendants of Egyptian priests, or Libyans––anything but "Negro" kings.[24] In this view, Africans were indolent,

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Interaction," *Journal of World History* 16 (2005): 1-30; Stephen Howe, "Egyptian Athena, African Egypt, Egyptian Africa: Martin Bernal and Contemporary African Historical Thought," in *African Athena: New Agendas*, ed. Daniel Orrells, Gurminder K. Bhambra and Tessa Roynon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 156-173; O'Connor and Reid, "Egypt in Africa," 1-21. Joseph C. Miller, "History and Africa/Africa and History," *The American Historical Review* 104 (1999): 1-32, emphasizes that history as a field of enquiry which developed in the 19th century, "specifically excluded most of Africa from the human progress that [it] celebrated" (2). For the same exclusion in philosophy, see Peter K. J. Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy: Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon, 1780-1830* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013). On the epistemology of historiography in the modern period, see further, Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2014); Raymond Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History: An Essay on the Limits of Historical Objectivity* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1976); Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010); Mark Bevir, "Objectivity in History," *History and Theory* (1994): 328-344; Anders Schinkel, "History and Historiography in Process," *History and Theory* 43 (2004): 39-56; Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (New York: Routledge, 2004); For critiques of colonial anthropological constructions, see the following: Andrew Apter, "Africa, Empire, and Anthropology: A Philological Exploration of Anthropology's Heart of Darkness," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999): 577-598; Peter Rigby, *African Images: Racism and the End of Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg, 1996); Talal Asad, *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (New York: Humanity Books, 2011); Peter Van Dommelen, "Colonial Constructs: Colonialism and Archaeology in the Mediterranean," *World Archaeology* 28 (1997): 305-323; Warwick Anderson, "Racial Hybridity, Physical Anthropology, and Human Biology in the Colonial Laboratories of the United States," *Current Anthropology* 53 (2012): 95-107; Peter Pels, "The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History, and the Emergence of Western Governmentality," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 163-183; V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[23] Edith R. Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective," *The Journal of African History* 10 (1969): 521-532; Charles B. Copher, "Blacks/Negroes: Participants in the Development of Civilization in the Ancient World and Their Presence in the Bible," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 23 (October, 1995): 5-9; O'Connor and Reid, "Egypt in Africa," 4-7; J. Daniel Hays, "Racial Bias in the Academy...Still?," *Perspectives in Religious Studies,* 34 (October, 2007): 315-29; Scott Trafton, *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 59-63; Trigger*, Archaeological Thought,* 195-207; Bruce G. Trigger, "Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?" in *Africa in Antiquity: The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan*, ed. Steffen Wenig, 2 vols. (Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Museum, 1978), 28-29; Török, "A Periphery on the Periphery," 371-377. The polyvalence of the Hamitic Hypothesis will be explored in the following chapter.

[24] Török, "A Periphery on the Periphery," 377.

culturally stagnant, and lacked the creativity or ability to be self-governing and innovative.[25] Indeed, except for occasional outside stimuli, Sub-Saharan Africa remained isolated and backward with very little contact with the rest of the world.[26] Such a conception plainly illustrates how modern racial dichotomies of Black and White, slave and master, inferior and superior were deployed to describe the relationship between ancient Nubia and Egypt through scholarly constructions—an implicit imposition of the colonial realities of the modern age on the ancient past.[27]

1.2.2 A Blind Spot in Biblical Scholarship

Biblical Studies as a discipline is no exception to the above, as many scholars have pointed out.[28] Biblical scholarship, a discipline of mainly North Atlantic provenance, has expressed and continues to express Euro-American bias towards Africa and Africans in the construction of biblical history. Hays, for example, has noted the extensive treatment of non-biblical peoples (such as the Hurrians and Sumerians), and certain traditionally marginal groups (such as women and the poor) in scholarly publications, but no similar sustained treatment of Cushites.[29] He also notes the "sloppy" scholarship which attends many discussions of Africa and Africans in biblical history, as if Africans are not worthy of serious and rigorous scholarly inquiry.[30]

Even in popular Bible translations (often in a single work), the Hebrew כּוּשִׁי is variously translated as "Ethiopian," "Cushite," and "Nubian" for no apparent reason except perhaps to mask the significance of the African presence in the biblical text.[31] Not to mention

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[25] Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought 2*, 195-207, 217-223; Bruce G. Trigger, "Paradigms in Sudan Archaeology," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 27 (1994): 327-328; Török, "A Periphery on the Periphery," 371-377. Cf. Török, *Herodotus in Nubia*, 1-7.

[26] Trigger, "Sudan Archaeology," 327-328. Cf. Keita, "Africans and Asians," 1-30.

[27] Török, "A Periphery on the Periphery," 373; Trigger, "Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?," 27-29. Cf. Johannes Siapkas, "Ancient Ethnicity and Modern Identity," in *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Jeremy McInerney (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 66-81.

[28] For example, Hays, "Racial Bias in the Academy," 315-29; John Riches, "Cultural Bias in European and North American Biblical Scholarship," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 431-448; Fernando F. Segovia, "Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Biblical Studies," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 469-492.

[29] Hays, "Racial Bias in the Academy," 315-29; J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 2003), 17-39.

[30] Hays, "Racial Bias in the Academy," 315-16.

[31] Hays, "Racial Bias in the Academy," 317-19; Hays, *Every People and Nation*, 25-27.

that maps of the ancient biblical world routinely exclude the area south of Egypt.[32] "Black Africans" it seems, have had very little part to play in the history of the biblical period—at least not enough to warrant serious inquiry.

While it is the case that Israelite ethnic identity in the biblical literature has been explored variously over the last few decades, studies analyzing how Cushites fit into the broader framework of cultural and ethnic interconnections in the Hebrew Bible are largely non-existent. Save for a few notable exceptions, few scholars are inclined to engage discussions regarding the presence and contribution of Africans in Israel's deep past. Of the many studies on the ethnicity of biblical peoples,[33] very few even mention Cushites as an ethnic group in the Mediterranean region, and still fewer provide any serious treatment of Cushites as an ethnic group in close interaction with ancient Israel and Judah.[34] Again, this marginalization is systemic, stretching across various disciplines, most of which were founded on 19th century racial assumptions.[35]

Moreover, the burgeoning field of Nubiology has much to teach about the ancient Cushites and their engagement in the broader Mediterranean context, but few have tapped into this increasingly rich area of study in order to shed fresh insights on the dynamics of Cushite-Israelite interrelations in the Hebrew Bible. Rather, a tacit assumption of modern racial categories which subordinates and excludes people of African origins seems to account for this general neglect. Why is this so? Why has the presence and significance of Cushites in

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[32] Hays, "Racial Bias in the Academy," 320-21.

[33] For example, Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998); Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel, 1300-1100 B.C.E* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); Ann E. Killebrew and Gunnar Lehmann, *The Philistines and Other "Sea Peoples" in Text and Archaeology* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013); Armin Siedlecki, "Foreigners, Warfare and Judahite Identity in Chronicles," in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, ed. M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie (Sheffield: Sheffield academic press, 1999), 229-66.

[34] The edited volume, Eric M. Meyers, Douglas R. Edwards and C. Thomas McCollough, eds., *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the "Other" in Antiquity: Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers* (Boston, MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007), is a notable exception for its inclusion of an article by Rodney S. Sadler dealing with Cushites. See Rodney S. Sadler, "Representing the Cushite Other: The Use of Cushite Phenotypes in Numbers 12 and Jeremiah 13:23," 49-66.

[35] See O'Connor and Reid, "Egypt in Africa," 1-10; Bernal, *Black Athena*; Bernal, "Afrocentrism," 23-29; Trigger, "Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?," 27-29; Trigger, "Sudan Archaeology," 323-345. Cf. John A. North, "Attributing Colour to the Ancient Egyptians: Reflections on *Black Athena*," in *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, ed. David B. O'Connor and Andrew Reid (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2003), 31-38.

the Hebrew Bible elicited such little attention among scholars? Why in the few instances where Africans and people of African descent appear in scholarly publications they are often cast as servile outsiders?[36] The simple answer, Hays would argue, and this study agrees, is that biblical scholarship continues to be influenced by racial ideas inherited from the past.[37]

It seems evident that such realities (the scholar's historical horizon) contribute to the misrepresentation of Africans in the Hebrew Bible and in the history of ancient Israel more generally.

1.2.3 Studies Related to Cush and Cushites in the Hebrew Bible

Fortunately, several studies of Africans in the Hebrew Bible have appeared in recent years, a number of which have made salutary contributions toward the correction of conscious and unconscious distortions.[38] These studies collectively represent a positive corrective step

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[36] For example, scholars persistently portray Cushites in the biblical text as servile, distant, or despised. A short survey of the interpretation of two such texts will serve to illustrate the point. When discussing the episode of the Cushite soldier in David's army, (2 Sam 18:19-33), many scholars are quick to point out that he was a slave, though the biblical text makes no such assertion. In the older, though still widely used *ICC* series, Henry P. Smith comments on the Cushite thus: "Joab then calls a negro (naturally, a slave) and commands him . . . a message of grief by a despised messenger"; Henry P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (1899; repr., Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1977), 359. And George B. Caird's newer commentary arrives at a similar conclusion: "The Cushite was an Ethiopian, probably a slave, and so a more suitable person for the unpleasant task"; George B. Caird, "II Samuel" (*IB*; Nashville: Abingdon, 1953), 1142. Other examples could be cited; cf. Hays, "Racial Bias in the Academy," 323-326. Similarly, commentators on Amos 9:7 express the same bias. Again, the commentary on Amos in the popular *ICC* series sets a precedence for later interpreters. Describing the Cushites, William Harper writes: "Israel, says the prophet, is no more to me than the far-distant, uncivilized, and despised black race of Ethiopians. . . . No reference is made to their Hamitic origin, or their black skin; and yet their color and the fact that slaves were so often drawn from them added to the grounds for despising them"; William R. Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1905), 192. By the same token, in his more recent commentary, James Mays writes: "On the evidence one can say no more than that the Cushites were a distant, different folk whom Israelites knew mostly as slaves. 'You are to me,' says Yahweh, 'as these Cushites are to you.' What the comparison does is to humiliate Israel completely. . . to reduce them to the role in Yahweh's order of things which the Cushites played in their own society"; James L. Mays, *Amos: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 157. The implication is clear: Negroes in ancient Israel were slaves inasmuch as they are/were slaves in modern society. Again, many other commentaries on Amos 9:7 express this view. For a good summary see, Regina Smith, "A New Perspective on Amos 9:7a: 'To Me, O Israel, You Are Just Like the Kushites'," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 22 (1994): 36-38.

[37] Cf. Hays, "Racial Bias in the Academy?" 315-329.

[38] Charles B. Copher, "Blacks and Jews in Historical Interaction: The Biblical/African Experience," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center,* 3 (1975): 9-16, was one of the pioneering articles which broached the issue of African presence in the Hebrew Bible. Copher is often considered the father of Afrocentric biblical scholarship. For an anthology of his work, see Charles B. Copher, *Black Biblical Studies: An Anthology of Charles B. Copher* (Chicago: Black Light Fellowship, 1993). Other significant contributors

toward a neglected area in biblical studies. Of those studies dealing with Cushites in the Hebrew Bible, the most similar in focus to the present work is Rodney S. Sadler's 2005 monograph, *Can a Cushite Change His Skin?: An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible*. While many of the previous studies sought to catalogue individual Africans appearing in the biblical literature and argued for the significance and positive contribution of Africans to Israelite history, Sadler examines the Cushites specifically with reference to modern theories of race. His major task was to determine whether the authors of the Hebrew Bible expressed racialized sentiments toward the Cushites akin to racial stereotyping in contemporary society. He concludes that Cushites were never seen as "racialized others" by the Hebrew writers.[39] His work is a welcomed and serious contribution to a generally neglected area in biblical studies and a must-have for any student of Cush and Cushites in the Hebrew Bible.

Nevertheless, while Sadler's monograph includes "ethnicity" in its sub-title and does engage theories of ethnicity in his introduction, his discussion largely centers around the concept of race with minimal engagement with theories of ethnicity. Indeed, he conflates ethnicity and race in many respects (though, as we shall see, these are often over-lapping categories). Moreover, Sadler's "word study" approach does not fully flesh out the theological premises which undergird representations of Cushites in the biblical literature; nor does the scope of his work allow for an in-depth discussion of historical issues.

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to the topic include: Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989); David T. Adamo, *Africa and the Africans in the Old Testament* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1998); David T. Adamo, "The Images of Cush in the Old Testament: Reflections on African Hermeneutics," in *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa papers from the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament in Nairobi, October 1999*, ed. Victor Zinkuratire, Knut Holter and Mary N. Getui (New York: P. Lang, 2001), 65-74; Hays*, Every People and Nation*; J. Daniel Hays, "From the Land of the Bow: Black Soldiers in the Ancient Near East," *Biblical Review* 14 (August, 1998): 28-33; J. Daniel Hays, "The Cushites: A Black Nation in Ancient History," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (July, 1996): 270-80; Rodney S. Sadler, *Can a Cushite Change His Skin? An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005); Sadler, "The Cushite Other," 49-66; Marta Høyland Lavik, "The "African" Texts of the Old Testament and their African Interpretations," in *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa: Papers from the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament in Nairobi, October 1999*, ed. Victor Zinkuratire, Knut Holter and Mary N. Getui (New York: P. Lang, 2001), 43-54; Marta Høyland Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned: The Rhetoric of Isaiah 18* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Edwin M. Yamauchi, ed., *Africa and Africans in Antiquity* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001); Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004); Keith A. Burton, *The Blessing of Africa: The Bible and African Christianity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2007).

[39] Sadler*, Cushite*, 149-151. Cf. Rodney S. Sadler, "Can A Cushite Change His Skin?: Cushites, 'Racial Othering' and the Hebrew Bible," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 60 (2006): 386-403.

The study being undertaken here while not directly engaging the question of whether or not Cushites were racialized others in Israelite society, seeks to engage more substantively with both theological and historical dimensions of selected references to Cush and Cushites in the Hebrew Bible. The study is also centrally concerned with modern theories of ethnicity as an analytic tool. Yet as we shall see in our discussion of Israelite ethnic identity in Chapter 4, current definitions of ethnicity does not fully capture the Hebrew Bible's conception of "the Other."

A comprehensive redress of distorted representations of Africans in biblical studies lies beyond the ability of a single project, of course, and therefore this study simply adds another voice to the growing chorus calling for a more representative treatment of Africans in the biblical past.

1.2.4 Biblical Scholarship and Israelite Ethnicity

The study of ethnicity of biblical peoples, including the Israelites, usually proceed along two lines of investigation: archaeological interpretation of material culture remains and/or examination of literary texts (the Hebrew Bible and ANE texts). While some scholars see a complementary relationship between these two streams of evidence,[40] others tend to elevate one source over the other.[41] For example, William Dever and Anne Killebrew argue that archaeology is more determinative of Israelite ethnicity in the past over against the biblical material.[42] But Nadav Na'aman cautions against giving archaeology the last word in the "high court" of biblical historical research.[43] And Kenton Sparks maintains that the Hebrew text,

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[40] For example, Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "Israelite Ethnicity in Iron I: Archaeology Preserves What is Remembered and What is Forgotten in Israel's History," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 401-425; P. Pitkänen, "Ethnicity, Assimilation and the Israelite Settlement," *Tyndale Bulletin* 55 (2004): 161-182.

[41] Baruch Halpern, "Text and Artifact: Two Monologues?" in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, ed. Neil Asher Silberman and David B. Small (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 311-341; Miller, "Ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible," 176, 181-182.

[42] William G. Dever, "Cultural Continuity, Ethnicity in the Archaeological Record and the Question of Israelite Origins," *Eres Israel* 24 (1993): 22-33; William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites, and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 18-23; Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples*, 150-154, 182, 185. Along with archaeological and other non-biblical textual evidence, Killebrew also incorporates "a cautious and critical reading of the biblical texts" (185).

[43] Nadav Na'aman, "Does Archaeology Really Deserve the Status of a 'High Court' in Biblical Historical Research?" in *Between Evidence and Ideology: Essays on the History of Ancient Israel Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Oud Testamentisch Werkgezelschap, Lincoln, July 2009*, eds. Bob Becking and Lester L. Grabbe (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 165-183.

"despite obvious limitations, [is] our best window into the ancient Israelite context."[44] Like Sparks, the present study is concerned primarily with the literary evidence.

Most archaeological investigations of Israelite ethnicity prior to the 1980's and 1990's proceeded with a conception of ethnicity which Sian Jones calls 'culture-history.'[45] Culture-history approaches conform to the *primordial* paradigm,[46] wherein cultural identities in the past were believed to be static, homogenous, and timeless entities which could be objectively identified from material remains.[47] Instead of viewing identities as fluid, heterogeneous and historically contingent, interpreters of biblical history and artifacts understood identities of ancient peoples as static, bounded and persisting more or less unchanged across time and space. On this basis, direct links were made between material remains and particular ethnic groups. The ambiguity and misunderstanding that characterized the definition of "ethnicity" as it related to Israel's past permitted such uncritical associations as few studies on Israelite ethnogenesis seriously engaged sociological developments in ethnicity studies.[48]

For instance, "Israelite" ethnic identity in the Iron I Judean highland settlements has been inferred from a combination of ceramic remains (the collared-rim jar), architecture (the pillared 3-room or 4-room house), food ways (lack of pig bones, for example), along with settlement patterns (proliferation of silos, cisterns, and agricultural terraces).[49] Such concrete

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[44] Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 14.

[45] Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 15-26; Cf. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought 2*, 235-241; Sam Lucy, "Ethnic and Cultural Identities," in *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity and Religion*, eds. Margarita Díaz-Andreu et al (New York: Routledge, 2005), 87-91.

[46] The three main paradigms of ethnic theorizing—*primordialism*, *instrumentalism*, and *constructivism* are discussed in Appendix A.

[47] Lucy, "Ethnic and Cultural Identities," 86; Díaz-Andreu and Lucy, "Introduction," 2; David B. Small, "Group Identification and Ethnicity in the Construction of the Early State of Israel: From the Outside Looking In," in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, eds. Neil Asher Silberman and David B. Small (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 271-278.

[48] See for example Miller's evaluation of the problem in, Miller, "Ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible," 179-89. Cf. Mark G. Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity: Method, Hermeneutics, Ethics," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 3-24; Small, "Group Identification and Ethnicity," 271-72.

[49] On Israelite settlement in the Iron I period, see Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1988); Israel Finkelstein, "Pots and People Revisited: Ethnic Boundaries in the Iron Age I," in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, eds. Neil Asher Silberman and David B. Small (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 216-237; Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002); William G. Dever, "Ceramics, Ethnicity, and the Question of Israel's Origins," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58 (1995): 200-13; Dever, *The Early Israelites*; William G. Dever, "Ethnicity and the Archaeological Record: The Case of Early Israel," in *The*

conceptualization of ethnicity, however, allowed for crude one-to-one correspondences between ethnic groups and material culture, and often elicited direct associations between ancient populations and modern groups, sometimes facilitating the legitimation of exploitative power relations, territorial claims, and racial 'othering.'[50]

Notwithstanding a range of archaeological studies still dependent on a culture-history approach, this view of ethnic identity in the Hebrew Bible and archaeology has come under serious criticism in recent years. Working from an *instrumentalist* perspective, some scholars argue that ethnic identities are impossible to ascertain from either material remains or literary texts due to the insufficiency of the material evidence and the historical unreliability of biblical texts.[51] While such arguments lie on the extreme end of the spectrum, it is now understood that a far more complex relationship exists between material remains and ethnic identities. The same holds true for relationships between past peoples in literary and material records and present populations.[52]

While it is clear that some ethnic identities tend to persist over hundreds or even thousands of years, it is equally clear that the boundaries of such groups undergo constant flux in response to historical contingencies. Moreover, many ethnic identities are formed

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Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the "Other" in Antiquity: Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers, ed. Douglas R. Edwards and C. Thomas McCollough (Boston, MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007), 53-60; Avraham Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion and Resistance* (London: Equinox Pub., 2006); Cf. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples*, 157, 171-181.

[50] Indeed, the perception of ancient Israelite and Jewish ethnicity as bounded and homogenous stemming from a common ancestral origin, has strongly influenced modern assertions of a Jewish "race" with primordial ties to the Promised Land. See, Yaacov Shavit, "Archaeology, Political Culture, and Culture in Israel," in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, ed. Neil Asher Silberman and David B. Small (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 48-61; Silberman and Small, "Introduction," 17-31; Jones*, Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 1-14; Carla M. Antonaccio, "(Re)Defining Ethnicity: Culture, Material Culture, and Identity," in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, ed. Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 32-53.

[51] For example, Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity," 3-22; Diana Edelman, "Ethnicity and Early Israel," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 25-55; Cf. Thomas L. Thompson, *Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York: Fine Communications, 2005); Thomas L. Thompson, "Defining History and Ethnicity in the South Levant," in *Can a 'History of Israel' Be Written?*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 166-187; Niels Peter Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1998).

[52] Cf. Klaniczay, Werner and Gecser, "Introduction," 9-25; Lucy, "Ethnic and Cultural Identities," 86-109; Trigger, "Sudan Archaeology," 323-345.

situationally, and others dissolve rather rapidly.[53] In other words, there is no simple formula for how ethnic groups form, persist or dissolve. Neither is there a single configuration of Israelite ethnic identity.[54] Rather, each historical context is important for understanding specific ethnic dynamics as such identities undergo change over time. In a word, ethnogenesis is a diachronic process, involving constant renegotiation of ethnic boundaries depending on specific contexts.[55] Scholars researching Israelite ethnicity in the biblical period are increasingly acknowledging the fluidity and contingent nature of ethnic identities even if many still envision Israelite ethnicity as essentially primordial.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND HYPOTHESIS

1.3.1 Problem Statement

The primary issue which this research seeks to address relates to the importance that ethnic differentiation acquired in Israelite-Cushite interrelation as evinced by the biblical evidence. The specific research question then is: what markers or constituent elements of ethnic identity were important in ancient Israelite and Judean society, and on the basis of these, how did biblical authors understand and portray Cushites as an ethnic Other? For example, did Israelites differentiate Cushites on the basis of their religion, descent or ancestry, homeland, or somatic features (or a combination of some or all of these), and in what ways did such differentiation impact Israelite perception and treatment of Cushites? Furthermore, how were the boundaries of Israelite ethnicity negotiated in the various contact situations with individual Cushites, or with Cush as an international player in the broader Mediterranean?

1.3.2 Hypothesis

The starting position of this study is that the frequent representations of Cushites in the Hebrew Bible suggest that Cushites were well known to the biblical writers, and by extension to their audiences. This is true for all period, but especially so from the mid-eighth century to the mid-seventh century B.C. when the height of Cushite power in the

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[53] See Paul R. Brass, "Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Identity Formation," in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 85-90.

[54] Miller, "Ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible," 173.

[55] See Fredrik Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 75-82; Stuart Tyson Smith, *Wretched Kush: Ethnic Identities and Boundaries in Egypt's Nubian Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1-9.

Mediterranean coincided with the period of the classical prophets of Israel/Judah. Indeed, the Egypt of some of the prophetic literature (the Book of Isaiah, in particular) was an Egypt under the control of the 25th Cushite Dynasty—an elite family whose origin lies to the south. Significantly, the Hebrew Bible largely presents Cush as a nation of mighty warriors with deep antiquity. However, by virtue of their distinctive phenotypic characteristics, the blackness of the Cushite also became paradigmatic for immutability in the biblical text (e.g., Jer 13:23). Nevertheless this paradigmatic representation, it is asserted here, is not to be seen as being of the same species of racial discrimination which developed in Western thought.[56]

But the question is still worth asking: were Cushites ever perceived and treated negatively by the biblical writers? If so, on what grounds? For example, the Chronicler's portrait of Asa's defeat of Zerah the Cushite and his vastly superior army, while consistent with the idea of Cushites as warriors, seems to represent a negative perspective of Cushite-Israelite interrelations. What is the function of this account for the Chronicler's theological outlook? Is its inclusion in his account serving rhetorical purposes for his readers living in a new socio-political context.[57] What does one make of the most significant ethnographic description of Cushites in Isaiah 18? What is the biblical writer's intention for highlighting Cushite somatic features, physical stature, and military reputation?

Taking as a point of departure the assertion that Israelites differentiated themselves from others based on descent, religion, ancestral homeland, among other ethnic markers to be discussed in the following chapters, it is understood that Cushites were likewise differentiated from Israelites on the basis of the same, and further, that such differentiation determined the parameters of ethnic perception and interaction. Furthermore, based on the sociological position that ethnic identities are situationally contingent, allowing for inclusion of non-members under certain circumstances and becoming salient in oppositional inter-group interactions, it is hypothesized that Cushites, like other groups, were incorporated into Israelite society at key historical periods, both as diasporic communities as well as through the

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[56] Cf. Sadler, *Cushite*, 149-151; Cain Hope Felder, "Race, Racism, and the Biblical Narratives," in *Stony The Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 127-145.

[57] See for example, Louis Jonker, "The Cushites in the Chronicler's Version of Asa's Reign: A Secondary Audience in Chronicles?" *Old Testament Essays* 19 (2006): 863-881, who argues that the numerically mightier Cushites are functioning rhetorically as a foil for the less powerful Israelites who defeat them.

assimilation of individual Cushites living as גֵּר, "alien" among the Israelites.

1.4 METHODOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

The project undertaken here engages a multidimensional approach to the investigation of Cushites in the Hebrew Bible.[58] While the study is primarily literary, drawing upon ancient theological and historiographic sources, from time to time important archaeological evidence will be brought into the discussion. Moreover, a substantive discussion of the development and expressions of theories of ethnicity is featured in the following chapter and will precede our investigation of the biblical sources. This initial discussion of social scientific theories of ethnicity will inform—though not determine—our discussion of the ancient sources and will further serve to orient the study toward the contemporary arena.[59]

Here again, it is important to acknowledge that the biblical literature provides the best vantage point for viewing not only ancient Israelite collective self-perception, but equally important, it is one of our best literary sources for understanding how Cushite ethnic identity was understood from an outsider's perspective. For the same reason, we are also interested in the literary records of surrounding societies (in this case, Egyptian, and to a far lesser extent Assyrian and Greek) as they pertain to Cushite ethnicity and history, since these form a counterpoint to the biblical texts. Importantly, our discussion of Cushite ethnic identity is largely an *etic* one, reflecting the perspective of outsiders, and not of the Cushites themselves (the *emic* perspective).

Furthermore, a diachronic discussion of Cushite identity is not pursued in this project. This approach has already been done quite ably by Sadler and others.[60] The approach to the

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[58] For a representative discussion of multidimensional biblical interpretation, see the following: Louis C. Jonker, *Exclusivity and Variety: Perspectives on Multidimensional Exegesis* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996); Louis C. Jonker, "Why History Matters: The Place of Historical Consciousness in a Multidimensional Approach Towards Biblical Interpretation," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34 (2013): 1-7; W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

[59] Though social-scientific approaches to biblical interpretation are not without their pitfalls and their use not an end in itself, I outline the significance of a social scientific approach to ethnicity and its relevance to biblical studies in the subsequent chapter and in Appendix A. For a representative discussion, see Daniel R. Carroll, ed., *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions from the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

[60] This is the approach which Sadler, *Cushite*, takes in his study by analyzing occurrences of Cush and related terms in "Tenth to Eighth Century Hebrew Literature," "Seventh Century to Exilic Hebrew Literature," and "Post-Exilic Hebrew Literature."

study of Cushite ethnic identity in this work is mainly thematic and synchronic: texts that deal with similar aspects of Cushite ethnic identity are discussed together. Moreover, not all instances of Cush and related terms in the Hebrew Bible are catalogued, as yet again such an approach has already been undertaken.[61] Only texts which are of particular relevance to our overall approach—which incidentally include the good majority of texts referring to Cushites—are brought to the discussion.

A synchronic approach to biblical texts does not negate the need to establish historical contexts for the various narratives which will be explored in this study. Indeed, in a study such as this with strong historical underpinnings, some informed discussion as to the social and historical locations of the narratives in question and their authors is necessary. Because this study is chiefly concerned with the text in their present form, however, it also means that the various source critical theories related to the evolution of the text will be given negligible attention.[62]

This study also assumes the historical value of the biblical literature. A starting position of this investigation is that Israel's Scriptures are records of the cultural and collective memory of its past—its history. And that while such memories are renegotiated and appropriated in new social and political contexts, new appropriations do not necessarily displace, but rather complement the former.[63] Again, this does not mean that the texts to be examined will be treated uncritically. To the contrary, biblical penmen are selective in the material they choose to include; their texts also have calculated rhetorical purposes dictated by historical circumstances. Therefore, literary critical questions need to be appropriately posed (and

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[61] See for example, Adamo, *Africans in the Old Testament*; and Sadler, *Cushite*.

[62] This approach to the text, in the view of some is inherently problematic. See Robert B. Chisholm, "Old Testament Source Criticism: Some Methodological Miscues," in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith?: A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, ed. James Karl Hoffmeier and Dennis Robert Magary (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 181-199. Along this same line, this study does not engage reader-response or postmodern interpretative traditions which either totally ignores or marginalizes history in service of the reader's right to determine meaning. Rather, as Louis Jonker has argued, because the history of the text is both the history of its production and reception in various historical contexts down through the ages, a historical dimension remains important in order for biblical interpretation to be truly contextual. See further, Jonker, "Why History Matters," 1-7.

[63] The inclusion of both Samuel-Kings and Chronicles in the canon is the prime example of such a complimentary juxtaposition of the interpretation of Israel's past. See further, Jens Bruun Kofoed, "The Old Testament as Cultural Memory," in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith?: A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, ed. James Karl Hoffmeier and Dennis Robert Magary (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 303-323.

answered) in order to clarify the various contexts of the texts under discussion.[64]

Finally, the field of Nubiology will be especially important for situating historical Cush/Nubia within the broader Mediterranean social, economic and political milieu. Fortunately, Nubian studies have come a long way since the early days when this field was subsumed under Egyptology. A new generation of scholars with a fresh outlook have refashioned the relationship between ancient Nubia and Egypt positing a scenario wherein Nubia is in every respects Egypt's rival in Africa rather than its subsidiary.[65] Such insights promise to establish more objective historical grounds for Nubian interaction with Egypt and the Levant.

The overall methodology is straightforward: a multidimensional investigation of Israelite-Cushite ethnic interrelations in the Hebrew Bible encompassing literary, historical, and theological dimensions, with relevant social scientific theories on ethnicity providing direction and background to the discussion of the ancient sources. Importantly, the goal here is *not* to reconstruct Cushite ethnic identity in any purely objective manner, but rather to understand how ancient literary texts (primarily biblical) applied ethnic labels and displayed ethnic sentiments toward Cushites and to what end. In short, we are interest in how biblical writers *perceived* "the Cushite" as an ethnic Other.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

This study is divided into two parts. Part I, constituting chapters 2 to 4, establishes the theoretical and historical background for the examination of Cushite ethnic identity in Part II. Chapter 2 traces the historical evolution of anthropological theories in Western intellectual history, noting how racial philosophies which dominated much of modern thought well into the twentieth century finally gave way to theories of ethnicity. Drawing upon current debates

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[64] Cf. V. Philips Long, "Reading the Old Testament as Literature," in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis*, ed. Craig C. Broyles (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001), 85-123.

[65] See William Y. Adams, *Nubia, Corridor to Africa* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1977); David B. O'Connor, *Ancient Nubia: Egypt's Rival in Africa* (Philadelphia: University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 1993); O'Connor and Reid, "Egypt in Africa," 1-21; Török, "A Periphery on the Periphery," 369-380; David N. Edwards, *The Nubian Past: An Archaeology of the Sudan* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Smith, *Wretched Kush*; Stuart Tyson Smith, "Revenge of the Kushites: Assimilation and Resistance in Egypt's New Kingdom Empire and Nubian Ascendancy Over Egypt," in *Empires and Diversity: On the Crossroads of Archaeology, Anthropology and History*, ed. Gregory E. Areshyan (Los Angeles, CA: The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2013); Marjorie M. Fisher and Chester Higgins, *Ancient Nubia: African Kingdoms on the Nile* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012).

within ethnicity studies, the chapter establishes a theoretical basis for the subsequent discussion. Chapter 3 situates ancient Cush as an ethnic and political entity in the ancient Mediterranean context. Specifically, explorations in the field of Nubian studies help to establish a foundation for Cushite political history and ethnic representation vis-à-vis ancient Egypt thus providing relevant historically contextual analogy for the study of Cushites in the Hebrew Bible. Chapter 4 establishes the basis of Israel's particular self-definition with reference to the primeval history. The chapter fleshes out the interface between the universal anthropology of the primeval history and Israel's particular ethnic self-perception in Genesis and beyond.

Part II of the study has four main chapters (5-8) and a brief conclusion (Chapter 9). Chapter 5 examines the ethnography of Cush in the Table of Nations of Genesis 10 through a sustained discussion of genealogical descent and kinship, geographical scope and location, and religious evaluation of Cushites via the personage of Nimrod. Chapter 6 explores the historical, ethnographic, and theological dimensions of the Cush oracle of Isaiah 18. The chapter seeks to establish a firm historical context for the oracle and attempts to determine the theological and rhetorical purposes of the author through an exegetical study of the passage.

Chapter 7 examines the episode of Zerah the Cushite in 1 Chron 14:9-15. The chapter grapples with the Chronicler's theological outlook, rhetorical purposes, and posits a possible historical setting for the episode. Chapter 8 examines the representation of Cush and Cushites in the prophetic corpus and assesses, once again, the theological outlook and rhetorical purposes underpinning their depiction. Importantly, the chapter also examines two case studies of Cushites within Israelite and Judean society and draws conclusions regarding the ways in which ethnic dynamics impact the interaction between Cushites and Israelites at the individual level.

Chapter 9 concludes the project by summarizing the findings and outlining the main theological, historical, and hermeneutical implications. The chapter also suggests potential areas for further research.

PART I

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 2

Theorizing Difference: From Race to Ethnicity

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The development of what anthropologist Ashley Montagu called "man's most dangerous myth"—the fallacy of *race*—took shape in the nineteenth century, and only in the West.[1] The impact of racial construction in the contemporary political and social arenas can only be fully apprehended when the evolution of racial ideas is put into historical perspective. Yet even concepts of *ethnicity*, which are relatively recent modes of defining human difference, must also be fully denuded in view of the long development and articulation of racial theories which crystalized in nineteenth century Western thought. Concepts of race and ethnicity are historically entangled, and still today, as Jeremy McInerney reminds us, "there is a consistent substratum of race in discussions of ethnicity."[2]

For the reason that ethnicity's "intellectual history inextricably linked it to the concept of race,"[3] this chapter is concerned first with the development and articulation of race as a social construct: it seeks (1) to comprehend the motivations which gave rise to racial thinking in the modern period, (2) to identify the main ideologues who helped to shape the idea, and (3) to outline the contours that such ideas took en route to becoming canonized in Western thinking. Secondarily, the chapter discusses the rise of "ethnicity" in the post-World War II era and qualifies the utility of the term as an analytical tool in ancient Israelite-Cushite interrelationship. Undoubtedly, the genealogy of racial theorizing is variegated and complex, and the literature on the subject is extensive. The discussion in this chapter is therefore meant to be representative of the subject and not comprehensive. The same is true for the history and

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[1] Ashley Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*, 6th ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: Altimara, 1997). For modern racism as a Western phenomenon, see George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 6; Benjamin Braude, "How Racism Arose in Europe and Why It Did Not in the Near East," in *Racism in the Modern World: Historical Perspectives on Cultural Transfer and Adaptation*, ed. Manfred Berg and Simon Wendt (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 41-61.

[2] Jeremy McInerney, "Ethnicity: An Introduction," in *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Jeremy McInerney (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 4.

[3] Riv-Ellen Prell, "The Utility of the Concept of 'Ethnicity' for the Study of Jews," in *Ethnicity and Beyond: Theories and Dilemmas of Jewish Group Demarcation*, ed. Eli Lederhendler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 102.

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articulation of theories of ethnicity.[4]

2.1.1 Prelude to Racial Theorizing

While "race" as a category of human classification has largely been discredited in academic discourse, it has been conceived of in multiple ways and has been employed to various ends. For our purposes here, "race" as a conceptual category defined a discrete set of inheritable, immutable attributes which all members of a putative subdivision of the human species were believed to possess (it was commonly held that about four to six such subdivisions existed). These attributes, of which skin colour, hair texture and somatic features were supposed to be the most visible manifestations, determined not only the intellectual capacity and moral tenor of individual and collective identity; they also determined the place of each race within a strictly defined social hierarchy, their capacity for "civilization," and even the ultimate destiny of a racial group.[5]

The development of racial theories in the modern West was conditioned primarily by the encounters of explorers, traders, colonists, and missionaries with various people groups, as European empires expanded across the global frontier beginning in the late fifteenth century. Central to the development and enunciation of racial categories were the encounters with the indigenous populations of the Americas and of sub-Saharan Africa via the Trans-Atlantic Slave

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[4] For a general introduction to the origin of racial theories in the 19th century see William R. Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Fredrickson, *Racism*; Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996); Bruce D. Baum, *The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race: A Political History of Racial Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010). While the preceding works focus on the development of racial ideas in North Atlantic scholarship and society, see the essays in Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard, eds., *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2008), for the development of racial theorizing and practice in Oceania.

[5] Cf. Fredrickson, *Racism*, 5-9; Montagu, *Fallacy of Race*, 31. Equally, the term *racism*, which first came into usage in the 1930's as a means of characterizing the policies of the Nazi regime towards the Jews of Europe, is notorious for the variegated ways in which it is defined and employed. The term generally describes the modes by which deeply entrenched attitudes about race are expressed in "practices, institutions, and structures," and the ways in which such attitudes and policies ultimately lead to the denial of individual rights. In this sense, when racial ideology finds expression in power relations, racism can usefully be said to exist in a particular social context. See further, Robert Miles, "Racism as a Concept," in *Racism*, ed. Martin Bulmer and John Solomos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 344-345; Fredrickson, *Racism*, 5-10. Cf. Braude, "How Racism Arose in Europe," 41-42.

Trade.[6] The dynamics of European interaction with these various populations, in large measure, resulted in the "scientific" endeavour to classify people and eulogize notions of race.[7] In historical perspectives, however, scientific views on race emerged as a result of social dynamics more so than by unbiased findings of science.[8]

Beginning in the mid-fifteenth century, the "age of exploration" ultimately led to the colonization, expropriation, and enslavement of many non-European populations, and this dynamic created the necessary conditions for the growth of racial philosophies.[9] Europeans inevitably came to see themselves—their culture, religion, and civilization—as superior to those of the vast multitudes which they now held under subjection. The circumstances which lead to such eventualities begged for explanation.

The singular rationale—*race*—gave a name to humanity's place in the Great Chain of Being, as envisioned by such early ethnologists as Carolus Linnaeus in the eighteenth century. Race provide a credible explanation for European power and progress.[10] Race in the conception of a newly expanding Europe was essential to human origin and destiny. "Race is everything," declared the influential Scottish anatomist Robert Knox (1791-1862), who is described by Philip Curtin as "the real founder of British racism."[11] "That race in human affairs is everything is simply a fact," he affirms, "the most remarkable, the most comprehensive, which philosophy has ever announced." For Knox and his contemporaries, race determined

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[6] Cf. Bronwen Douglas, "Climate to Crania: Science and the Racialization of Human Difference," in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940*, ed. Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (Acton, AU: ANU Press, 2008), 35. Cf. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 45. It is clear that racial theorizing did not crystalize into a coherent theory until centuries after the initial encounters with non-European groups. Nevertheless, these encounters were a necessary precondition for the later development of racial theories.

[7] Frederik Holst, "More than Meets the Eye: Analytical Frameworks beyond Race and Ethnicity," in *Ethnicity as a Political Resource: Conceptualizations across Disciplines, Regions and Periods*, ed. University of Cologne Forum (Bielefeld: Kordula Röckenhaus, 2015), 41: "race as a concept became manifest at a time when Europeans encountered people whose physical appearance was outright different." Cf. Braude, "How Racism Arose in Europe," 41-64; Fredrickson, *Racism*, 49-95.

[8] Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 54-55.

[9] Cf. Braude, "How Racism Arose in Europe," 44-45.

[10] The standard work for the historical development of the notion of the Great Chain of Being is Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: The Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974). Cf. Daniel J. Wilson, "Lovejoy's The Great Chain of Being after Fifty Years," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987): 187-206.

[11] Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 377: "The first important proponent in Great Britain was Dr. Robert Knox, the real founder of British racism and one of the key figures in the general Western movement toward a dogmatic pseudo-scientific racism."

"literature, science, art—in a word, *civilization* depends on it."[12]

Fundamentally, in nineteenth century intellectual and political imagination, race came to be seen as the ultimate cause of social and political outcomes in the course of human history.[13] As Reginald Horseman underscores, racial theorizing not only "served to justify the subordination or even the extermination of non-European peoples throughout the world," but such theories were used to "explain the ever-increasing gulf in power and progress that separated them [Europeans] from the peoples they were overrunning."[14] In short, racial theorizing became enshrined in European intellectual and popular life in order to rationalize and justify the social, economic, and political dominance that had resulted from interaction with non-European peoples since the late fifteenth century.[15] Until Darwin's 1859 publication decisively altered the nature of the debate, for several centuries the intellectual debacle surrounding concepts of race pitted *monogenists* against the more radical *polygenists*, with the latter gaining the upper hand in the long run.

2.2 MONOGENESISM VS POLYGENESISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

From the very beginning, modern racial theorizing was touted as a science, something that could be ascertained employing reason, deduction and empirical data—key tenets of the scientific method articulated during the Enlightenment. Well before Darwin's theory of evolution crystalized the permanence of a *biological* racial hierarchy, race scientists, whose worldview was essentially Christian, were locked in conflict over the question of human origins and diversification. Advocates of monogenesis maintained that humanity had a common origin in Adam and Eve via Noah and his sons, based on the biblical record. While this view prevailed as the accepted scientific position well into the nineteenth century, it came under increasing challenge from those who espoused polygenesis.

How is it possible, these scientists asked, that all human groups descended from a common origin as described by the received tradition? What accounted for the geographical distribution and stark differences in phenotype, culture, and religion among the various

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[12] Knox, *Races of Men: A Fragment*, 2nd ed. (London, 1862), v; emphasis mine. Cited in Braude, "How Racism Arose in Europe," 42. Cf. Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 377.

[13] Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 29.

[14] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 122.

[15] Cf. Rigby, *African Images*, 1-5; Trigger, "Sudan Archaeology," 323.

peoples of the world? Polygenists, who tended to view the Genesis account as allegorical, asserted that human diversity is best explained by envisioning human groups as separate and distinct creations from the beginning, each with permanent physical and moral characteristics.[16] Monogenists, on the other hand, sought to explain human diversity as the result of environmental factors, some even believing that black skin colour could become white under ideal climatic conditions.[17]

2.2.1 Monogenesis, Race, and the Environmental Argument

The majority of Enlightenment philosophers of the eighteenth century had promoted the unity of humankind, maintaining that an original cluster of individuals had diverged into the various populations over a few thousand years.[18] Consonant with ancient Greek ethnological speculations, however, natural scientists of the Enlightenment argued that differences between peoples were externally induced based on the environments they inhabited.[19] According to both neoclassical and Christian cosmologies, climate was responsible for physical attributes like skin colour and "beauty," moral characteristics such as a courage and cowardice, and notably, in both ancient and modern contexts, climate was deployed as a justifying ideology for empire.[20]

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[16] Cf. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 71. Cf. Baum, *Caucasian Race*, 58-94; Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World*, 1600-2000 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 121-167.

[17] Cf. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 71.

[18] See for example, Immanuel Kant, "Division of the Human Genus into Its Different Races," in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (London: Blackwell, 1997), 40-42. Cf. Richard H. Popkin, "The Philosophical Basis of Modern Racism," in *Philosophy and the Civilizing Arts: Essays Presented to Herbert W. Schneider*, ed. Herbert W. Schneider, Craig Walton and John P. Anton (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974), 34-35.

[19] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 44-45. Cf. John E. Coleman, "Ancient Greek Ethnocentrism," in *Greeks and Barbarians: Essays on the Interactions between Greeks and Non-Greeks in Antiquity and the Consequences for Eurocentrism*, ed. John E. Coleman and Clark A. Walz (Bethesda, MD.: CDL Press, 1997), 190-192; Popkin, "Modern Racism," 134. Enlightenment philosophers like Voltaire, David Hume, Lord Kames and Henry Home, contrary to the well-established view, were early advocates of a polygenetic origin of the different human kinds. See further Douglas, "Climate to Crania," 33, 48.

[20] Mark Harrison, *Climates & Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 92, for example, draws the parallel between the two contexts in writing that: "Classical doctrines of environmental determinism came into vogue during the eighteenth century because they offered an explanation for the material and intellectual progress experienced by European countries over the previous two centuries." See further, Douglas, "Climate to Crania," 35; Denise

2.2.1.1 Aesthetics and the Racial Hierarchy

For ancient Greeks as for the philosophers, Europe had been most fortuitous in being located in the climate most favourable to the cultivation of the best attributes.[21] Like many of his contemporaries, the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) advanced the idea that "between 31 and 52 degrees latitude in the old world . . . can justifiably be thought of as that with the most fortunate mixture of influences of colder and hotter regions, and the greatest wealth of creatures; where man too, because from there he is equally well-prepared for every transplantation, must have diverged least from his original form."[22] Following Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778) who was the first to organize the Homo sapiens species into a four-scheme hierarchy based on skin color and geography,[23] Kant, who is said to be both the

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E. McCoskey, "On *Black Athena*, Hippocratic Medicine, and Roman Imperial Edicts: Egyptians and the Problem of Race in Classical Antiquity," in *Race and Ethnicity: Across Time, Space and Discipline*, ed. Rodney D. Coates (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 313-324; Coleman, "Ancient Greek Ethnocentrism," 190.

[21] It is noteworthy that ancient Greek ethnocentrism was based on the same argument, namely that the Greeks, by virtue of the gods' favour, inhabited the most temperate climate and therefore were superior culturally, morally, and politically to those in less desirable climates like for example, the Scythians, Asiatics, and Ethiopians. Aristotle expresses this in his *Politics*, in writing that: "The nations that live in cold regions and those of Europe are full of spirit, but somewhat lacking in skill and intellect; for this reason, while remaining relatively free, they lack political cohesion and the ability to rule over their neighbours. On the other hand, the Asiatic nations have in their souls both intellect and skill, but are lacking in spirit; so they remain enslaved and subject. The Hellenic race, occupying a mid-point geographically, has a measure of both, being both spirited and intelligent. Hence, it continues to be free, to live under the best constitutions and, given a single constitution, to be capable of ruling all other people" (*Politics* 1327b 23-34). Aristotle cited in Coleman, "Ancient Greek Ethnocentrism," 190-191. For a more extensive discussion of ancient Greek ethnography based on geography see James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[22] Immanuel Kant, "On the Different Races of Man," in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (London: Blackwell, 1997), 48. Cf. Mark Larrimore, "Antinomies of Race: Diversity and Destiny in Kant," *Patterns of Prejudice* 42 (2008): 350. Similarly, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), the most renowned French naturalist of the eighteenth century believed that "The most temperate climate lies between the 40th and 50th degree of latitude, and it produces the most handsome and beautiful men. It is from this climate that the ideas of the genuine color of mankind, and of the various degrees of beauty ought to be derived." See Georges Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, *Natural History, General and Particular*, trans. William Smellie (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1785), 205-207. Cited in Popkin, "Modern Racism," 135-136. Cf. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 71.

[23] Linnaeus' designated four races: red, white, yellow and black, corresponding to America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Linnaeus' *homo Europaeus* is physically fair, sanguine, brawny, with yellow, brown, flowing hair, and blue eyes; he is covered in close vestments, and in character he is gentle, very acute, inventive, and governed by laws. Linnaeus' *homo Africanus* is physically black, phlegmatic, relaxed, with black frizzled hair, silky skin, flat nose and tumid lips; he anoints himself with grease, and in character he is crafty, indolent, negligent, and governed by caprice. See Popkin, "Modern Racism," 134-135; Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 403-405; Douglas, "Climate to Crania," 36; Gunnar Broberg, *"Homo sapiens*: Linnaeus's Classification of Man,"

inventor of the terms 'race' and 'whiteness,'[24] divided humanity into four races: the Whites, the Negro, the Hunnic (Mongolian or Kalmuck), and the Hindu or Hindustanic.[25]

For Kant, "If one asks with which of the present races the first human stock (*Menschenstamm*) might have had the greatest similarity, one would, though without any prejudice, pronounce in favour of the Whites because of the evidently *greater perfection of one colour* over others."[26] In Kantian racial hierarchy, whites were closest to the original form of humankind as white skin colour evidently had "greater perfection" than the others. Similarly, for the influential French naturalist Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), a monogenist and contemporary of Kant, "White, then appears to be the primitive color of Nature," as well as the standard measure of beauty.[27]

Linnaeus' student, the German naturalist Johann F. Blumenbach (1752-1840), who is often called the father of racial classification, and with whom the "scientific" measurement of human skulls was to gain respectability, eventually established a five-scheme racial hierarchy of putative value based largely on aesthetic standards which he believed inhered in the skulls he measured.[28] Blumenbach held that God had created mankind from an original stock, which he maintained was the "white race." The original home of the white race, according to Blumenbach, was the Caucasus mountain region—the ideal location within the ideal latitude, giving rise to the ideal human race. The "Caucasian race," according to Blumenbach, was so named,

from Mount Caucasus, both because its neighborhood, and especially its southern

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in *Linnaeus: The Man and His Work*, ed. Tore Frängsmyr and Sten Lindroth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 156-194; Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 37-38. Cf. Painter, *White People*, 25.

[24] See Robert Bernasconi, "Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race," in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Malden: Blackwell, 2001), 11-36; Larrimore, "Antinomies of Race," 340, 344, 346.

[25] See Kant, "Different Races," 41. Cf. Emmanuel Eze, "The Color of Reason: The Idea of 'Race' in Kant's Anthropology," in *Anthropology and the German Enlightenment: Perspectives on Humanity*, ed. Katherine M. Faull (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1995), 200-235; Bernasconi, "Concept of Race," 11-36; Park, *History of Philosophy*, 93; Pauline Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 57 (2007): 573-592; Larrimore, "Antinomies of Race," 343-350.

[26] Kant cited in Larrimore, "Antinomies of Race," 345.

[27] Comte de Buffon, *Natural History*, 207. Cf. Popkin, "Modern Racism," 135-136; Kant, "Different Races," 48.

[28] See Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *De generis humani varietate nativa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek, 1776). Blumenbach's treatise would go through two extensive revisions. The third and final edition was published in 1798. See also, Painter, *White People*, 72-90.

slope, produces *the most beautiful race of men*, I mean the Georgian; and because all physiological reasons converge to this, that in that region, if anywhere it seems we ought with the greatest probability to place the autochthones [original forms] of mankind.[29]

2.2.1.2 Beauty Ideal and the Degeneration Argument

Blumenbach's construction of the Caucasian was based purely on aesthetics: white was the original handiwork of God and therefore the most beautiful; and based on the environmental argument, other non-white human groups were degenerations of the original Caucasian stock.[30] Monogenists like Blumenbach, Buffon and Kant advanced the *degeneration* argument wherein Europeans, located in the ideal climate, are either the best representation of the original creation, or the least diverged from this "primitive" stock. As Richard Popkin notes, almost without exception, "degeneracy theorists took it for granted that the natural state of man is to be white and that Adam and Noah were white."[31] Blumenbach's treatises on racial classification were enormously influential and set the standard for contemporary and later race scientists in both Europe and the United states.[32] Based in large measure on

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[29] Blumenbach cited in Baum*, Caucasian Race*, 5-6, emphasis added. Blumenbach even purported to have differentiated Caucasian beauty in the skulls he was examining: "In the first place, that stock [Caucasian] displays... *the most beautiful form of the skull* from which, as from a mean and primeval type, the others diverge by most easy gradations. . . . Besides, it is white in color, which we may fairly assume to have been the primitive color of mankind, since . . . it is very easy for that to degenerate into brown, but very much more difficult for dark to become white." Citation in Gould*, Mismeasure of Man*, 411. Cf. Painter*, White People*, 72-90; Jeremy Tanner, "Race and Representation in Ancient Art: *Black Athena* and After," in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, ed. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2010), 6-7.

[30] Gould*, Mismeasure of Man*, 401-412; Painter*, White People*, 72-90.

[31] Popkin, "Modern Racism," 134. Popkin notes John Mitchell, M. D., who opposed the view that whites represent the primitive race of man when in 1745, he wrote "[W]hite people who look on themselves as the primitive Race of Man from a certain Superiority or Worth, either supposed or assumed, seem to have the least Pretensions to it of any, either from History or Philosophy; for they seem to have degenerated more from the primitive and original Complexion of Mankind, in *Noah*, and his Sons, than even the *Indians* and Negroes" ("An Essay upon the Causes of the Different Colours of People in Different Climates," *Royal Society of London Philosophical Transactions*, XLIII [1744-45]: 146); emphasis original to Mitchell.

[32] Curtin*, The Image of Africa*, 39; Painter*, White People*, 72-90. While race scientists were never sure exactly how many races actually existed, by the nineteenth century Blumenbach's five varieties—Caucasian, Mongolian, American, Ethiopian and Malay—became the standard scheme accepted by most theorists of race. Yet, already in the middle of the nineteenth century, Nott and Gliddon, noting the arbitrary nature of classification methods, puzzled over the alarmingly divergent views on the supposed number of races: the number of races, families, species, types, and varieties into which the human kind was classified ranged from two to sixty-three. See Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Company, 1854), 82-83.

Blumenbach's classification, the most visible racial marker became skin colour: white was beautiful and the farther away skin colour deviated from whiteness, the uglier it became.[33]

Importantly, degeneration was not simply a matter of aesthetics; aesthetics came to be associated with moral, intellectual and physical abilities, no less so than to political acumen. Thus, if whites were the least degenerate and the most beautiful, they were also the most intellectually competent and therefore the most qualified to rule over the other races of humankind. The French naturalist Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) expressed this common view toward the end of the eighteenth century when he wrote, "The race from which we are descended has been called Caucasian ... the *handsomest on earth*." Consequently, "To this variety, the most highly civilized nations, and those which have *generally held all others in subjection*, are indebted for their origin."[34] It is clear that naturalists like Blumenbach, Cuvier and others, understood Europe as the crown of the human race, and their rationalizing sought to define the European continent as the source of human origin and the center of human civilization and progress. Europeans, it was believed, occupied the pinnacle of the racial hierarchy. This epistemological trajectory is consistent with what Thomas Gossett observes of all racist constructions: "the self-aggrandizement of one's own people and the denigration of others."[35]

2.2.1.3 *The Black-White Racial Binary*

Indeed, the elevation of the Caucasian race went hand in hand with arguments propounding the denigration of the other non-European peoples. The creation of the Black-White racial binary was the most significant result of this denigration, as Africans were contrasted with Europeans in myriad ways. Racial theorizing could not have crystalized without this particular conceit, developed in large part due to the lowly status of Africans on

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[33] Park, *History of Philosophy*, 81-82; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 49; Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 39. The less influential colleague of Blumenbach and fellow professor at Götingen, Christoph Meiners (1747-1810), divided the human race into two varieties: white and black. White was beautiful, and naturally, black, the polar opposite of white, was ugly. For Meiners, the Germans, the highest of the Caucasian race, possessed the "whitest, most blooming and most delicate skin"; they were the "tallest and most beautiful," and superior to "all the remaining peoples of the earth." The dark-skinned peoples were ugly, and "weak in body and spirit, bad, and lacking in virtue." Meiners cited in Painter, *White People*, 88-90.

[34] Georges Léopold Cuvier, "Varieties of the Human Species," in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (London: Blackwell, 1997), 104-105, emphasis mine.

[35] Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 411.

slave plantations in the western hemisphere.[36] In contradistinction to the Caucasians, the Negro race was not only understood to be ugly and barely above the gorilla, but members of this race were held to be mentally and morally inferior, culturally stagnant, and in many respects incapable of improvement in any of these spheres.[37] The French naturalist Cuvier, cited above, referred to Africans as "the *most degraded* of human races, whose form approaches that of the beast and whose intelligence is nowhere great enough to arrive at regular government."[38]

The prevalence of this view can be seen, for example, in the first American Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* published in 1798. The article on "Negro," sums up the physical and moral characteristics of the negro thus:

> NEGRO, *Homo pelli nigra*, a name given to a variety of the human species, who are entirely black, and are found in the Torrid zone, especially in that part of Africa which lies within the tropics. In the complexion of negroes we meet with various shades; but they likewise differ far from other men in all the features of the face. Round cheeks, high cheek-bones, a forehead somewhat elevated, a short, broad, flat nose, thick lips, small ears, ugliness, and irregularity of shape, characterize their external appearance. The negro women have the loins greatly depressed, and very large buttocks, which give the back the shape of a saddle. Vices the most notorious seem to be the portion of this unhappy race: idleness, treachery, revenge, cruelty, impudence, stealing, lying, profanity, debauchery, nastiness, and intemperance, are said to have extinguished the principles of natural law, and to have silenced the reproofs of conscience. They are strangers to every sentiment of compassion, and are an awful example of the corruption of man when left to himself."[39]

Though monogenists believed and advanced the unity of humankind, nevertheless, their construction of an African identity, as the preceding citation attests, construed black and Negro (the opposite of white and Caucasian) as the most degenerate representation of human

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[36] Cf. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 51.

[37] Monogenists were divided on the question of whether the less civilized races were capable of improvement. Blumenbach, for instance, deplored slavery, called Africans his "brethren" and maintained that they were capable of improvement under the right environment or with the adoption of European culture and civilization. Others believed improvement was impossible. On this see Popkin, "Modern Racism," 138-139; Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 71.

[38] Georges Cuvier, *Recherches sur les ossemens fossiles*, 2 vols. (Paris: Deterville, 1812), 1:105. Cited in Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 69.

[39] Cited in Popkin, "Modern Racism," 139. Cf. Francesca Royster, "'Working Like a Dog': African Labor and Racing the Human-Animal Divide in Early Modern England," in *Writing Race Across the Atlantic World: Medieval to Modern*, ed. Philip D. Beidler and Gary Taylor (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 116.

filiation and farthest removed from the virtues of the species. Polygenists, however, would expand that distance, removing the Negro completely from the brotherhood of humanity.

2.2.2 Polygenesis and Innate Racial Differences

According to Archbishop Ussher's meticulous calculation in the seventeenth century, the monogenetic creation of humankind had taken place around 4004 B.C.[40] By the early decades of the nineteenth century, however, there was widespread skepticism regarding this commonly accepted view, not least among the so-called American School of Ethnology, the most influential think tank and advocate of the polygenetic theory. Unlike the environmentalists who argued for human differences based on geography and climate, polygenists stressed inherited biological traits—the product of separate and distinct creations—as the primary reason for the wide gulf which existed between human groups.[41]

2.2.2.1 Skulls, Heads, Brains, and the Racial Order

While disavowing the fundament of climate in shaping human difference, polygenists could still agree with their monogenetic counterparts on the place of Europeans in the racial hierarchy and on the virtue of European beauty and intellectual capacity in contradistinction to the others, especially blacks. For example, in his 1799 *Account of the Regular Gradation in Man*, which was the strongest defense of polygenesis up to that point, the influential English surgeon and anatomist Charles White (1728-1813), in describing where to locate "the most beautiful of the human race," inquired,

> that nobly arched head, containing such a quantity of brain …? Where that variety of features, and fullness of expression; those long, flowing, graceful ring-lets; that majestic beard, those rosy cheeks and coral lips? Where that … noble gait? In what other quarter of the globe shall we find the blush that overspreads the soft features of the beautiful

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[40] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 45.

[41] The majority of polygenists adopted some form of the Pre-Adamite theory of the Catholic theologian Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1676) in which he argued for the existence of "pre-Adamites," a degenerate creation, separate and distinct from the biblical Adam and his descendants. See David N. Livingstone, "The Preadamite Theory and the Marriage of Science and Religion," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 82 (1992): 5-27; David N. Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Popkin, "Modern Racism," 140-142; Richard Popkin, "The Development of Religious Scepticism and the Influence of Isaac la Peyrere's Pre-Adamism and Bible Criticism," in *Classical Influences on European Culture, A.D. 1500-1700*, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 271-280.

women of Europe, that emblem of modesty, of delicate feelings …? Where, except on the bosom of the European woman, two such plump and snowy white hemispheres, tipt with vermillion?[42]

By contrast, White maintained that blacks were not only a separate and distinct species, but in his racial gradation, "the African" he believed, was much "nearer to the ape."[43] In like fashion, the Frenchman Jean-Joseph Virey (1775-1846) in his *Histoire naturelle du genre humaine* celebrated European intellectual heritage and destiny when he wrote: "The European, called by his high destiny to rule the world, which he knows how to illuminate with his intelligence and subdue with his courage, is *the highest expression of man* and at the head of the human race. The other, a wretched horde of barbarians, are so to say, no more than its embryo."[44] In Virey's estimation, blacks did not fully make it into the human taxon but were more closely related to apes.[45] What was uncontroverted from all attempts by polygenists to classify the human variety, was that the African, almost without exception, occupied the bottom tier of the racial hierarchy, a liminal space between man and ape, where one was never certain to which category he truly belonged.[46]

Brain size, in particular, which could be established by measuring skull capacity or the

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[42] White cited in Stanton, *Leopard's Spots*, 17; Painter, *White People*, 70-71; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 51; Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 73-74.

[43] Douglas, "Climate to Crania," 49. Not surprisingly, in the craniometric hierarchies of major race scientists like White, the Negro with characteristically exaggerated prognathous facial features, is always placed next to the ape to show his close association physiologically and mentally. See for example, Painter, *White People*, 66, 70; Tanner, "Race and Representation," 6-8.

[44] Virey cited in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 49. Cf. Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 371.

[45] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 49. Not surprisingly, Virey's work was highly influential in the slavery debate in the antebellum American South. Cf. Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 371.

[46] The measuring of the "facial angle" which was first articulated by Pieter Camper (1722-1789) of Holland in his quest to identify the ideal form, was in fact a measurement of prognathism, a characteristic feature of animals. The more prognathous a facial profile, presumably the closer to the animal kind and the lesser the intellect. According to Camper, the facial angle of "the Grecian antique," the representative of the European and the ideal form, measured 100 degrees, while the Negro, the antithesis of the Grecian ideal, was a depreciable 70 degrees. For an overview of Campers work, see Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 39-40; Nicholas Grindle, "Our Own Imperfect Knowledge: Petrus Camper and the Search for an 'Ideal Form'," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 31 (1997): 139-148. In the United States in 1787, slaves were classified as three-fifths of a man, a move which excluded them from the newly drafted constitution which proclaim the equality of "all men." See Young, "The Afterlives of *Black Athena*," 177. Cf. Painter, *White People*, 79; Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 6-7; Andreas Eckert, "Historiography on a 'Continent without History': Anglophone West Africa, 1880s–1940s," in *Across Cultural Borders: Historiography in Global Perspective*, ed. Eckhardt Fuchs and Benedikt Stuchtey (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 100.

size of the head, was believed to be a physical index of a racial hierarchy: the larger the brain, the more intelligent and capable, and the higher up on the hierarchy a race was believed to be located (an argument used by both monogenists and polygenists). By all accounts, Europeans were found to have the largest brains of all the races.[47] According to the polygenist George Combe (1788-1858) who lectured widely in Britain and the United States, Europeans were naturally endowed with larger brains and greater intellectual force which enabled them to rule over the smaller-brain nations. Using skull capacity as an index of brain size, he argued: "among the nations, as among individuals, force of character is determined by the average size of head; and that *larger-headed nations* manifest their superior power, by *subjecting and ruling their smaller-headed brethren*—as the British in Asia, for example."[48]

What is easily discernible in the arguments of Caldwell, Combe, and other alchemists of human worth, is the consistent need to justify and explain what was already well established—European dominance—by appealing to scientific "facts" derived from meticulous measurements of the human head and skulls. For these intellectuals of race, influenced by the social and political dynamics of their time, the putative character and abilities of human races were "rooted in biological disparities between human groups that were impervious to change."[49] But here again, the salience of social-political realities and cultural politics in determining the results of scientific research is indisputable.[50]

2.2.3 Ancient Egypt, Race, and the American School of Ethnology

Racism ever seeks to normalize and justify power relations (with those in power setting the rules and defining the relationship) through some form of legitimizing ideology, whether religious, biological, genealogical, environmental, and so on.[51] Thus, conceptions of race are rooted in an imbalance of power, and racial taxonomies are always undergirded by political

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[47] But see the refutation of this thesis by Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*.

[48] *Phrenological Journal*, 19 (July 1846): 214, emphasis mine. According to Combe, the larger brain size of the British permits just forty or fifty thousand of them to hold in subjection "one hundred millions" Hindus. Cited in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 58-59.

[49] Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought 2*, 167.

[50] Cf. David N. Livingstone, "Cultural Politics and the Racial Cartographics of Human Origins," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35 (2010): 205, 218-219: "Scientific explorations of human origins thus turn out to be exercises in cultural politics and racial apologetics, of one stripe or another."

[51] Marcus Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (London: Routledge, 1996), 54.

motivations.[52] In the United States where slavery as an institution was entrenched, that justifying ideology came through the ideologues of the so-called American School of Ethnology. While the earliest expression of polygenetic views were found among European thinkers, polygeny found its greatest advocates and clearest articulation in the United States among anthropologists, anatomists, craniologists, phrenologists, and other scientists of the American School.[53]

The American School's strong defense of the innate racial inferiority of Indians and blacks was motivated mainly by the political currents surrounding the dispossession of indigenous peoples and the Southern institution of slavery, both of which were increasingly under attack by anti-slavery advocates at home and abroad.[54] Consequently, the development and articulation of ethnological taxonomies within the United States was chiefly concerned with justifying the expropriation of Indian lands and the enslavement of African peoples by appealing to natural law and history.[55] The two landmark publications of the reputed founder of the American School, the influential physician Samuel Morton (1799-1851), served precisely these purposes. His 1839 *Crania Americana* and his 1844 *Crania Ægyptica* provided "scientific" justification for the inferiority of Indians and Africans respectively, and at his death in 1851 the *Charleston Medical Journal*, the leading medical journal of the South declared: "We of the South should consider him as our benefactor, for aiding most materially in giving to the negro his true position as an inferior race."[56]

As far as southerners and scientists alike were concerned, "God had shaped the Negro's physical and emotional makeup at the beginning of existence and rendered him forever

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[52] This is the principal argument of Jill Vickers and Annette Isaac in their examination of racial politics in three former British settler societies (now federal states), which they refer to as "race regimes." See Jill M. Vickers and Annette Isaac, *The Politics of Race: Canada, the United States, and Australia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

[53] Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 74, 83. In the process of articulating racial differences, race scientists collected numerous samples of human skulls from around the world. For example, at the point of his death in 1851, the polygenist and pioneering craniologist of the American School, Samuel George Morton, had over one thousand skulls in his collection. On this see, Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 74, 83.

[54] Cf. Young, "The Afterlives of *Black Athena*," 182; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 122-123; Stanton, *Leopard's Spots*, 51-53.

[55] Stanton, *Leopard's Spots*, 52. Cf. Young, "The Afterlives of *Black Athena*," 175-183.

[56] R.W. Gibbes, "Death of Samuel George Morton, M.D.," *Charleston Medical Journal*, VI (1851): 597. Citation in Stanton, *Leopard's Spots*, 144. Cf. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 82-101; Popkin, "Modern Racism," 145-148.

inferior to whites."[57] This polygenetic view which asserted black inferiority as an ancient historical fact would find support through the scientific writings of the American School. As Martin Bernal puts it, "In the 19th century, racial 'science' made it clear not merely that 'whites' were now better than 'black', but also, according to the idea of permanent racial essences, that *they had always been so.*"[58]

2.2.3.1 *Ancient Egypt, Caucasian Egyptians, and Black Slavery*

One of the most striking observations in the context of nineteenth century race theory is the extent to which scientists—whose ideas developed contemporaneously with the exploration of Egypt—depended upon interpretations of ancient Egypt to provide support for their speculations on race.[59] Following in the steps of Morton's *Crania Ægyptica*, in 1854 the prominent physician Josiah C. Nott (1804-1873) and Egyptologist George R. Gliddon (1809-1857), published their bestselling *Types of Mankind* (dedicated to Morton) in which they drew extensively upon ancient Egyptian monuments to prove that black slavery was as ancient as civilized society itself.

In challenging the monogenetic view of human origin, Nott and Gliddon appealed to the monuments of Egypt—which they repeatedly emphasized, antedated the biblical account by potentially thousands of years.[60] Their goal was clear: to prove that differentiated human types was a *permanent* feature of earth's history from the very beginning (and evidence for separate creations) rather than the cause of environmental factors.[61] Equally clear as it related to each physical type was the "consequent permanence of moral and intellectual peculiarities,"

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[57] Daniel Joseph Singal, "Ulrich Bonnell Phillips: The Old South as the New," in John David Smith and John C. Inscoe, eds., *Ulrich Bonnell Phillips. A Southern Historian and His Critics* (Westport, Conn., 1990), 223. Cited in Miller, "History and Africa," 6.

[58] Bernal, "Afrocentrism," 26, emphasis mine.

[59] Young, "The Afterlives of *Black Athena,"* 176.

[60] Laying aside the Hebrew and Septuagint texts which according to Nott and Gliddon says nothing regarding the date of the appearance of humankind on earth, they declared "we turn ... to the monumental records of Egypt as our best guide," Nott and Gliddon*, Types of Mankind*, 59.

[61] Nott and Gliddon were particularly challenging the monogenetic arguments of the highly influential and "grand orthodox authority... on the common origin for the races," British ethnologist James C. Prichard. Prichard who had advanced the environmental argument as the main reason for the differences in human physiognomy and culture, according Nott and Gliddon, "was the victim of a false theory"—monogenesis. Moreover, they chided Prichard for "nervously shifting his scientific and theological views from year to year" in subsequent revisions of his original work. Yet even Prichard, at the last, had come to see to the "light" of polygenesis. See Nott and Gliddon*, Types of Mankind*, 54-56. Cf. Stanton*, Leopard's Spots*, 51-52,

and therefore the permanent place of each type on the "social scale" of Providence.[62] Adopting Blumenbach's racial scheme, Nott and Gliddon affirmed that "God's 'noblest work,'" and highest type of man is the Caucasian, while the "slough of despond in human degradations" can be found in Africa.[63] For Nott and Gliddon, "the highest types of pre-historic humanity would reveal their birth-places around the Caucasus," and were singularly responsible for all the great achievements of the past, including the splendid civilization of ancient Egypt: "the destinies of the species appear to have been carried forward almost exclusively by its Caucasian variety," and from "Caucasian progress, as exhibited in the splendid succession of distinct civilizations, from the ancient Egyptian to the recent Anglo-American to which the Caucasian part of the species has given birth."[64]

For ancient Egypt which was believed to be the greatest of the ancient civilizations, Gliddon claimed to provide for his readers a "perfect demonstration of the fact, that the Ancient Egyptian race were Caucasians."[65] Similarly, based on his interpretation of the confluence of evidence, Nott concluded: "It is clear then that history, the Egyptian Monuments, her paintings and sculptures, the examination of skulls by Cuvier, Morton and others, analogy, and everything else connected with this country, combine to prove beyond possible doubt, that the Ancient Egyptian race were Caucasians."[66] Commenting on the artistic depiction of Pharaoh Ramses II, Nott and Gliddon bemused: "His features are as superbly European as Napoleon's, whom he resembles."[67]

Repeated numerous times in their voluminous work, Nott and Gliddon attempted to prove that the permanent superior moral and intellectual abilities of the native Caucasian Egyptians enabled them to enslave and rule over the negro types whom they captured and

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[62] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 50.

[63] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 191.

[64] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 52-53, 247.

[65] George R. Gliddon, *Ancient Egypt: A Series of Chapters on the Early Egyptian History, Archaeology and Other Subjects, connected with Hieroglyphical Literature*, 12th ed. (Philadelphia, 1848 [1843]), 58-59. Citation in Robert Young, "Egypt in America: Black Athena, Racism and Colonial Discourse," in *Racism, Modernity and Identity: On the Western Front*, ed. Ali Rattansi and Sallie Westwood (London: Polity Press, 1994), 161. According to George Morton, "I think we may safely conclude that the complexion of the Egyptians did not differ from that of the other Caucasian races, in the same latitude." Morton, cited in Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 218.

[66] Nott cited in Young, "Egypt in America," 163.

[67] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 148. For an extensive discussion of the evolution of the "white race" under the American School, see Baum, *Caucasian Race*.

brought into Egypt. Drawing upon various Egyptian wall paintings depicting the different "types" of mankind, the authors argued that "the Egyptian, Negro, several White, and sundry Yellow races, had existed, in their present forms, for at least 4000 years,"[68] and consequently, the "effigies" of negro types on Egyptian monuments, could easily be recognized by "anyone living in our Slave-States."[69] Most certainly, they argued, "the physical characteristics of a 'field,' or agricultural, 'Nigger' were understood at Rome 1800 years ago, as thoroughly as by cotton-planters in the State of Alabama, still flourishing in A.D. 1853."[70]

In his *Crania Ægyptica*, Morton had written that although "Negroes were numerous in Egypt . . . their social position, in ancient times, was the same that it is now; that of servants or slaves."[71] Nott and Gliddon followed Morton in affirming that "Negroes, at no time within the reach even of monumental history, have inhabited any part of Egypt, save as captives."[72] They reasoned that there is no evidence to indicate that the social position of the negro would or should ever change: "it would seem that the Negroes ... must remain substantially in the same benighted state wherein Nature has placed them and in which they have stood, according to Egyptian monuments, for at least 5000 years."[73]

With such reasoning, Nott and Gliddon had in effect weaved the narrative of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, as well as the black-white, slave-master dichotomy of the American South into the fabric of ancient Egyptian society. The ontological significations were far from subtle: whites have always ruled, and blacks have always been slaves, and therefore, the racial order is ancient, permanent, and hallowed.[74] For Morton, Nott, Gliddon, and other nineteen

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[68] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 51.

[69] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 249. According to Nott and Gliddon, the "*permanence* of existing physical types," was so well established it would "not be questioned by any Archaeologist or Naturalist of the present day," 50; emphasis original.

[70] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 252.

[71] Samuel George Morton, *Crania Ægyptica; or, Observations on Egyptian Ethnography, derived from Anatomy, History and the Monuments* (Philadelphia, 1844), 66. This statement of Morton was reiterated in the preface to Nott and Gliddon's Types of Mankind written by Henry S. Patterson ("Memoir of the Life and Scientific Labors of Samuel George Morton," in Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, xli).

[72] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 217. To be fair, Nott and Gliddon, after making the case for the ancient Egyptians as a variety of Caucasian race, conceded the possibility that "the ancient Egyptians did present a type intermediate between other African and Asiatic races; and, should such be proved to have been the case, the autochthones of Egypt must cease to be designated by the misnomer of 'Caucasian'" (217).

[73] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 189.

[74] Cf. Török, "A Periphery on the Periphery," 373. Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 252, 253. Cf. Young, "The Afterlives of *Black Athena,*" 181-182; Stanton, *Leopard's Spots*, 51. While polygenists like Josiah

century race architects, "race was a matter of truth, civilization was a matter of cranial capacity, and Egypt, properly understood and represented, was the ultimate authority of the ages."[75] Indeed, not only did race determine one's place on the social scale, but race also determined the progress of civilization across time and space.

2.2.4 The Final Verdict: The Place of Africa and Africans in World History

In the pre-Darwinian context of racial theorizing, race was put forward as the chief determinant of cultural achievement. Only those races which were said to be advanced, and intellectually efficient, were capable of philosophy, civilization, and culture.[76] In France, Joseph-Arthur comte de Gobineau (1816-1882) in his Essay on the *Inequality of the Human Races*, popularized the notion that the robustness of civilization was connected to its racial make-up. He suggested that racial mixing lead ultimately to degeneration and corruption— that is, the stagnation of civilization.[77] Mixing with Negroes, in particular, was to be avoided at all cost: civilization depended on it. And according to the distinguished anatomist G. Elliot Smith who took part in the first archaeological survey of Nubia, "the smallest infusion of Negro blood immediately manifest itself in a dulling of the initiative and a 'drag' on the further development of the arts of civilization."[78] This was a particularly crucial doctrine since *all* cultural advancements were attributable to the Caucasian race.

2.2.4.1 *Africa and Progress in World History*

In his 1830 *Thought on the Original Unity of the Human Race*, the renowned American

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Nott were clearly in favour of slavery and sought to justify contemporary political policy by appealing to the monuments of ancient Egypt, it would be a mistake to imagine that all race theorists or polygenists were slave-mongers. To the contrary, while all shared a common sentiment of black inferiority, many race theorists were resolutely anti-slavery, not least of whom was Charles Darwin. Ephraim George Squier, the pioneer in American archaeology, expressed this dichotomy when in the 1850's he wrote that he had a "precious poor opinion of niggers, or any of the darker races," but at the same time he had "a still poorer one of slavery." See Stanton*, Leopard's Spots*, 193. Cf. Gould*, Mismeasure of Man*, 69-70.

[75] Trafton*, Egypt Land*, 48.

[76] Cf. Manfred Berg and Simon Wendt, "Introduction," in *Racism in the Modern World: Historical Perspectives on Cultural Transfer and Adaptation*, ed. Manfred Berg and Simon Wendt (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011) 1.

[77] Joseph-Arthur, comte de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 4 vols, 1853-1855. Cf. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought 2*, 168.

[78] G. Elliot Smith, *Archaeological Survey of Nubia, Bulletin* No 3, 1909, 25. Elliot cited in Adams*, Nubia*, 92.

phrenologist George Caldwell maintained: "To the Caucasian race is the world indebted for all the great and important discoveries, inventions, and improvements, that have been made in science and the arts."[79] David Hume was even more striking in his claim regarding the genealogy of civilization: "There *never* was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation."[80] And for the German naturalist Christoph Meiners noted above, all the "great law-givers, sages, and heroes," were white, while the dark, ugly races never developed any sciences.[81] Consequently, not only have the white race always dominated the feeble, degenerate races, but world history in reality *was* Caucasian history.[82]

On the other hand, Africans were said to be the offspring of an unhistorical race, and Africa, a land without a history. This view found one of its clearest articulation in the work of Georg W. F. Hegel, considered to be the founding father of Western philosophical thought in the modern period:

> Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained... shut up; it is...the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night. For *it is no historical part of the World*, it has no movement or development to exhibit. . . . What we properly understand by Africa, *is the Unhistorical*, Underdeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History.[83]

According to Hegel, Africa must be excluded from world history since Africans, from their lowly position on the scale of human worth, were never in a place to make any lasting contribution to human progress. This perspective was common among philosophers.

Hume, for example, believed "negroes ... to be naturally inferior to the whites," since there were "No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences . . . none ever

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[79] Charles Caldwell, *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race* (New York: 1830), 136. Cited in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 120; Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 54.

[80] Hume cited in Popkin, "Modern Racism," 143, emphasis added. Cf. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 73; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 48.

[81] Park, *History of Philosophy*, 82.

[82] "The Caucasian is the only historical race," wrote an anonymous ethnologist in middle of the nineteenth century, "and is the only one capable of those mental manifestations which have a permanent impression behind. It is the only race that can be said to leave a history." Anonymous, *The Six Species of Men* (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, 1866). Cited in Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 54.

[83] Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (1837; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 91, 99.

discovered any symptoms of ingenuity."[84] And Kant embraced the notion that blacks (and Indians) made no contribution to the history of human civilization "because they did not have it in them to do so."[85] This view of Africa and Africans found intellectual currency also among the ideologues of American polygeny. By recourse to the Egyptian monuments, Nott and Gliddon assessed the progress of the black race thus: "In the broad field and long duration of Negro life, not a single civilization, spontaneous or borrowed, has existed, to adorn its gloomy past."[86] They concluded:

> The monuments of Egypt prove, that Negro races have not, during 4000 years at least, been able to make a solitary step, in Negro-Land; the modern experiences of the United States and the West Indies confirm the teaching of the monuments of history; and our remarks ... hereafter, seem to render fugacious all probability of a brighter future for these organically-inferior types.[87]

This inert state of affairs in Africa and among Africans continued until Europeans entered into the equation and brought the "light" of civilization to the "dark continent."[88] The view that any semblance of civilization in Africa was the work of white colonizing Hamites, came to be incorporated into the protean doctrine known as the *Hamitic Hypothesis*.

2.2.4.2 Hamitic Hypothesis: Black Slaves and White Invaders

The Hamitic Hypothesis has had a long and capricious history, with antecedents of the myth going back to at least the early centuries of the Christian era.[89] The so-called "Curse of

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[84] Hume cited in Popkin, "Modern Racism," 143. Cf. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 73; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 48.

[85] Mark Larrimore, "Sublime Waste: Kant on the Destiny of the Races," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 29 (1999): 115. For Kant, blacks are naturally inferior to whites, indolent, and incapable of any other form of education other than slave labour. See Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts," 576.

[86] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 52-53. Nott and Gliddon dismisses even Meroë as a black civilization, arguing rather that it was the creation of "Pharaonic Egyptians, and not of Negro races" (52).

[87] Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 95-96. Cited in Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 52.

[88] Such views have been so deeply inculcated in European consciousness that African pre-colonial history is still believed by many to be "a series of 'primitive' societies, still in the stone age or only just emerging from it under the impact of Europe"; see Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 30. For the development and propagation of the idea of the Dark Continent see Patrick Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 166-203.

[89] For a broad overview of the Hamitic Hypothesis see David H. Aaron, "Early Rabbinic Exegesis on Noah's Son Ham and the So-Called 'Hamitic Myth'," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63 (1995): 721-759; David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Benjamin Braude, "Michelangelo and the Curse of Ham:

Ham" underpinned by exegetical distortions of Gen 9:18-27, has been used to justify prejudice against various "descendants" of Ham from at least the early Christian centuries, and in time became "the most widespread justification for the enslavement of Africans."[90] As Benjamin Braude remarks, "Before the rise of the Atlantic slave trade, the biblical Ham, son of Noah, could be a Mongol, an Indian (in both senses of the word), a Jew, or even a Polish aristocrat, among his many varied identities."[91]

Not unlike other linkages of Ham with the Other, some early Christian exegetes, a few Rabbinic sources, as well as some Muslim expositors had associated the blackness of Africans to varying degrees, with the descendants of cursed Ham.[92] However, these earlier inchoate speculations were transformed and systematized into an elaborate racial discourse in modern Europe and America as a moral response to the Trans-Atlantic distribution of African slaves.[93]

From a Typology of Jew-Hatred to a Genealogy of Racism," in *Writing Race Across the Atlantic World: Medieval to Modern*, ed. Philip D. Beidler and Gary Taylor (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 79-92; Benjamin Braude and Marie-Pierre Gaviano, "Cham et Noé: Race, Esclavage et Exégèse entre Islam, Judaïsme et Christianisme," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 57 (2002): 91-125; Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (January, 1997): 103-142; Michael Spöttel, "German Ethnology and Antisemitism: The Hamitic Hypothesis," *Dialectical Anthropology* 23 (1998): 131-150; Sanders, "Hamitic Hypothesis," 521-532; Stephen R. Haynes, "Race, National Destiny, and the Sons of Noah in the Thought of Benjamin M. Palmer," *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 78 (2000): 125-143; Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: the Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009); Peter D'Agostino, "Craniums, Criminals, and the Cursed Race': Italian Anthropology in American Racial Thought, 1861-1924," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (2002): 319-343; Steven Jablonski, "Ham's Vicious Race: Slavery and John Milton," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 37 (1997): 173-190; Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible*, 19-33.

[90] Braude, "The Curse of Ham," 79.

[91] Braude, "How Racism Arose in Europe," 43. Braude, "The Curse of Ham," 81, notes further, "In the course of his long history Ham was Egyptian, heretic, sinner, satyr, sodomite, Jew, Muslim, Mongol, Black, Asian, and African." Cf. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham*, 44-45.

[92] Braude, "The Curse of Ham," 81; Braude and Gaviano, "Cham et Noé," 91-135. Several modern authors have postulated a genealogical connection between the development of modern racism and medieval rabbinic exegesis of Genesis 9 which, reputedly envisioned black Africans as the cursed/enslaved descendants of Ham. For example, Sanders, "Hamitic Hypothesis," 521-532; Ania Loomba, "Periodization, Race, and Global Contact," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37 (2007): 595-620; and Haynes, *Noah's Curse*. But see Aaron, "Early Rabbinic Exegesis," 735-749; Whitford, *The Curse of Ham*, 19-42, 175; and David M. Goldenberg, "The Curse of Ham: A Case of Rabbinic Racism?" in *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States*, ed. Jack Salzman and Cornel West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 21-52, all of whom deny a direct link between medieval Rabbinic exegesis of Gen 9 and the development of modern racism and the Trans-Atlantic enslavement of Africans.

[93] Cf. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham*, 175; Braude, "The Curse of Ham," 79.

It was only in this new socio-political context that the "curse" came to embody unambiguously the three discursive elements of African blackness, hypersexuality, and chattel slavery.[94] As David Goldenberg writes "everyone in nineteenth-century America seemed to believe in the truth of Ham's blackness."[95] Still, the fungible curse of Ham would undergo yet another significant metamorphosis by polygenic exegetes from the middle of the nineteenth century.

The reformulation of the Hamitic Hypothesis in the nineteenth century was occasioned by a paradox which ensued from the French discovery of ancient Egypt under Napoleon. According to the French explorers, the glory of ancient Egypt was the creation of black Africans, long believed to be the descendants of Noah's benighted son.[96] Polygenists, however, found it hard to envision ancient Egyptian "high civilization" as a creation of black Africa as French scholars such as Denon, Gregoire, and Volney were postulating.[97] To counter this view, a new exegetical initiative was carried forward by polygenists of the American School who were earnest in their efforts to establish the Caucasian origin of ancient Egypt. Nott and Gliddon contested the view that civilization had its origins among Africans, claiming rather that:

> History . . . when subjected to a strictly impartial examination . . . will not support that

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[94] Cf. Braude, "The Curse of Ham," 81; Whitford, *The Curse of Ham*, 41, 122-133, 175. The idea of African blackness and servitude as deriving from Noah's curse found explanatory power particularly among monogenists of the nineteenth century since blacks could still remain a part of the human family while their enslavement could be rationalized as divine fiat. When in 1843 Josiah Priest wrote his *Slavery, as It Relates to the Negro, or African Race, Examined in the Light of Circumstances, History and Holy Scriptures*, or when George Washington Freeman published his *Rights and Duties of Slave Owners* in 1837, the venerated narrative of the enslaved African as the cursed progeny of Ham had been popularized for more than two hundred years. Strong advocates of slavery, both authors justified American enslavement of blacks by appealing to the putative curse of Ham. With Scripture as his justification, Josiah Priest for example argued, "We come to the conclusion, that it is not sinful to enslave the negro race." See Whitford, *The Curse of Ham*, 164. Another pro-slavery advocate, J.J. Flournoy declared in 1838, "the blacks were originally designed to vassalage by the Patriarch Noah." J. J. Flournoy, *A Reply to a Pamphlet* (Athens, Ga: 1838), 16. Citation in Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*, 142.

[95] Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*, 142.

[96] Maghan Keita, "Believing in Ethiopians," in *African Athena: New Agendas*, ed. Daniel Orrells, Gurminder K. Bhambra and Tessa Roynon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21; Spöttel, "German Ethnology," 133.

[97] Reflecting on his expedition in Egypt, Volney wrote: "[A] people now forgotten, discovered, while others were yet barbarians, the elements of the arts and sciences. A race of men now rejected from society for their sable skin and frizzled hair, founded on the study of laws of nature, those civil and religious systems which still govern the universe ... we reflect that to the race of negroes, at present our slaves ... we owe our arts and sciences" (Constantin Francois Volney, *The Ruins: Or Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires: And the Law of Nature* (1802; repr., New York: Peter Eckler, 1926). Cited in Keita, "Africans and Asians," 4.

superannuated, but untenable, doctrine, that civilization originated in Ethiopia, and consequently among an African people, by whom it was brought down the Nile, to enlighten the less polished, therefore inferior, Caucasian...or, that we, who trace back to Egypt the origin of every art and science...have to thank the sable Negro.[98]

Rejecting such prejudiced conclusions of the French, more careful exegesis of the Noahic episode by polygenists of the American school concluded that Ham was not in fact cursed, as had been supposed by monogenists for centuries—it was after all *Canaan*. Probing the vexing narrative more cautiously, Gliddon further divested the curse from blackness, as had been supposed, and contended rather that Canaan,

> was not *physically* changed in consequence of the *curse*. He ever remained a *white* man, as did, and do, all his many descendants. No scriptural production can be found, that would support an hypothesis so absurd, as that, in consequence of the curse, Canaan was transmuted into a negro. . . . If then with the curse branded on Canaan, and on his whole posterity, the Almighty did not see fit to change his skin, his hair, bones, or any portion of his physical structure, how unjust, how baseless is that theory (unsupported by a line of Scripture, and in diametrical opposition to monumental and historical testimony), which would make Canaan's immediate progenitor, Ham, the father of the Negroes! or his apparently blameless brother, Mizraim, an Ethiopian![99]

This "new" exegetical insight opened the door for the Hamites to have been white all along, and thus the progenitors of a high ancient civilization, which in the estimation of many at that time, laid at the foundation of Western civilization.[100] Thus, under the polygenists of the American school, the long-standing association of blackness-African-slavery-Hamites was spun upon its head. As Trafton points out, the ideologues of the American school had to make a choice between justifying black slavery by recourse to the curse of Ham, which would mean that Egypt (Mizraim) as a descendant of Ham would have been black; or, by denying that the curse of Ham/Canaan resulted in blackness, which would mean that Egypt was and had always been a white/Caucasian civilization. According to Trafton, "the American school chose

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[98] Nott and Gliddon cited in Keita, "Believing in Ethiopians," 21.

[99] George R. Gliddon, *Ancient Egypt: Her monuments, Hieroglyphics, History and Archæology, and Other Subjects Connected with Hieroglyphical Literature* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, 1850), 41. Also cited in Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 61; emphasis original to Gliddon.

[100] Monogenists did not take lightly to the view that would "get rid of the responsibility of brotherhood to the Negro," as Edward Wilmot Blyden decried in a polemical piece against the reinterpretation of the American School. According to Blyden, "[A]n American professor, in an elaborate work, claims for the tropical African a pre-Adamite origin, and ignores his relation with Ham. His arguments, however, are, as yet, beneath the level of scientific criticism." Blyden cited in Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 60.

Egypt"—the latter.[101]

Expurgating blackness from ancient Egyptian high society, Nott and Gliddon went so far as to argue that even "the so-called 'Ethiopian' dynasty [the 25th Egyptian Dynasty] had no *Negro* blood in their veins."[102] Going further, they claimed that the ancient Cushites and Meroïtes were anything but black Africans. "Kush" or "Ethiopia" mentioned in the Bible, they suggested, were best understood to mean "swarthy," and not "black," and referred to Arabs and not the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa.[103] As far as Nott and Gliddon were concerned, blacks were not mentioned in the Bible at all.[104] Excluded from biblical history, Africa was regarded as stagnant in every regard, and the few "rudiments of civilization" which one encountered in sub-Saharan African—"rude" agriculture, manufacturing of course cloth and leather, "somewhat" use of metals, and urban centers of ten to thirty thousand inhabitants— were said to be "attributable to *foreign immigration and exotic influences.*"[105]

Such exotic influences came to Africa, According to Nott and Gliddon, as they had always done: through wars of conquest and colonization carried on by the superior invading races.[106] Of course, the invading, nomadic Hamites were understood by the American School as Caucasians, who since ancient times have been trying to ameliorate the inferior races of

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[101] Trafton*, Egypt Land*, 61.

[102] Nott and Gliddon*, Types of Mankind*, 150.

[103] Nott and Gliddon*, Types of Mankind*, 253: "the *Negro* races are never alluded to in ancient Jewish literature; the Greek word 'Ethiopia' being a false interpretation of the Hebrew KUS*h*, which always meant *Southern Arabia*, and nothing but the *Cushite*-Arabian race" (emphasis original). As late as 1966 the prominent Old Testament scholar Martin Noth argued that the ancient Egyptians portrayed the Cushites "in an incorrect manner, with typical negro faces . . . incorrectly classifying the Nubians as Negroes. The Nubians were at most very slightly related to the Negro tribes bordering them on the south." Nubians, he continued, were known "only on the border of the Near East as neighbours of Egypt." What would influence competent biblïcal scholars such as Noth to charge the ancient Egyptians with a misapprehension in their depictions of a people with whom they had first-hand experience over millennia confounds the understanding. See, Martin Noth and Victor I. Gruhn, *The Old Testament World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 236. Cf. Copher*, Black Biblical Studies*, 20; Sadler*, Cushite*, 1.

[104] According to Nott and Gliddon*, Types of Mankind*, 249, the writer of Genesis 10 "omits *Negro* races altogether, from his tripartite classification of humanity under the symbolic appellatives of 'Shem, Ham, and Japheth'." Cf. Popkin, "Modern Racism," 146-147.

[105] Nott and Gliddon*, Types of Mankind*, 187; emphasis original.

[106] Nott and Gliddon*, Types of Mankind*, 53: "Looking back over the world's history, it will be seen that human progress has arisen mainly from the war of races. All the great impulses which have been given to it from time to time have been the results of conquests and colonization. Certain races would be stationary and barbarous for ever, were it not for the introduction of new blood and novel influences; and some of the lowest types are hopelessly beyond the reach even of these salutary stimulants to melioration."

Africa to no avail.[107] The notion that rudiments of civilization was dispersed across Africa by Hamitic Europeans—the so-called "diffusion" hypothesis—was a defining feature of the new myth, and one which became entrenched in a host of scientific disciplines from the middle of the nineteenth century—biblical studies being no exception.[108]

Not only was Africa now said to have had "civilizations," but as Charles G. Seligman put it in his influential *Races of Africa*, "the civilizations of Africa, are the civilizations of the *Hamites*."[109] Thus, by a sleigh of the academic hand, the black, enslaved Africans, descendants of Ham, had been transmuted into conquering, civilization-bearing Caucasian invaders from

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[107] In his 1849 study, Nott wrote: "The numberless attempts by the Caucasian race, during several thousand years, to bring the Mongol, Malay, Indian, and Negro, under the same religion, laws, manners, customs, etc., have failed, and must continue to fail, unless the science of Ethnography can strike out some new and more practical plan of operation. So utterly fruitless have been the attempts of the philanthropist, that we might well pause and ask whether we are not warring against the immutable laws of Nature, by endeavoring to elevate the intellectual condition of the dark, to that of the fair races" [Josiah C. Nott, *Two Lectures on the Connection between the Biblical and Physical History of Man* (1849; repr., New York: Negro University Press, 1969), 17]. Citation in Trafton*, Egypt Land*, 46-47.

[108] Cf. O'Connor and Reid, "Egypt in Africa," 4-6; Spöttel, "German Ethnology," 131; Trigger*, Archaeological Thought*, 150-155. The impact of the Hamitic Hypothesis upon historical epistemology was sure to leave a lasting effect on biblical hermeneutics as a discipline, for as David Whitford points out, the Scriptures were always front and center in debates about slavery. By the eighteenth century, and especially after the 1754 publication of Thomas Newton's enormously influential *Dissertation on the Prophecies* (in which he both "corrected" the text of Genesis 9.25 so Ham is cursed and not Canaan, and proclaimed the text a prophetic fulfillment of African slavery), there was near universal agreement among theologians, university professors, and professional clergy who commented on Genesis 9 that the permanence of African slavery was a prophetic fulfillment of the curse of Ham; see Whitford*, The Curse of Ham*, 141-169. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, for a host of biblical interpreters past and present, the history of civilization, biblical and secular, can be traced directly to the influence and actions of the Caucasian races, while black Africa and Africans, consigned to the fringes of civilization, have contributed little of value to human progress. Biblical scholar William F. Albright expressed this view in part when he wrote: "All known ancient races in the region which concerns us here belonged to the so-called "white" or "Caucasian" race, with the exception of the Cushites ("Ethiopians") who were strongly Negroid in type, as we know from many Egyptian paintings." William F. Albright, "The Old Testament World," in *The Interpreters Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1952), 238.

[109] Charles G. Seligman, *Races of Africa* (London: T. Butterworth, 1930), 96; emphasis mine. The myth of Hamitic conquerors spreading civilization throughout Africa has been traced to several tribal conflicts in post-colonial Africa, the most significant of which was the Rwandan genocide. For a detailed study of the influence of the Hamitic Hypothesis on the Rwandan genocide, see Aimable Twagilimana, *The Debris of Ham: Ethnicity, Regionalism, and the 1994 Rwandan Genocide* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2003). For the broad influence of the Hamitic Hypothesis on the continent of Africa see Michael F. Robinson, *The Lost White Tribe: Explorers, Scientists, and the Theory that Changed a Continent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Robin Law, "The 'Hamitic Hypothesis' in Indigenous West African Historical Thought," *History in Africa* 36 (2009): 293-314. For the myth and its consequences in the South African context, see G. Wittenberg, "Let Canaan Be His Slave (Gen. 9:26) Is Ham also Cursed?," *Journal of theology for Southern Africa* 74 (1991): 46-56; Louis C. Jonker, "The Biblical Legitimization of Ethnic Diversity in Apartheid Theology," *Scriptura* 77 (2001): 165-183.

Europe—a feat accomplished almost singlehandedly by the formidable influence of the American School of Ethnology.[110]

2.3 THE DEMISE OF RACE & THE EMERGENCE OF ETHNICITY

2.3.1 The Impact of Darwinian Evolution

As demonstrated in the preceding section, racial theorizing matured well before Darwin published *On the Origins of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* in 1859. However, the impact of Darwinian evolution on race and racist speculation cannot be overstated. As Stephen Gould observes, "Biological arguments for racism may have been common before 1850, but they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of evolutionary theory."[111] Indeed, virtually all of the major racial ideas which were hashed out by appeal to divine fiat up to the mid-nineteenth century acquired true "scientific" credibility as a result of Darwin's sophisticated, atheistic reframing of the Great Chain of Being.[112] The biological evolution of simple organisms to complex creatures over millions of years came to be seen as a model for human societies which were also believed to be following evolutionary pathways from simple hunter-gatherer societies to the more complex industrial societies of the West.[113] The universality of the theory of evolution provided an all-encompassing explanation for the upward mobility and biological superiority of Europeans, the most evolved of human races.

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[110] Both views—Hamites as black African slaves and Hamites as white European conquerors—continued well into the twentieth century, and while the former has been largely discarded, the latter still continue to exert significant (if often subconscious) influence on scholars working in various fields. The famous archaeologist Flinders Petrie, for example, posited that a "dynastic race" of white Europeans migrated from the North and are singularly responsible for the high civilization of Egypt. Based on his study of physiognomic representations in Egyptian art, Petrie suggested that the earliest Egyptians were of the "acquiline type," with features typical of "the western race in general." From this assessment, he reaches the "simple conclusion that North Africa, Egypt, and Syria were occupied by allied tribes of a *European* character." W. M. Flinders Petrie, "The Races of Early Egypt," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 31 (1901): 250; emphasis added. Cf. Smith*, Wretched Kush*, 14.

[111] Stephen J. Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap-Harvard Press, 1977), 127-128.

[112] Post-Darwinian racial theorizing is typically called "scientific racism" to differentiate it from earlier forms of racism which appealed to the Bible and Christian tradition. Social Darwinism and eugenics are examples of scientific racism.

[113] Cf. Trigger*, Archaeological Thought*, 94-104; Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 10.

Not only did the Darwinian notion of the survival of the fittest seem to demonstrate that in human affairs the European was the fittest, it also provided scientific rationalization for the extermination of the "lower races"—a proposition which was well established before 1859.[114] While finding slavery abhorrent, Darwin nonetheless had prophesied:

> At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the *civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races.* At the same time the anthropomorphous apes [negro and Australians]... *will no doubt be exterminated.* The break will then be rendered wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilised state, as we may hope, than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as at present between the negro or Australian and the gorilla.[115]

The implications of Darwin's prognostication are best summarized by the ethicist Benjamin Wiker: "The European race, following the inevitable laws of natural selection, will emerge as *the* distinct species, human being, and all the transitional forms—such as the gorilla, chimpanzee, Negro, Australian aborigine, and so on—will be extinct."[116]

Following Darwin, a host of social scientists were all too eager to bring about the fulfillment of his predictions by applying the evolutionary tenet of natural selection to human societies. As Richard Weikart points out, from around the 1860's onward, exterminationist ideologies were rampant in scholarly publications and were soon to be put into practice in various parts of the colonial world.[117] Weikart writes, "Darwinism radicalized racism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by providing a scientific rationale for exterminating non-European races."[118]

Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* of 1894 is a good example of the ways in which this argument was understood and propagated. Kid's basic argument is that the British would

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[114] For example, according to Nott, *Two Lectures*, 18, regarding the question of black emancipation in the American South, "Emancipation must follow, which, from the light before us, is but another name for extermination." And the jurist and novelist Hugh Brackenridge argued that "extermination" would be the best policy toward "the animals vulgarly called Indians." Cited in Gossett, *The History of an Idea*, 229-230.

[115] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871; repr., New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 201.

[116] Benjamin Wiker, *Moral Darwinism: How We Became Hedonists* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 250; emphasis added.

[117] Richard Weikart, "Progress through Racial Extermination: Social Darwinism, Eugenics, and Pacifism in Germany, 1860-1918," *German Studies Review* 26 (2003): 273-294.

[118] Weikart, "Racial Extermination," 275. Cf. Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 30.

inevitably kill off the "weaker" races in "the struggle for existence":

> The current inequality of the races is an indubitable fact. Under equally favorable climatic and land conditions the higher race always displaces the lower, i.e., contact with the culture of *the higher race is a fatal poison for the lower race and kills them.* . . . [American Indians] naturally succumb in the struggle, its race vanishes and civilization strides across their corpses.... Therein lies once again the great doctrine, that the evolution of humanity and of the individual nations progresses, not through moral principles, but rather by dint of the right of the stronger.[119]

The impact of social Darwinism on racist ideologies like eugenics and its policies of forced sterilizations and extermination of the "unfit" cannot be overstated.[120] Yet, not until Darwinian-motivated exterminationist policies were carried out on European soil did any significant counter-narrative arose that would challenge race theories and racial thinking.

2.3.2 The Emergence of Ethnicity

Ethnicity as an anthropological classification is only decades old in modern intellectual discourse and emerged as a social category, not in response to any new anthropological or scientific discovery, but was necessitated (along with other terms for defining human difference) following the social-political outfall that ensued during and after World War II.[121] While many factors contributed to the "demise" of race and the emergence of ethnicity as a social construct, above all else, the horrors of the Holocaust created an urgent need to re-evaluate the applicability of racial ideas to human societies.[122] Gould, for example, points out

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[119] Kidd cited in Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans," 186; emphasis added. Another example of the deployment of this argument is seen in the social Darwinist Rudolph Cronau. Writing in 1896 he affirmed: "The Anglo-Saxon has exterminated the less developed peoples with which he has come into competition ... through the operation of laws not less deadly [than war] and even more certain in their result. The weaker races disappear before the stronger through the effects of mere contact . . . . The Anglo-Saxon, driven by forces inherent in his own civilisation, comes to develop the natural resources of the land, and the consequences appear to be inevitable. The same history is repeating itself in South Africa." Cronau's piece appeared in Friedrich Hellwald's, *Kulturgeschichte in ihrer naturlichen Entwickelung*, 4th ed., 4 vols. (Leipzig: Friesenhahn, 1896), IV: 615-616. Citation in Weikart, "Racial Extermination," 273.

[120] See the detailed treatment of the subject in Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). See also Jerry Bergman, Diana Bogardus and David Herbert, *Darwin Effect: Its Influence on Nazism, Eugenics, Racism, Communism, Capitalism & Sexism* (Green Forest, AR: 2014).

[121] Steve Fenton, *Ethnicity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2003), 19-20, 53-56; Hall*, Ethnic Identity*, 2.

[122] Cf. Bronwen Douglas, "Foreign Bodies in Oceania," in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940*, ed. Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (Acton, AU: ANU Press, 2008), 3; Fenton*, Ethnicity*, 19; Fredrickson*, Racism*, 2-4.

that "The death knell of the old eugenics in America was sounded more by Hitler's particular use of once-favored arguments for sterilization and racial purification than by advances in genetic knowledge.[123] Here again, in historical hindsight, social contingencies precipitated changes in the ways human differences were conceptualized and articulated; not evidence from hard science.

In this particular case, the near-extermination of a European population under the Nazi regime set off a current of intellectual backlash against racial thinking and ignited new efforts to find alternative ways of conceptualizing human difference.[124] As Jonathan Hall notes, "the Holocaust discredited the racial philosophies that spawned it, and that, by and large, the term 'race' was replaced by another—most often, 'ethnic group.'"[125] *Ethnicity* therefore, like *race*, is a historically contingent term, and theories of ethnicity, as Marcus Banks points out "do not simply drop out of the sky ready-formed; they are as much the products of the historical and political contexts in which they arise as any of the data that these theories strive to make sense of."[126]

Perhaps the most important take away from the preceding historical survey is that the construction of difference is never an innocuous pursuit. Not only are such pursuits typically intended to serve the agendas of power groups, but identity construction, such as we have seen with Western racism, can be dangerous. Enterprises of identity construction are often undergirded by ideologies which naturalize and legitimize violence, conquest, and exploitation. And for this reason alone, the interpreter of the biblical text must give careful thought to the ways in which his or her hermeneutical conclusions about the past impact social outcomes in the present. Though for another place and time, biblical interpretation has

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[123] Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 54.

[124] According to Elazar Barkan, "The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars," in *Racism: Essential Readings*, ed. Ernest Cashmore and James Jennings (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 326, "Most scientists were hesitant to join the political frontier in the intellectual battle to discredit racism." It was only "from 1938 on, that the scientific community declared itself against racism." But as McCoskey, "Problem of Race," 310-311, has remarked, "it seems ironic to many that the historical interrogation of skin color has been debunked just, and only, when the authority of 'whiteness' seemed to start slipping."

[125] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 19. Similarly, Douglas Bronwen underscores that following the WWII era, "Human variation was uncomfortably euphemized as ethnicity, identity, religion, or culture," all on account of the need to get away from the "dirtiness" of race. See Douglas, "Foreign Bodies," 3.

[126] Banks, *Ethnicity*, 48. Similarly, McInerney, "Ethnicity," 2, writes: "as the subject of academic discourse, ethnicity is a concept with its own history, subject to the changing patterns—critics will say fads— that direct the flow of academic investigation.

too frequently been employed towards invidious ends. Thus, if Martin Bernal is correct in urging scholars to recognize "the academic production of knowledge as an element of Western imperialism,"[127] then one must also locate the academic interpretation of the Bible within this broader political framework.

2.3.3 Defining *Ethnicity* for the Purpose of this Study

Only in the 1960's and 1970's did the term "ethnicity" come into widespread usage in the social sciences. As we have seen, it emerged as a social construct out of necessity—to discredit notions of race. Yet, far from a clearly delineated phenomenon, ethnicity remains a highly contested concept and one which is difficult to pin down (see Appendix A).[128] Exactly what is an "ethnic group" and under what conditions do ethnic identities become salient?

2.3.3.1 Elements and Definition of Ethnic Identity

Though diversity characterizes attempts to define ethnicity, there are some general principles which seem to be accepted by most theorists of the ethnic phenomena:[129]

1. Ethnicity is both socially constructed and subjectively perceived.
2. Ethnicity involves both emic and etic dimensions (how a group perceives itself vs how the group is perceived by others).
3. Ethnicity is defined more by the boundaries of group interaction than by the content of ethnic identity.
4. Ethnic boundaries, instead of being natural and fixed, are fluid and permeable allowing for inclusion of non-members under various circumstances.
5. Ethnic boundaries tend to be sharpened in conflict situations where group solidarity may be perceived as a matter of survival and/or where it becomes essential to distinguish between "us" and "them."
6. A primordialist view of ethnicity is more likely to be held by an ethnic group than an instrumentalist one, especially in situations of perceived threat.

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[127] Cf. O'Connor and Reid, "Egypt in Africa," 3.

[128] John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, "Concepts of Ethnicity," in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15-16; Elizsabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald and Malcolm Chapman, "History and Ethnicity," in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 18-24. For further discussion, see Appendix A.

[129] See the following: Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 17-33; University of Cologne Forum, ed., *Ethnicity as a Political Resource: Conceptualizations across Disciplines, Regions and Periods* (Bielefeld: Kordula Röckenhaus, 2015); Fredrik Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," 75-82; Lucy, "Ethnic and Cultural Identities," 95; Small, "Group Identification and Ethnicity," 272.

Based on these principles, many scholars emphasize that expressions of ethnic identity display both primordial and constructed qualities. Jonathan Hall's definition exemplifies this synthesis. Hall defines *ethnic identity* as "the operation of socially dynamic relationships which are constructed on the basis of a putative shared ancestral heritage."[130] Similarly, for Christoph Antweiler, "Ethnicity is a socially grown collective identity, which assumes a common history and origin as well as shared traditions, and claims to define a culture as different from (all) others."[131] Both theorists capture the sense that claims to primordial heritage are important to ethnic identities, even if those claims involve fictive and fictional elements; what is important from an emic point of view is the *perception* of common ancestry.[132]

Hutchinson and Smith further identify a subset of six characteristic elements of the *ethnie*—a proper name, common ancestry, historical memories, elements of common culture, link with a homeland, and a sense of solidarity—all of which may be discerned in ancient Israelite self-definition.[133] Nevertheless, the scope of this study will only require engagement

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[130] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 16.

[131] Christoph Antweiler, "Ethnicity from an Anthropological Perspective," in *Ethnicity as a Political Resource: Conceptualizations across Disciplines, Regions and Periods*, ed. University of Cologne Forum (Bielefeld: Kordula Röckenhaus, 2015), 27.

[132] Cf. McInerney, "Ethnicity," 2; Sparks*, Ethnicity and Identity*, 270.

[133] John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, "Introduction," in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6-7. While scholars of ancient history have increasingly applied the term ethnicity to ancient societies, it is crucial to recognize that ancient peoples of the Mediterranean did not conceive of "ethnicity" as a social category; neither did they seek to delineate the constituent elements of ethnic identity; see for instance, Peter M. Fraser, *Greek Ethnic Terminology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1-11; Erich Gruen, "Did Ancient Identity Depend on Ethnicity? A Preliminary Probe," *Phoenix* 67 (2013): 1-3; Jeremy McInerney, "Ethnos and Ethnicity in Early Greece," in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. Irad Malkin (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 51-73. Certainly, we trace the root of ethnicity to the Greek *ethnos* which was used to denote "people" and "nation"; but *ethnos* was polyvalent in meaning and went well beyond "people" and "nation" to include other categories of denotation, including birds and insects.[133] *Ethnos* simply described a collectivity of any kind; see Fraser, *Ethnic Terminology*, 1. In this sense ethnicity does not find a direct counterpart in the ancient context which concerns us. Nevertheless, even though ancient societies did not have a particular word for ethnicity in its modern sense, this does not mean that group differentiation did not play a central role in sociopolitical relationships. To the contrary, notions of group solidarity based on common *biological* descent have been a consistent feature of human existence across time and space. For this reason, some scholars have attempted to argue that the more unpopular term, "race," might better describe ancient conceptions of collective difference; e.g., Gruen, "Ancient Identity," 1-22. Yet because the biblical text betrays no concern for an elaborate system of *racial* differentiation for the purpose of social and political domination such as that which developed in the modern West (Sadler*, Cushite*, 149-151), concepts of race fail to capture the non-essential nature of ethnic differentiation in ancient Israel. Moreover, both biblical and historical sources reveal that

with three of the most important elements of ethnic identity revealed by the Hebrew Bible.

2.3.3.2 *Defining Ethnicity for the Purpose of this Study*

For Israelites, self-consciously identifying as "the chosen people" in covenantal relationship to Yahweh, and whose ancestor Abraham was promised the land of Canaan, those major constituent elements of ethnic identification certainly included (though not limited to) descent, territory, and religion. Accordingly, the chief ways in which Israelites differentiated themselves from non-Israelites from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible were through (1) descent and kinship (i.e., we are the *children* of Abraham); (2) religious election as reflected in the concept of monotheism (i.e., Abraham and his descendants were *chosen* by Yahweh for an exclusive covenantal relationship), and (3) territory (i.e., the *land* promised to Abraham and his heirs is *our* perpetual possession).[134]

Based on the above, a working definition of Israelite ethnicity for the purpose of this study is as follows. According to the Hebrew Bible, "Israel" may be defined in an "ethnic" sense as the descendants of Jacob, bound by a covenantal relationship to Yahweh the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and perpetually tied to the land of Canaan by virtue of the divine promise made to Abraham their ancestor.[135] In the course of our study, the theological dimensions of this self-definition will be fleshed out, and both primordial as well as constructed characteristics will become apparent.

As a contrast to the perception of Isrealite ethnic identity in the Hebrew Bible, other peoples were *not* the children of Jacob; their ancestors were *not* selected for a special relationship with Yahweh, and therefore the "Promised Land" is *not* their possession. This

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ancient Israel and Judah, for the most part, identified as an oppressed group under various imperial regimes for much of its history. Thus, group demarcation in ancient Israel is better conceived of in terms of ethnic identity and less so in terms of strict biological determinism. A number of scholars have also demonstrated that ancient societies did not think about group difference in racial essentialist terms; see for example, Frank M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), 218; Frank, M. Jr. Snowden, "Greeks and Ethiopians," in *Greeks and Barbarians: Essays on the Interactions between Greeks and Non-Greeks in Antiquity and the Consequences for Eurocentrism*, ed. John E. Coleman and Clark A. Walz (Bethesda, MD.: CDL Press, 1997), 103-126; Lloyd A. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

[134] Cf. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 16-22.

[135] For all practical purposes, "Israelite" here denotes the descendants of Jacob in broad generality and without reference to specific tribal, political or historical divisions (i.e., Israel-Judah, northern-southern kingdoms, pre- and post-exilic communities, etc.).

study therefore will examine the Cushites through these three main ethnic differentials (descent/kinship, territory, and religion), though other aspects of identity, such as physical characteristics will also become important to the discussion.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The foregoing historical review is part of the effort to place racial theories which matured in the nineteenth century in the broader context of Western political hegemony. Racism then is an ideology of domination, developed in conjunction with Western political expansion and the resulting subjection of indigenous peoples the world over. The ranking of "races" served to rationalize the oppression, exploitation, and even extermination of those groups consigned to the bottom of the racial order.[136] The sum of the argument is this: racial theories which developed in conjunction with European imperial and colonial explorations not only ratified European dominance through the concept of race, but also served to consign other non-Europeans—people of African descent in particular—to a permanent status of inferiority in order to justify their exploitation.[137]

Theories of race, therefore, whether undergirded by environmental or biological arguments, must be understood as cultural and social constructs, rooted in discourses of power with the simultaneous objectives of legitimation and exclusion. From this perspective then, race has been a major vehicle for political agendas.

The idea of ethnicity, though not free of its own problems, better approximates the ways in which concepts of group identity are depicted in the Hebrew Bible than notions of race, and therefore *ethnicity* will provide a more useful analytical tool for discussions of biblical group demarcation. Before moving on to the study of the biblical material, however, another historical excurses is necessary. Because ancient Egypt played such a fundamental role in the construction of nineteenth century racist theories, this next chapter will take a closer look at the evidence from ancient Egypt in order to provide historical context and analogy for our discussion of Cushites in Part II.

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[136] Cf. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 57.

[137] Cf. Gould*, Mismeasure of Man*, 62-63.

CHAPTER 3

Cushite Ethnic Identity in the Context of Ancient Egypt

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew Bible makes 54 references to Cush and related terms (כּוּשִׁים, כּוּשִׁי, כּוּשׁ, כּוּשָׁן, כֻּשִׁית). The clear majority of these refer to the region of Cush south of Egypt—more commonly known as *Nubia*—or, to individuals with apparent genealogical or cultural ties to the region.[1] To get a clearer picture of the people whom biblical writers called Cushites, and to understand how ethnic perceptions potentially influenced interactions with Cushites in ancient Israel, it is necessary first to look outside the biblical text.

Because ethnic identity is best understood in relationship to historical and social contexts, the purpose of this chapter is firstly to situate Cush within the historical context of ancient Egypt and the Mediterranean, and secondly, to characterize perceptions of Cushite ethnic distinction in ancient Egyptian society. While Cushites are frequent in the art and literature of the ancient Mediterranean, Egypt, by virtue of its proximity and *longue durée* of interaction with Nubia, has preserved by far and away the most of what is known of Cushites in the ancient world. For this reason, our exploration of the social and political history of Cush must begin in ancient Egypt, and our discussion of Cushite ethnic identity must be understood in relationship to ancient Egyptian attitudes to foreign peoples in general.[2] This chapter draws upon two main sources: Nubian studies, and literary and art-historical evidence from ancient Egypt. Together these sources help to situate the political and social dynamics of Cush and Cushites in the ancient Egyptian context.[3]

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[1] Sten Hidal, "The Land of Cush in the Old Testament," *Tel Aviv* 41 (1977): 97-106; Robert H. Smith, "Ethiopia (Place)," in *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 665-667; J. Daniel Hays, "From the Land of the Bow: Black Soldiers in the Ancient Near East," *Biblical Review* 14 (1998): 28-33.

[2] Perceptions of Cushite ethnic identity in Assyrian and Greek sources will be discussed in subsequent chapters in connection with the biblical perspective.

[3] Historically, Nubian studies has been a sub-discipline of Egyptology and up until quite recently reflected much of the "Egyptocentricity" characteristic of that discipline. Over the last several decades, however, Nubiology has emerged as a relatively independent field of investigation, though still closely related to Egyptology. See Stuart Tyson Smith, "Nubia, Coming Out of the Shadow of Egypt," *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 6 (2014): 1-4.
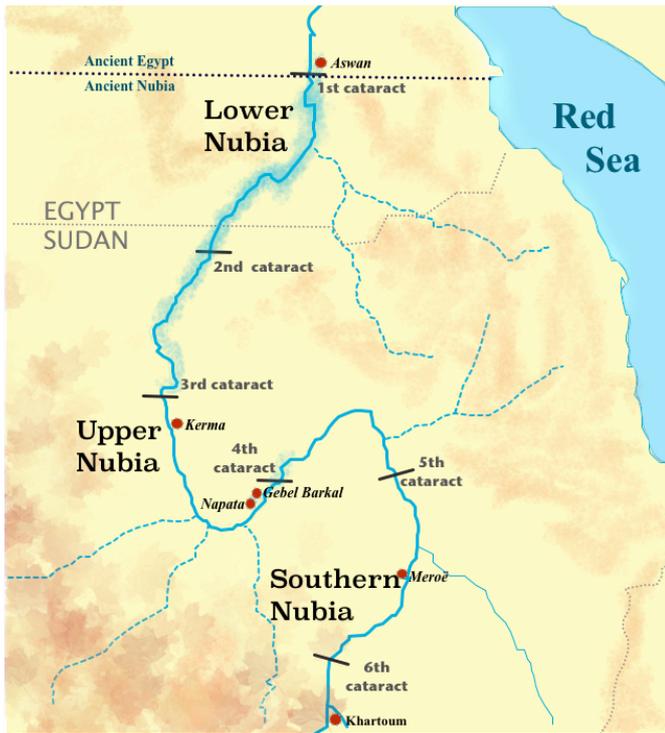
Figure 1. *Map showing main regions of the Middle Nile with principal sites and topographical features. Adapted from O'Connor 1993 and Van Pelt 2013.*

EGYPT	DATE (B.C.)	DATE (B.C.)
Old Kingdom	c.2649-2100	c. 2500-1550
1st Intermediate Period	c.2100-2030	c. 2050-1750
Middle Kingdom	c.2030-1650	c. 2050-1750
2nd Intermediate Period	c.1650-1550	c. 1750-1500
New Kingdom	c.1550-1070	c. 1550-1070
3rd Intermediate Period	c.1070-760	c. 1070-760
Napatan Period	c.760-656	c. 760-330
		c.760-747
		c.747-720
		c.720-702
		c.702-690
		c.690-664
		c.664-656
Late Period	c. 656-525	c. 300 BC-350 CE

Figure 2. *Chronology of pharaonic Egypt adapted from Metropolitan Museum of Art. Kerman, Napatan and Meroitic periods adapted from Edwards (2004:81, 115) and Fischer et al (xvviii-xix).*

3.1. 1 Geography

Geographically, ancient Nubia defines the southern quarter and the northern half of the modern nations of Egypt and Sudan, respectively. Often called the "Middle Nile" region, this area stretches almost a thousand kilometers along the Nile Valley from the first cataract at Aswan to the sixth cataract at the confluence of the Blue and White Nile near Khartoum (Fig. 1).[4] Like Egypt which is divided into Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) regions based on the direction of the river flow, Nubia is also divided into Upper and Lower zones. Lower Nubia lies between the first and the second cataracts, and for most of its history, functioned as a buffer zone between the two powerful centers of Egypt and Cush.[5] Upper Nubia extends from the second to the fourth cataracts and was the main seat of Cushite power for the period covered in this study. The fourth to the sixth cataract is designated as Southern Nubia by some scholars; others consider this region an extension of Upper Nubia.[6]

3.1.2 Ancient Names

Ancient Egyptians had several names for the land and people beyond their southern frontier. Among the most frequent were *Wawat* (*wȝwȝt*), *Ta Seti* (*tȝ-stj*), *Ta Nehesi* (*tȝ-nḥsjw*), and *Kush* (*Kš, Kȝš*). From at least the Old Kingdom, Egyptians referred to Lower Nubia, known for its prolific gold mines, as *Wawat*.[7] The area from Aswan/Elephantine to further south was also known to the Egyptians as *Ta Seti*, "land of the bow," an attribution to the preferred weapon of their Nubian neighbours.[8] *Ta Nehesi* as a reference to the land, and *Nehesi* (*nḥsj, nḥsjw,* or *nḥs*) as a reference to the people of Nubia occur with high frequency

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[4] O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, xii.

[5] Timothy Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," in *The Egyptian World*, ed. Toby A. H. Wilkinson (New York: Routledge, 2010), 401.

[6] In antiquity, Lower Nubia supported a population of roughly 20,000, while the population of Upper Nubia numbered about 200,000. See, O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 32; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 75.

[7] László Török, *Between Two Worlds: The Frontier Region Between Ancient Nubia and Egypt, 3700 BC-AD 500* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 60; O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 33; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 405; Derek A. Welsby, *The Kingdom of Kush: The Napatan and Meroitic Empires* (Princeton, N.J.: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 1998), 7. Wawat was further divided into several sub-regions (Irtjet, Setju, and Medjay).

[8] Robert G. Morkot, *The Black Pharaohs: Egypt's Nubian Rulers* (London: Rubicon Press, 2000), 2. *Ta Seti* was also the name of the first Upper Egyptian nome from Aswan/Elephantine to areas further north.

in Egyptian literature.[9] *Nehesi* is of uncertain origin, though some scholars suggest the term meant "Nubian," "black," or "negro," denoting the physical attributes of Cushites.[10]

The most widespread name used by Egyptians for Nubia, however, was *Kush* (*Kš*, *Kȝš*), which could designate either Upper Nubia proper, or Upper and Lower Nubia collectively.[11] The Assyrian *Kusu* and the Hebrew כּוּשׁ also reflect this latter Egyptian appellative.[12] As for the Greeks, they referred to the people of ancient Nubia as well to those further south as *Aithiops* (Αἰθίοψ), "burnt of face," without distinction.[13] The Greeks also gave the name *Aegyptos* (Αἴγυπτος) to the land of the pharaohs which they would later conquer. The Egyptians themselves called their country *kmt*, the "black land," which scholars suggest was a reference to the alluvial soil.[14] In this study the terms Nubia, Cush/Kush, and related gentilics Nubian, Cushite/Kushite will be used interchangeably.[15]

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[9] O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 32; Welsby, *Kingdom of Kush*, 7.

[10] For example, Donald B. Redford, *From Slave to Pharaoh: The Black Experience of Ancient Egypt* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 5-6; Jan Krzysztof Winnicki, *Late Egypt and Her Neighbours: Foreign Population in Egypt in the First Millennium BC*, trans. Dorota Dzierzbicka (Warsaw: Institute of Archaeology of Warsaw University, 2009), 85, 488. Some scholars see *Ta Nehesi* as an equivalent of *Ta Seti*, denoting the fame of Nubian archery. The association of *nḥsj* with "black" and "negro" is disputed. See §3.3.1 below.

[11] Welsby, *Kingdom of Kush*, 7; O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 3; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 2. The region of Cush was not known as "Nubia" prior to the third century B.C. The Nuba people apparently came to dominate the region in the late first millennium B.C., and subsequently the Greeks and Romans came to identify them with the region. See Edwards, *Nubian Past*, 19-20; O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 3; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, xii. Nubia could also derive from the Egyptian word for gold, *nb*, since Lower Nubia was known for its prolific gold mines in antiquity. See, Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 2; Richard Lobban, *Historical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval Nubia* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), li.

[12] O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 3; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 2.

[13] Snowden, "Greeks and Ethiopians," 103, notes however, that the Greek designation Αἰθίοψ "lacked the pejorative meanings of post-classical societies." Cf. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*; Frank M. Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); Török, *Herodotus in Nubia*, x; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 2. The modern nation of Ethiopia is not to be confused with ancient Nubia. As we have seen, ancient Nubia was on the Nile and occupied what is now northern Sudan and southern Egypt. The modern country of Ethiopia is located further south in the Horn of Africa. Both Homer, *Od.* 1.23-1.24 and Herodotus, *Histories* 3.94, 7.70, refer to two branches (eastern and western) of Aithopians with dark skin. Chapter 5 will explore this subject more closely.

[14] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 1:200. Cf. Sakkie Cornelius, "Ancient Egypt and the Other," *Scriptura* 104 (2010): 323.

[15] The use of Nubia to describe Cush prior to the third century B.C. is anachronistic. Nevertheless, scholarly convention employs Nubia in a geographic sense regardless of historical period and without reference to ethnic or linguistic affiliations. This convention is followed in this study: Nubians derive from Nubia regardless of historical period.

3.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

For thousands of years the Nile river facilitated endless interaction between the two oldest civilizations in Africa.[16] Egypt and Nubia shared a single riverine environment and a frontier zone, and the histories of these two lands have been inextricably linked for millennia. Throughout its long history, ancient Egypt's primary direction of orientation, its greatest territorial and commercial interests, and its "primary sphere of influence" lay to the south in Nubia.[17] Driven by an aggressive economic agenda, Egypt sought to dominate its southern neighbour politically and culturally.[18] And Nubia, for its part, levied various forms of resistance and retaliation against Egyptian aggression, resulting in endless conflict over territory, resources and trade routes. Indeed, the history of Egyptian and Nubian interaction has been characterized mainly by hostility and rivalry.[19] Nevertheless, Egyptian engagement in Nubia was to leave a permanent imprint on Nubian culture and politics, and in its own turn,

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[16] The massive volume Adams*, Nubia*, was among the first, and certainly the most extensive monograph to appear on Nubian history. Other early works include, Bruce G. Trigger, *Nubia under the Pharaohs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976); Steffen Wenig, *Africa in Antiquity: The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan.* 2 vols. (Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Museum, 1978). More recent works include the following: Vivian W. Davies, ed., *Egypt and Africa: Nubia from Prehistory to Islam* (London: British Museum Press, 1991); O'Connor*, Egypt's Rival*; László Török, *The Birth of an Ancient African Kingdom: Kush and Her Myth of the State in the First Millennium BC* (Lille Ill: Université Charles-de-Gaulle, 1995); László Török, *The Kingdom of Kush: Handbook of the Napatan-Meriotic Civilization* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Timothy Kendall, *Kerma and the Kingdom of Kush, 2500-1500 BC: The Archaeological Discovery of an Ancient Nubian Empire* (Washington: National Museum of African Art, 1997); Welsby*, Kingdom of Kush*; Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*; Smith*, Wretched Kush*; Edwards*, Nubian Past*; Redford*, Black Experience*; Charles Bonnet and Dominique Valbelle, *The Nubian Pharaohs: Black Kings on the Nile* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006); Török*, Between Two Worlds*; Fisher, Lacovara, et al*, Ancient Nubia*. See also the edited volume, *Studien zum antiken Sudan: Akten der 7. Internationalen Tagung für meroitistische Forschungen von 14. bis 19. September 1992 in Gosen/bei Berlin* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999). This excellent work has many articles appearing in English. See also Necia D. Harkless, *Nubian Pharaohs and Meroitic Kings: The Kingdom of Kush* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2006); Barbara Hufft, "The Kushite Kings of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty in Light of Transcultural Studies: An Iconographic Approach," in *Proceedings of the Second Birmingham Egyptology Symposium, 20th February 2015*, ed. Steven R. W. Gregory (Birmingham: Birmingham University Press, 2016), 1-20.

[17] Redford*, Black Experience*, 19-23. Indeed, the most important cardinal point in ancient Egyptian cosmology was south. See, Dieter Kurth, "Uresh-Nefer's Image of the World," in *Flora Trade Between Egypt and Africa in Antiquity*, ed. Ilaria Incordino (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017), 67: "The goddess Nut looks to the south, since this was the ancient Egyptians' most important cardinal point."

[18] Anthony Spalinger, "Covetous Eyes South: The Background to Egypt's Domination of Nubia by the Reign of Thutmose III," in *Thutmose III: A New Biography*, ed. Eric H. Cline and David O'Connor (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 344.

[19] See, O'Connor*, Egypt's Rival*.

Nubia came to impress its own political and cultural stamp on Egypt, even if less often remembered.[20]

3.2.1 Reassessing Egyptian and Nubian Political History

3.2.1.1 The Old View

An earlier generation of scholars had portrayed Nubia as the dependent of Egypt, endlessly manipulated and exploited by the more politically and culturally dominant northern neighbour. Bronze Age Nubia was construed as a spatter of uncivilized nomadic and tribal societies which were later to be acculturated by the civilizing force of imperial Egypt.[21] Following the end of Egyptian occupation in Nubia with the disintegration of the New Kingdom, Nubia was believed to relapse into its former tribalism for several centuries, until once again, Egyptian influence brought about the emergence of the 25th Cushite Dynasty in the eighth century B.C., ushering in a period of cultural invigoration.[22] The process of degeneration would repeat itself yet again following the expulsion of the Cushite pharaohs from Egypt in the middle of the seventh century B.C., until finally, Nubian political culture lumbered to an inglorious end.[23]

In this view, cultural dissemination was a unidirectional phenomenon, and one in which the passive societies of Nubia were subjected to the civilizing agency of the dominant Egyptian core.[24] The Egyptologist Heinrich Brugsch, in his major treatise on Egyptian history first published in 1877, reflected this point of view in writing that the Egyptians "ascended the river to found in Ethiopia temples, cities and fortified places, and to diffuse the blessings of a civilised state among the rude dark-coloured population."[25]

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[20] Cf. Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 37-38.

[21] O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, xi; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 20-22; W. Paul van Pelt, "Revising Egypto-Nubian Relations in New Kingdom Lower Nubia: From Egyptianization to Cultural Entanglement," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 23 (2013): 524-527.

[22] See Robert G. Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," in *Empires: Perspectives from Archaeology and History*, ed. Susan E. Alcock et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 229.

[23] Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 229; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 20-22; Van Pelt, "Cultural Entanglement," 524-527; Török, *Kingdom of Kush*, 92-93.

[24] Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 229; Van Pelt, "Cultural Entanglement," 524-527; Török, *Kingdom of Kush*, 92-93.

[25] Brugsch cited in Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 20. As we have seen in the previous chapter, early race scientists of all caliber promoted Egypt as a White civilization. Brugsch was no exception. He adhered to the classical idea that Egyptian civilization began in Ethiopia, yet he maintained that even the Cushites/Ethiopians

For Brugsch and other Egyptologists, the culture of Nubia was then, at best, an imitation of the superior model of Egypt, and the relationship between the two states was one which excluded mutual benefit.[26] This account not only presented a static and sterile view of ancient Egyptian-Nubian interaction, but unsurprisingly this construct reflected the image of European colonial realities in Africa.[27] As several scholars point out, such views have coloured the interpretation of Nubian history and archaeology and continue to persist in scholarly interpretations.[28]

3.2.1.2 Reassessing Nubian Political History

Notwithstanding the continued influence of earlier interpretations, a growing number of scholars are painting a much more nuanced and complex portrait of the historical interaction between ancient Egypt and Nubia. David O'Connor's 1993 study, *Ancient Nubia: Egypt's Rival in Africa*, exemplifies this new approach in presenting "a more positive or dynamic version of Nubian history and culture than some other studies."[29] Writing to counter scholarly opinion which envisioned Bronze Age Nubian political organization as "relatively small, simply structured chiefdoms," O'Connor argues instead that "Nubia had a civilization—that is, was in 'an advance stage of social development.'"[30] He emphasizes that "for most of the

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were Caucasians: "[T]he Egyptians appear to form a third branch of the Caucasian race, the family called Cushite . . . [who] left the soil of their early home . . . to find a new fatherland on the banks of the Nile." Brugsch cited in Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 21.

[26] Cf. Török, *Herodotus in Nubia*, 4-5.

[27] Edwards*, Nubian Past*, 7; Van Pelt, "Cultural Entanglement," 526.

[28] See Trigger, "Sudan Archaeology," 223-245; Stuart Tyson Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," in *The Egyptian World*, ed. Toby A. H. Wilkinson (New York: Routledge, 2010), 230; Edwards*, Nubian Past*, 7-9; Török, "A Periphery on the Periphery," 365-380; Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 23-36; Van Pelt, "Cultural Entanglement," 524-527. The very recent work of Jack A. Josephson, "Connoisseurship," in *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, ed. Melinda K. Hartwig (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 68, demonstrates the persistence of this Egyptocentric view: "Nubia, on Egypt's southern border, was subjugated for almost two millennia, beginning in the Old Kingdom until the end of the New Kingdom, and was a principal supplier of gold."

[29] O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 2.

[30] O'Connor*, Egypt's Rival*, xi. See also, Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 54.

Bronze Age Nubian political systems were strongly centralized, covered large territories, and were akin to states and kingdoms rather than chiefdoms."[31]

Stuart Tyson Smith is another scholar whose work reflect this new perspective. In his many publications dealing with Cushite history and ethnicity, he presents a more dynamic understanding of Egyptian and Nubian interaction in light of new evidence. Re-assessing the significance of Nubian political organization, Tyson states:

> Egyptologists have and tend still to underestimate the complexity and power of the Nubian Kerma culture (c.2400-1500 BC) which was an urban civilization itself from at least the end of the Old Kingdom to its destruction at the beginning of the New Kingdom. Archaeological excavations at Kerma, however, have shown that this civilization was highly complex with a large, fortified capital. Kerma clearly posed a serious potential threat to Egypt from at least the Middle Kingdom onwards, in contrast to the Egyptian ethnic topos of Nubians as poorly organized and incapable of serious resistance to Egyptian hegemony.[32]

This view is further expressed in the many works of the Hungarian scholar, Lázló Török. Refashioning ancient Nubia as Egypt's rival, Török writes:

> More recent studies have put forward, on the basis of a less partial interpretation of the evidence and with the possession of a more complete picture of the Nubian Bronze Age cultures, a hypothesis of alternating success and failure on the part of both Egypt and Nubia, suggesting that the history of the Middle Nile Region was determined by their *rivalry* and *competition* for the sovereignty over Lower and Upper Nubia and the control of the African trade.[33]

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[31] O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 1. Cf. Vivian W. Davies, "Egypt and Nubia: Conflict in the Kingdom of Kush," in *Hatshepsut: From Queen To Pharaoh*, ed. Catharine H. Roehrig, Renée Dreyfus and Cathleen A. Keller (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 49-50.

[32] Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 230.

[33] Török, *Kingdom of Kush*, 93; emphasis mine. See further, Bruce B. Williams, "Some Geographical and Political Aspects to Relations Between Egypt and Nubia in C-Group and Kerma Times, CA. 2500 - 1500 B.C.," *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 6 (2013): 67: "It is now clear that Kush gathered a multi-ethnic empire-sized sphere of influence and control, at least from the Aswan border to the upper limits of the Fourth Cataract, reaching across steppe and desert to the horn of Africa." Similarly, Edwards, *Nubian Past*, 75: "By the second millennium BC, there is little reason to doubt that Kerma was the centre of a substantial kingdom, almost certainly the earliest in sub-Saharan Africa, and one which came to be a major rival to Egypt." And, Carola Vogel, "Keeping Out the Enemy—Egyptian Fortifications in the Third and Second Millennium BC," in *The Power of Walls—Fortifications in Ancient Northeastern Africa: Proceedings of the International Workshop Held at the University of Cologne, 4th-7th August 2011*, ed. Friederike Jesse and Carola Vogel (Köln: Heinrich-Barth-Institut, 2013), 80, writes: "There is no doubt that Kerma developed slowly but steadily into an equal opponent for Egypt." See also, Robert G. Morkot, "Nubia in the New Kingdom: The Limits of Egyptian Control," in *Egypt and Africa: Nubia from Prehistory to Islam*, ed. W. V. Davies (London: British

Hence, it has become more established that ancient Nubia represented a formidable opponent to Egyptian interests, competing with its northern neighbour for control of territory, resources, and important commercial avenues. The numerous campaigns against Kush by Old and Middle Kingdom Egypt, and the eventual Cushite conquest of Egypt in the eighth century B.C. following several centuries of Egyptian domination, attest to the formidable threat that Cush posed to Egypt during the entire period of historical interaction. Indeed, the frequent references to "wretched Kush" in Egyptian political ideology denotes not only the Egyptian contempt for its southern neighbour, but also serve to demonstrate the reality that the relationship between the two states was characterized by frequent conflicts.[34]

Comparatively, Nubia was subjected to Egyptian domination for more extensive periods. Nevertheless, Nubia also invaded and occupied Egypt at different times.[35] Thus, far from a passive recipient of Egyptian culture or the object of its endless manipulation over the millennia, a growing body of works now conceive of this interaction as more "cultural entanglement" rather than a unidirectional donation of the trappings of a higher civilization.[36] Stated differently, Egyptian civilization was not monolithic and absolute, but in the process of its own cultural advancement was simultaneously influenced by adjacent cultures.

At various points, Egyptian society adopted religious practices, dress, economic, technological, and political ideas from neighbouring peoples, particularly those of the Levant and Nubia.[37] As a result of nearly three millennia of interaction between ancient Egypt and Nubia, the geographic, political and cultural boundaries between these two African civilizations were subject to continuous ebb and flow. Wars, diplomacy, commercial and

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Museum Press, 1991), 204; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 59-68; Charles Bonnet, "Upper Nubia from 3000 to 1000 BC," in *Egypt and Africa: Nubia from Prehistory to Islam*, ed. W. V. Davies (London: British Museum Press, 1991), 112-117; Davies, "Egypt and Nubia," 49-56; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 406-407. Cf. Graham Connah, *African Civilizations: An Archaeological Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[34] Cf. Bonnet, "Upper Nubia," 112-117.

[35] Cf. Davies, "Egypt and Nubia," 49-56; David O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," in *'Never Had the Like Occurred': Egypt's View of Its Past*, ed. W. J. Tait (London: UCL, 2003), 167; Edwards, *Nubian Past*, 75, 78; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 230.

[36] Van Pelt, "Cultural Entanglement," 523-550, details the recent shift from the "Egyptianization" model of political transformation in Nubia to the more complex "entanglement" model. Cf. Hufft, "Transcultural Studies," 1.

[37] Stuart Tyson Smith, "People," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Donald B. Redford, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 31; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 231; Van Pelt, "Cultural Entanglement," 531-532.

cultural interchange, no less than migration and biological admixture all contributed to a long history of "entanglement" between these two neighbouring societies. Still, as O'Connor points out, this history of entanglement does not of course diminish the fact that Egyptian and Nubian civilizations differed in fundamental ways.[38]

3.2.2 Egypt and Nubia in the Old and Middle Kingdoms (3100-1550 B.C.)

The emergence of several kingdoms in Nubia by around 3100 B.C. coincided with the development of pharaonic Egypt.[39] These early Nubian polities developed into a highly complex and centralized state, and by around 2200 B.C. the third cataract center of Kerma was recognized as the political capital of the kingdom of Kush.[40] Early Egyptian contact with the Cushite state in Kerma was characterized by trade and diplomacy, though control of the resource rich region of Lower Nubia fluctuated between the two powers through the Old Kingdom.[41]

In the Middle Kingdom, Egypt expanded southward and brought Lower Nubia and its population more permanently into its political sphere.[42] The pharaohs of the 11th and 12th Dynasties constructed a series of massive forts from the first to the second cataracts on Egypt's

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[38] O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 2. For a general outline of Egyptian and Nubian historical chronology, see Figure 2 above.

[39] Whether there were multiple or a single centralized Nubian polity by 3100 B.C. is unclear. But Nubian political cohesion developed contemporaneously with Egyptian state formation. As Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 37, has noted, "The tradition of rulership in Nubia extends back as far as it does in Egypt, for over two thousand years before the emergence of the 'Napatan' state [in the eighth century C.B.]." See further, Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 230; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 404-405.

[40] O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 10-41; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 407; Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 230; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 59-68; Edwards, *Nubian Past*, 75-81.

[41] Lower Nubia was renowned in antiquity for its rich deposits of gold, diorite and other resources. Since the 12th Dynasty conquest of Lower Nubia, Egyptians considered the area up to the 2nd cataract as falling within their border. It was reconquered by Nubia during the second intermediate period and remained so until the conquest of Ahmose, the founder of the 18th Dynasty. It would again pass into Nubian hands from the 3rd Intermediate period until the emergence of the 26th Libyan Dynasty. See O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 25; Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 2:15, note 13; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 47-50; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 405; Bonnet, "Upper Nubia," 112; Rosemarie Klemm and Dietrich Klemm, *Gold and Gold Mining in Ancient Egypt and Nubia: Geoarchaeology of the Ancient Gold Mining Sites in the Egyptian and Sudanese Eastern Deserts* (Berlin: Springer, 2012).

[42] O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 25; Davies, "Egypt and Nubia," 49; Vogel, "Keeping Out the Enemy," 73-100. Bonnet, "Upper Nubia," 114-115; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 407-412. Also, Török, *Between Two Worlds*.

new southern frontier.[43] These structures not only served to regulate trade and diplomacy, but their construction was principally defensive and signaled "the seriousness of the threat felt by Egyptians in the area."[44] The boasting of the Middle Kingdom pharaoh Sesostris III that he defeated "thousands of Bowmen [Nubians], who had come to invade his borders,"[45] is indicative of probably many attempts made by the kings of Kush to regain lost territory.

Nubia would continue to press hard against Egypt's southern defenses, and by the Second Intermediate Period, Cushite forces were making raids deep into the heart of Egypt.[46] A 17th Dynasty inscription describes a devastating invasion of Upper Egypt by Nubian forces.[47] Indeed, from around 1650 B.C. Cush regained full control of Lower Nubia as indicated by Egyptian expatriate officials paying fealty to the "king of Kush."[48]

During the Second Intermediate Period, Asiatic Hyksos controlled Lower Egypt, subjected Upper Egypt to vassalage, and established the 14th and 15th Egyptian Dynasties (c.1640-1530 B.C.) based in the Delta.[49] The kingdom of Kerma also reached its zenith during

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[43] Barry J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 172-178; Kendall, *Kingdom of Kush*, 15-16; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 406.

[44] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 176. Cf. Kendall, *Kingdom of Kush*, 15-16; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 54: "All of this suggest that they [the Egyptians] faced a formidable opposition in the Nubians." Andrea Manzo, "'They Shall Come to Trade at Iken.' Ports and River in Second Millennium B.C.E. Nubia," in *Flora Trade Between Egypt and Africa in Antiquity*, ed. Ilaria Incordino (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017), 75, writes, "More recently, the increasing awareness of the political and military power and capabilities of the kings of Kush in the first half of the second millennium BCE provided good justification for such an imposing defense apparatus on the southern border of Egypt." See further, Vogel, "Keeping Out the Enemy," 78-80; Ellen F. Morris, *The Architecture of Imperialism: Military Bases and the Evolution of Foreign Policy in Egypt's New Kingdom* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 68; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 87-90; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 406; Williams, "Egypt and Nubia," 65; James K. Hoffmeier, "Aspects of Egyptian Foreign Policy in the 18th Dynasty in Western Asia and Nubia," in *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World: Studies in Honor of Donald B. Redford*, ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Antoine Hirsch (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 122-128; Morkot, "Nubia in the New Kingdom," 294; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 56-58.

[45] Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1:198.

[46] Davies, "Egypt and Nubia," 49-56; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 109-110; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 406; Dan'el Kahn, "The History of Kush—an Outline," in *The Power of Walls—Fortifications in Ancient Northeastern Africa: Proceedings of the International Workshop Held at the University of Cologne, 4th-7th August 2011*, ed. Friederike Jesse and Carola Vogel (Köln: Heinrich-Barth-Institut, 2013), 17.

[47] Vivian W. Davies, "Kush and Egypt: A New Historical Inscription," *Sudan & Nubia* 7 (2003): 52-54; Davies, "Egypt and Nubia," 49-56; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 406; Kahn, "History of Kush," 17.

[48] Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 406; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 62; Spalinger, "Covetous Eyes South," 345; Davies, "Egypt and Nubia," 49; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 104-106; Redford, *Black Experience*, 10.

[49] See, O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 165; Manfred Bietak, "Egypt and the Levant," in *The Egyptian World*, ed. Toby A. H. Wilkinson (New York: Routledge, 2010), 426. It remains unclear whether the 14th Dynasty was Hyksos or a local Egyptian family.

this phase and established political and commercial alliances with the Delta dynasties.[50] Nehesy, one of the early pharaohs of the Lower Egyptian 14th Dynasty based in Avaris, was the son of a Nubian queen and a Hyksos king.[51] His Nubian descent is reflected in his name, *Nehesy*, "the Nubian." The Hyksos and Cushites came to dominate Egypt during this period. In a record of one of his war councils, Kamose, the last pharaoh of the 17th Dynasty laments the state of affairs wherein Egypt remained subjected to Hyksos dynasts and Cushite kings:

> I would like to know what (use) is my strength with a Prince in Avaris and another in Kush, and I sit united with an Asiatic and a Nubian, each man with his slice of this Egypt, sharing the land with me? . . . My wish is to save Egypt and smite the Asiatic![52]

Kamose apparently found the opportune time to strike his adversaries upon the succession of a new Cushite king. A letter from the Hyksos king Apophis requesting military assistance from the newly acceded king of Cush indicates that Kamose had made well on his intention to regain Egyptian independence:

> Aawaserre, Son of Re, Apophis greets my son, the ruler of Cush. Why did you accede as ruler without informing me? Do you see what Egypt has done against me? The ruler who is in it, Kamose the Mighty, given life, is assailing me upon my soil—although I did not attack him—the very same way he did against you. It is in order to torment these two lands that he picks them out. Both my land and yours he has ravaged. Come north! Don't blanch (?)! Since he is occupied with me here, there is no one who can be opposed to you in this Egypt. Since I won't let him go until you arrive, we can then divide up the towns of this Egypt, and [both] our [lands] will be happy again.[53]

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[50] See Enrico Dirminti, "Between Kerma and Avaris: The First Kingdom of Kush and Egypt During the Second Intermediate Period," in *The Fourth Cataract and Beyond: Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies*, ed. Julie R. Anderson and Derek A. Welsby (Paris: Peeters, 2014), 337-345; Spalinger, "Covetous Eyes South," 345; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 65; Török, *Kingdom of Kush*, 93; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 107-108. Cf. Hoffmeier, "Egyptian Foreign Policy," 122-123; Bietak, "Egypt and the Levant," 428.

[51] K. S. B. Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt During the Second Intermediate Period, c. 1800-1550 B.C* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 1997), 252-253. Cf. Dirminti, "Kerma and Avaris," 345; Bietak, "Egypt and the Levant," 426.

[52] In Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 239; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 69; Davies, "Egypt and Nubia," 49; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 112; Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 84.

[53] Edward F. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1990), 26; Cf. Morkot, *Black Pharaohs* 69; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 113; Hoffmeier, "Egyptian Foreign Policy," 122.

It appears unlikely that Apophis' solicitation to the Cushite king was relayed at this time since the letter was intercepted by Kamose's desert patrols.[54] Kamose, however, would launch a war of liberation against the Hyksos and Cushites, and following his untimely death, his brother Ahmose, who is often considered as the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty, would intensify the military offensive.[55] The war of liberation begun by the Seventeenth Dynasty pharaohs resulted not only in the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt and the destruction of the Kerman state, it also resulted in the extension of Egyptian political dominion to its farthest extent.[56] The irony of the 17th Dynasty wars against Cush, however, is that, as Donald B. Redford has established, the pharaonic family of the 17th Dynasty were of Nubian origin![57]

3.2.3 New Kingdom: Egyptian Imperialism in Nubia (1550-1070)

New Kingdom Egypt (1550-1070 B.C.), known as the imperial period, was characterized by a new militarism as the warrior pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty set about to expand their dominion into Asia and Nubia.[58] The lessons of the preceding centuries of foreign control had sunken in: foreigners should never be trusted, but should be subjected and dominated, otherwise the security of Egypt is imperiled.[59] In 1502 B.C. the Kerman state was brought to an end by the conquest of Thutmose I, though it would take close to a hundred years of intense military campaigning in Nubia to break Cushite power and extend Egyptian domain as far as the fourth cataract.[60] Thutmose III (1479-1425) was a major player in this political expansion. Not content with the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt, he set about to

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[54] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 69; Hoffmeier, "Egyptian Foreign Policy," 122; Bietak, "Egypt and the Levant," 431.

[55] It is disputed whether Kamose should be seen as the last pharaoh of the 17th Dynasty or the founder of the 18th Dynasty. See further, Donald B. Redford, *History and Chronology of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 28-49; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 69; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 409; Kahn, "History of Kush," 17.

[56] Davies, "Egypt and Nubia," 49.

[57] Redford, *Black Experience*, 35; Redford, *Eighteenth Dynasty*, 28-49. This also means that the Eighteenth Dynasty pharaohs were of Nubian origin since "the royal family of the two dynasties is the same"; Redford, *Eighteenth Dynasty*, 28.

[58] Török, *Kingdom of Kush*, 93. Spalinger, "Covetous Eyes South," 344-369.

[59] Cf. Bietak, "Egypt and the Levant," 432-433; Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 86.

[60] Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 407; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs* 63, 75; Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 233; Hoffmeier, "Egyptian Foreign Policy," 122-123; Bonnet and Valbelle, *Nubian Pharaohs*, 12.

"slay the countries of the wretched Retenu [Asiatic]" and to "extend the borders of Egypt" into Asia.[61]

Thutmose III also consolidated Egyptian control over Nubia up to the fourth cataract, dividing Upper and Lower Nubia into the Egyptian provinces of Kush and Wawat. New Kingdom expansion into Nubia and Asia was intended to crush the powers of long standing rivals and to gain access to valuable mineral wealth and trade routes.[62] Nubia was the major gold producing region of the ancient world, and the virtual unrestricted access to Nubian gold and other commodities made Egypt the wealthiest nation of its time.[63] The wealth generated from Nubia enabled the Egyptian empire to secure and maintain a wide imperial dominion stretching from the heart of the Sudan to the Euphrates in western Asia.[64]

Until the disintegration of the New Kingdom around 1070 B.C., Nubia was deemed an extension of Egypt.[65] During this extended period of imperial control in Nubia, Egypt essentially absorbed the population of Nubia and incorporated local elites into the imperial administration.[66] As Robert Morkot notes,

> Egyptologists once thought that, apart from the princes, the Viceregal administration largely comprised colonial Egyptians. This is certainly wrong, the administration was left mostly in the hands of the local elite families. As early as the joint reign of Thutmose III and Hatshepsut, members of princely families had adopted Egyptian names and were working in high positions in the Viceregal bureaucracy. Some of them

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[61] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 2: 30. See also the edited volume, Eric H. Cline and David O'Connor, eds., *Thutmose III: A New Biography* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

[62] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 76-80; O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 166; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 411; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 182-183, 210.

[63] Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 411.

[64] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 76-80, 91. Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 411. Cf. Klemm and Klemm, *Gold Mining*. The Amarna Letters include several diplomatic correspondences between the Egyptian court and foreign leaders who claimed gold was as plentiful as "dirt" in Egypt. Assur-uballit of Assyria requesting gold from the pharaoh declared, "Gold in your country is dirt; one simply gathers it up." See William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), EA 16, 38-41.

[65] Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 411. Cf. Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 209.

[66] Direct Egyptian control extended to the third cataract, however, while the region up to the fourth cataract remained independent princedoms owing their allegiance to the pharaoh. As a consequence of this administrative setup, the degree of Egyptianization was considerably less below the third cataract compared to the rest of Nubia. See Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 75-76; Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 234-41; Edwards, *Nubian Past*, 102, 105.

moved from their home territory and worked in other parts of Nubia, others were appointed to offices in Egypt itself.[67]

Over the course of several centuries, the children of Nubian elites were trained at the Egyptian court and returned to govern their own people. This was an important imperial strategy practiced in both Nubia and Asia.[68] The children of subjected rulers were brought to the Egyptian court as vassals with at least two objectives in mind. First, they were being held as hostages to ensure the loyalty of their client-parents. And second, having learned the Egyptian way, they would, at least in theory, represent Egyptian interests upon their succession or administrative service.[69] The employment of local elites was meant to dissuade rebellion and enhance the functioning of the imperial administration.[70]

The pharaohs of the New Kingdom also undertook the building of major religious centers deep into the heart of Nubia.[71] This policy was rooted in a religious ideology which not only blended Nubian and Egyptian religious traditions, but importantly, was predicated on ideas of a common *origin* of Nubian and Egyptian religion.[72] The traditional Nubian religious site, the "Holy Mountain" of Gebel Barkal, later the center of Napatan kingship, took on new significance for the pharaohs of the New Kingdom. Several temples were built at Gebel Barkal, the largest of which was the temple of Amun.[73] The distinctive Nubian ram manifestation of Amun became established in Egypt and Nubia from this period.

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[67] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 81.

[68] O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 169. Cf. Bietak, "Egypt and the Levant," 434; Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 72-76, 81, 84-89; Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 243.

[69] Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 72-76, 81, 84-89; Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 243.

[70] See Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 72-76, 81, 84-89; Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 243. This strategy was not foolproof, however, as the many campaigns to crush rebellion in Nubia suggest. Smith, "Revenge of the Kushites," 84-107, indicates that Nubians responded to Egyptian imperial domination in several ways: by overt rebellion, through forms of ethnic solidarity, by varying degrees of assimilation, and by co-opting the dominant ideology. Smith further notes that in spite of several centuries of Egyptian imperial domination, Nubian culture still managed to survive: "Although Nubian culture was transformed by the colonial experience, archaeological evidence suggests that it persisted in spite of Egyptian policies of assimilation" (98).

[71] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 74; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 165, 184-196.

[72] Kendall, *Kingdom of Kush*, 76; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 411; Toby A. Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt: The History of a Civilisation from 3000 BC to Cleopatra* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 391-393. Cf. Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 227.

[73] Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 409-411; Edwards*, Nubian Past*, 103.

Championed as the "Southern Karnak," New Kingdom propagandists actively promoted Gebel Barkal as the birthplace of the god Amun—the guarantor of the White Crown of Upper Egypt—and the origin of Egyptian kingship.[74] Nubia was thus framed as both an extension of Egypt and the source of Egyptian kingship.[75] Though clearly intended to legitimate Egyptian rule in Nubia, Timothy Kendall has pointed out that at the core of this ideological lore there might actually have been a kernel of historical reality harking back to an earlier period.[76] In any case, the idea of Gebel Barkal as the birthplace of Egyptian kingship became widespread in Nubia during the New Kingdom, and some archaeologists see a revival of this ideology in the *Weltanschauung* of the 25th Dynasty pharaohs.[77] The end of Egyptian dominion in Nubia around 1070 B.C. set the stage for Cush to re-emerge as an independent state with a leading role on the Mediterranean political scene by about 850 B.C.[78]

3.2.4 Kush, Egypt, Assyria and the Levant (750-650 B.C.)

The origin of the Cushite Dynasty in the eighth century remains debated in Nubian scholarship; the particulars of this debate are not germane to our purposes here, but will be picked up in Chapter 7. But whether the work of "Egyptianized" Nubians or of indigenous Nubian elites from further south, the emergence of the 25th Dynasty in the eighth century marked a significant watershed in Nubian, and by extension, Mediterranean history.[79] Moving north from his Napatan capital, the first pharaoh of the 25th Dynasty, Kashta, took control of

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[74] Kendall, *Kingdom of Kush*, 78-79; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 409-411. Cf. Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 227-229.

[75] Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 409-411. Cf. Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 210-211.

[76] Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 411.

[77] Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 411. Citing archaeological evidence showing the earliest Nubian kings wearing the white crown associated with Upper Egyptian kingship, some archaeologists have proposed that Nubian kingship antedated and gave rise to Pharaonic Egypt. See Bruce B. Williams, "Forebears of Menes in Nubia: Myth or Reality?" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46 (1987): 15-26; Bruce B. Williams, "The Lost Pharaohs of Nubia," *Journal of African Civilizations* 10 (1989): 90-104. The view that Pharaonic Egypt derived from Nubia is now tempered or rejected by most Egyptologists (see Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 43-44), though the idea is by no means dead.

[78] Cf. Redford, *Black Experience*, 58-59.

[79] Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 244-246, cites the long tradition of kinship in Nubia which goes back to the Early Bronze Age and continued even under Egyptian imperial dominion as a possible reason for the weakening and ultimate demise of Egyptian imperialism in Nubia. See Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 129-144. See also, Edwards, *Nubian Past*, 75.

Upper Egypt by around 750/740 B.C.[80] While an earlier chronology suggested that Kashta's son Piye (often Piankhi) completed the unification of Egypt in 715 B.C. with the defeat of the Libyan chieftains in the Delta, new chronological evidence indicate that it was Shabaka, the third Cushite pharaoh who in fact reunified Egypt in 720 B.C. following Piye's earlier feat.[81] Thus, Piye was the first Nubian pharaoh to unify Egypt, and he would be followed by Shabaka, Shebitku, Taharqa, and Tanwetamani, all of whom ruled in Egypt for all or parts of their reigns. Portraying themselves as restorers of an ancient tradition that had fallen into disarray, the Cushite pharaohs unified the Two Lands after several centuries of political disorder, launching a period of renewal and Renaissance in Egypt.[82] Many cities were restored and temples built throughout their realm: "The time of Kushite rule was one of great building activity throughout Egypt and Nubia."[83] With the unification of Egypt complete and Cushite rule firmly in place, the pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty now set their sights on regional developments.

The entrance of Cushites on the world stage meant, inevitably, that Egypt-Cush would be brought into conflict with Assyria for control of the Levant. For the roughly one hundred year period between 750 to 650 B.C., Egypt and Assyria vied for control of the Levant, with Assyria ultimately gaining the upper hand, even going on to conquer Egypt. This period also coincided with the age of the classic prophets of Israel/Judah, and not surprisingly, the military face-off between the two great powers would find articulation in the prophetic corpus.

3.2.4.1 The End of Kushite Rule in Egypt

A number of military clashes occurred between the Egyptian-Cushite forces and the Assyrians under Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal.[84] Cushite soldiers are

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[80] Several 25th Dynasty inscriptions names Alara as the first of the Napatan kings, and likely the brother of Kashta. See, Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 156-157; Redford, *Black Experience*, 59-61.

[81] Many scholars consider Piye to be the founder of the 25th Dynasty in light of his successful unification of Upper and Lower Egypt; see Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 179-196. On the new chronological evidence, see §6.2.1 of this study.

[82] Bonnet and Valbelle, *Nubian Pharaohs*, 64; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 217-222; Peter Lacovara, "The Art and Architecture of Kushite Nubia," in *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, ed. Melinda K. Hartwig (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 447-462; Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 472; Redford, *Black Experience*, 101; Hufft, "Transcultural Studies," 2.

[83] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 231. Cf. Bonnet and Valbelle, *Nubian Pharaohs*, 64; Redford, *Black Experience*, 101-138; Hufft, "Transcultural Studies," 2-3.

[84] For an overview of this period, see Jeremy W. Pope, *The Double Kingdom under Taharqo: Studies in*

shown in Assyrian wall reliefs depicting at least two campaigns of Sargon II in Syria-Palestine. Certainly Sargon's campaign in 720 B.C. against Hamath and Samaria and their allies depict Cushite soldiers; and images of Cushite soldiers from another or others of Sargon's campaigns also appear on his sculptures.[85] Sennacherib's 701 B.C. campaign is a special point of interest, finding mention in Assyrian, Greek and biblical sources. Taharqa who ascended the throne in 690 B.C. is said to have been only 20 years old when he lead his Egyptian-Cushite army against Sennacherib. The chronological discrepancies related to Taharqa's presence in Syria-Palestine in 701 B.C. have been variously resolved and are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.[86] Both 1 Kings 19:9 and Isaiah 37:9 mention Taharqa's arrival in Palestine in defense of Hezekiah and his allies. Sennacherib claimed that he defeated the Egyptian-Cushite army and their west Asian allies at the battle of Eltekeh.[87] The Cushites also appear to have claimed victory in the battle.[88]

While Sennacherib managed to crush the rebellion in western Asia and re-established Assyrian rule over many of his former vassals, his military campaign came to a premature end following a mysterious event which apparently decimated the Assyrian army. According to the prophet Isaiah (37:36), an angel of Yahweh destroyed 185,000 of the Assyrian soldiers in a

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the History of Kush and Egypt, c. 690-664 BC (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Bonnet and Valbelle, Nubian Pharaohs, 140-154; Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 244-251; Morkot, Black Pharaohs, 167-304; Redford, Black Experience, 65-144; Dan'el Kahn, "Taharqa, King of Kush and the Assyrians," Journal of the Society for the Study of Ancient Egyptian Antiquities 31 (2004): 109-128; Dan'el Kahn, "The Assyrian Invasions of Egypt (673-663 BC) and the Final Expulsion of the Kushites," Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur 34 (2006): 251-267; Dan'el Kahn, "Tirhakah, King of Kush and Sennacherib," Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections 6 (2014): 29-41.

[85] See Pauline Albenda, "Observations on Egyptians in Assyrian Art," Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar 4 (1982): 8. Cf. Morkot, Black Pharaohs, 202-203; Nadav Na'aman, "Population Changes in Palestine Following Assyrian Deportations" Tel Aviv 20 (2013): 107. Further details are provided in §6.2.1 and §6.3.2.3 of this study.

[86] See Kenneth A. Kitchen, The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt, 1100-650 B.C (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1973), 158-172; Donald B. Redford, Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1992), 351-354; Morkot, Black Pharaohs, 210-212. See Kahn's excellent summary and evaluation of the chronological discrepancy in, Kahn, "Kush and Sennacherib," 29-41; Dan'el Kahn, "The War of Sennacherib against Egypt as Described in Herodotus II 141," Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections 6 (2014): 23-33; Kahn, "Kush and the Assyrians," 109-128.

[87] Mordechai Cogan, "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem," in Context of Scripture, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 2.119B: 303; Daniel D. Luckenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 2:119-120, §240; A. Kirk Grayson and Jamie R. Novotny, The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704-681 BC) Pt. 1 (RINAP 3/1; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 64-66; Cf. Morkot, Black Pharaohs, 200-203; Kahn, "Tirhakah, King of Kush," 29.

[88] Kahn, "Sennacherib Against Egypt," 24. See also §6.2.1 and §6.3.2.3 of this study.

single night. Herodotus credits the victory to the Egyptians attributing the destruction of Sennacherib's army and the premature withdrawal of the Assyrians to the work of "field mice" sent by the Egyptian gods in response to the petition of the Egyptian king Sethon. The mice are said to have effectively crippled the army by chewing up their bow strings and the leather straps of their shields, "with the result that many were killed fleeing unarmed [from the Egyptian army] the next day."[89]

Though Sennacherib claimed victory over Hezekiah and his allies and re-established vassalage among many of the local governors, up until his death some twenty years later he did not attempt another campaign in western Asia.[90] Nearly a quarter century would elapse before the Assyrians would return to Palestine to face off with the Cushites once again. Kenneth Kitchen suggests that the military clash between the Cushites and Assyrians in 701 B.C., though partially successful for the Assyrians, had in fact ended in a military stalemate.[91] The Cushites meanwhile continued to exert political and commercial influence in the Levant until around 677 B.C. when the Assyrians under Esarhaddon renewed their bid for total supremacy in the region.[92]

By 676 B.C. most of western Asia was in Assyrian hands once again, and in 674 Esarhaddon attempted to invade Egypt itself but suffered defeat.[93] Three years later he renewed his assault against Taharqa and his west Asian allies, defeating the allied forces. Attacking Egypt, the Assyrian army marched toward Memphis, Taharqa's royal residence. Taharqa himself was wounded in the battle but managed to escape south to Thebes. According to Esarhaddon, "I fought . . . very bloody battles against Tarqu, king of Egypt and Kush, the one accursed by all the great gods. Five times I hit him with the point of (my) arrows (inflicting) wounds (from which he should not) recover."[94]

Following a pitched battle, Memphis was sacked by the Assyrians and Taharqa's royal wives, his heir, Ushanukhuru, and many of his relatives were taken captive to Assyria. Taharqa

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[89] Herodotus, *Histories*, II, 141.6. See §6.2.1 of this study.

[90] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 217, 259-260, 262.

[91] See Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Egypt, the Levant and Assyria in 701 BC," in *Fontes atque Pontes: Festgabe für Hellmut Brunner* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983) 243-253; Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 383-386, esp. 385, n.822. Cf. Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 217.

[92] Cf. Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 231-233, 260-263.

[93] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 264.

[94] Citation in Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 268; Bonnet and Valbelle, *Nubian Pharaohs*, 146, 148.

himself would live to fight other battles for supremacy over Egypt. A series of wars followed over the next decade which saw Lower Egypt pass back and forth between Assyrian and Cushite control. But in 656 B.C. the final Cushite king of the 25th Dynasty, Tanwetamani, was defeated in Egypt by Assurbanipal's army and forced to retreat to Napata. The Kushites were acknowledged as kings in Upper Egypt for some time later but would never again exert political authority in Egypt.[95]

From the final decades of the seventh century B.C. to the early decades of the sixth, the pharaohs of the 26th Saite Dynasty waged several wars against Cush, and in the process destroyed many of the monuments of the 25th Dynasty. In the last quarter of the sixth century the Persians conquered Egypt and exerted control over Lower Nubia as well. But the Cushites would regain control of the first cataract region by the time Herodotus wrote his chronicle in the mid-fifth century B.C.[96] Despite the setbacks following the expulsion of the 25th Dynasty from Egypt, the Napatan Kingdom with its later capital at Meroë, would continue to flourish as a unified state for almost another thousand years till its final dissolution around 360 A.D.[97]

3.3 CUSHITE ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE EGYPTIAN WORLDVIEW

Having overviewed Cushite history in the ancient Mediterranean, and especially in relationship to Egyptian history, this section explores perceptions of Cushite ethnicity in the Egyptian worldview. Understanding how ancient Egyptians constructed and deployed ethnic sentiments and stereotypes will help to clarify how biblical writers might have understood Cushite ethnic identity in relation to their own. The Egyptian social context provides an ideal environment from which to explore perceptions of Cushite ethnicity due to proximity and duration of interaction between these two cultures. The length of cultural contact between Egypt and Nubia provides an opportunity to see how ethnic dynamics might have changed over time and according to differing historical contexts.

While Egyptian attitudes toward Nubians are revealed in written and artistic sources throughout most periods of Egyptian history, Nubia's view of Egyptians and other foreigners is not preserved until much later. Bronze Age Nubian society was largely non-literate, and not

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[95] See Bonnet and Valbelle, *Nubian Pharaohs*, 151-152.

[96] See Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 359-367; Kahn, "History of Kush," 25.

[97] Kendall, *Kingdom of Kush*, 80-81; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 414; Smith, "Revenge of the Kushites," 102-103.

until the Napatan period in the eighth century B.C. and later do ethnic perceptions of foreigners emerge in Cushite art and literature.[98] Consequently, we are presented with a largely one-sided view of the ancient Cushites. Nevertheless, the history of rivalry between the two states makes it almost certain that pre-Napatan Nubians, like their Egyptian opponents, held unflattering views of their adversaries—at least at the state level.

3.3.1 Modern Perceptions: Nubia and "Black Africa"

Any discussion of Cushite ethnic identity in the context of ancient Egypt must necessarily bring us back to the thorny issues of physiognomy and skin colour. In Egyptian iconographic representations, Nubians are normally depicted with black skin and "African" facial features, particularly during the New Kingdom.[99] What significance then, if any, did skin pigmentation and somatic traits acquire in ancient Egyptian society? With the modern world as our frame of reference, it is certainly tempting to assume that skin colour was the most salient and defining feature of ethnicity in ancient Egypt, especially since Egyptian iconography consistently depict Nubians with black skin. But was this indeed the case?

Predictably, scholars of ancient Egypt regularly assert that Nubians were "Black Africans," or "negroid" as compared to the Egyptians.[100] Smith and others have argued, however, that such categorization is nothing short of imposing modern racial classifications on ancient populations.[101] Unlike interpretations which tend to see "Nubia as a long-time frontier between the Black and White races,"[102] archaeologists and anthropologists are increasingly

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[98] Cf. Redford, *Black Experience*, 10.

[99] Ann Macy Roth, "Representing the Other: Non-Egyptians in Pharaonic Iconography," in *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, ed. Melinda K. Hartwig (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 163. Anthropologists have demonstrated that no singular somatic type defines what is "African" since African features and genetic profile are the most diverse on the planet. See S. O. Y. Keita, "Studies and Comments on Ancient Egyptian Biological Relationships," *History in Africa* 20 (1993): 129-154; S. O. Y. Keita and A. J. Boyce, "The Geographical Origins and Population Relationships of Early Ancient Egyptians," in *Egypt in Africa*, ed. Theodore Celenko (Indianapolis, Ind.: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1996), 23-24; S. O. Y. Keita and Anthony J. Boyce, "Genetics, Egypt, and History: Interpreting Geographical Patterns of Y Chromosome Variation," *History in Africa* 32 (2005): 221-246; Rick Kittles and S. O. Y Keita, "Interpreting African Genetic Diversity," *African Archaeological Review* 16 (1999): 87-91.

[100] See for example, Redford, *Black Experience*, 5-6; Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 85; Eugen Strouhal, *Life of the Ancient Egyptians* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 202.

[101] Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 220; Smith, "People," 27-28; Trigger, "Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?" 27.

[102] Trigger, "Sudan Archaeology," 331.

emphasizing a more nuanced, and entangled history of interaction between the peoples of ancient Egypt and Nubia.[103]

It is in this context that both the title of Redford's *From Slave to Pharaoh: The Black Experience of Ancient Egypt*, and his interpretation of *nehesi* as "black," receive sharp criticism from Smith, himself a well accomplished Egyptologist.[104] Noting how skin pigmentation along the Nile Valley experience a gradual and gentle shift, Smith pertinently asks, "If Nubians were 'black Africans,' then what were the Egyptians? If they weren't black, then they must be white, or perhaps a bit darker 'Mediterranean' race, but, by implication, disconnected from sub-Saharan Africans."[105] Refuting this argument, Smith observes that "Egyptologists have been strangely reluctant to admit that the ancient Egyptians were rather dark-skinned Africans, especially the further south one goes."[106] For Smith, "If the real Tutankhamen hopped on a bus with a Nubian friend, in, say Atlanta around 1950, there is no doubt that both would be sitting in the back."[107]

Drawing on a number of anthropological and genetic studies, Smith reiterates that skin colour and other somatic characteristics along the Nile Valley are distributed in clines based on environmental, evolutionary and social factors. Based on this, he emphasizes, importantly, that ancient Egyptians are most closely related to other North-Eastern African populations, such as Chadians and Somalians.[108] Bruce Trigger, likewise, highlighting the continuum of physical

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[103] Michele R. Buzon, "Biological and Ethnic Identity in New Kingdom Nubia," *Current Anthropology* 47 (August, 2006): 683-695; Michele R. Buzon, Stuart Tyson Smith and Antonio Simonetti, "Entanglement and the Formation of the Ancient Nubian Napatan State," *American Anthropologist* 118 (2016): 284-300; Stuart Tyson Smith, "Nubian and Egyptian Ethnicity," in *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Jeremy McInerney (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 194-212; Neal Spencer, "Creating and Re-Shaping Egypt in Kush: Responses at Amara West," *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 6 (2014): 42-61; Van Pelt, "Cultural Entanglement," 223-250.

[104] See Stuart Tyson Smith, review of *From Slave to Pharaoh: The Black Experience of Ancient Egypt*, by Donald B. Redford, *Near Eastern Archaeology* 71 (2004): 190-192.

[105] Smith, review of *Slave to Pharaoh* (by Redford), 190.

[106] Smith, review of *Slave to Pharaoh* (by Redford), 190; emphasis mine.

[107] Smith, review of *Slave to Pharaoh* (by Redford), 190; emphasis original. Cf. Smith*, Wretched Kush*; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 218-241; Stuart Tyson Smith, "Nubia and Egypt: Interaction, Acculturation, and Secondary State Formation from the Third to First Millennium BC," in *Studies in Culture Contact: Interaction, Culture Change, and Archaeology*, ed. James G. Cusick (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015), 256-287.

[108] Smith, review of *Slave to Pharaoh* (by Redford), 190; Smith, "People," 28. Cf. Trigger, "Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?" 27; Keita, "Egyptian Biological Relationships," 129-154; Keita and Boyce, "Population Relationships," 23-24; Keita and Boyce, "Genetics, Egypt, and History," 221-246.

characteristics of the Nile Valley population, from the Delta in northern Egypt to the Sudan, writes: "All of these people are Africans. To proceed further and divide them into Caucasoid and Negroid stocks is to perform an act that is arbitrary and wholly devoid of historical or biological significance."[109]

In other words, what Smith, Trigger and others are suggesting is that if one presumes to employ the modern racial category of "black" or "negroid" to describe ancient Nubians, then this racial label would as easily apply to Egyptians, since no discrete break in phenotypic characteristics is discernible along the Nile continuum.[110] Hence, while disavowing the utility of modern racial categories for the ancient Egyptian context, Smith nevertheless writes that "any characterization of the race of the ancient Egyptians depends on modern cultural definitions, not scientific study. Thus, by modern American standards it is reasonable to characterize the Egyptians as 'black,' while acknowledging the scientific evidence for the physical diversity of Africans."[111]

Biological and Bioarchaeological studies of ancient Egyptian and Nubian populations also support the close affinity between the two groups. K. Godde's 2009 study, "An Examination of Nubian and Egyptian Biological Distances," indicates for instance, that biologically, Egyptian and Nubian population samples cluster together and therefore imply close genetic relationships. This is not momentous given the millennia of interaction and bidirectional migration between the two populations:

> The clustering of the Nubian and Egyptian samples together supports this paper's hypothesis and demonstrates that there may be a close relationship between the two populations. This relationship is consistent with Berry and Berry (1972), among others, who noted a similarity between Nubians and Egyptians. . . *the results suggest homogeneity between the two populations*. . . . Both mtDNA (Krings et al., 1999) and Y-Chromosome data (Hassan et al., 2008; Keita, 2005; Lucotte and Mercier, 2003) indicate that migrations, usually bidirectional, occurred along the Nile. Thus, the osteological material used in this analysis also supports the DNA evidence.[112]

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[109] Trigger, "Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?" 26.

[110] Cf. Hufft, "Transcultural Studies," 2, note 7.

[111] Smith, "People," 28.

[112] K. Godde, "An examination of Nubian and Egyptian Biological Distances: Support for Biological Diffusion or *in situ* Development?" *Homo* 60 (2009): 398-399, emphasis added. While Godde does not rule out the possibility of adaption to similar environment accounting for the biological similarity between Egyptians and Nubians, her study supports population admixture rather than the former. Moreover, other genetic and archaeological studies indicate that the earliest pre-Dynastic populations of Egypt, the Badarian

As more research is conducted on population dynamics in the ancient Nile Valley, it becomes clearer that the ancient Egyptians had no concepts of biological essentialism which inhibited their mixing with Nubians. Rather, the "cultural and biological entanglement" of Egyptian and Nubian populations in Egypt and colonial Nubia is supported by recent bioarchaeological studies of many New Kingdom sites.[113] Large numbers of Egyptians moved into Nubia and settled among the population during the New Kingdom, and many New Kingdom sites display heterogeneous habitation of Nubians and Egyptians.[114] Intermarriage between Nubians and Egyptians was neither restricted nor uncommon.[115]

Sites such as Tombos, Askut, and Amara West display a heterogeneous mixture of Egyptians and Nubians in diverse social relationships.[116] Researchers working at Tombos observe, for instance that,

> The millennia of contact and admixture between the Nubians and Egyptians complicate the ability to distinguish individuals from these groups. . . . Egyptians and their descendants clearly had long-standing ties to the local populations in Nubia. Morphometric and isotopic indications of origin at Tombos reflect intermarriage, and corresponding cultural entanglements are displayed in their burial rituals.[117]

Every period of Egyptian history, including the earliest pre-dynastic Naqada and Badarian cultures, witnessed cultural exchanges between the two groups.[118] In fact,

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and Naqada cultures, are most closely related to southern African populations thus supporting the indigenous development of Pharaonic Egypt. See again Keita and Boyce, "Genetics, Egypt, and History," 221-246; and Sonia R. Zakrzewski, "Variation in Ancient Egyptian Stature and Body Proportions," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 121 (2003): 219-229.

[113] Buzon, Smith and Simonetti, "Entanglement," 287.

[114] Kendall*, Kingdom of Kush*, 75; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 411; Török*, Between Two Worlds*, 114-117; Buzon, "Biological and Ethnic Identity," 683-695; Michele R. Buzon, "A Bioarchaeological Perspective on Egyptian Colonialism in Nubia During the New Kingdom," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 94 (2008): 165-181; Buzon, Smith and Simonetti, "Entanglement," 284-300; Keita and Boyce, "Genetics, Egypt, and History," 221-246.

[115] Smith*, Wretched Kush*, 23: "Nubians, Asiatics, and other peoples married freely with Egyptians."

[116] Smith*, Wretched Kush*, 97-166; Stuart Tyson Smith, *Askut in Nubia: The Economics and Ideology of Egyptian Imperialism in the Second Millennium B.C* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1995); Buzon, Smith and Simonetti, "Entanglement," 284-300; Spencer, "Responses at Amara West," 42-61; Van Pelt, "Cultural Entanglement," 523-550.

[117] Buzon, Smith and Simonetti, "Entanglement," 294, 296. Cf. Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 82, who likewise notes the difficulty in differentiating between Nubian and Egyptian princes in New Kingdom art and iconography: "Later Nubians with Egyptian names and titles are indistinguishable from Egyptians."

[118] Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 404; Keita and Boyce, "Genetics, Egypt, and History," 221-246; Godde, "Biological Distances," 398-404.

anthropological and genetic studies have shown that the population of these earliest Egyptian and Nubian cultures was biologically closely affiliated.[119] The point here is to highlight, again, that interaction between Egypt and Nubia goes back to pre-Dynastic times, and bi-directional migrations occurred between these two cultures for some three thousand years. If skin colour did not deter miscegenation at any point in that history of interaction, it is not remarkable that various points of evidence converge to show that homogeneity, or at least close biological affinities, existed between ancient Egyptians and Nubians. Thus, the sum of the argument is that the population of the ancient Nile Valley reflected biocultural entanglement, and therefore any application of Western concepts of race to the ancient context, would perforce locate native Egyptians and Nubians within the same category, though there would be exceptions.[120]

Another significant point to be made in this regard, is that while iconographic evidence abounds with depictions of Egypt's neighbours, including representation of skin colour, it is interesting, but notable, that for the period covered in this study only one extant Egyptian text (to be discussed below) refers to the skin colour of Egypt's neighbours; and the text does not single out the blackness of Nubians. This is significant because if racial sentiments relating to skin colour were important to Egyptians, they would have had ample opportunity to express such views, for Nubians are a constant feature in diverse Egyptian written sources.

Clearly, the dark pigmentation of Nubians evoked little notice among ancient Egyptians and was never a cause for racial antipathy for the reasons given above, and for the fact that the colour black had positive connotations in ancient Egypt. Black represented fertility and rebirth in the Egyptian worldview and featured prominently in funerary contexts.[121] Many Egyptians are painted jet black in fertility and funerary contexts (making it virtually impossible to distinguish between Egyptians and Nubians in such contexts), and so are many of the

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[119] See Sonia R. Zakrzewski, "Population Continuity or Population Change: Formation of the Ancient Egyptian State," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 132 (2007): 501-509; Godde, "Biological Distances," 392; S. O. Y. Keita, "Studies of Ancient Crania from Northern Africa," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 83 (1990): 35-48; Keita, "Egyptian Biological Relationships," 129-154; Keita and Boyce, "Genetics, Egypt, and History," 221-246. Cf. Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 44.

[120] Cf. Sonia Zakrzewski, "'Behind Every Mask there Is a Face, and Behind that a Story.' Egyptian Bioarchaeology and Ancient Identities," in *Egyptian Bioarchaeology: Humans, Animals, and the Environment*, ed. Salima Ikram, Jessica Kaiser and Roxie Walker (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2015), 159.

[121] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 51.

Egyptian deities, including, importantly, Osiris and Amun.[122] According to Bernal, "black was also the national colour of Egypt."[123]

We have also noted above that the Egyptians called their own country *kmt*, the "black land," and themselves *kmtjw*. As we have seen, scholars suggest *kmt* is a reference to the fertility of the soil. Nevertheless, in Chapter 5 we shall encounter another "black land" where this appellative clearly refers to the people of the land. This may call into question the quick dismissal of *kmt* as a reference to the people of the land of Egypt. In any case, ancient Egyptians had no negative stigma attached to blackness in any way resembling the racial *Zeitgeist* of the modern world. Modern racial category had no utility in the ancient Egyptian context. Hence, the focus on *ethnic* difference in the ancient world is far more befitting than racial taxonomies; for as we shall see, Egyptians *did* in fact differentiate between themselves and foreigners (including Nubians) in very strong ethno-cultural terms.

3.3.2 Ancient Perceptions: Ethnic Topoi and Mimesis in Egyptian Cosmology

Ethnic identity was a central feature in ancient Egypt. The evidence reveals that ethnic dynamics impacted all levels of society, from the imperial posturing of state ideology to the subjective world of ordinary people.[124] Ancient Egyptian literature and art express extreme antipathy for foreigners and foreign lands throughout all periods of Egyptian history which concerns us in this study.[125] In iconography Egyptians differentiated between themselves and foreigners on the basis of distinct ethnic characteristics such as dress, coiffeur, skin colour, and facial features. And in written sources, other features of ethnic identity, such as language,

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[122] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 51-52; Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. Volume II: The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 3 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 2: 261, 262.

[123] Bernal, *Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 261.

[124] See the following for Egypt's view of foreigners: Smith, *Wretched Kush*; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 218-241; Smith, "Nubian and Egyptian Ethnicity," 194-212; O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 155-185; Roth, "Representing the Other," 155-174; Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, "Foreigners in Egypt in the Time of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III," in *Thutmose III: A New Biography*, ed. Eric H. Cline and David O'Connor (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 370-412; Winnicki, *Foreign Population*; Cornelius, "Ancient Egypt," 322-340; Flora Brooke Anthony, *Foreigners in Ancient Egypt: Theban Tomb Paintings from the Early Eighteenth Dynasty (1550-1372 BC)* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

[125] O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 155-156.

territory, customs, and beliefs are assigned to various groups.[126] These cultural distinctions impacted the ways in which Egyptians constructed and deployed ethnic stereotypes.

3.3.2.1 The Foreigner Topos in Egyptian Cosmology

Ancient Egyptians had a clearly developed ethnocentrism which saw Egypt as the ideal land, and the epitome of civilization and order. Foreign lands, on the other hand, were constructed as the abode of chaos, disorder, and barbarity.[127] This self-other opposition presented Egypt as safe, central, and superior to the dangerous, peripheral, and subordinate foreign lands.[128] In the Egyptian worldview, such lands and their peoples must necessarily be subjected to the ordered world of Egypt. Since the role of the pharaoh was central to the ordering of life, the motif of the subjugated foreigner is most frequently associated with images of the mythical, conquering king.[129]

Egyptian cosmology characterized the king as the divinely appointed agent who maintained order, *Ma'at* (*mꜣꜥt*) and kept chaos, *isfet* (*jzf.t*) at bay by keeping foreigners (particularly the three traditional enemies of Egypt: Asiatics, Nubians, and Libyans) out of Egypt, and by subduing the Nine Bows (*psḏt-pḏwt*), the collectivity of foreign lands.[130] The Egyptian Pharaoh was "The King who lives by Maat," and "The Son of Re who lives by

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[126] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 4; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 219-221; O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 155-156; Roth, "Representing the Other," 155.

[127] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 4, 19-29; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 221; Smith, "Nubian and Egyptian Ethnicity," 195-198; O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 155-164; Roth, "Representing the Other," 155-159; Cornelius, "Ancient Egypt," 322-340.

[128] Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 221; O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 159-161.

[129] Roth, "Representing the Other," 159; O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 156-158. Cf. Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 227. The Cushite pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty also portrayed themselves as subduers of foreign lands. According to Piankhi, part of his divinely constituted role was "to function as ruler of every foreign land." Shebitqo took the name "Great of Strength, smiting the Nine Bows (the foreign lands); Satisfied by victory, and Great of renown in all lands." And in his royal statuary at Pnubs, Taharqa is shown with his feet trampling upon the Nine Bows. See Redford, *Black Experience*, 106; Kahn, "Sennacherib Against Egypt," 24; Bonnet and Valbelle, *Nubian Pharaohs*, 92.

[130] O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 161, 175-176; Roth, "Representing the Other," 156-159; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 167-171; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 169-171; Lázló Török, "Egypt's Southern Frontier Revisited," in *The Power of Walls—Fortifications in Ancient Northeastern Africa: Proceedings of the International Workshop Held at the University of Cologne, 4th-7th August 2011*, ed. Friederike Jesse and Carola Vogel (Köln: Heinrich-Barth-Institut, 2013), 57-60; Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 227; Kurth, "Image of the World," 65-73; Hufft, "Transcultural Studies," 3. In Egyptian cosmology the Nine Bows is a collective representation of all foreign lands.

Maat,"[131] charged with the responsibility of securing the borders of Egypt by building walls "to bar Asiatics from entering Egypt,"[132] and "to prevent any Nubian from passing it when faring northwards, whether on foot or by boat."[133] The king thus kept his domain safe from dangerous, encroaching foreigners.

The creation and deployment of the negative foreigner *topos* (representation) served as a foil for the larger-than-life Egyptian king.[134] In his re-enactment of the cosmological struggle of good and evil, order and chaos, the king always triumphs over the symbols of chaos. Hence, the Middle Kingdom *Prophecies of Neferti* states:

> Asiatics will fall to his sword,
> Libyans will fall to his flame. . .
> Then Order will return to its seat,
> While Chaos is driven away.[135]

Figure 3. *Ramses II (c.1279-1213 B.C.) smiting caricatured enemies: Libyan, Nubian and Syrian (Image permission: Art Resource AR9145621).*

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[131] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 2:99.

[132] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 1:143.

[133] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 176.

[134] Cf. Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 223.

[135] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 1:143-144.

In the New Kingdom, a heightened sense of imperial destiny created an even more pronounced negative ethnic stereotyping of dominated peoples.[136] In state ideology foreigners become "vile" and "wretched" in writing and ritual, and are caricatured as cowards who are easily defeated and degraded by the king.[137] The deployment of this refurbished foreigner topos in New Kingdom royal theology not only served to enhance the positive ethnic image of Egypt and Egyptians, but also functioned as a legitimizing ideology for Egyptian expansionist policies.[138] The Egyptian positive ethnic self is thus defined against a negative ethnic other who is typically shown as passive and helpless in the grasp of the conquering king (Fig. 3).[139]

This heightened antipathy toward foreigners in the New Kingdom was directed particularly against Asiatics and Nubians following the period of Hyksos rule in the Delta and Nubian control of parts of Egypt—though Libyans were by no means exempted.[140] The ascription of wretchedness to Cushites and Asiatics may reflect the sentiment expressed in the Middle Kingdom *Instruction to King Merikare*: "A wretch is he who desires the land [of his neighbour], A fool is he who covets what others possess."[141] The ascription certainly had a magical function too: it stood as a ritualistic curse or self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby recitation and repetition would bewitch the object of the curse to the declared state.[142] This is similar to the ritual surrounding the "Execration Texts" of the Old and Middle Kingdoms wherein clay figures of foreign enemies were ritualistically smashed in order to "kill" them.[143]

The declaration of wretchedness was also meant to connote the inferiority of the subjected other, and therefore the idea that any attempt at rebellion was bound to failure.[144] In

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[136] Roth, "Representing the Other," 167-171; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 13; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 223.

[137] Cf. Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 13, 171-176; Hufft, "Transcultural Studies," 11.

[138] Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 219, 221; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 21, 171-176; Hufft, "Transcultural Studies," 11.

[139] Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 219, 221; Roth, "Representing the Other," 159; O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 156-159.

[140] Roth, "Representing the Other," 167-171. As far as the Egyptians were concerned, the war against the Hyksos and Cushites which began with Kamose, was under way well into the reign of Thutmose III. See Redford, *Eighteenth Dynasty*, 28-29. Cf. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 84-85.

[141] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 1:100.

[142] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 13.

[143] Redford, *Black Experience*, 27.

[144] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 13.

this sense, the image of the wretched, cursed ethnic other served to further dehumanize subjugated foes. Foreigners are also routinely characterized as bestial, effeminate, and even demonic, indicating their non-human, inferior status.[145] Thus, the New Kingdom *Instruction of Ani* compares Nubians and Syrians to animals:

> One teaches the Nubian to speak Egyptian,
> The Syrian and other strangers too.
> Say: 'I shall do like all the beasts,'
> Listen and learn what they do.[146]

Such sentiments were intended to contrast with Egyptian self-perception as the representation of humanness, order, civility, and centrality.[147] Egyptians are "people"; foreigners are not.[148]

3.3.2.2 *Topos and Mimesis in Identity Negotiation in Ancient Egypt*

Despite such hostility towards foreigners in Egyptian state ideology, however, the reality of daily experience as seen in more prosaic literature and art (and in the archaeological data) suggest that a much more dynamic and ambiguous perspective characterized Egyptian attitude towards foreigners.[149] Drawing upon Antonio Loprieno's differentiation between *topos* and *mimesis* of foreigner representations in Egyptian literature and art, Smith demonstrates that Egyptian imperial ideology created a stereotypical foreigner topos which was quite different from the reality (mimesis) of the more fluid and flexible identity negotiation process of ordinary experience.[150]

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[145] O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 159; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 27; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 226-228.

[146] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 2:144. Cf. Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 226; Roth, "Representing the Other," 156. Similarly, in the Middle Kingdom *Instruction to King Merikare*, Asiatics are no better than crocodiles: "Do not concern yourself with him/The Asiatic is a crocodile on its shore/It snatches from a lonely road/It cannot seize from a populous town." See Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 1:104.

[147] O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 159; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 219-220; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 21.

[148] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 21, 22.

[149] Cf. O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 159; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 4-5, 24-29; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 230-237; Török, "Egypt's Southern Frontier," 59.

[150] Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 220; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 24-29; Smith, "People," 31-32. Cf. Antonio Loprieno, *Topos und Mimesis: Zum Ausländer in der ägyptischen Literatur* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988); O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 159; Török, "Egypt's Southern Frontier," 59.

Despite the topos of the chaotic, hostile ethnic other, at all stages of Egyptian history, foreigners who acculturated to Egyptian norms were incorporated into Egyptian society, married freely among Egyptians, and frequently attained to high office in the Egyptian state bureaucracy.[151] Some texts even assert the inherent value of foreign peoples known to the Egyptians, revealing the variability of Egyptian attitude towards foreigners under various historical and social contexts and even in different textual genres.[152] Moreover, at any given time, Egyptian interaction with foreign peoples included alliances of diverse sorts: diplomatic, commercial, military and political.[153] All of this demonstrates that for ancient Egypt, the ideology of a homogenized hostile and subordinate ethnic "other" did not correspond to the pragmatics of social reality.[154]

3.3.2.3 Topos and Mimesis: The Nubian Soldier

The role of the Nubian soldier in the ancient context is a fitting example of the two oppositional views, one topical, the other mimetic. In state propaganda, Nubians attempting to repel Egyptian incursions pose no real threat to the military might of Egypt; they are easily defeated by the prowess of the pharaoh and his army. Thus, on the one hand, the *Boundary Stela of Sesostris III* (*c.* 1850 B.C.) set up at the second cataract town of Semna (in the wake of Egyptian expansion into Lower Nubia) constructs a topical image of Nubians as cowards whom no one respects:

> A coward is he who is driven from his border.
> Since the Nubian listens to the word of mouth,
> To answer him is to make him retreat.
> Attack him, he will turn his back,
> Retreat, he will start attacking.
> They are not people one respects,
> They are wretches, craven-hearted.[155]

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[151] Smith*, Wretched Kush*, 23; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 22; O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 159, 170.

[152] O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 159, 161; Smith*, Wretched Kush*, 22; Török*, Between Two Worlds*, 210.

[153] O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 159, 167-168; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 230-241.

[154] O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 168-169.

[155] Lichtheim*, Egyptian Literature*, 1:119. Cf. Smith*, Wretched Kush*, 25. Asiatics are spoken of in similar terms: "Lo the miserable Asiatic, He is wretched because of the place he's in.../He fights since the time of

Yet, on the other hand, the reputation of the Nubian soldier was well established in the Ancient Near East, and Egypt was no exception.[156] For Egypt, political pragmatics meant that, since at least the Old kingdom, Nubian mercenaries were recruited in large numbers in the Egyptian army.[157] Bruce Williams has observed that Nubian soldiers were so prevalent in ancient Egypt that "they played a role in just about every struggle or military force whose composition is recorded, textually or visually.[158] Cushite soldiers were routinely called upon to join Egyptian campaigns against Asiatic states. When in the Old Kingdom Pepy I (c. 2350 B.C.) sent a paramilitary expedition to western Asia, he recruited "Nubians from Irtjet, Nubians of Medja, Nubians of Yam, Nubians of Wawat and Nubians of Kaw."[159]

Furthermore, Cushite soldiers were a key component in the administration of New Kingdom garrison and administrative towns in the Levant, like Aphek, Beth Shean, Succoth, Tel Mor, among others.[160] Many references to Cushite troops operating in Palestine appear in the Amarna Letters.[161] Several requests are made to the pharaoh for additional Nubian troops to guard western Asian towns against the 'Apiru and other foes. The king of Amurru, for instance, requests of the Pharaoh to send Nubian troops to guard his city "according to the practice of your ancestors."[162] Clearly, Nubian troops had a long history in western Asia and were well regarded as soldiers.[163]

Horus/Not conquering nor being conquered/He does not announce the day of combat/Like a thief who dart about a group." See Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 1:103-104.

[156] Redford, *Black Experience*, 20.

[157] Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 406. Cf. Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 22-23; Smith, "People," 29.

[158] Williams, "Egypt and Nubia," 65.

[159] Citation in Redford, *Black Experience*, 20. See also Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 71-72; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 50-51. Indeed, several passages in the Hebrew Bible allude to military campaigns of joint Egyptian, Cushite, and other forces. See for instance Jer. 46:9; Ezek. 30: 4,5,9; Nah 3:9; 2 Chron. 12: 1-4.

[160] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 207: "As in Egypt so in Asia, Egypt employed in addition to garrison troops and commissioners a sizable police force comprised largely of Nubians originally of the Medjay tribe." See also Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 96.

[161] For example, Moran, *Amarna Letters*, EA 95, EA 108, EA 112, EA 117, 127, EA 131, EA 132, EA 133, EA 287, EA 288.

[162] Moran, *Amarna Letters*, EA 117, 82. In one instance, the Nubian troops were disruptive: having narrowly escaped with his life, 'Abdi-Heba, king of Jerusalem complains to the pharaoh about Cushite soldiers who had broken into his citadel and attempted to kill him. He wishes for pharaoh to investigate what he called a "criminal act." See Moran, *Amarna Letters*, EA 287.

[163] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 207.

Indeed, the Egyptian terms for "police" and "soldier" reflected the influence and reputation of Nubian soldiers in ancient Egypt. By the New Kingdom, Cushite paramilitary troops, particularly the Medja of the Eastern Desert, were the state police of Egyptian society and elite guards of the pharaoh.[164] Known for their tough treatment of the populace, "Medja" became the established term for the Egyptian police force; and the hieroglyph for "soldier" depicts a figure with a bow and an ostrich feather—clear allusions to the Nubian ethnic topos.[165] By the New Kingdom, the influence of Nubian military accoutrements, like leather kilts and cropped hairstyle are particularly apparent in Egyptian military regalia.[166] Rightly parsed, the *topos* of the coward Nubian is to be contrasted with the *mimesis* of the skilled and trusted Nubian soldier.

3.3.2.4 *Topos and Mimesis: Nubian Slaves in Egypt*

The nineteenth century deduction which sought to establish the universal slave status of Nubians in Egyptian society has been shown to be patently incorrect. It cannot be denied, however, that many Nubian captives were brought to Egypt as slaves. The 4th Dynasty pharaoh Snefru boasts of "hacking up the land of the Nubian: bringing living captives 7,000; cattle, 200,000."[167] The majority of these captives, no doubt would have provided slave labour in various fields of work: domestic helpers, temple servants, field hands, tutorships, among other occupations.[168] In addition to captives taken in raids, the New Kingdom pharaohs also required yearly supplies of slaves from Nubia.[169] At face value, this would seem to indicate that the enslavement of "blacks" was an ancient institution.[170]

The reality, however, was that slavery was not exceptional for Nubians. Large numbers of Asiatic slaves working in Egyptian households and temples are represented in Middle and

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[164] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 50-52, 84-85; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 71-72; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 75; Redford, *Black Experience*, 8-9, 20; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 207-208; Strouhal, *Ancient Egyptians*, 203; Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 86, 97-99; Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 292.

[165] Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 231; Redford, *Black Experience*, 8-9; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 207-208; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 84-85.

[166] Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 231; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 28; Van Pelt, "Cultural Entanglement," 531-532.

[167] Citation in Redford, *Black Experience*, 20.

[168] See Redford, *Black Experience*, 8-9. Cf. Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 41.

[169] Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 37.

[170] See again the previous chapter, especially the discussion of Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*.

New Kingdom texts and iconography.[171] The conquest of Syria in the New Kingdom by Thutmose III brought upwards of 5,000 slaves into Egypt, aside from the annual tribute of slaves that was imposed on Syrian states.[172] His campaign against Megiddo, captured 1,796 "male and female slaves and their children."[173] In fact, over a 11-year period, Thutmose III brought back four times the number of Syrian slaves to Egypt compared to Nubians over the same period.[174] According to Redford, "boatloads of Canaanite slaves were regular arrivals in Egyptian ports."[175] Indeed, Israelite historians preserve the memory of their ancestors living in Egypt as slaves for several centuries.

It is clear that defeated foes and captives of every caliber were brought to Egypt as slaves—for slavery "was not connected to race or even to class."[176] Nubians were not *the* slaves of ancient Egypt, as again Egyptians and other ancient peoples did not discriminate against foreigners on the basis of racialized features like skin colour.[177] As Robert Morkot underscores,

> There is no evidence that the Egyptian attitude to Kushites was different to their attitude to Asiatics, Libyans or any of the other foreigners they had contact with. Antipathy to foreigners was a characteristic of many ancient . . . civilizations, but was not based on "race." Kushites, Asiatics and Libyans were all depicted as Egyptians when they had been absorbed into the Egyptian system. Until then, they were representatives, along with the people of Egypt themselves, of the chaotic forces which it was pharaoh's duty to control.[178]

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[171] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 208-209, 221; Bietak, "Egypt and the Levant," 421; John A. Wilson, "Asiatics in Egyptian Household Service," in *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 240-242.

[172] Cf. Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 14-15, 37, 40. Winnicki suggests that the actual number of captives might have exceeded 10,000. Cf. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 208-209, 221.

[173] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 2:34.

[174] Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 85. Cf. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 208-209, 221.

[175] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 209.

[176] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 22.

[177] Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 218; Zainab Bahrani, "Race and Ethnicity in Mesopotamian Antiquity," *World Archaeology* 38 (2006): 48-59; McCoskey, "Problem of Race," 311-312; O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 159; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 220; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 22-24. Hufft, "Transcultural Studies," 2-3. Thus, Redford, *Black Experience*, 8, writes: "In the First Intermediate Period we find Nubians living side by side with Egyptians in towns of Upper Egypt, some transcribing their names in hieroglyphic script and setting up mortuary stelae. Nubian residents in Egyptian communities were able to employ the organs of the law just like natives."

[178] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 88. In the New Kingdom, "Egyptian attitude to their empire was universally applied irrespective of the peoples or countries. Their response to their subjects was not distinguished in racial terms; all were foreigners"; Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 227.

Hence, Egyptocentricity showed no respect of foreigners, whether Asiatics, Libyans, or Nubians; whether they had light or dark skin; or whether they came from the north or the south (see again fig. 3).

A good example of this non-discriminatory denigration of foreigners is the *Poetical Stela of Thutmose III* where the god Amun is said to be the one who subdues all the lands of the traditional enemies of Egypt before the pharaoh:

> The princes of all lands are gathered in your grasp,
> I stretched my own hands out and bound them for you.
> I fettered Nubia's Bowmen by tenthousand thousands,
> The northerners a hundred thousand captives.
> I made your enemies succumb beneath your soles,
> So that you crushed the rebels and the traitors.
> For I bestowed on you the earth, its length and breadth,
> Westerners and easterners are under your command.[179]

As the evidence indicates, in Egyptian celebratory ideology all foreigners are "vile" and "wretched"; all represent chaos and barbarity; and all are equally represented on the shoe or the footstool of the pharaoh to be symbolically trampled underfoot.[180] Tutankhamun's sandals, footstool, and walking sticks, have topical Nubians, Asiatics and (to a lesser degree) Libyans

Figure 4. *Drawing of Tutankhamun's sandals showing images of topical Nubians and Asiatics (Schroer & Staubli 1998: Abb. 91)*

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[179] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 2:36.

[180] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 28; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 221, 223-224; Cornelius, "Ancient Egypt," 329-330.

engraved on them so that the king could symbolically trample his enemies by literally walking on their images in his sandals, or dragging their effigies in the dirt with his walking stick (Fig. 4).[181]

On monumental art Nubians are shown as either defeated foes or as groveling tribute bearers before the aggrandized pharaoh; but so are other ethnic others from Libya, Palestine, Punt, and even the Aegean.[182] In the Amarna Letters, all subjected rulers of Syria-Palestine, repeat some variant of the phrase, "I fall at the feet of my lord the king, seven times plus seven times," indicating that their subordinate, servile status was not qualitatively different from Cushite princes in the New Kingdom.[183] In a word, Egyptian view of foreigners was universal and undifferentiated.

3.3.2.5 *Mimesis and Identity Negotiation: Nubians in Egyptian Society*

If Egyptian ideological representation of foreigners was undifferentiated, then so was the reality of the day to day experience of acculturated foreigners living in Egypt. Because biological essentialism was not the basis of differentiation, ethnic boundaries in ancient Egypt remained fluid and negotiable.[184] Success in Egyptian society was determined by the extent of acculturation, and countless foreigners were so thoroughly Egyptianized that except for those whose genealogies or ethnic names are available, they remain indistinguishable from native-born Egyptians.[185]

Here again, Nubians were not exempted. Many Nubians settled in Egypt, married freely among Egyptians, and some are even depicted with their own Egyptian servants.[186] Others attained to such high posts in the Egyptian royal families that their tombs are found among

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[181] Cf. Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 13; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 223-229; Roth, "Representing the Other," 159. The practice of engraving the enemy's heads on walking sticks is also seen in the Levant and was probably widespread. When Thutmose III captured Megiddo, among the recorded booty of slaves, horses, vessels, etc., there is said to be 3 "walking sticks with human heads." See Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 2:34.

[182] See Panagiotopoulos, "Foreigners in Egypt," 370-412; O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 173-174; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 226; Roth, "Representing the Other," 155-174. Cf. Winnicki, *Foreign Population*.

[183] Moran, *Amarna Letters*, EA 202, EA 215, EA 223, EA 225, EA 241, EA 261, EA 262, EA 303, etc.

[184] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 22-23.

[185] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 23-24; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 239; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 82.

[186] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 50-52, 84-85; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 23: "Nubians, Asiatics, and other peoples married freely with Egyptians." See also, Zakrzewski, "Egyptian Bioarchaeology," 160.

the pharaohs' in the Valley of the Kings.[187] Many of the royal wives were of Nubian origin.[188] And high ranking Egyptian officials were often Egyptianized Nubians or descendants of Nubian and Egyptian heritage.[189] The Nubian prince Heqa-em-sasen, for example, held several high ranking titles in the court of Amenhotep II, and Tutankhamun's Nubian Viceroy, Huy, oversaw an extensive region stretching from Hierakonpolis in Upper Egypt to the fourth cataract in Upper Nubia.[190]

Based on artistic and literary sources, many archaeologists see a Cushite origin for the 11th and 12th Theban dynasties who unified Egypt and annexed Lower Nubia in the Middle Kingdom.[191] The 12th Dynasty pharaoh Amenemhat I, for example, is said to be the "Son of a woman of Ta-Seti [Nubia], child of Upper Egypt."[192] And as we have noted above, the 14th Dynasty pharaoh Nehesy, and the pharaohs of the 17th Dynasty (and by extension, those of the Eighteenth) who drove out the Hyksos and subdued Cush, were of Nubian origin.[193] Moreover, various sites of Nubian occupation are found throughout Egypt in all periods, the region of Gebelein being especially known as a settlement for Nubian soldiers.[194]

All of this suggests that Nubians and other foreigners manipulated and shifted ethnic identities within Egyptian society for social, economic, and other reasons.[195] In the New

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[187] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 50-52, 84-85; Smith, "People," 28-29; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 22-23; Kendall, "Egypt and Nubia," 406; Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 86.

[188] Cf. Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 230-231; Kendall, *Kingdom of Kush*, 15; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 51-53. As noted above, the mother of Nehesy, one of the early pharaohs of the 14th Dynasty based in Avaris, was the son of a Nubian queen and a pharaoh of Asiatic origin.

[189] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 22-23.

[190] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 75-76, 84.

[191] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 52-53; Kendall, *Kingdom of Kush*, 15.

[192] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 1:143: "Then a king will come from the South, Ameny, the justified, by name, Son of a woman of Ta-Seti, child of Upper Egypt. He will take the White crown, he will wear the Red crown."

[193] See again, Redford, *Black Experience*, 33; Redford, *Eighteenth Dynasty*, 28-49.

[194] Maria Carmella Gatto, Antonio Curci and Alberto Urcia, "Nubian Evidence in the Egyptian First Nome: Results of the 2013-2014 Field Seasons of the Aswan-Kom Ombo Archaeological Project (AKAP)," *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 6 (2014): 38; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 50-52, 84-85; Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 87-88; Redford, *Black Experience*, 8. The settlement at Gebelein dates from the Old Kingdom and indicates that Nubian soldiers settled in Egypt and integrated with the population. Cf. Zakrzewski, "Egyptian Bioarchaeology," 160: "These steles from Gebelein indicate that Nubians lived with, and were buried near the Egyptian community they served, and although they were buried in an Egyptian manner, they were still depicted as Nubian, thus retaining their ethnic identity."

[195] Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 239.

Kingdom, several Nubian princes, like Hekanefer of Aniba and Huy, appear in Egyptian tomb paintings with all the topical markers which identify them as ethnic Nubians, yet in their own elegant tombs they appear as fully Egyptians.[196] The Nubian princes are painted black in Egyptian topical representations, yet in their own tombs they depict themselves as reddish-brown, according to the general artistic convention for depicting Egyptians.[197] In the topical representations, the "wretched" Nubian princes grovel at the feet of the Pharaoh, while in their own tomb paintings they self-represent as ethnically Egyptian and high ranking officials.[198]

The fact that social mobility within Egyptian society was rooted in one's level of acculturation and not in one's ethnic origins or biological indicia, demonstrates that Egyptian society reflected a chauvinism defined by *cultural* rather than racial parameters.[199] Hence, while ideologically charged depictions implied essentialism to ethnic origins, in daily praxis, ethnic identity remained instrumental and negotiable.[200]

3.3.3 The Four Ethnic Topoi

Four ethnic topoi predominate in Egyptian solar theology: Egyptian, Libyan, Nubian and Asiatic.[201] Akhenaton's *Hymn to the Aten* (c.1350 BC) mentions three of the four and is the only extant *text* to refer to skin colour as an ethnic distinction:

> You made the earth as you wished. . .
> All peoples, herds, and flocks...
> The lands of Khor [Syria] and Kush,
> The Land of Egypt.
> You set every man in his place,
> You supply their needs...
> Their tongues differ in speech,
> Their characters likewise;
> Their skins are distinct,
> For you distinguished the peoples.[202]

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[196] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 83; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 173.

[197] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 52.

[198] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 81, 83; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 173.

[199] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 23-24: "It was the cultural identity of immigrants to Egypt that mattered to their success in Egyptian society, not their color or ancestry."

[200] Cf. Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 239.

[201] Besides these four, several other ethnic groups are mentioned in Egyptian literature and depicted in art. See Winnicki, *Foreign Population*; Panagiotopoulos, "Foreigners in Egypt," 370-412.

[202] Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature*, 2:98-99.

The hymn exemplifies the idea that descent, territory, language, and certain physical characteristics were central to the Egyptian conception of the ethnic other. Each ethnic type is presented as bounded, and linked to a primordial territory, and each figure has distinct skin pigmentation and cultural characteristics which differentiate it from the others.[203] Significantly, Akhenaton presents the idea that foreign peoples, like Egyptians, owe their origin to the beneficence of the Aten. Such a view differs markedly from the stereotypical foreigner topos of royal ideology and owes much to Akhenaten's monotheism.[204]
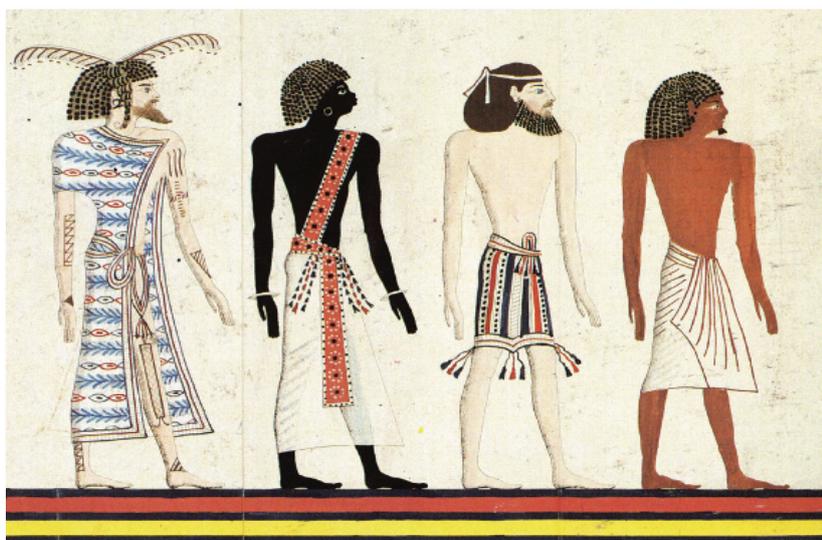
Figure 5. *New Kingdom depiction of the four ethnic topoi from the tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings: Libyan, Nubian, Asiatic, Egyptian (Freiherrn von Minutoli 1827, pl. III).*

Scenes from the New Kingdom tombs of Seti I and Ramses III (19th and 20th Dynasties respectively) display the four ethnic types most frequently represented in Egyptian art and literature (fig. 5). From left to right, the Libyan, Nubian, Asiatic (Syro-Palestinian), and Egyptian topoi are depicted. Each is distinct in colour, hairstyles, and dress, and each is associated with a territorial homeland. Each figure has distinctive cultural accoutrements which further set them apart. In terms of skin colour, the Libyan has the lightest complexion, followed by the Asiatic who is yellowish in appearance. The Egyptian is reddish-brown, while the Nubian is black. Egyptian self-perception of skin colour falls in the middle of two

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[203] Cf. Smith, "Nubian and Egyptian Ethnicity," 195-196; Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," 218-221.

[204] O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 159, 161.

extremes. Like the *Hymn to the Aten*, the ethnic topoi are presented as static, with distinctive physical characteristics that set them apart. Ethnic types in Egyptian royal ideology are thus presented as discrete, timeless, and immutable.[205]

3.3.3.1 Topical Representation and Mimetic Reality

Yet it should be recognized here again that these visual topoi are stereotypical, formulaic, and exaggerated, reflecting generalized artistic conventions characteristic of the New Kingdom; they depict neither the mimetic realities, nor true-to-life representation of the foreigner or Egyptian.[206] No doubt cultural markers like dress, generalized phenotype, and skin tone have a basis in reality; otherwise, the ideological libel would be disarmed.[207] But, far from representing the complexities of ethnic identity, they provide simplified conventions by which to differentiate Egyptian identity from topical foreigners, particularly in the state ideology of New Kingdom Egypt.[208]

For instance, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos discerns a difference in representations of Nubians from the Middle to the New Kingdom: "During the Middle Kingdom representations of Nubians did not differ considerably from the ethnic type of Egyptians. The New Kingdom breaks with this iconographic tradition and gradually depicts them with negroid physiognomic features."[209] Clearly, New Kingdom identity politics demanded an exaggerated caricature of Nubians and other foreigners in order to accentuate the imperial status of Egypt and Egyptians.

In the case of Egyptian self-perception as reddish-brown, this colour attribution should not be taken at face value either but needs further qualification. The Egyptians called all southerners, including the people of Punt on the edge of the Red Sea (in modern day Somalia), *Nehesi*.[210] Yet in New Kingdom iconography the Puntites are consistently depicted with the same reddish-brown pigmentation typical for Egyptians.[211] In this case, a group of

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[205] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 21.

[206] Roth, "Representing the Other," 160.

[207] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 21.

[208] Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 21.

[209] Panagiotopoulos, "Foreigners in Egypt," 391-392.

[210] O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 3.

[211] Panagiotopoulos, "Foreigners in Egypt," 395; Smith, "People," 29.

Nubians appear identical to Egyptians in skin pigmentation, though other cultural accoutrements differ from that of the Egyptians. This should add caution to any straightforward association of depiction to reality.[212]

A modern example serves to illustrate the complexities involved in self- and other-representation. Steven Kaplan has observed of the Beta Israel mentioned in the introduction: "Ethiopian Jews (like other northern Ethiopians), do not consider themselves to be 'black' (Amharic: *tequr*). Rather, they describe themselves (as do other peoples of North Ethiopia) as *qeyy*, a term best translated as 'reddish-brown'."[213] As Kaplan further explains, for northern Ethiopians, it is the *perception* and not the reality that is important in this ethnic self-ascription.[214] Similarly, one tribal group among the Beta Israel, the *chewa*, identify their skin colour as "red' or "brown," while attributing "black," with the association of slavery, to another group, the *barya*.[215] Yet to outsiders, the *chewa* and the *barya* display much the same range in skin pigmentation, which obviates any objective basis for red and black distinctions.[216]

An example from ancient Greece further bears out the point. In his *Physiognomy*, pseudo-Aristotle describes the colour of courage thus: "Those who are too black are cowards like, for instance, the Egyptians and the Ethiopians. But those who are excessively white are also cowards, as we can see from the example of women. The complexion of courage is between the two extremes."[217] In Aristotle's subjective view, Egyptians cluster with Ethiopians (Nubians) on one end of the colour spectrum in opposition to the other extreme complexion of (Greek) women. Aristotle, does not perceive the Egyptians of his day as red or reddish brown, but in terms of skin colour, places them in the same category with Ethiopians—not Greeks.

Similarly, Egyptians appearing in ninth to seventh century Assyrian reliefs, though not homogenous, are depicted mainly with "negroid" features.[218] According to Pauline Albenda, "[t]he Assyrian artist [of the seventh century] utilized a single racial type for representing

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212 Cf. Bahrani, "Mesopotamian Antiquity," 53: "archaeologists often mistakenly read visual representation directly as evidence of daily life and historical facts."

213 Kaplan, "The Beta Israel," 537.

214 Kaplan, "The Beta Israel," 537.

215 Salamon, "Blackness in Transition," 7.

216 Salamon, "Blackness in Transition," 7.

217 Aristotle, *Physiognomy*, 6.

218 See Pauline Albenda, "Egyptians in Assyrian Art," 5-23.

Egyptians and Kushites, similar to the usage on the reliefs of Sargon II."[219] Thus Assyrian artists often homogenize Egyptian and Cushite ethnic types, as per convention and convenience, while Egyptian representations seek to differentiate between the two topoi.[220] From the Assyrian artistic standpoint, the Kushite ethnic topos suitably represents Egyptian as well. The sum of the argument is this: while Egyptians clearly differentiated between the various ethnic types, such representations cannot be taken uncritically as true-to-life representations of daily life or historical fact; they are self-conscious ascriptions in the never-ending game of identity politics.[221]

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that politically, the region of Cush was in every respect the rival of ancient Egypt rather than the object of its unfettered manipulation. Both regions grew into powerful states more or less contemporaneously toward the end of the fourth millennium B.C. The two regions competed endlessly for territory and trade routes for millennia, experiencing alternating periods of success and failure, with Egypt having the greater advantage in the long run.[222] Particularly during the New Kingdom, imperial Egypt subjugated Nubia for several centuries, in much the same way that it dominated the Levant. Yet Nubia was to recover from Egyptian imperial domination to have its "revenge" with the emergence of the pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty who ruled Egypt for some one hundred years.[223] It was particularly during this period that Cushite political influence was extended far into western Asia and impacted biblical Israel and Judah, a subject to be pursued in Chapter 6. Following the end of Cushite rule in Egypt, the Nubian kingdom would survive intact for still another thousand years until its disintegration in the middle of the fourth century A.D.

In terms of identity politics, ancient Egyptian ethnic identity was constructed in oppositional terms and rooted in a cosmological ideology wherein the Pharaoh participated in

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[219] Albenda, "Egyptians in Assyrian Art," 10.

[220] In the same way, the captured son of Taharqa, is shown in the stele of Esarhaddon with "typical 'negroid' features." Yet in the numerous monumental sculptures and artistic representation of the Kushite Dynasty kings and royal family which reflect their own perspective and artistic conventions, such exaggerated features are conspicuously absent. Cf. Albenda, "Egyptians in Assyrian Art," 11; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 265-266; Bonnet and Valbelle, *Nubian Pharaohs*.

[221] Cf. Bahrani, "Mesopotamian Antiquity," 53.

[222] See again, O'Connor, *Egypt's Rival*, 25.

[223] See Smith, "Revenge of the Kushites," 84-107.

the cosmic conflict to bring order (*mꜣꜥt*) out of chaos (*jzf.t*). In Egyptian political theology foreigners represented chaos, and the pharaoh as the embodiment of the god destroys, restrains, and subjugates chaos. In this construction, the topos of a positive ethnic self is juxtaposed against that of the negative ethnic other, conceived of in discrete, static, and primordial terms. Particularly during the New Kingdom, the deployment of ethnic stereotyping took place in the context of imperial expansion and thus provided an ideological basis for Egyptian takeover of foreign lands. In such an imperial context, Cushites, like other ethnic Others, were further dehumanized and denigrated in order to justify their domination.[224]

Despite the unrelenting effort of the Egyptian state to dominate foreign peoples, within the broad scope of Egyptian interaction with ethnic Others, physical attributes like skin pigmentation never became essentialized and defining of ethnic identity. While physical differences were recognized and described, unlike modern racial constructions, ancient Egyptian chauvinism was predicated on cultural rather than biological criteria. For this reason, Nubians were not targeted for discrimination on the basis of skin colour, but all foreigners, regardless of origin, were objects of execration in the ethnocentric worldview of the Egyptian state. Nevertheless, the topical foreigner stereotype found in royal propaganda did not reflect all the facts of ordinary experience. Rather, foreigners who embraced Egyptian cultural mores were capable of social and political progress, regardless of their ethnic origin. Many acculturated foreigners attained to high positions within the Egyptian state bureaucracy—not excluding the office of the pharaoh. To be sure, Nubians encountered the full range of topical and mimetic experience in the course of their long engagement with and within ancient Egypt.

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[224] It is again noteworthy that because Bronze Age Nubian society was largely non-literate, their perspectives of their Egyptian rivals and overlords did not survive. But the constant situation of conflict would have without a doubt created a reciprocal negative perspective of Egyptians.

CHAPTER 4

Defining Israelite Ethnic Identity in the Primeval History

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Before we begin to examine the dynamics of Cushite ethnic construction in the Hebrew Bible in the second half of this study, it is first necessary to trace the contours of Israelite ethnic identity in broad strokes as represented in the biblical text. Here the question of self-perception and the basis of its construction must precede that of other-perception. The significance of Cushite ethnic ascriptions in Genesis and the biblical narratives more generally can be discerned only in relationship to Israelite self-definition. What then is the ideological basis for and the major criteria of Israelite ethnic identity as presented in the biblical material?

The primeval history plays a crucial role in answering this question and so will be the major point of focus in this chapter. The primeval history also happens to be the only portion of the book of Genesis that mentions geographical Cush or deals directly with aspects of Cushite ethnic identity (Gen 2:13; 10:6-12). These early chapters of Genesis present a foundational demarcation of Cushite ethnic and geographic boundaries, laying the groundwork for subsequent representation of Cush and related terms in the biblical corpus. Thus, our discussion of Israelite ethnic identity will be fleshed out with reference to the theological foundation of the primeval history.

Though the case for a synchronic reading of the biblical material was stated in the introduction, the analysis of the text of Genesis which follows warrants a few more words of reflection on methodology.

4.1.1 Approaching Genesis and the Primeval History

A host of methodological and interpretive interests characterize current approaches to the book of Genesis and the biblical literature more generally.[1] Historical critical scholarship (along with its various sub-fields of form, source, tradition, and redaction criticisms) has dominated much of biblical scholarship since the nineteenth century. Many new perspectives

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[1] See the overview in Richard E. Averbeck, "Pentateuchal Criticism and the Priestly Torah," in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith?: A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, ed. James Karl Hoffmeier and Dennis Robert Magary (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 151-154.

have also come to rival the historicist position in the twentieth century. Among the more prominent one finds a number of literary perspectives, social scientific, anthropological, and archaeological approaches, various post-modern standpoints, theological interpretations, and still others.

All these points of view, predicated on differing assumptions and methodologies, while offering enriching perspectives for biblical interpretation, have equally created a bewildering diversity of scholarly positions—which frankly can leave the neophyte confounded. Moreover, this hermeneutical expanse presents a relatively obscure picture of when the book of Genesis was composed, its possible oral and literary sources, the nature of its genre, and the ultimate purpose and meaning of the book.[2] Add to the methodological profusion the question of the

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[2] For an overview of the hermeneutical approaches to Genesis see, Charles Halton et al, *Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither?: Three Views on the Bible's Earliest Chapters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015). See also the essays in Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr and David L. Petersen, eds., *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). For a comprehensive treatment and defense of the historical critical approach to the Pentateuch, see Ernest W. Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Historical critical scholarship has been centrally concerned with the diachronic analysis of the Pentateuch/Hexateuch/Tetrateuch with the goal of identifying and dating the various literary layers of the text. Historicist approaches also attempt to reconstruct the circumstances and motivations surrounding the composition of the Pentateuchal material. The literary tradition of the book of Genesis has been traced to the early monarchic period, while the final form is generally accepted to have materialized between the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.; see, Konrad Schmid, "Genesis in the Pentateuch," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr and David L. Petersen (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 34; Iain W. Provan, *Discovering Genesis: Content, Interpretation, Reception* (Discovering Biblical Texts; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 50. More recent "revisionist" views have tended to locate the final editing of Genesis in the later Persian or even Hellenistic period, with some scholars admitting and others excluding pre-exilic sources and traditions. In this latter view, the final editors, driven by ideological goals, are effectively autonomous authors of the biblical texts, either composing or freely shaping previous material for a new social context. Scholars of this persuasion see the book of Genesis (as for the rest of the biblical material) as a 2nd century production with no oral or literary tradition predating the Hellenistic period. Some scholars have even argued that the Pentateuch, like many sacred traditional texts of subjected peoples, was an "authorized" production of the Persian Empire; see the arguments and rebuttals in James W. Watts, ed., *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001). Traditional critical scholarship has tended to reject the new revisionism, since it envisions the "history of Israel" as nothing more than a construction or invention of post-exilic ideologues seeking to create social cohesion from the splintered identities in Persian Yehud. For a thoroughgoing critique of the new revisionism from a historical critical perspective, see Ernest Nicholson, "Current 'Revisionism' and the Literature of the Old Testament," in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day. (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 1-22, and the other essays in the volume. On the other side of the equation, narrative criticism, one of the formidable rivals of historical critical scholarship in the twentieth century, eschews altogether with the fundamental assertions of the latter, since in the view of narrative critics, historical criticism represents the biblical text as little less than an "accretion of sundry traditions, shot through with

historical value of the Genesis account and the implications for biblical theology, and one gets the sense of a truly factious scholarly guild.[3]

Within the overall exposition of Genesis, the primeval history has been the subject of endless debate regarding its genre and meaning. Whether Genesis 1-11 can be viewed as history, myth, legend, fable, mytho-history, or other genres remain issues of contestation.[4] In view of the methodological pluralism that has characterized the interpretation of Genesis and the primeval account more specifically, it is important to restate how this study will approach the book of Genesis in order to make the best sense of the evidence related to Cushite ethnographic representation.

Like many biblical texts, it is clear that the historical context of the final form of the book of Genesis can never be known with any certainty. And in light of more than a century of debate regarding the possible sources behind its narratives, the source question, notwithstanding broad scholarly consensus, also remains unresolved.[5] As Konrad Schmid

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disjunctions and contradictions, and accumulated in an uneven editorial process over several centuries"; Robert Alter, *Genesis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), xl. Rather, the narrative critic, displaying little interest in the constituent sources or redactional strata of the biblical text, argues for the compositional unity of the text based on characteristic features of narrative art. Fokkelman*, Narrative Art in Genesis*, and Alter*, Genesis*, are examples of this approach to Genesis.

[3] As Robert S. Kawashima, "Literary Analysis," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr and David L. Petersen (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 84, succinctly summarized the main scholarly position: "What historical information . . . can one hope to recover from Genesis? The answer, it turns out, is almost entirely negative: we can know very little about the history of Bronze-Age Canaan as it relates to Genesis." Notwithstanding such a formidable conclusion, many conservative scholars are prepared to argue the case for the historical reliability of the biblical material. See for instance the edited volumes, Hoffmeier and Magary*, Historical Matters*; James K. Hoffmeier, ed., *Did I Not Bring Israel out of Egypt?: Biblical, Archaeological, and Egyptological Perspectives on the Exodus Narratives* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2016); James K. Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess, eds., *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014); and Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

[4] For an overview of the history of scholarship on the primeval history, see the edited volume, Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, eds., *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994). See also Halton, Hoffmeier, et al*, Three Views*; and Bill T. Arnold, "The Genesis Narratives," in *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 23-45.

[5] Jan Christian Gertz, "The Formation of the Primeval History," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr and David L. Petersen (Leiden: Brill, 2012),

recently stated:

> Pentateuchal scholarship has changed dramatically in the last three decades. . . . The confidence of earlier assumptions about the formation of the Pentateuch no longer exists. . . . One of the main results of the new situation is that neither traditional nor newer theories can be taken as the accepted starting point of analysis; rather, they are, at most, possible ends.[6]

As for the book of Genesis, Schmid continues:

> In current scholarship, it is no longer possible to explain the composition of the book of Genesis from the outset within the framework of the Documentary Hypothesis. . . it is by no means clear or even probable that its literary history is to be described by the merger of layers that already extended in their earliest forms beyond the boundaries of Genesis as was supposed for J and E. Rather, the opposite seems to be true.[7]

This of course does not mean that scholars are abandoning the basic premises of source-critical traditions. This new turn of theoretical direction in the formation of Genesis and the Pentateuch simply gives rise to more questions and opens up new cycles of debate regarding compositional history. For these reasons, we will leave it up to the specialists to debate sources, historical settings, and the like.

In this chapter we are interested in the book of Genesis as a whole (and so for the rest of the biblical books), and from this holistic perspective we attempt to understand how Cushite ethnography is portrayed. For the same reason, we speak simply of "the author" of Genesis, while recognizing the complexity of the issues related to authorship and diachrony.[8] Furthermore, since this chapter seeks to comprehend Cushite ethnic representation from the perspective of the author of Genesis, we are interested in a plain reading of the text; that is, reading the text for its truth claim.[9] Put differently, our primary interest is in the historical and social setting which the narrative claims to represent and less so in the historical and social

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113, has called the diversity of positions within historical critical scholarship on Genesis 1-11, "a rather confusing current state of research."

[6] Schmid, "Genesis in the Pentateuch," 28-29. Cf. Konrad Schmid, "Has European Pentateuchal Scholarship Abandoned the Documentary Hypothesis? Some Reminders on Its History and Remarks on Its Current Status," in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid and Baruch J. Schwartz (FAT 78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 17-30.

[7] Schmid, "Genesis in the Pentateuch," 45.

[8] Cf. Brett, *Genesis*, 21.

[9] Cf. Long, "Old Testament as Literature," 85-123.

setting of the book's composition which scholars seek to explain. Finally, the goal here is not to argue for the objectivity of the ethnography outlined in Genesis 10-11 and related passages, but rather to probe the key theological and historical assertions that undergird the construction of Cushite ethnic identity—for here again, we are interested in establishing *perception* of ethnic identity rather than its objectivity.[10]

4.2 DEFINING ISRAELITE ETHNIC IDENTITY

Though the Hebrew Bible does not present a univocal expression of Israelite ethnic identity, the primeval history establishes the theological foundation and the literary trajectory for the expression of ethnic sentiments that one finds in the rest of the Old Testament.[11] Already in the primeval history the ideological basis of ethnic distinction and the core elements which will come to define Israelite ethnic identity are established. In Genesis 1-11 one finds a theological and an anthropological universalism contrasted with a developing religious and ethnic particularism.[12] These two seemingly oppositional perspectives in the Genesis primeval account, form key ideological bases of ethnic expression in the biblical tradition. Also emerging in the primeval history are three core elements which this study identifies as the major building blocks of Israelite ethnic particularism: (1) divine election, (2) genealogical descent, and (3) claims to an ancestral homeland. It is of course necessary to look beyond Genesis 1-11 to see the full outworking of these core elements as they relate to Israelite

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[10] This position does not preclude the possibility that objective ethnography and historiography exists in the selected passages. Indeed, in the course of this chapter it will be shown that the primeval portrait in Genesis 10:8-12 and 11:1-9 reflects to a great degree the general trajectory of urban development in early Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, establishing ethnographic and historical "facts" lie beyond the goal of this chapter.

[11] Sparks*, Ethnicity and Identity*, 320-325, for example, identifies different motivations and expressions of ethnic sentiments in Hosea, Amos, Deuteronomy, and other biblical texts. Cf. Jon D. Levenson, "The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 145-146.

[12] Though "Israel" is not mentioned in the primeval story, Richard J. Clifford, "Election in Genesis 1," in *The Call of Abraham: Essays on the Election of Israel in Honor of Jon D. Levenson*, ed. Gary A. Anderson and Joel S. Kaminsky (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 7-22, identifies several allusions to Israel's liturgical life and history in Genesis 1, including the Sabbath, the temple, dietary laws, and land conquest. These "particular" aspects of the life of ancient Israel in the earliest chapter of Genesis demonstrate that the Israelite author of Genesis anticipates and prepares the reader for the emergence of Israel in subsequent portions of the narrative.

ethnic self-definition, and this will be done as necessary.

4.2.1 Theological and Anthropological Universalism in the Primeval History

As is widely acknowledged by scholars, Genesis 1-11 is universal in its outlook. Its creation stories aim to answer fundamental questions related to the origin of the cosmos and of humankind, and its genealogies attempt to characterize the nature of human descent and kinship.[13] The universal outlook of Genesis 1-11 is one of the distinctive, if enigmatic features of the book of Genesis.[14] Indeed, the primeval history is the most systematic expression of universalism in the Hebrew Bible.[15] As the theological point of departure for the construction of ethnic identity in the biblical corpus, the Genesis primeval story is particularly concerned with establishing the absolute status of Israel's God and the relationship of humanity to the divine.[16]

Ultimately, it is Yahweh, the God of the Israelites who is portrayed as the universal God, singularly responsible for the creation of human beings, and whose image humanity as a collective bears.[17] Fundamental to the worldview of the Genesis author is the axiom that the universality of Yahweh guarantees his exclusive claim over creation and his uncontested right to human allegiance. Yahweh is not only the universal deity, but from the point of view of the Genesis author the name of Yahweh was the first to be invoked among mankind: "then people began to call upon the name of Yahweh (יְהוָה)" (Gen 4:26).[18] Thus, inherent in the theological universalism of the Genesis primeval story is the implication of polytheism as an illegitimate alternative: Yahweh made heaven and earth, but the gods of the nations are idols (cf. Ps 96:5). It is the proposition of Yahweh's absolute status—the most important theological premise of

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[13] Claus Westermann, *Genesis: An Introduction*, trans., John Scullion (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 4; Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and Their Alleged Babylonian Background," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 16 (1978): 369; Frank Crüsemann, "Human Solidarity and Ethnic Identity: Israel's Self-Definition in the Genealogical System of Genesis," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 66.

[14] Cf. Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 146. This section draws extensively on Levenson's discussion of biblical universalism and Israelite particularism.

[15] It is this enigmatic universalism which leads Brett to posit the book of Genesis as a Persian period text intended to counter the ethnocentric theologies of Ezra-Nehemiah. See again, Brett, *Genesis*, 4-5, 24-48.

[16] Cf. Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 147-148.

[17] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 147-148.

[18] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 148.

the Hebrew Bible—that underpins all theological and ontological evaluations in the biblical literature.[19]

Similarly, the anthropological outline of the primeval story displays a universal picture of human filiation which reverberates throughout the Hebrew Bible.[20] According the Genesis author, all human beings are part of a universal brotherhood, connected through the three sons of Noah, and ultimately trace their origin to the first human being.[21] The comprehensive and inclusive anthropology presented in Genesis 1-11, what Jon D. Levenson describes as the "universal horizon of biblical particularism," contrasts sharply with other Ancient Near Eastern primeval stories.[22] Unlike Mesopotamian primeval accounts, for example, which are concerned with the local history of a particular people and territory, the creation account of Genesis presents a universal picture of human origin, disconnected from any particular people, territory, or landmark.[23] Up to the Table of Nations narrative in Genesis 10, humanity remains undifferentiated ethnically, culturally and linguistically. And even while paving the way for the emergence of ethnic Israel, the primeval history lacks any clear mention of the descendants of Abraham.[24] As Levenson emphasizes, in the anthropology of Genesis, "Israel is not primordial. It emerges in history twenty generations after the creation of the human species in the image of God."[25]

The affirmation of a universal humanity at the beginning of the Hebrew Bible is not insignificant. Next to a theological universalism, this anthropological universalism establishes the second significant universal frame of reference for Israelite ethnic identity. From this

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[19] Cf. David Novak, *The Election of Israel: The Idea of the Chosen People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 111.

[20] Cf. Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 146; Terry J. Prewitt, "Kinship Structures and the Genesis Genealogies," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40 (1981): 87, 88.

[21] Cf. Hasel, "Genealogies of Genesis," 369; Richard S. Hess, "The Genealogies of Genesis 1-11 and Comparative Literature," in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumura (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 68; Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 66.

[22] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 143-169.

[23] In the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, often cited for its similarity to the Genesis account, Marduk is the god of the Babylonians. He creates the city of Babylon and establishes the people of Babylon. See discussion in Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 146-147. Cf. Westermann*, An Introduction*, 8-9; Hasel, "Genealogies of Genesis," 369-370.

[24] But see again, Clifford, "Election in Genesis 1," 7-22.

[25] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 146.

anthropological point of view, the Genesis primeval story "establishes a universal horizon" for the emergence of the particular people of God.[26] Situating itself in the stream of humanity, Israelite ethnic identity bears no ontological significance above other human groups: all share a common human identity, and all have their origin in God. "Here, at the entrance of the Torah," Frank Crüsemann writes, "Israel has written itself into the world of peoples and has defined its location within the framework of the entire humanity created by God. What today often appear as a contradiction and an *aporia*—humanness and peoplehood—is here connected and mediated."[27] The creation stories of Genesis and the universal picture of human connectedness at the beginning of Torah, Levenson adds, "serve as a powerful warrant for a Jewish doctrine of human solidarity and as a formidable obstacle to any attempt to mix Judaism and racism."[28]

Behind the assessment of a singular divine origin of the human species in the ethnographic picture of Genesis 1-11 is the premise of the unity, dignity, and nobility of the entire human family. Such an evaluation of human worth serves as an ideological counterpoint to the ethnic particularism which one finds in other portions of the Hebrew Bible; for it is manifest that the universalism of Genesis 1-11 moves increasingly towards the particular, leading purposefully toward the specific kinship lineage of Abraham and his descendants.[29] Indeed it is religious particularism, more fully articulated in notions of election and covenant, kinship, and territory which comes to determine the symbolic boundaries of Israelite ethnic identity.[30] And it is Israel's peculiar religious identity which dominates the ethnographic profile presented in the Hebrew Bible.[31] Yet Israelite ethnic particularities must always be juxtaposed and negotiated against the Genesis anthropological universalism, which itself is reiterated at various points in the biblical text.[32]

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[26] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 146.

[27] Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 58. Cf. Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 146; Yigal Levin, "Understanding Biblical Genealogies," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 9 (2001): 36.

[28] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 147.

[29] Cf. Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 66.

[30] Cf. Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 151-161.

[31] Cf. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 330.

[32] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 149; Cassuto*, Book of Genesis*, 181.

4.2.2 **Religious and Ethnic Particularism**

From the perspective of the biblical tradition, the primary ideological basis of Israelite ethnic identity, what comes to define Israel as an *ethnie*, is its religious particularism, expressed in its monotheistic faith, and attended by several subjective elements which differentiates "Israel" from other ethnic collectivities. Yet, even before the emergence of Israel as an ethnic group in the biblical text, religious particularism is already evident in the primeval account.[33]

What then is the basis for a religious particularism even before the emergence of what could be defined as an ethnic group in Genesis 10? The particularist aspects of the ethnological outline in Genesis 1-11 and beyond—what makes one group or individual special in some sense from the rest—lies in the nature of the relationship to the divine.[34] In some sense similar to the Egyptian cosmological construct wherein the land and the people of Egypt are especially favoured by the divine,[35] the cosmology of Genesis 1-11 also establishes a criterion of valuation based on divine favour. Genesis 1-11 as an anthropological system then is not rooted in notions of differentiated race or environment as in other ethnological iterations discussed already, but is founded rather on a religious logic: specifically, the theological premise of *election*.

4.2.2.1 *Divine Election and the "Chosen" People*

At stake is the way in which one group or individual is "chosen," to a large extent it seems, on account of a right standing with Yahweh, while the others, for the opposite reason are passed over for election. Hence, Abel for his obedience to the divine will is favoured above Cain (Gen 4:3-5); Enoch, unlike the men of his generation, was "taken" (לָקַח) by God on account of his exemplary walk with God (5:22, 24);[36] by implication of their designation, the "sons of God (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים) are in special relationship to God until their co-mingling with the "daughters of men" (בְּנוֹת הָאָדָם) leads to social anarchy (6:1-5). Similarly, Noah is the recipient of divine grace above the men of his generation on account of his relationship to

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[33] Clifford, "Election in Genesis 1," 7-22.

[34] Cf. Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 144.

[35] See O'Connor, "Egypt's View of 'Others'," 156, 161, 175-176.

[36] Hebrews 11:5 (cf. Jude 14) interprets the phraseology to mean that Enoch was exempted from death; but like Elijah who was "taken" (לָקַח; 2 King 2:3, 10-11), Enoch too was translated to the presence of God.

Yahweh: "Noah was a righteous man (אִישׁ צַדִּיק) . . . Noah walked with God" (Gen 6:9). And Shem is blessed of Yahweh (בָּרוּךְ יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵי שֵׁם; Gen 9:26) for the sake of his righteous deed in contrast to Ham who acts shamefully towards his father.

Outside of the primeval account but continuing the same theme, Abraham is elected above the members of his kinship group for his faithful walk with God (Gen 12:1-3; 15:6; 17:1).[37] Lot and his immediate family are spared from the destruction of Sodom because of their special relationship to Yahweh. Isaac, though second born, is the son of promise above Ishmael; Jacob, likewise the younger, is elected above Esau; and, at least in Genesis, Joseph is favoured above his brothers for a special destiny.[38] A contrast is thus made between the elected and the non-elected. The former is chosen for some special purpose by Yahweh and exhibit a certain measure of allegiance to the divine will; while those in the latter category appear to fall outside of the divine will, and in some instances are the objects of divine judgment.[39]

At first, this special relationship to the deity lacks any attachment to an "ethnic group," but with the covenant made with Abraham and his descendants, election comes to be associated exclusively with a single kinship lineage, and expressed—at least from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible—by a distinct Israelite monotheism.[40] From this point

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[37] W. Randall Garr, "Abraham's Election in Faith," in *The Call of Abraham: Essays on the Election of Israel in Honor of Jon D. Levenson*, ed. Gary A. Anderson and Joel S. Kaminsky (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 23-43, attributes Abraham's election to his exemplary faith. Cf. Novak, *Election of Israel*, 39. But see Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 151-152, who suggests that there were no preconditions to Abraham's/Israel's election. See also, Jon D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 20-21.

[38] As Joel Kaminsky, "The Concept of Election and Second Isaiah: Recent Literature," *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 31 (2001): 138, writes, "Even among the elect there are gradations of election."

[39] However, in relation to divine will and action, the characterization of the unchosen when viewed more carefully, is shown to exhibit more complexity.

[40] The history of Israelite religion is beyond our purview here; rather, the *biblical portrait* of Israelite election and monotheism is what interests us. For recent views on the former, see the essays in the volumes, Bob Becking, ed., *Only One God?: Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); and Jürgen Van Oorschot and Markus Witte, eds, *The Origins of Yahwism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017). For comprehensive discussions on election in the Old Testament, see H. H. Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* (Lutterworth Press: London, 1950); Seock-Tae Sohn, *The Divine Election of Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991); Joel N. Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen: Conceptions of Election in the Pentateuch and Jewish-Christian Interpretation* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009); Novak, *Election of Israel*; Chad Owen Brand, ed., *Perspectives on Election: Five Views* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006). See also, the edited volume, Gary A. Anderson and Joel S. Kaminsky, eds., *The Call of Abraham: Essays on the Election of Israel in Honor of Jon D. Levenson* (Notre Dame: University of Notre

forward, religious identity and ethnic identity, mediated by a strong emphasis on covenant, become synonymous: Israel's identity as a people is defined by its monotheistic covenantal relationship to Yahweh. Thus, election is inextricably bound up with the notion of covenant and the affirmation of a monotheistic faith.[41] Yahweh the God of Israel is the one, true God, and Yahweh has chosen Israel for his covenant people. This covenantal relationship entails promised blessings of land, offspring, and universal acclaim.[42]

Whereas Egyptian self-definition is wrapped up in the sum total of Egyptian cultural particularities—a *cultural* chauvinism—Israelite ethnic differentiation is predicated on a *religious* chauvinism: Israelites are *the* chosen people of God above all other peoples on earth.[43] And because Israel's selection is purely Yahweh's initiative, election thus confers on the Israelites a unique status among all the peoples of the earth. Israel is Yahweh's beloved—or as Levenson describes it, "Israel is God's special possession, his firstborn son, who is assigned special obligations, special privileges, and a special destiny."[44] Consequently, one of the founding pillars and subjective criterion which differentiates Israel from other ethnic groups is its assertion of a unique relationship to the universal deity.

The doctrine of the divine election of Israel, the *Leitmotiv* of Scripture, thus becomes the hallmark of Israelite religious and ethnic identity.[45] What this means is that Israelite ethnic identity is defined first and foremost in theological terms. What David Novak writes of Jewish identity in the present is equally true of Israelite ethnic identity in the past: "[T]he ultimate answer to any question of Jewish identity is theological, the one that points to God's

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Dame Press, 2013); and Dale Patrick, "Election, Old Testament," in *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freeman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2: 434-441.

[41] See Rowley, *Doctrine of Election*, 45-68. Cf. Sohn, *Divine Election*, 1.

[42] Cf. Oren R. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 78.

[43] Cf. Sohn, *Divine Election*, 193-194; Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham*, 19-20. The doctrine of election is best expressed in Deuteronomy 7:6-8 (NRSV): "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen (בחר) you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession. It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose (ויבחר) you—for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

[44] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 168. Cf. Novak, *Election of Israel*, 116.

[45] Novak, *Election of Israel*, 108.

relationship with his people."[46] Informed by its monotheistic worldview, the Hebrew Bible's evaluation of other peoples was also fundamentally a religious question. In the book of Deuteronomy, for example, as Walter Moberly emphasizes, the biblical writer exhibits "a prime concern not for ethnic identity but for religious identity and allegiance."[47] Similarly Frank Crüsemann underscores that in the genealogical system of Genesis, "What is decisive is the *theological evaluation* of the variety of the peoples and cultures, including what one could call their religions."[48] For the Hebrew Bible then, questions of identity for Israelite and non-Israelite alike take the form of a theological inquiry; which means an assessment—stated or implied—of one's relationship to the God of Israel.

How then did Israel's self-identification as "the chosen people" impact its evaluation of other peoples according to the Hebrew Bible? While some biblical exegetes are prepared to argue that Israel's religious chauvinism meant racial exclusion, and even legitimized "ethnic cleansing" of non-Israelite peoples,[49] Levenson argues instead that Israel's special status did not cause them to look down on others in a racial sense: "They did not think that their chosenness rested upon racial and cultural superiority or that the unchosen status of outsiders followed from some innate deficiency because they did not have a concept of race or culture at all in the sense in which the term is used by moderns."[50] Still, Israelite theological evaluation of other groups does not necessarily prove to be more charitable than say the Egyptian way of dealing with the chaotic forces of foreign peoples. A theological evaluation of the Canaanites, the obvious example, does not preclude, but rather anticipates and justifies on religious grounds the destruction of their religious symbols, sancta, cities—and in the case of seven specified Canaanite nations, the total annihilation (חרם) of man, woman, children, and even

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[46] Novak, *Election of Israel*, 5. Cf. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 168.

[47] R. Walter Moberly, "Election and the Transformation of *Hērem,"* in *The Call of Abraham: Essays on the Election of Israel in Honor of Jon D. Levenson*, ed. Gary A. Anderson and Joel S. Kaminsky (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 70-71.

[48] Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 72; emphasis original.

[49] For example, Jeremy Cott, "The Biblical Problem of Election," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 21 (1984): 204, writes: "As a way of working out and consolidating one's religious identity, the wholesale slaughter of people (whether in *herem*, crusade, or *jihad*) is exactly what it seems to be, no more and no less. The pressure that builds up naturally in the idea of election is here unleashed, and the idea is given its fullest expression. The Conquest tradition is the primary expression and fulfillment of the idea-the *Urtext*. The biblical idea of election is the ultimate anti-humanistic idea." Cf. Joel S. Kaminsky, "Did Election Imply the Mistreatment of Non-Israelites?" *Harvard Theological Review* 96 (2003): 397.

[50] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 164.

beasts (Deut 7:1-3; 13:15; 20:17; Josh 6:21).[51]

As for physical differences, Levenson continues, "In ancient Israel, the former [skin colour as a physical characteristic] seems to have played no role whatsoever, and not much more significance was attributed to the latter [language, i.e., Hebrew]."[52] Crüsemann likewise writes that Israelite ethnic perception as seen in the Genesis tradition, "lack any hint of an allusion to skin colour, or to other racially utilizable points of difference."[53] On these points, one can agree with Levenson's and Crüsemann's assessment, since as we have seen, Israel's self- and other-perception was conceived of in religious terms. There is one physical characteristic, however, which in the context of Israel's status as Yahweh's chosen people took on special significance. In the Hebrew Bible, circumcision is an important "token in the flesh" that held both religious and ethnic significations (Gen 17:11).[54]

While many Ancient Near Eastern cultures practiced circumcision,[55] Israel's appropriation of the practice symbolized the covenant God made with Abraham.[56] Beginning in Genesis, the practice of circumcision is intimately connected to the concept of Israel's election and becomes a signifier of ethnic boundary in certain contexts. Circumcision distinguishes Israelite males as the descendants of Abraham and the covenant community of Yahweh. Uncircumcision for the Israelites indicates that one falls outside of its religious and ethnic community (Gen 17:14). In the patriarchal narrative which tells of Dinah's rape by Shechem the son of the Hivite king Hamor (Gen 34:1-24), the Israelites' refusal to intermarry with Hamor's tribe could not be overcome unless the Canaanite males agreed to become

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[51] See discussion in Moberly, "Transformation of *Hērem*," 73-77. As Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 168, notes, "the sacred literature of Judaism legitimizes and even mandates certain forms of inequality." Cf. Kaminsky, "Mistreatment of Non-Israelites?" 397-426.

[52] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 159.

[53] Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 66.

[54] Levenson, "Biblical Particularism," 152.

[55] Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.36.3, for example, reported that the Egyptians practiced circumcision and that everyone else learned the practice from them. Egyptian tomb paintings indicate that from at least the VI Dynasty circumcision was practiced in ancient Egypt. See Paul Ghalioungui, *Magic and Medical Science in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965), 95-97.

[56] Avraham Faust, "The Bible, Archaeology, and the Practice of Circumcision in Israelite and Philistine Societies," *JBL* 134 (2015): 275: "It is quite clear that in some parts of the Bible, circumcision is prominent in contexts that refer to ethnic boundary maintenance." See also, Robert G. Hall, "Circumcision," in *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freeman (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 1:1026: "Although many of the surrounding nations practiced it (Jer 9:25-26), circumcision gave Hebrews a sense of national identity."

circumcised. In this context, even though an obvious pretext, circumcision is presented as an ethnic and religious divide that separates the two people. Circumcision as an ethnic distinction is especially poignant in Israelite interaction with the "uncircumcised Philistines" (Judg 15:18; 1 Sam 14:6; 17:26, 36; 1 Sam 31:4; 2 Sam 1:10, 1 Chron 10:4).[57] In the heightened situation of conflict between Israelites and Philistines, circumcision becomes a significant symbolic marker of Israelite ethnic and religious solidarity.[58] The repeated charge against the Philistines for being "uncircumcised" in the historical narratives signifies not only that the Philistines are outside of the covenant community of Yahweh, but equally important that their encroachment on Israelite territory is illegitimate.[59]

To summarize this section, from the perspective of the biblical text, Israelite ethnic identity was defined primarily by its religious identity as *the* covenant community of Yahweh. One may say that biblical Israel had an ethno-religious identity rather than a purely ethnic one. Other peoples were equally evaluated based on religious criteria. Importantly, Israel's self-conception as a chosen people was by no means unique in the Ancient Near Eastern context. The Sumerians, for example, who will be discussed below, thought of themselves in much the same way:

> There is little doubt that the Sumerians considered themselves a kind of "chosen people," "the salt of the earth," as it were. . . [T]he Sumerians thought of themselves as a rather special and hallowed community more intimately related to the gods than mankind in general—a community noteworthy not only for its material wealth and possessions, not only for its powerful kings, but also for its honored spiritual leaders, the *en*'s—a community which all the fate-decreeing heaven-gods, the Anunnaki, had selected as their abode.[60]

Such views were not uncommon in a world where symbolic boundaries were defined by and large by religious ideas. For many ANE peoples like the Sumerians, Babylonians, and

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[57] Faust, "Practice of Circumcision," 274-278. Cf. Hall, "Circumcision," *ABD* 1:1025-31.

[58] Faust, "Practice of Circumcision," 275.

[59] Cf. Faust, "Practice of Circumcision," 278-287.

[60] Samuel N. Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 286.

Assyrians, no less than for the Israelites, it may be said that "religion was society and society was religion."[61]

4.2.2.2 Descent and Kinship

From the beginning of Torah it becomes evident that descent and kinship play a fundamental role in the life of Israel, for it is kinship relationships which identify the members of the covenant community and properly define the ethnic boundaries of "Israel." Israelite socio-political organization no less than its ethnic and geographic boundaries are determined by genealogical relationships.[62] The book of Genesis, for example, establishes a genealogical lineage stretching from the first human being created by God to the eventual birth of Israel as a nation, articulating in the process genealogical relationships and geographic diffusion of all human collectivities. An intricate and unprecedented genealogical system provides a framework for the entire book of Genesis and climaxes at the end of the book with the emergence of Israel, its focal point.[63] The Genesis genealogies set a precedence for subsequent genealogical listing in the Hebrew Bible, and the importance of genealogical delineation is evident even in the New Testament.[64]

In the Hebrew Bible descent and kinship is intimately tied up with the concept of Israelite election. Abraham as the progenitor of Israel is critical to its self-understanding, for Yahweh's covenant is exclusively with Abraham *and* his descendants. Therefore, a unilineal delineation of descent from Abraham delimits and differentiates Abraham's "seed," the

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[61] Katerina Sasková, Lukás Pecha and Petr Charvát, "Preface," in *Shepherds of the Black-Headed People: The Royal Office Vis-à-vis Godhead in Ancient Mesopotamia*, ed. Katerina Sasková, Lukás Pecha and Petr Charvát (Plzen, Czech Republic: University of West Bohemia, 2016), 8-9.

[62] Kinship structures mediated a variety of social, religious, economic, and political relationships in the national life of Israel. The genealogies of the Hebrew Bible serve at least the following functions. (1) Genealogies establish kinship ties and demarcate group boundaries. (2) Kinship structures defined by genealogies determine one's rights and responsibilities and locates one's place within the hierarchy of the "sons of Israel." (3) Genealogies have chronological and historiographic functions: tracing descent unilineally purport historical and chronological continuity. And (4) genealogies demonstrate geographic relationships connecting kinship groups to specific territories. See discussion in Levin, "Biblical Genealogies," 12-40; Westermann*, An Introduction,* 6, 7; Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of Biblical Genealogies*, 2nd ed. (SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 3-84.

[63] Levin, "Biblical Genealogies," 34, 36. See Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 74-75, for a meticulous visual reconstruction of the genealogical system of Genesis. Cf. Westermann*, An Introduction*, 6.

[64] Cf. Westermann*, An Introduction*, 7.

Israelite *ethno*s, from other ethnic collectivities.[65] The constructed nature of *Abraham's seed* is already evident, however, for it is only one branch of Abraham's descendants—the Israelites—who become the chosen people of Yahweh. Genealogies then serve as a critical component of Israelite religious and ethnic identity.

4.2.2.3 Ancestral Territory

Inextricably bound up with the theme of election and genealogy, the idea of an ancestral homeland is fundamental to Israelite ethnic and national identity and constitutes a central theme in the biblical tradition.[66] Repeated numerous times in the patriarchal narratives, Canaan is the land of promise, unconditionally granted to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:7-21; 17:8; 16:3; 18:4, 13; 35:12).[67] Canaan as a perpetual possession is repeated numerous times to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, all while still living as "foreigners" in the Promised Land (e.g. Gen 12:1, 5, 7; 13:15, 17; 15:7, 18; 17:8, 24:7, 26:2, 28:4, 13, etc.). The promise of nationhood is connected to the promise of a national homeland. Beyond Genesis, the Hebrew Bible is replete with references to "the land of Canaan" as *the* Promised Land, "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; 14:8; Deut 6:3, 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20, etc.). But the theme of Canaan as the land of Israel's inheritance is also clearly presaged in the primeval history.

While Israel is not mentioned in Genesis 1-11, a foundation story involving the eponymous ancestor of the Canaanites (Gen 9:18-27) as well as the explicitly demarcated territory of the descendants of Canaan (Gen 10:19) adumbrate Israel's interaction with the

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[65] Cf. Levin, "Biblical Genealogies," 16, 33.

[66] David Frankel, *The Land of Canaan and the Destiny of Israel: Theologies of Territory in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 1-2. Cf. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 158. For discussion of land ideologies in the Old Testament from a theological and historical perspective, see Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); Norman C. Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*; Jacques van Ruiten and Jacobus Cornelis de Vos, eds., *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology: Studies in Honour of Ed Noort* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Philip Johnston and Peter Walker, eds., *The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

[67] Scholars remain divided on the question of the "conditions" of the land promise to Abraham. For a good discussion of the issues, see Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 63-71.

inhabitants of the Promised Land.[68] This primeval forecast surely anticipates Israel's encounter with the inhabitants of Canaan; little wonder a great number of commentators understand the story of Canaan's curse as an aetiology for the dispossession of the Canaanites.[69] The author of Genesis seems to be providing a justification as to why Abraham, whose original ancestral homeland is southern Mesopotamia, specifically, "Ur of the Chaldees" (Gen 11:31),[70] comes to settle in Canaan with the promise that his descendants will inherit *Canaan's land.*

Thus, the end of the primeval story finds Terah and his family, among whom are Abraham, Lot, and their wives, leaving their original ancestral homeland of Ur "to sojourn into the land of Canaan" (Gen 11:31). While Terah does not eventually make it to Canaan, choosing rather to settle in Haran, Abraham follows the divine command to leave his immediate kinship and complete the journey into the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1-3). The land is formally promised to Abraham's posterity upon his arrival in Canaan (Gen 12:7). Abraham's posterity will eventually possess the land at the behest of Yahweh because the land of Canaan is Yahweh's land.[71] And it is Yahweh who gives the land to the Israelites: "On that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your offspring I have given this land'" (Gen 15:18).

On account of this promise, Israel's legitimacy to the land is beyond reproach because the land was covenanted to the Israelites by Yahweh, the sovereign God. Israel will eventually come to dispossess the Canaanites through conquest, directed and fought by Yahweh, for it is Yahweh who drives out the nations on Israel's behalf (Exod 23:28-31; 33:2; 34:11; Deut 9:5; 11:23; 18:12, etc.).[72] Having secured the land from the Canaanites, Israelite ethnic and

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[68] Cf. Robert L. Cohn, "Negotiating (with) the Natives: Ancestors and Identity in Genesis," *Harvard Theological Review* 96 (2003): 149.

[69] For example, John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), 186; Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1972), 135, 137; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 327. But see Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 168-169, who explains the meaning of the curse on Canaan in the context of the subjection of the Canaanite cities Sodom and Gomorrah and their allies to Chedorlaomer and his allies in Genesis 14:1-4.

[70] On the issue of whether Abraham was born in Ur of the Chaldees or in Haran, see Shubert Spero, "Was Abraham Born in Ur of the Chaldees?" *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 24 (1996): 156-159. Cf. Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 299. For a discussion of the term "Ur of the Chaldees" and its related problems, see William D. Barrick, "'Ur of the Chaldeans' (Gen 11:28-31): A Model for Dealing with Difficult Texts," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 20 (2009): 7-18.

[71] See Habel, *Biblical Land Ideologies*, 36-41, 59-62; Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 158-159.

[72] Cf. Habel, *Biblical Land Ideologies*, 62-65; Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 81-86.

national identity is forever linked to the land of promise. Israel as a nation, whether *in situ* or in exile, cannot and does not exist apart from a connection to the land.[73] In the end, the boundaries of the Canaanite tribal groups delineated in Genesis 10:19 become the geographical boundaries of Israel; the land of Canaan *becomes* the land of Israel.[74]

4.3 CONCLUSION

The construction of Israelite ethnic identity, beginning with the Genesis primeval story, demonstrates both universalist and particularist ideologies held in tension in the biblical literature. The universal theology of Genesis 1-11 stresses Yahweh as absolute Creator and Sovereign, and the universal anthropology defines the divine origin and common descent of all human collectivities. The particularist aspect of Israelite religious and ethnic identity, also predicated on the sovereign status of Yahweh, properly define Israel as a discrete ethnic group. Correspondingly, ethnic identity in the Hebrew Bible is shown to be constructed around religious ideas, and therefore one may speak of a "ethno-religious" rather than a purely "ethnic" identity as it pertains to Israelite self- and other-perception.

This study has identified and discussed three of the major components of Israelite ethnic particularism: divine election, genealogical descent, and claims to an ancestral territory. The theological concept of election, forecasted in the primeval history but developed more fully in other parts of the Pentateuch, emphasizes the exclusivity and perpetuity of Israel's covenantal relationship to Yahweh, the universal God. The doctrine of Israel's election is thus undergirded by the premise of Yahweh's universal sovereignty. Divine election separates Israel from other ethnic collectivities precisely because Yahweh as the universal sovereign has chosen Israel, and *only* Israel to be his special people. But Israel's particular ethnic identity is still defined against a universal backdrop of ethnic collectivities, especially as laid out in the Table of Nations. Moreover, Israel as the chosen people of God, entail, at first blush in any case, the exclusion of all others. More will be said on this in Chapter 8.

The emphasis on genealogy is also indispensable to the concept of election for only the descendants of Abraham are identified as heirs of the promised blessings. Finally, the land of Canaan, given as Yahweh's gift to Abraham and his seed becomes the rightful territory of the

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[73] Cf. Frankel, *Theologies of Territory*, 3.

[74] Cf. Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 180.

Israelite ethnic group. Thus, our working definition of Israel's ethnic identity in Chapter 2 seems to be born out by the precding analysis: "Israel" signifies those descendants of Abraham chosen by Yahweh for a special relationship and religious destiny, and whose connection to the land of Canaan is ratified by a permanent covenant with the universal God.

As we shall explore in the next chapter and develop further in subsequent chapters, biblical writers also perceived the ethnic identities of other peoples through the three-fold prism of election, genealogy and territory. The common origin and universal brotherhood of humanity precludes a purely ethnic evaluation of other groups in the Hebrew Bible, certainly nothing on the order of modern racial categorization. Rather, the biblical text is far more concerned with religious allegiance as it pertains to other ethnic collectives. The identification of Yahweh the God of Israel as the one true God with exclusive claim to human allegiance, implicates the polytheism of other nations and evokes a largely negative theological evaluation of non-Israelite groups by the biblical authors. Foreign peoples as collectives identify with "other gods" and are therefore not part of the elected community of Yahweh.

Now having laid out the core premises of Israelite ethnic self-perception, we will proceed to look at the construction of Cushite ethnic identity in the primeval history, with special reference to the Table of Nations once again. Perhaps the most significant contribution of the following chapter to the identification of Cush in the primeval history relates to the geographic location of Cush. Whereas outside the book of Genesis Cush comes to be identified almost exclusively with Nubia, it will be demonstrated that for the Genesis author, Cush as a reference to a geographical region denotes not African Cush, but rather a primordial land far to the east. Thus, in the following chapter Cushite genealogy and territory are assessed, highlighting in the process a rather intriguing correspondence between the location of Cush in the Genesis primal account and the historical problems surrounding the "two Meluhhas" in ANE sources and the "two Ethiopias" in classical sources. The final part of Chapter 5 will lay out the Genesis author's theological evaluation of Hamites, particularly Nimrod, the son of Cush.

PART II

CUSHITE ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

CHAPTER 5

Cushite Ethnic Identity in the Biblical Table of Nations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the establishment of the system of segregation known as apartheid in South Africa in the late 1940's, biblical interpreters played a crucial role in both its formation and maintenance. Genesis 10-11 in particular, became a major point of departure for interpreters looking for theological and moral justification for what was already pre-determined or actual political policy.[1] Ironically, the same chapters provided counter arguments that challenged the apartheid system and eventually contributed to its demise in the 1990's.[2] As this study has maintained thus far, the *Sitz im Leben* of a particular historical moment can never be ignored when it comes to the interpretation and application of the biblical text. Social contexts shape interpretations and determine outcomes in subtle yet powerful ways.

In this chapter, we take another look at the Table of Nations and related passages in the book of Genesis with an interpretive approach which aligns with the overall purpose of this study; namely, to provide a more balanced view of Cushite ethnographic representation in the biblical literature. The chapter aims to lay out the ways in which Cushite ethnic identity is perceived and situated in the broader ethnographic picture of the primeval history, with specific reference to Genesis 2:13 and 9:18-11:9.[3] Comparative material from Mesopotamian

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[1] J. A. Loubser, *The Apartheid Bible: A Critical Review of Racial Theology in South Africa* (MML South Africa Today Series; Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1987), outlines the interface between politics and theology with reference to the Dutch Reform Church during the apartheid era. Loubser demonstrates that the historical development of apartheid theology traces its origins to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries during the era of colonization in South Africa. Cf. J. A. Loubser, "Apartheid Theology: A 'Contextual' Theology Gone Wrong?" *Journal of Church and State* 38 (1996): 321-337. Jonker, "Apartheid Theology," 165-183, provides an insightful analysis of how Gen 10-11 was used in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) to advocate segregation based on race. Jonker's analysis shows how hermeneutical conclusions were conditioned by the social and political climate of apartheid. For the theologians of the DRC, the Table of Nations represented a divine mandate for racial separation, a policy that incidentally was already well established in South Africa.

[2] Cf. Mark Rathbone, "Unity and Scattering: Toward a Holistic Reading of Genesis 11:1-9 in the South African Context," in *Genesis*, ed. Athalya Brenner, Archie C. Lee and Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 99-101.

[3] For good arguments concerning the unity of Gen 9:18-11:9, see Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part II* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989), 141. On the unity of Gen 11:1-9, see J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (Assen: Van Gorcum,

literary and historical tradition will be discussed in conjunction with the biblical text.

5.2 CUSHITE GENEALOGY & ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE TABLE OF NATIONS

Figure 1: Diagram of the genealogical outline of Genesis 10.

TABLE OF NATIONS

Gen 10.1-4		And these are the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; after the flood children were born to them.						
	1	**Japheth**						
			I.	Gomer				
					i.	Ashkenaz		
					ii.	Riphath		
					iii.	Togarma		
			II.	Magog				
			III.	Madai				
			IV.	Javan				
					i.	Elishah		
					ii.	Tarshish		
					iii.	Kittim		
					iv.	Dodanim		
			V.	Tubal				
			VI.	Meshech				
			VII.	Tiras				
Gen 10.5		From these the coastland nations were scattered abroad into their lands, each according to their language, their family and their nation.						
Gen 10.6-7		The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan						
	2	**Ham**						
			I.	Cush				
					i.	Seba		
					ii.	Havilah		
					iii.	Sabtah		
					iv.	Rama		
							1	Sheba
							2	Dedan
					v.	Sabteca		
					vi.	Nimrod		
Gen 10:8-12								

1975), 11-45; Ellen Van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 84-89.

						He began to be a mighty warrior on earth. He was a mighty hunter in the sight of Yahweh; for this reason it is said, "Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter in the sight of Yahweh." The beginning of his dominion was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar. From that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, the city of Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.						
Gen 10:13-14			II.	Mizraim								
					i.	Ludim						
					ii.	Anamim						
					iii.	Lehabim						
					iv.	Naphtuhim						
					v.	Pathrusim						
					vi.	Caslukhim	out of whom came					
							1	Philistim				
							2	Caphtorim				
			III.	Put								
Gen 10:15-18			IV.	Canaan								
					i.	Sidon	his firstborn					
					ii.	Heth						
					iii.	the Jebusite						
					iv.	the Amorite						
					v.	the Girgasite						
					vi.	the Hivite						
					vii.	the Arkite						
					viii.	the Sinite						
					ix.	the Arvadite						
					x.	the Semarite						
					xi.	the Hamathite						
Gen 10:18-19				Afterward the families of the Canaanites were scattered abroad. And the territory of the Canaanites was from Sidon, going towards Gerar, as far as Gaza, and towards Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.								
Gen 10:20		These are the descendants of Ham, according to their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.										
Gen 10:21-30		And children were born to Shem; he is the father of all the children of Eber, and the older brother of Japheth.										
	3	**Shem**										
			I.	Elam								
			II.	Asshur								

			III.	Arpachshad									
					i.	Selah							
							1	Eber					
									I.	Peleg			
									II.	Joktan			
											i.	Almodad	
											ii.	Sheleph	
											iii.	Hazarmaveth	
											iv.	Jerah	
											v.	Hadoram	
											vi.	Uzal	
											vii.	Diklah	
											viii.	Obal	
											ix.	Abimael	
											x.	Sheba	
											xi.	Ophir	
											xii.	Havilah	
											xiii.	Jobab	
(29-30)										All these were the descendants of Joktan. And their territory was from Mesha going towards Sephar, a hill country of the east.			
			IV.	Lud									
			V.	Aram									
					i.	Uz							
					ii.	Hul							
					iii.	Gether							
					iv.	Mash							
	These are the descendants of Shem, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.												
Gen 10:31													
Gen 10:32	These are the families of Noah's sons, according to their genealogies, in their nations; and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.												

There are approximately 70 names contained in the Table of Nations, if one excludes Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth.[4] Of this number, the descendants of Japheth total fourteen;

[4] Though there are actually 74 names in the Table of Nations, including Shem, Ham, and Japheth, scholars often speak of the typological "seventy" descendants of Noah as a comparison to the seventy descendants of Jacob in Genesis 46:27. See for example, Yigal Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty, King of Kish, King of Sumer and Akkad," *Vetus Testamentum* 52 (2002): 365; Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 175-177; Crüsemann,

those of Ham total thirty-one; and Shem's descendants total twenty-six. In broad geographical strokes, Japhites, often seen as "Indo-Europeans," have been considered to occupy northern and coastal regions (including islands); Shemites, typically seen as "Asians" are classified as easterners; and Hamites, whose historical identity has been subject to endless controversy, are generally known to occupy regions to the south, normally northeastern Africa.[5] Yet as we shall see from a deeper examination of biblical Cush, such generalizations fall short of capturing the complexity of either the biblical ethnographic picture or the ethnographic reality of the greater Mediterranean region. These brief observations aside; three questions will occupy our attention in this section. (1) Exactly how is the Table of Nations organized? (2) What is its primary purpose and function? And (3) what role or roles do Cushites play in the overall function of the Table?

5.2.1 Cushite Genealogy in the Overall Purpose of the Table of Nations

A number of studies have attempted to compare the genealogies of Genesis 1-11 to other records of decent in the Ancient Near East in order to inform the interpretation of the former.[6] But it is clear that no truly comparable material can be found. The genealogies of Genesis serve different functions and are unique in scale and scope compared to known genealogical records in the ANE.[7] The well-known Sumerian King List is a particular favourite

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"Genealogical System of Genesis," 67-68; J. Simons, "The 'Table of Nations' (Gen. X): Its General Structure and Meaning," *Oudtestamentische Studien* 10 (1954): 156.

[5] Cf. Ps 74:6; 78:51; 105:23, 27; 106:22.

[6] For comparative studies of biblical and ANE genealogies, see Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1901), 121-123; A. Malamat, "King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and Biblical Genealogies," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 88 (1968): 168-173; Thomas C. Hartman, "Some Thoughts on the Sumerian King List and Genesis 5 and 11B," *JBL* 91 (1972): 25-32; Robert R. Wilson, "The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research," *JBL* 94 (1975): 169-189; Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Hasel, "Genealogies of Genesis," 361-374; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (The Anchor Bible; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987), 41-42. See Hess, "Genealogies of Genesis," 58, for a more comprehensive list of sources.

[7] See Hess, "Genealogies of Genesis," 242, who writes that "none of the comparative Ancient Near Eastern examples proposed by scholars actually have a precise parallel with any of the genealogical forms found in Genesis 1-11. . . . [T]he primary functions of the biblical genealogies are significantly different from those found in the Ancient Near Eastern examples." It is important to clarify, however, that many themes in the primeval history of Genesis (various aspects of the creation story, the flood narrative, etc.) also have parallels in Babylonian and other Ancient Near Eastern sources. For example, the "confusion" of tongues mentioned in Genesis 11, has a parallel in the Sumerian *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*. According to this early text, all the people of the world spoke one language until Enki, the Sumerian god of wisdom brought contention.

for comparison. But apart from "superficial similarities," Gerhard Hasel observes, "the ideology, function, and purpose of the Hebrew and Sumerian documents are quite different."[8] Whereas, only political genealogy (i.e., the genealogy of kings) traced from the beginning of "civilization" is important in Babylonian genealogical lists, the genealogical outline of Genesis 1-11 is universal in scope, tracing human ancestry from creation to the descendants of Noah, and emphasizing the absolute beginning of humanity.[9] Genesis 10, in particular, is unique in its aim to capture the totality of humanity in a single genealogical outline.[10]

Still, apart from the problem of identifying the social and political contexts behind the composition of Genesis 10,[11] there are numerous challenges which this passage presents for

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On *Enmerkar* see Samuel N. Kramer, "The 'Babel of Tongues': A Sumerian Version," in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumura (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 108-111. The biblical primeval story thus shares many thematic similarities to primeval accounts from Babylon and elsewhere in the Ancient Near East, but actual textual dependencies remain elusive. The lack of actual textual dependencies on the part of the Genesis author still does not prevent biblical scholars from asserting that Genesis 1-11 is dependent on Mesopotamian "material." For example, K. van der Toorn and P. W. van der Horst, "Nimrod before and after the Bible," *The Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 15, writes: "Within the context of Genesis 10, the use of Mesopotamian material by the biblical author does not come as a surprise. It has long been known that many elements in the first eleven chapters of Genesis have a Babylonian background." However, having a Babylonian background should not be taken to mean that the biblical material can be traced to Babylonian cuneiform prototypes. Scholars such as W. G. Lambert, "A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis," in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumura (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 97-98, rightly admonish caution regarding assertions of literary dependency on the part of the biblical material.

[8] Hasel, "Genealogies of Genesis," 372. See also, Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 71-76; Levin, "Biblical Genealogies," 34; Hess, "Genealogies of Genesis," 58-72; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 539; Westermann*, An Introduction*, 6.

[9] Cf. Hasel, "Genealogies of Genesis," 370-371; Westermann*, An Introduction*, 8.

[10] Hess, "Genealogies of Genesis," 64: "nothing on the order of the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 is found for comparison [in the ANE]." Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 63: "Indeed, a system with the propensity to encompass all of humanity, all neighbouring peoples as well as the whole internal structure of one's own people, that is something extraordinary." See further, Alter*, Genesis*, 42; Levin, "Biblical Genealogies," 34.

[11] Scholars continue to glean Genesis 10-11 for cues that may reveal the text's compositional history; for example, Israel Knohl, "Nimrod, Son of Cush, King of Mesopotamia and the Dates of P and J," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Chaim Cohen et al., 2 vols. (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 45-52. Similarly, many studies attempt to identify the social and political contexts behind the narratives of the Table and Nations and the Tower of Babel pericopes. The comprehensive study of Christoph Uehlinger, *Weltreich und 'eine Rede': Eine neue Deutung der sogenannten Turmbauerzählung (Gen 11,1-9)* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1990), is an important contribution to the interpretation of the

interpreters, not least of which is determining the criteria for the tripartite genealogical outline. Is the purpose of the Genesis author to convey some kind of ancient ethnography in a kind of quasi-scientific way?[12] Is the Table organized according to ethnic, linguistic, geographic, or some other criteria? D. J. Wiseman argues that the Table of Nations intends to convey all of these—geographic, linguistic, and ethnographic information.[13] Even so, any one or combination of these criteria present problems for interpreters. Gunther Wittenberg, for example, cannot fathom how such diverse group of people representing such distinct cultural, geographical and linguistic backgrounds could be seen by the author of Genesis as belonging to the same family tree.[14] And Bustenay Oded inquires, "Why would a scribe be tempted to link up Cush (an African people) with Nimrod, a hero belonging to the Mesopotamian world?"[15]

Such observations may be warranted because rather than the discrete ethnic, geographic and linguistic separation that some biblical exegetes have proposed for the descendants of Noah based on the Genesis 10 pericope, at every level the Table of Nations bespeaks overlap and convergence. There are many points of convergence between Hamitic, Semitic, and Japhetic peoples. For example, though scholars have determined biblical Cush to be that area south of Egypt called Nubia, the majority of the ethnonyms in Cush's genealogy

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Babel story as a critique of the Assyrian Empire and its deportation and homogenizing policies. Likewise, Arie van der Kooij, "The City of Babel and Assyrian Imperialism: Genesis 11:1-9 Interpreted in the Light of Mesopotamian Sources," in *Congress Volume: Leiden 2004*, ed. André Lemaire (VTSup 109; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1-18, following Uehlinger, reads the Babel account as a critique of the construction of the imperial city Dur-Sharrukin, inaugurated in 706 B.C. by Sargon II but left unfinished following his untimely death in 705 B.C. See also, J. Severino Croatto, "A Reading of the Story of the Tower of Babel from a Perspective of Non-Identity," in *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 203-23. Reading Genesis as a Persian period political text, Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (Old Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 2000), understands Genesis 10, indeed the entire book of Genesis, as an ideological response to the exclusivist theologies of Ezra and Nehemiah. Brett suggests that the democratization theology of Genesis 10 is a counterpoint to the "holy seed" theology of Ezra-Nehemiah which advocates genealogical purity and separation (see esp., 4-5, 24-48). See also, Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 64, who suggests that the Genesis genealogical system belongs to the Persian period. It should be noted that no Persians are mentioned in the Genesis genealogies.

[12] Cf. Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 174.

[13] D. J. Wiseman, "Genesis 10: Some Archaeological Considerations," *Faith and Thought* 87 (1955): 17.

[14] See Wittenberg, "Is Ham also Cursed?" 51.

[15] Bustenay Oded, "The Table of Nations (Genesis 10): A Socio-Cultural Approach," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 8 (1986): 14.

which can be identified historically have been associated with Arabia.[16] Likewise, the greater number of Shem's eponymous descendants via Joktan which scholars are able to ascertain have been historically associated with Arabia.[17] Thus, a variety of Hamitic and Semitic peoples are known to have inhabited Arabia in historical times.[18] Of whose genealogy are those of Sheba and Havilah? Of Cush the Hamite or Joktan the Shemite? Sheba and Havilah are mentioned in the genealogies of both Cush (v. 7) and Joktan (vv. 28, 29), and these ethnonyms have been geographically linked to Arabia.

Again, in Gen 10:7 "Sheba and Dedan" (Gen 10:7) are grandsons of Cush; but in Genesis 25:3, "Sheba and Dedan" are also grandsons of Abraham via his son Jokshan (through Keturah). And these tribes have been identified as pastoral nomads occupying southern Palestine and parts of Arabia.[19] Had the ethnic lines in southwestern Asia become so blurred that the biblical writer placed Sheba, Dedan and Havilah in the lineage of both Ham and Shem?[20] Along these same lines, the Canaanites with whom Israelites shared many cultural, linguistic and ethnic characteristics are the descendants of Ham (vv. 15-20). Linguistically, Hamitic Canaanites cluster with Semitic speaking peoples, inasmuch as a variety of Afro-Asiatic languages have been represented among "Semitic" Asian populations.[21] Language cannot be a defining feature of an "ethnic group," as culturally diverse groups may share the same language for a variety of reasons (see Appendix A). In the same vein, Japhetic peoples overlap with Semitic and Hamitic peoples across the same ethno-linguistic-geographic lines.[22]

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[16] Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 199; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 142; Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 336; Wiseman, "Genesis 10," 19, 22; Simons, "Table of Nations," 158-159, 163-164; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 510-512; Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 354; E. G. H. Kraeling, "The Origin and Real Name of Nimrod," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 38 (1922): 217-218.

[17] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 147; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 526-527; Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 345-346; Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 221; Wiseman, "Genesis 10," 16, 19, 22; Simons, "Table of Nations," 158-159.

[18] Wiseman, "Genesis 10," 19-20; Simons, "Table of Nations," 159-160; Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 182.

[19] Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 20.

[20] There are other duplicate names in Genesis 10 which are mentioned in both the genealogy of Ham and that of Shem (e.g., Lud or Ludim [vv. 13, 22] and Asshur [vv. 11, 22]).

[21] Trigger, "Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?" 29: "During historical times, much of Eastern Asia have been occupied by people who speak languages belonging to various branches of the Afro-Asiatic stock: Semitic, Omotic, Cushitic, ancient Egyptian, Berber, and Chadic." See further, Ran Zadok, "A Prosopography and Ethno-Linguistic Characterization of Southern Canaan in the Second Millennium BCE," *Michmanim* 9 (1996): 119-122; Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 15; Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 201.

[22] See discussion in Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 14-15. For example, the Hittites, typically identified as an Indo-European people, and who would logically be associated with Japheth, is connected to

There is thus a complex of linguistic, ethnic, and geographic overlap, anomalies and obscurities deriving from the Table of Nations. In a word, there are no clear-cut means of organizing the table.

This complexity has lead Oded to propose that a socio-cultural criterion underlies the organization of the Table. Oded discards altogether with ethnic and geographic explanations, arguing rather that "only by socio-economic and socio-cultural criteria could a scribe combine in one setting the kingdom of Babylonia and the great cities of Mesopotamia in the north with Egypt and Cush in the south."[23] For Oded, the Table of Nations depict the social opposition between urban and nomadic societies that is widespread in the ancient literature.[24] How else, Oded inquires, could an African Cush be associated with Nimrod in Mesopotamia if not by a socio-cultural explanation?[25] Hence, the "genealogical" connection between Egypt and Mesopotamia represents that branch of civilization that is settled and urban, while the others are nomadic and tribal.[26] Associated with Nimrod of Ham's lineage are words such as "city" (עִיר), and "kingdom," "empire" (מַמְלָכָה; Gen 10:10-12), depicting sedentary and politically organized populations.[27] The Canaanites too are city-dwellers; their cities "are great and walled up to heaven" (Deut 1.28).[28] By contrast, the Shemites (and presumably the Japhites) are tent-dwelling nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes (Gen 9:27).[29]

There is value in Oded's approach since Noah's blessing does fall on the tent-dwelling

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the genealogy of Ham in Gen 10:18 (so Von Rad, *Genesis*, 138, 142; elsewhere the Hittites are listed with the Canaanites [e.g. Gen 36:2; Exod. 13:5, Deut 20:17, etc.]). The homeland of the Japhetic Madai or Medes (v. 2) who are linguistically Indo-European, is not a northern region as one might expect, but is central Asia, in Iran; see Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 505; Simons, "Table of Nations," 159. The Philistines too, believed to be Indo-Europeans, derive from the lineage of Mizraim, a son of Ham (v. 14); cf. Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 206. Moreover, Genesis 10 mentions the Philistines but omits Israel, or its immediate neighbours, Edom, Moab, Ammon. Yet, these groups are known to be contemporaneous inhabitants of Palestine. Archaeologically, the earliest peoples of Elam and Assyria were non-Semitic, yet both groups are listed under the genealogy of Shem (v. 22); see Wiseman, "Genesis 10," 16, 22.

[23] Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 28.

[24] Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 25. Cf. Bahrani, "Mesopotamian Antiquity," 54-55, who identifies this opposition in early Mesopotamian society. See also Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 336.

[25] See Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 28. Cf. Wittenberg, "Is Ham also Cursed?" 50-51.

[26] Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 25, 28.

[27] Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 27.

[28] Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 28. Cf. Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 336.

[29] Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 27, 29. Oded sees the Japhites as coastline and island dwellers, according to Genesis 10:5.

Shemites and Japhites (Gen 9:27), and indeed Abraham heeds the divine call to leave the urban life of "Ur or the Chaldees" to become a tent-dweller far away in Canaan (Gen 11:31; 15:7; Neh 9:7). And, as will be argued further below, urbanization, kinship and empire-building are negatively evaluated by the author of Genesis. Nevertheless, Oded's approach breaks down precisely on the point regarding Semites being viewed largely as pastoral nomads by the Genesis author.

While Oded argues that Shem's descendants through Joktan dwell in the Syrian-Arabian deserts and are considered nomadic and semi-nomadic by the author of Genesis 10, it is equally clear that Abraham's Semitic ancestors originate from southern Mesopotamia in the thriving metropolis of "Ur of the Chaldees."[30] Sumerian cities such as Ur, Kish, Uruk, Lagash, Akkad, among others, have long been associated with Semitic peoples, and have been important centers of civic life since earliest times.[31] Surely the Genesis author would have been aware of this if his intention was to organize his table according to socio-cultural criteria.

Rather, this study follows Umberto Cassuto in arguing that the purpose of the Table of Nation is primarily theological, with three main objectives: (1) to show the sovereignty of Yahweh in the administration of the world, including the creation and dispersion of the nations; (2) to establish the international framework for the emergence of Israel, God's special people; and (3) to show the unity and common origin of humankind, created in the image of God.[32] The author of Genesis attempts to delineate the entire peoples of his world because such an outline coheres with his universal and particular theology: Yahweh is the Creator and

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[30] The city of Ur was an important urban center in ancient Babylonia, "in fact, it was the capital of Sumer at three different periods in its history"; Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 292. Cf. Wiseman, "Genesis 10," 20.

[31] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 27-28, 40, 42-49, 59-66; Wiseman, "Genesis 10," 20; Bahrani, "Mesopotamian Antiquity," 54-55; Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 28. Moreover, Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 298, following his teacher Arno Poebel, suggests that Sumer, or "Shumer"/"Shum" of the cuneiform texts could plausibly be linked to "Shem" of the Hebrew Bible. Was the civilization of Shumer-Sumer named after Shem the ancestor of the Shemites, according to the biblical tradition? Kramer believes this is quite probable. Linguistically, the Sumerians proper were non-Semitic, but the inhabitants of early Sumer represented a conglomeration of ethnic groups. The Sumerian King List for instance demonstrates that several of the kings of the First Dynasty of Kish had Semitic names. With the conquest of Sumer by the Semitic Amorites (also known as the Babylonians), however, the Semitic element in Sumer became indisputably dominant. Indeed, "Sumerian" is an Akkadian (Semitic) term and not the term the "Sumerians" used to describe themselves or their language. See further, Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 40-42, 44, 288, 298; Graham Cunningham, "The Sumerian Language," in *The Sumerian World*, ed. Harriet E. Crawford (New York: Routledge, 2013), 95; Bahrani, "Mesopotamian Antiquity," 54-55; Wiseman, "Genesis 10," 21.

[32] Cf. Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 175-180; Hasel, "Genealogies of Genesis," 370-371.

Sovereign over all nations, but Israel is his special people. Moreover, theories of ethnic boundary maintenance indicate that an ethnic group cannot exist apart from interaction with other differentiated collectives.[33] Thus "Israel" as an ethnic group can only be defined against other differentiated ethnicities. "Israel" emerges subsequent to and only in the context of the ethnographically differentiated framework presented in Genesis 10.

While the Table delineates genealogical descent from Noah's three sons in a particular order (Shemites are listed last, for example) and relates geographic, ethnographic, and historiographic information about the totality of peoples known to the Genesis author, all such information is in the service of the author's theological agenda.[34] Apart from its universal theology, it would seem that the Table of Nations is not concerned with any other particular scheme or organization. It is not, for example, an ancient attempt at "scientific" ethnography.[35]

Bearing in mind that ethnic perceptions are situational and constructed, the ethnographical profile of Genesis 10 is a theologically motivated *construction* that synthesizes the author's subjective conception of past and present socio-political realities. The author of Genesis is writing down what he believes is the history of human descent and the nature of human filiation. In pursuant of his theological agenda, the author aims to capture the dynamic process of the international social and political order which he believes is rooted in the primordial past and continue to impact his world, yet always remaining under the sovereign control of Yahweh, the God of Israel. Wherefore, Genesis 10 reflects the kind of complexity, overlap and anomalies one might expect to find in a real-world scenario of converging and overlapping identities.

Lastly, the Table is not an exhaustive representation of ethnic affiliations (see Gen 10:5, 21, 30, 31), but an attempt to simplify what would otherwise be a bewilderment of ethnic, linguistic, and political actors—hence the reason for the roughly schematic 70-person outline.[36] Importantly, in the Table of Nations, Cushites are part of the milieu of humanity,

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[33] See Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," 75-82. Cf. Appendix A.

[34] Cf. Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 67, who argues that the genealogies of Noah's three sons cannot be reduced to a single criterion of organization, whether linguistic, political, or even socio-cultural.

[35] Cf. Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 174.

[36] Cf. Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 179-180. A number of "ancestors" have no descendants listed after them (e.g., Magog, Madai, Tubal, Meschech, Tiras, Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Put, Elam, Asshur, etc.)

who, apart from Nimrod, garner no special attention. But the singling out of Nimrod the son of Cush in Genesis 10:8-12 poses two important problems for understanding Cush in the Table of Nations: (1) the location of Cush, and (2) the of theological evaluation of Nimrod the Cushite. The first problem will occupy our attention immediately, while the second will be taken up in the final section of this chapter.

5.2.2 The Geography of Cush

For many exegetes concerned with Genesis 10 the appearance of Nimrod in the lineage of Cush is the most vexing problem in the text. Terry Fenton calls the "Cushite issue" of Genesis 10 "the most intractable" problem in the Nimrod passage.[37] Yet the geographical context of Nimrod's kingdom is clearly Mesopotamian. The mention of Babylon and Assyria is self-evident, and many of the toponyms identified with Nimrod are Mesopotamian cities known outside the Bible.[38] In the biblical text, Nimrod is a southern Mesopotamian king who extends his domain northwards into Assyria.[39] Furthermore, in Micah 5:6 Assyria is called "the land of Nimrod," removing any doubt as to Nimrod's Mesopotamian origins. Biblical scholars are nearly unanimous that Nimrod's sphere of influence is Mesopotamia. The placing of a "Cushite" Nimrod in Mesopotamia is a problem, however, because, as we have seen, scholars understand biblical Cush to denote Nubia, while some tribal ethnonyms associated with Cush have also been linked to Arabia and even southern Palestine.[40] Oded's question is once again pertinent here: why would a scribe be "tempted" to connect Nimrod of Mesopotamia with

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[37] Terry Fenton, "Nimrod's Cities: An Item from the Rolling Corpus," in *Genesis, Isaiah, and Psalms: A Festschrift to Honour Professor John Emerton for His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. John A. Emerton et al. (VTSup 135; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 30. Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 338, says it is "unexpected." Cf. Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 6.

[38] Fenton, "Nimrod's Cities," 23; E. A. Speiser, "In Search of Nimrod," *Eretz-Israel* 5 (1958): 33; Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 353-54; Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 1-2, 6.

[39] Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 6: "Despite the toponymical difficulties adumbrated above, there can be no doubt that Gen 10:8-12 situates Nimrod in Mesopotamia, with his sphere of influence based in the south (Babylonia) and later extending to the north (Assyria)."

[40] Ham's descendants, Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan, are considered by scholars to inhabit Syria-Palestine, north Africa and parts of Arabia. Cf. Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 354; Douglas Petrovich, "Identifying Nimrod of Genesis 10 with Sargon of Akkad by Exegetical and Archaeological Means," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56 (2013): 291; Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 199; A. Malamat, "The Conception of Ham and His Sons in the Table of Nations," in *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World: Studies in Honor of Donald B. Redford*, ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Antoine Hirsch (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 359-360.

Cush of Africa?[41]

A number of solutions have been proposed to this question.[42] Nimrod's placement in the lineage of Cush may have been a scribal error, some scholars argue, or, even if Nimrod is to be associated with African Cush, his placement in Mesopotamia is a historiographic and/or geographic error.[43] Yigal Levin, for example, sees the Genesis Nimrod as a reference to the early southern Babylonian Sargonic Dynasty whose kings took the title "King of Kish" to legitimize their universal claims. He suggests that the biblical writer confused Mesopotamian Kish with Hamitic Cush, hence the reason for placing Nimrod in the lineage of Cush.[44] Based on similar spelling and geographic proximity, a variety of scholars consider the Cush associated with Nimrod as referencing the Kassites, a people of Iranian origin who ruled southern Mesopotamia from the 16th to the 12th centuries B.C.[45]

E. G. Kraeling understands biblical Cush as encompassing not only Ethiopia and Arabia, but also potentially Chaldea based on cultural continuity, hinting that Nimrod could indeed have been a "Cushite" who ruled in Mesopotamia.[46] Kraeling's particular view is the exception and, while promising, was not taken up by subsequent scholars.[47] Yet following in this general direction, it is suggested here that a highly plausible historical reality lies behind the biblical picture of Nimrod the Cushite, and further that the Nimrod pericope may preserve ancient traditions which give Cushites a formative role in the earliest history of Mesopotamia. This particular view has not been seriously considered by commentators and will be worked out below.

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[41] Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 14. C.f. Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 6.

[42] See the valuable discussion in Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 354-356. Critical scholars attempt to resolve the problem by attributing vv. 8-12 to a separate documentary source than the rest of the passage based on style. Westermann, *An Introduction*, 9-12, for example, sees vv. 8-30 as the work of J, while attributing vv. 1-7 to P. See also, Von Rad, *Genesis*, 140-147.

[43] See discussion in Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 515-516.

[44] Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 366. See also, Simons, "Table of Nations," 164-165.

[45] See for instance, Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 170, 337-338; Speiser, "In Search of Nimrod," 32; E. A. Speiser, "The Rivers of Paradise," in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumura (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 176-177; E. Lipiński, "Nimrod et Asshur," *Révue Biblique* 73 (1966): 80-81. See further Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 6; Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 356.

[46] See Kraeling, "Name of Nimrod," 217-218: "The name of Cush in the Old Testament often includes Arabia as well as Ethiopia and the region of Chaldea can without difficulty be described as belonging to Cush."

[47] See critique of Kraeling by Simons, "Table of Nations," 163-164.

Before dealing substantively with the issue of Cushites as part of the cultural milieu of early Mesopotamia, it is worth noting that historically Semites have been linked to virtually all regions of the Ancient Near East. According to the Hebrew Bible, the Israelites identify their ancestor Abraham and his family as Mesopotamians who arrived in Canaan as immigrants. And we have already noted that Joktan's Semitic tribal descendants are generally linked to Arabia and the Syro-Arabian deserts. Thus, Semitic peoples represented a continuum of diverse peoples that were never restricted to any single location, east or west (or north or south). Therefore, to consign Cushites a priori to Africa (and Arabia) is to unjustifiably foreclose the possibility that the biblical record may reflect a historical reality now lost to commentators.

According to the Table of Nations and the Babel pericope, Cushites did not originate in Africa, but like all the descendants of Noah, were part of the linguistically and ethnically homogenous group of primordial Mesopotamia (except for Nimrod, Genesis 10 does not delimit the borders of Cushites). For the Genesis author, Cushites like Semites and Japhites were part of the Mesopotamian ethnic mix, and like the others were scattered from there by an act of Yahweh. On this basis alone, and without reference to any historical reality, it should not be "surprising" that Cushites via Nimrod are given a leading role in the primeval Mesopotamia portrayed in Genesis. And this latter point bears emphasis: the Genesis Nimrod story is set in primeval history representing the earliest history of the post-flood human community. While a branch of people bearing the ascription Cushites came to be associated with Africa, the possibility that other peoples descending from a patronymic Cush/Kush could reside elsewhere, some even retaining the eponym of their primogenitor, should not be ruled out *prima facie*. Let us examine the issue more closely.

5.2.2.1 The Location of Cush in Genesis

> And a river went out from Eden to water the garden. From there it parted into four branches. The first river, Pishon, traverses the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good; there is even bdellium and the onyx stone. The second river, Gihon, traverses the whole land of Cush. The fourth river, Hiddekel, flows east of Assyria, and the fourth river is the Euphrates (Gen 2:10-14).

For the author of Genesis the primeval garden is meant to identify a real rather than a symbolic region or territory; Eden is tied to rivers that would have been familiar to his

readers.[48] That the garden was planted in the "east" (קֶדֶם, Gen 2:8), certainly means east of Israel, especially with the mention of the Hiddekel/Tigris (חִדֶּקֶל) and Euphrates (פְּרָת), rivers three and four respectively. The river Gihon (גִּיחוֹן), the second of the four, meanders the whole land of Cush (v. 13), and the first, Pishon (פִּישׁוֹן), is located in the land of Havilah (הַחֲוִילָה). As biblical commentators past and present have noted, the mention of the land of Cush in connection to the location of Eden is an enigma not easily resolved.[49] The Gihon here cannot be associated with the Nile as is customary, for the location of Eden is again east of Israel.[50] The Nile is southwest of Israel and known more commonly as "the river of Egypt" (e.g., Gen 15.18; Num 34.5; Josh 15.4), the *Yᵉʾōr* (יְאוֹר/יְאֹר; Gen 41:1, 2; Exod 1:22; 2:5; 4:9; 7:17; Isa 19;6; 23:3; Jer 46:7, etc.), or the *Šĭḥōr* (שִׁיחוֹר; Josh 13.3; Isa 23.3 Jer 2.18; 1 Chron 13.5) in the biblical text. Yet it is to be noted that the LXX, as well as ancient Jewish and Christian commentators are almost unanimous in identifying the Gihon with the Nile, though the problem of the "east" was also noted in some sources.[51]

Significantly, both Havilah (הַחֲוִילָה) and Assyria (אַשּׁוּר) are connected to the genealogy of Cush (Gen 10:7, 11; Havilah is also a descendant of Joktan, 10:29), and the region of the Euphrates, indeed the cradle of Euphratean civilization is linked to Nimrod the Cushite. If the Havilah of Cush (and not Joktan) is meant in Genesis 2:11,[52] then it would seem that all four rivers and lands mentioned would be somehow connected to Cush and his descendants. Was the Garden of Eden located in Cushite territory? At first glance, it would appear that the Genesis author is ascribing to Cush and his descendants a formative influence in the post-flood history of the east. It would also seem that the four rivers are outlined in a westerly direction from the Pishon furthest east to the Euphrates furthest west.

Undoubtedly, the land of Cush in the Genesis primeval story is to be identified, not with Nubia proper, but with a primeval location to the east.[53] While the goal here is not to

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[48] Cf. Speiser, "Rivers of Paradise," 176-177.

[49] Cf. Speiser, "Rivers of Paradise," 176.

[50] Contra Sadler, *Cushite*, 23-25.

[51] See Speiser, "Rivers of Paradise," 177.

[52] Admittedly, it is impossible to know with whose genealogy the Havilah to the east is to be connected. There is clearly a western Havilah which is mentioned in the biblical text in connection to Egypt (e.g., Gen 25:18; 1 Sam 15:7) and associated with Arabia by scholars. Cf. Sadler, *Cushite*, 24. Nevertheless, the Havilah in question here is to be found in the east.

[53] Cf. Speiser, "Rivers of Paradise," 176-177.

determine the location or identification of a particular river named Gihon, it is the placing of the land of Cush in the east which interests us. On this point, this study concurs with Speiser that the Cush of Genesis is to be found in the east, but depart fundamentally from him and other commentators in identifying the Genesis primeval Cush with the Kassites who ruled northern Iran from the middle of the second Millennium B.C. From the perspective of Genesis 2 and 10 Cush and Nimrod identify primordial personages. The land of Cush is therefore a primordial land which chronologically is considerably earlier than the time of Kassite rule. Our Cushites are to be sought nearly a millennium before the Kassite period. It is the land of *Meluhha* in Old Babylonian sources, also known as the "eastern" Ethiopia in classical sources, which this study maintains holds the key to understanding the Cush of the Genesis primordial account.

In highlighting the historiographic problem of "the two Ethiopias," one eastern and the other western, which is so widespread in the ancient literature, it is suggested that the Table of Nations exhibits a familiarity with a historical problem which has been wholly lost to commentators. The primeval history reflects an early tradition which locates a land called "Meluhha" in the east before the middle of the second millennium B.C., but thereafter locates it in the west. In the historical sources, Meluhha becomes synonymous with African Cush from about the middle of the second millennium B.C. The author of Genesis is familiar with the early eastern Cush tradition, whereas subsequent biblical tradition reflects the geographic shift which identifies western Cush with Nubia in Africa.

5.2.2.2 *The Location of Cush and the Land of Meluhha in ANE Sources*

Textual and archaeological evidence of the third millennium B.C. indicates that Mesopotamia had strong commercial, political and possibly cultural ties to a region called "Meluhha."[54] Meluhha is also very frequently associated with another region called Magan, as

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[54] See Gregory L. Possehl, "Meluhha," in *The Indian Ocean in Antiquity*, ed. Julian. E. Reade (London: Kegan Paul International in Association with the British Museum, 1996), 132-208, for a thoroughgoing discussion of the evidence. See also, Steffen Laursen and Piotr Steinkeller, *Babylonia, the Gulf Region, and the Indus: Archaeological and Textual Evidence for Contact in the Third and Early Second Millennium B.C.* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 79-88; Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 274-275, 278-279; Rita P. Wright, *The Ancient Indus: Urbanism, Economy, and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 215-232; Christopher P. Thornton, "Mesopotamia, Meluhha, and Those in Between," in *The Sumerian World*, ed. Harriet E. Crawford (New York: Routledge, 2013), 600-619; Jonathan M. Kenoyer, ed., *From Sumer to Meluhha: Contributions to the*

seen in phrases such as, "May Magan and Meluhha submit to you!" and "Magan and Meluhha will come down from their mountains."[55] According to scholars familiar with the subject, from Sargonic times (mid-3rd millennium B.C.) to the Neo-Assyrian empire, there was an "eastern" and a "western" Meluhha identified in the sources.[56] That Meluhha in the early textual sources refer to an area east of Mesopotamia is almost unanimously agreed upon by scholars.[57] I. J. Gelb identifies eastern Meluhha with a wide geographical area: "Meluhha is the northern shore of the Persian Gulf and of the Arabian Sea; it denotes Iran and India, extending east of ancient Elam and Ansan up to and including the Indus Valley."[58] Geographically then, "Meluhha was situated not too far from Mesopotamia and north of the Persian Gulf."[59]

Other scholars have tended to narrow the geographical scope of Meluhha, identifying it almost exclusively with the Harappan civilization of the Pakistani Baluchistan mountains eastward into the Indus Valley. Strong archaeological and textual evidence tie Meluhha with the Harappan civilization.[60] Harappan material culture such as jewelry, pottery, and seals have

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Archaeology of South and West Asia in Memory of George F. Dales, Jr. (Madison, WI: Dept. of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, 1994); Kramer*, The Sumerians*, 280-281.

[55] Possehl, "Meluhha," 139, 140.

[56] Daniel. T. Potts, "The Road to Meluhha," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41 (1982): 280; William F. Albright, "A Babylonian Geographical Treatise on Sargon of Akkad's Empire," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 45 (1925): 240; Kurt Jaritz, "Tilmun-Makan-Meluhha," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 27 (1968): 213.

[57] A minority view, reflected for example in Kramer*, The Sumerians*, 276, 278, maintains that Meluhha from the earliest times referred to an African location in Nubia or Ethiopia. The vast majority of scholars however, emphasize that the evidence unequivocally points to two Meluhhas, one eastern the other western. See the critique of Kramer's singular Meluhha hypothesis in I. J. Gelb, "Makkan and Meluhha in Early Mesopotamian Sources," *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 64 (1970): 1-8; and John Hansman, "A Periplus of Magan and Meluhha," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 36 (1973): 553-555.

[58] Gelb, "Makkan and Meluhha," 5. Cf. Possehl, "Meluhha," 136-137; Hansman, "Magan and Meluhha," 555; Romila Thapar, "A Possible Identification of Meluhha, Dilmun and Makan," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18 (1975): 11. Simo Parpola, Asko Parpola and Robert H. Brunswig, "The Meluhha Village: Evidence of Acculturation of Harappan Traders in Late Third Millennium Mesopotamia?" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 20 (1977): 129-165.

[59] Gelb, "Makkan and Meluhha," 6.

[60] Possehl, "Meluhha," 136-146; Hansman, "Magan and Meluhha," 562; Thornton, "Meluhha," 600-619; Potts, "Road to Meluhha," 280; Asko Parpola, *The Roots of Hinduism: The Early Aryans and the Indus Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 210-219.

been found at Mesopotamian sites such as Kish, Ur, Babylon, and Nippur, among others.[61] Similarly, Mesopotamian material culture have been found at various Harappan sites.[62]

If Meluhha referred to areas east of Mesopotamia in the third millennium B.C. but by the middle of the second millennium B.C. referred to a region in east Africa, "It is obvious therefore," Gelb writes, "that some kind of a shift in the location of Makkan and Meluhha must have taken place between the earlier and later times."[63] This evidence is seen in the textual sources as John Hansman notes: "References to Meluhha as an eastern region disappear from contemporary Mesopotamian texts at the beginning of the second millennium B.C."[64] The shift is also observable in the archaeological record as Possehl outlines:

> Prior to 2600 B.C. and for the time following 1800 BC, including virtually the entire second millennium, the record of Indus/Mesopotamian contact is not strong or weak, it is non-existent. Thus, the archaeological record that is available for this approximately 800 years stand out as a definite contrast to other periods.[65]

In other words, between 2600-1800 B.C. there is strong archaeological (and textual) evidence for contact between the Meluhha of the Harappan culture and Mesopotamia. But previous or subsequent to this interval the evidence is entirely lacking. What is observed instead from about the middle of the second millennium B.C., is a shift in the geographic local of Meluhha in the ancient sources, wherein Meluhha no longer refers to a region to the east, but to a location in Africa.[66]

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[61] Parpola, *Roots of Hinduism*, 212; Thapar, *Cultural Pasts*, 274-275; Possehl, "Meluhha," 136-146; Wright, *Ancient Indus*, 222-223.

[62] Wright, *Ancient Indus*, 222-223; Parpola, *Roots of Hinduism*, 212-214.

[63] Gelb, "Makkan and Meluhha," 7. Also Thapar, *Cultural Pasts*, 298: "A recent survey of the problem endorses the theory of a shift in toponym in the second half of the second millennium BC and this appears more acceptable. . . . [I]t can be suggested that Makan and Meluhha were situated elsewhere in the third millennium BC and that there was a shift of toponym in the first millennium BC when Egypt and areas close to it were called by these names."

[64] Hansman, "Magan and Meluhha," 564.

[65] Possehl, "Meluhha," 182.

[66] Gelb, "Makkan and Meluhha," 1: "[I]n the later periods, beginning about the middle of the second millennium B.C., Makkan and Meluhha stand for Egypt and Nubia respectively, while the generally favored location in the earlier periods, beginning about the middle of the third millennium B.C., is east of Mesopotamia in the area of the Persian Gulf and beyond." Hansman, "Magan and Meluhha," 553: "Old Babylonian and Sumerian references seem to place these regions at the lower end of the Persian Gulf and along the coast of the Indian Ocean beyond, while texts of the late Assyrian period indicate Egypt and Nubia/Ethiopia." Potts, "Road to Meluhha," 280, "[T]he name originally applied to the Baluchistan/ Indus

In the Amarna Letters, for example, which date from around the fourteenth century B.C., Meluhha clearly refers to Nubia over which the Egyptian pharaoh exercised control. Several requests are made of the pharaoh by Levantine rulers for soldiers from Cush. Cush is referred to as both "Meluhha" and "Kaši."[67] The king of Gubla, for instance, requests of the Pharaoh, "[2]0 men from Meluhha and 20 men from Egypt to guard the city for the king."[68] Elsewhere he wishes for the pharaoh to grant him "100 men and 100 soldiers from Kaši, and 30 chariots, that I may guard the land of my lord until a large force of archers comes out."[69] The interchangeability between Meluhha and Kaši in the Amarna Letters was noted long ago by Albright.[70] Likewise in the first millennium B.C., Neo-Assyrian kings used Meluhha and Kush (Kušu) interchangeably to refer to Nubia.[71] Records from at least four Neo-Assyrian kings, Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal, demonstrate the synonymy between Meluhha and Nubia.[72]

Valley region. Thereafter, however, the name seems definitely to have been applied to portions of Africa." Potts writes further, "The most frequently cited suggestions for the location of Meluhha, on the other hand, are in Africa (Nubia, Ethiopia) and the Baluchistan/ Indus Valley region" (281).

[67] In the Amarna Letters, the land of the Kassites (Kaššu; EA 76; 104; 116) differ from Nubia/Cush (Kaša or Kaši; gentilic "Kašite") both in spelling and frequency of occurrence. It is the latter which occurs more frequently (e.g., Moran, *Amarna Letters*, EA 49; 127; 131; 133; 287; 288).

[68] Moran, *Amarna Letters*, 182, EA 108.

[69] Moran, *Amarna Letters*, 207, EA 127; also, EA 131.

[70] William F. Albright, "Magan, Meluha and the Synchronism between Menes and Narâm-sin," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 7 (1921): 84, writes that in the Amarna period, "Kâši and Meluha interchange repeatedly, and where others use Kâši in referring to the Sudanese mercenaries of Egypt, employed as zaptiyes in Palestine, Rib-Addi nearly always speaks of troops from Misri and Meluha (e.g. EA, 70, 112, 118, etc.)." See also Moran, *Amarna Letters*, EA 95, 132, 133.

[71] William F. Albright, "New Light on Magan and Meluha," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 42 (1922): 318: "In late Assyrian texts, from Sargon to Aššurbânapal, Meluha always refers to the Ethiopia *magna* of the Pianhi dynasty, and is thus often extended to include Egypt, which formed a part of the Ethiopian Empire." See also, Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 276; Potts, "Road to Meluhha," 280, 284.

[72] According to Sargon's description of events in 712 B.C., upon his approach to quell rebellion in Palestine, the rebel prince Iamani "fled to the side (boundary) of Egypt which is on the border of Meluhha (Ethiopia), to be seen no more." But the king of Meluhha deported Iamani to Assyria, for fear of the "terrifying splendour" of Sargon's royal majesty (Daniel D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 2 vols. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927], 2:31-32, §62-§63). In his 701 campaign into Palestine, Sennacherib, claimed that the rebel officials of Ekron and Hezekiah the Jew, "became afraid and called upon the Egyptian kings, the bowmen, chariots and horses of the king of Meluhha (Ethiopia), a countless host, and these came to their aid." But with the help of his god, Sennacherib claimed to have captured alive "the charioteers and Egyptian princes, together with the charioteers of the king of Meluhha" (Luckenbill, *ARAB*, 2:119-120, §240; 143, §311). In his pursuit of Taharqa, Eshardaddon claimed to have left Egypt and "marched straight to Meluhha" (Luckenbill, *ARAB*, 2:220, §557). Elsewhere Esarhaddon declares, "And I, Esarhaddon,

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One interesting observation regarding the evident toponymical shift of Meluhha from an eastern to a western location is that, on the one hand, some Assyriologists concerned with this subject are prepared to invoke interpretational "error" as the reason for the shift in location. John Hansman, for example, writes that "The later associations [of Magan and Meluhha with Egypt and Nubia] then may have arisen from logical but incorrect interpretations of the earlier records."[73] On the other hand, biblical scholars studying the Nimrod account in Genesis 10 are also willing to invoke historiographic error to explain the apparent confusion between African Cush and Mesopotamian Kish.

Thus, mistaken interpretation, it is supposed by some Assyriologists, accounts for the shift from east to west, while mistaken historiography is invoked by some biblical scholars to explain the shift from west to east. Rather than invoking error in either case, it seems quite plausible that there may be some unique relationship between the two regions which may account for their association, and that for reasons yet unknown, both biblical and non-biblical sources reflect the shift of Meluhha from regions of the east to Africa in the west. But how exactly might Meluhha and Sumer be related, and what might Sumerian Kish and Indian Meluhhans have to do with Cushites, an African people? Some suggestions follow.

According to the Sumerian King List, when kingship was first lowered down from heaven following the flood, it was upon the city of Kish that the gods chose to bestow this gift.[74] Indeed the first historically attested dynasty in Sumer is the so-named First Dynasty of Kish, dating from about the middle of the third millennium B.C.[75] Kish was a leading city in Sumer and exerted considerable influence over southern Babylonia. Kish was the seat (at least initially) of the famous Sargon of Agade (also Akkad; biblical Accad), who has been identified

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king of the universe, king of Assyria . . . [king] of the kings of Dilmun, Magan (and) Meluhha, king of the four regions of the world" (Luckenbill, *ARAB*, 2:257, §668; Erle Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680-669 BC)* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011], 305). And in a parallel passage, Esarhaddon claims to be "the great king, the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria . . . king of Egypt, who bound the king of Meluhha (i.e., Kush, Ethiopia), king of the four regions (of the world)" (Luckenbill, *ARAB* 2:286, §759). Similarly, Ashurbanipal records: "In my first campaign I marched against Magan and Meluhha. . . . Against Egypt and Ethiopia, I directed the march" (Luckenbill, *ARAB*, 2:292-293, §770).

[73] Hansman, "Magan and Meluhha," 555.

[74] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 27, 46; Hasel, "Genealogies of Genesis," 370-371.

[75] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 42.

with Nimrod by some scholars.[76] The title "King of Kish" carried time-honored prestige and would be taken up time and again by later dynastic kings as a means of asserting sovereignty over all of Sumer.[77] This mean therefore, that early Sumer would have been the dominion of the "kingdom" of Kish.[78]

Though later dismissed by most scholars, as early as 1914 C. van Gelderen, noting the interchangeability of the vowels u/i in Kush/Kish as simply regional variation of the same name, suggested that the author of the Table of Nations knew of "a very ancient historical connexion between the city of Kish and the Kushites enumerated in v. 7."[79] Van Geldern sought to emphasize the correspondence between Cush the grandson of Noah as an early post-flood figure, and the Babylonian tradition of Kish as the first seat of kingly power following the flood. He implied that Cushites would have been part of the milieu of early Babylonia, a situation which he believed is reflected in the Table of Nations.[80] If Van Gelderen is correct, as this study seeks to affirm, is there additional evidence that may connect ancient Sumer with Cushites? There may be.

The Sumerians (and Babylonians) called themselves "the black-headed people."[81] The creation of the "black-heads," *the* true representation of mankind, is related in the Sumerian myth *Enki and the World Order*:

> After An, Enki, and Ninhursag
> Had fashioned the black-headed people,
> Vegetation luxuriated from the earth,
> Animals, four-legged (creatures) of the plain were

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[76] See Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 350-366; Petrovich, "Identifying Nimrod," 273-305; C. Van Gelderen, "Who Was Nimrod?" *The Expositor* 9 (1914): 274-282. Cf. Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 63.

[77] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 49, 55. Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 359: "In successive generations the title 'King of Kish' would come to mean a divinely authorized ruler over all of Sumer and would be claimed at different times by the rulers of the various cities. Use of the title King of Kish implied such qualities as being victorious at war, a righteous judge and a builder of cities." Cf. Van Gelderen, "Who Was Nimrod?" 276.

[78] Cf. Van Gelderen, "Who Was Nimrod?" 276.

[79] Van Gelderen, "Who Was Nimrod?" 277.

[80] Van Gelderen, "Who Was Nimrod?" 277-278.

[81] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 285; James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955), 1:28; Nicole Brisch, "History and Chronology," in *The Sumerian World*, ed. Harriet E. Crawford (New York: Routledge, 2013), 111; Bahrani, "Mesopotamian Antiquity," 54-55.

brought artfully into existence.[82]

Following the creation of the world and of the "black-heads," Enki first blesses Sumer and Ur its capital city, and then immediately proceeds to grant his blessings to the land of Meluhha:

> Then he proceeded to the land of Meluhha,
> Enki the king of *apsu* decreed its fate,
> 'Black land, may your tree be a big tree,
> may [your] forest be of highland 'mes'-trees.[83]

That Enki's blessing of Meluhha follows right after that of Sumer, indicates at a minimum friendly relation between Sumer and Meluhha, or perhaps an even deeper cultural or genetic relationship between the two. Commenting on Enki's blessing of Meluhha, Samuel Kramer, notes, "Remarkably enough, Enki is almost as favorably disposed to this land as to Sumer itself."[84] Elsewhere, Kramer elaborates on the potential meaning of the Sumerian favourable disposition toward Meluhha: "the fact that the Sumerian poets and men of letters were so favorably disposed toward it would tend to indicate that there was a rather close and intimate relationship between Meluhha and Sumer, far closer and far more intimate than has hitherto been generally thought."[85] In the same way, Sumerians were favorably disposed to the inhabitants of Magan and Dilmun, but showed "bitterness, scorn, and hatred" toward many other neighbouring lands and peoples.[86] Thus, unlike Meluhhans, groups such as the Gutians, Subarians, the Hurrians, and the Martus, were objects of Sumerian scorn.[87]

5.2.2.3 Meluhha, the "Black Land"

Significantly, in Enki's pronunciation of blessing, Meluhha is called the "black land."

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[82] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 286.

[83] C. A. Benito, *Enki and Ninmah and Enki and the World Order* (PhD Dissertation; Philadelphia: Department of Oriental Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1969), 125. Cf. Samuel N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C.*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), xvi, 60-61; Possehl, "Meluhha," 143.

[84] Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, 60-61.

[85] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 280-281. Similarly, Wright, *Ancient Indus*, 223, believes that the archaeological and textual evidence, "suggest a remarkably close relationship, as they show that Indus people actually traveled to Mesopotamia and a few who may have emigrated to Mesopotamia."

[86] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 286. Rather than a blessing, Enki subjects the lands of Elam and Marhashi to tribute; see Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, xvi.

[87] See Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 286-287.

The "black land" receives the blessing of Enki, one of the leading Sumerian deities. Apart from the fact that the Meluhhans are said to be mountain dwellers,[88] Meluhha as a "black land" is one of the most emphasized ascriptions of this land. In the *Curse of Agade*, an old Babylonian text extolling Naram-Sin of Agade, the following is observed of the inhabitants of Meluhha: "The Meluhhaites, the men of the black land, brought exotic wares down to him [Naram-Sin]"[89] In an inscription of King Šulgi of Ur (ruled 2094-2047 BC), the king is said to be able to speak in five languages: those of Elam, Sumer, the "black country" (Meluhha), Martu, and Subir.[90] But what does the "black land" mean as a reference to the land of the Meluhhans? Is this designation meant to signify the nature of the land or a prominent physical characteristic of the people? For Kramer, the reference to the "black land" is a reference to the people of the land and parallels another text of the first millennium B.C. which speaks of "the black Meluhhaites."[91] Likewise Gelb understands these references as a physical description of the people of the land:

> Four pieces of evidence based on conquests place Meluhha close to Mesopotamia, specifically in Iran east of Elam and Ansan. The evidence concerning the lapis lazuli, the sissoo-tree, and the black people of Meluhha, corresponding to the *Aithiopes* of classical times, place Meluhha between Iran and Afghanistan. The farthest extent of Meluhha in India is indicated by the imports.[92]

Similarly, the western Meluhhans are also described as black: "In the Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal inscriptions, Magan and Meluha certainly correspond to Egypt and Ethiopia

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[88] See Possehl, "Meluhha," 139-140.

[89] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 63, 278. Cf. Possehl, "Meluhha," 139.

[90] Parpola, *Roots of Hinduism*, 218.

[91] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 278. Kramer writes further, "In the post-Sumerian periods, we find Meluhha mentioned several times as a place of 'black men,' which leads naturally to an identification of Meluhha with Ethiopia" (277). Kramer is among a small minority of scholars who believes Meluhha in both the earliest and latest sources refer to Ethiopia.

[92] Gelb, "Makkan and Meluhha," 6. Cf. Thapar, "Meluhha, Dilmun and Makan," 11-12. The identification of the people of Meluhha by Assyriologists as black people based upon the ascription "black land" in the sources contrasts with Egyptologists who see the designation of Upper Egypt as the "black land" (*kmt*) as a reference singularly to the black alluvial soil surrounding the Nile. But if elsewhere the "black land" is understood as a clear indication of the people of the land, the possibility should not be foreclosed that the term may equally refer to the people of Upper Egypt. Egypt and Nubia were adjacent lands and shared millennia of cultural, political, and economic ties.

respectively, and the men of Meluha are called *salmûti*, 'black.'"[93] Is it possible that the "black peoples" of Meluhha may correspond in some way to the generic name the Sumerians gave themselves—"the black-headed people"? Though the term "black-headed people" eventually came to be a blanket term for the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, even being used into the Neo-Assyrian period,[94] its later usage does not preclude the possibility that the earliest usage of the term may have described a conspicuous phenotypic characteristic of the first inhabitants of the region. The frequent association of Meluhha both east and west with "black land" and "black peoples" seem to suggest a commonality, even genetic relationships between these groups.

The *Periplus of the Erythrian Sea* (first century A.D.), indicates that the people of the Gujarat region on the western coast of India and the southern coast of Pakistan are "tall in stature and black in complexion."[95] Romila Thapar suggests that these may be some of the black people of Meluhha to be identified in the Sumerian sources.[96] Whether this is the case or not, it is clear that the Sumerian civilization developed from a mixture of linguistic and ethnic groups in southern Mesopotamia, and these people called themselves "black-heads."[97] That black peoples or "black-headed" peoples may have had a formative role in the ethnic milieu of early Babylonia should not be discounted out of hand. Enki's blessing upon Meluhha might actually imply a genetic relationship between the people of the black land the black-headed people of early Mesopotamia.

Furthermore, if Meluhha is indeed close to Mesopotamia and is potentially a large geographic area extending from Iran through Pakistan into India, the possibility of migration and the influence of early Meluhhans on the politics of Mesopotamia is not far-fetched. The Assyrian king Sargon of Agade claims that he conquered Dilmun, Magan and Meluhha.[98] If Sargon exerted military and political influence in Meluhha, then the reverse could also have

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[93] Albright, "Meluha and the Synchronism," 84.

[94] Bahrani, "Mesopotamian Antiquity," 54. On Assyrian ethnic identity, see Simo Parpola, "National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18 (2004): 5-22.

[95] Citation in Thapar, "Meluhha, Dilmun and Makan," 12. Cf. Thapar, *Cultural Pasts*, 274-283.

[96] Thapar, "Meluhha, Dilmun and Makan," 12. Cf. Thapar, *Cultural Pasts*, 280. Many other scholars identify this region as part of the Meluhha of the Sumerian sources. See again, Hansman, "Magan and Meluhha," 562.

[97] William H. Stiebing, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture* (New York: Longman, 2003), 38-39.

[98] Samuel N. Kramer, "The Indus Civilization and Dilmun, the Sumerian Paradise Land," *Vetus Testamentum* 6 (1964): 49. Cf. Possehl, "Meluhha," 139.

been true in earlier periods. Perhaps, Meluhhans exerted a formative political influence on the culture and civilization of early Babylonia. While the origin of the Sumerians remains debated in scholarship,[99] it is clear that the Sumerian language is non-Semitic, even though ancient Sumer consisted of multiple linguistic and ethnic groups.[100] Some scholars argue that the Sumerians displaced an earlier population (often called the Ubaid culture) and therefore have their origin elsewhere.[101] Others suggest that the Sumerians share genetic and cultural affiliation with the Harappan civilization of Pakistan and the Indus Valley.

Asko Parpola, for instance, suggests that the presence of Harappan material culture in Mesopotamia may go beyond trade to indicate that "Harappans were already present in Sumer" in the middle of the third millennium B.C.[102] And Richard Hess is even more direct: "The Sumerian name for Babylonians and other peoples as 'black headed', and Sumerian references to the Indus Valley may suggest Indian origin."[103] Archaeological evidence abounds of Harappan material culture in Sumer, the wider Mesopotamian world, and Gulf region.[104] One important motif found of seals associated with the Harappan culture involves a human figure in combat with animals, particularly two tigers.[105] The commonality of human heroic figures wrestling lions on Babylonian seals,[106] may indicate a shared motif of great human hunters in Harappan and Babylonian cultures reminiscent of the biblical Nimrod, the "mighty hunter." Likewise, Indian flood stories and king lists are strikingly similar to the Sumerian flood stories and king lists, causing Thapar to wonder if such stories did not arrive in India from Sumer via the Harappan culture.[107]

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[99] Brisch, "History and Chronology," 111-112.

[100] Stiebing, *History and Culture*, 37-39; Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 42-43, 288; Wiseman, "Genesis 10," 21.

[101] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 29, 40-43. According to Kramer, the Sumerians likely replaced a "proto-Euphratean" population who were "the first civilizing force of ancient Sumer" (40-41). See also Stiebing, *History and Culture*, 37; Brisch, "History and Chronology," 111-112.

[102] See Parpola, *Roots of Hinduism*, 212.

[103] Richard S. Hess, "Sumer," in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood et al. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 1137.

[104] See again the in-depth discussion in Possehl, "Meluhha," esp., 147-175. Cf. Thapar, "Meluhha, Dilmun and Makan," 12.

[105] Possehl, "Meluhha," 179-180. Cf. Thapar, *Cultural Pasts*, 300; Wright, *Ancient Indus*, 229.

[106] Kraeling, "Name of Nimrod," 216.

[107] Thapar, *Cultural Pasts*, 762, 787. See also, Stavig Gopal, "India and the Pentateuch," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 80 (1999): 77-94.

A final piece of evidence worth considering is population genetics. Recent population genetic evidence suggests a connection between eastern populations and Sub-Saharan Africa. Stephen Oppenheimer's synthesis is worth quoting at length:

> What of other peoples who may be genetically closer to Africans as a result of their position on the old beachcombing trail — what can comparing the frequencies of retention of ancestral gene types in African and non-African peoples tell us? Two regions stand out. The closest (along with Australians and New Guineans) are those in Pakistan and the southern Arabian peninsula . . .
>
> The root position of Pakistanis and southern Arabians in retaining ancient African genetic diversity is certainly what we would expect from our proposed southern route out of Africa, and there are other pieces of evidence to support this. Along the south coast of Arabia are the isolated Hadramaut peoples, described by some as Australoid. Their maternal genetic make-up includes 40 percent of African genetic lines . . . . Farther along the Indian Ocean coast the peninsular Indian populations also group genetically closer to the African root than do more easterly Asian peoples. Indian ethnic groups, both caste and tribal, were included in a large study of nuclear autosomal (non-sex-linked) markers. They were found to retain a higher rate of the African ancestral types than do Europeans and other Asian groups.
>
> There are other signs that the ancient African genetic diversity has been preserved in Pakistan. While the population of Pakistan in general shares some ancient mtDNA links with India, Europe and the Middle East, they also possess unique markers that are found nowhere else outside Africa. There are indeed populations that hark back to that ancient connection. One aboriginal so-called Negrito group, the Makrani, found at the mouth of the Indus and along the Baluchistan sea coast of Pakistan, have an African Y-chromosome marker previously only found in Africa that is characteristic of sub-Saharan Africa. The same marker, though, is found at slightly lower frequencies throughout other populations of southern Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, and at higher rates in Iran. Another unique Y-chromosome marker appears outside Africa only in this region. One other ancient Y-chromosome marker points specifically to Pakistan as an early source and parting of the ways. This is an early branch off the Out-of-Africa Adam that is present at high frequency in Pakistan and at lower frequencies only in India (especially in tribal groups) and further north in the Middle East, Kashmir, Central Asia, and Siberia. The fact that this marker is not found farther east in Asia suggests that the only way it could have arrived in Central Asia was by a direct early northern spread up the Indus to Kashmir and farther north.[108]

This lengthy quotation is highly relevant to the geographical extent of ancient Cushites.

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[108] Stephen Oppenheimer, *The Real Eve: Modern Man's Journey out of Africa* (New York, N.Y.: Carroll & Graf, 2004), 175-176. A shorter citation of Oppenheimer is in Stephan H. Levitt, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Place Name 'Meluhha'," *Studia Orientalia* 107 (2009): 143.

While population geneticists place human origin in Africa, suggesting an outward migration about 60,000-85,000 years ago along the Arabian and Indian Ocean coastline based on the so-named Out-of-Africa hypothesis,[109] the Genesis text suggests human migration took place in the opposite direction and much more recently—according to what might be called the Out-of-Mesopotamia historiography.

Nevertheless, what is rather striking is the correspondence between the biblical placing of "Africans" in the east and the distribution of Sub-Saharan African genetic markers in eastern populations. Our discussion of ANE sources has already identified Iran, Pakistan (especially along the Baluchistan), the Persian Gulf, and the Indus civilization as the most probable geography of the "black land" of Meluhha.[110] And our discussion of biblical Cush has already identified Nubia and Arabia with toponyms in the genealogy of Cush. It is quite intriguing that these very localities are identified as containing populations with the highest frequency of ancient "African" genetic markers, with some markers occurring nowhere else outside of Africa except in some of these locations. There is thus a strong genetic connection between Sub-Saharan Africans and the continuum of peoples along the Arabian and Indian Ocean regions from both our study of ancient sources and modern population genetics. In either case, it would appear that "Africans" had a defining role in the beginnings of human civilization.

This study proposes that the Genesis primeval history as well as ANE sources reflect a tradition that links these populations genetically to a common ancestor known as Cush/Kush/Kash/Kish, with variant spelling of the name appearing in different places.[111]

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[109] The Out-of-Africa hypothesis is the dominant scientific explanation for the peopling of the non-African world. According to this theory, modern humans left Africa less than 100,000 year ago in a single migration. This African migration wiped out and replaced all other hominid species on the globe. Thus, only a single African male and female line is responsible for the "fathering" and "mothering" of the entire non-African world. See Oppenheimer, *The Real Eve*, xx-xxi; Spencer Wells, *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey* (London: Allen Lane, 2002).

[110] Though Thapar, *Cultural Pasts*, 279-280, suggests that "Meluhha" may derive from the proto-Dravidian root *mēl*, meaning "high," "up," "western," etc., it might even be that the Greek *mélas* whose main meaning is "black," "dark," "dark-blue" (W. Michaelis, "mélas," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey William Bromiley [Grand Rapids Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985], 577) could possibly be related to or derived from the root *mēl* of Meluhha.

[111] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 298, for example, suggests that the vowels *u* and *e* are interchangeable in "Shum" and "Shem" based on Akkadian and Hebrew spelling, respectively; which may be an indication that ancient "Shumer" or Sumer was named after Shem, the eponymous ancestor of the Semites.

Mesopotamia had cities like Kish and Kesh.[112] And still today certain eastern localities maintain eponymical vestiges of this genealogical past. The *Hindu Kush* mountains which are adjacent to the Indus Valley (the heart of Harappan civilization) and runs through Pakistan and Afghanistan may reflect an ancient eponym. The same may be true for names such as Kashmir, or the name for the island of Kish in the Persian Gulf off the southern coast of Iran, or the Kutch island and the Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat on the western coast of India.[113] As a final consideration on the geography of Cush, the historical problem of the two Meluhhas is identical to the later problem of the "two Ethiopias" which appear in a host of classical sources.

5.2.2.4 Excursus: The Two Ethiopias in Classical Sources

The apparent "confusion" between Cush/Kush/Kish/Meluhha in the east and west which is found in ANE sources is evident in a significant number of sources both ancient and modern. "The confusion or interchange between the names Kush/Ethiopia and India is found from antiquity to the modern period in Greco-Roman, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic sources," writes David Goldenberg.[114] Herodotus for example identifies both eastern and western Ethiopians in the Persian army:

> The Ethiopians above Egypt and the Arabians had Arsames for commander, while the Ethiopians of the east (for there were two kinds of them in the army) served with the Indians; they were not different in appearance from the others, only in speech and hair: the Ethiopians from the east are straight-haired, but the ones from Libya have the woolliest hair of all men. [2] These Ethiopians of Asia were for the most part armed like the Indians; but they wore on their heads the skins of horses' foreheads, stripped from the head with ears and mane.[115]

Herodotus distinguishes somatically between the "eastern Ethiopians" and the "Indians." The former he says are not different from the "western Ethiopians" except in terms

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[112] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 207; Brisch, "History and Chronology," 118.

[113] Akkadian cultural artifacts have been found at Kutch and other sites in the Baluchistan (Pakistan). See Thapar, *Cultural Pasts*, 274-275, 281.

[114] Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*, 211. Cf. Philip Mayerson, "A Confusion of Indias: Asian India and African India in the Byzantine Sources," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113 (1993): 174: "It should also be noted that the 'confusion of Indias' that exists in the Greek and Latin notices also appears in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac."

[115] Herodotus, *Histories*, VII: 69-70.

of their language and hair texture. But the eastern Ethiopians fight alongside the Indians from the east while the western Ethiopians fight alongside the Arabians. According to David Asheri, Herodotus' eastern Ethiopians are probably to be located in the vicinity of the Baluchistan in Pakistan.[116] This location is consistent with the evidence that have been uncovered thus far.

Yet long before Herodotus, Hesiod and Homer were well aware of an eastern Ethiopia, and so were subsequent Greek writers. Indeed, the idea of two Ethiopias, one eastern and the other western became entrenched in Greek idealization of Ethiopia.[117] According to Homer, for instance, not only do the gods dwell among the "blameless Ethiopians" but the Ethiopians were "apart furthest of men, some beyond the setting sun, others beyond the rising sun"; they "dwell sundered in twain, the farthest of men."[118] And it is from the *east* that, according to the earliest traditions about him, Memnon, the mythical Ethiopian hero of the Trojan war derives.[119]

For Homer, the magnificent Ethiopian hero "was the most handsome man at Troy."[120] According to Bernal, "There is no doubt that he came to Troy from the east and, by the 5th century, Herodotus was describing Susa in Elam as the 'city of Memnon.'"[121] Interestingly, in one tradition Memnon's mother is said to be "Kissian," which Bernal suggests may indicate her Cushite origin or that she was Black.[122] Snowden affirms this link between Memnon and Susa:

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[116] See David Asheri, Alan B. Lloyd and Aldo Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I-V*, eds. Oswyn Murray and Alfonso Moreno (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 492.

[117] For Homer, Herodotus, and many of the Greek writers, the Ethiopians are the noblest of men, the most pious, just, and blameless; they are also the most handsome, the longest-lived, and their land is so bountiful and prosperous that the gods partake of limitless and sumptuous feasting among them. Homer, *Il*. 1.424-425, for example, writes: "For Zeus is at Ocean among the blameless Ethiopians, gone to earth for banquets; all the god are there with him." The Ethiopians were also idealized for their bravery and skill in battle; e.g., Herodotus, *Hist*. 3.17-25. See Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 144-155; Aaron P. Johnson, "The Blackness of Ethiopians: Classical Ethnography and Eusebius's Commentary on the Psalms," *Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006): 167-170. Romm, *Edges of the Earth*, 49-60, suggests this mytholigyzing tradition by the Greeks which priveleged everything Ethiopian was rooted in an "inverse ethnocentrism" which idealized the periphery in order to indict the moral failings of one's own society.

[118] Homer, *Od*. 1.23-24. Cf. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 144-147; Bernal, *Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 32.

[119] Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 151; Bernal, *Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 32, 259: Cf. Keita, "Africans and Asians," 11.

[120] Homer, *Od*. 11.522. Cf. Bernal, *Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 32, 261.

[121] Bernal, *Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 259.

[122] Bernal, *Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 259.

"As to an eastern origin it was Susa with which Memnon was frequently associated."[123] Thus, according to one stream of this tradition Memnon is dispatched from the east to aid king Priam of Troy; he is accompanied by an army of twenty thousand, "one half Ethiopian the other half from Susa."[124] Bernal remarks that "Blacks" or "Negritos" "formed the basic population of Elam,"[125] and from Artaxerxes II's adoption of the name, by the Persian period "Memnon would seem to have been a national hero of Elam."[126]

Though Memnon would also acquire an equally strong African provenance in Greek and Roman tradition, from the earliest classical sources to the Roman poets, Memnon is an eastern hero and unmistakenly black.[127] Various version of the Memnon tradition appear in a host of classical sources, including Diodorus, Strabo, Dio Crysostom, Athenaeus, Heliodorus, Philostratus, Catulus, Seneca, and Ovid.[128] For Hesiod writing around the tenth century B.C., Memnon is the "brazen-crested King of the Ethiopians."[129] In Virgil's *Aeneid*, the hero who comes to Troy with his "Eastern hordes" is called "swarthy Memnon,"[130] and Quintus Smyrnaeus emblematizes the Black hero thus:

> Till our new champion come, the stormy heart of Memnon. Lo, he cometh, leading on Hosts numberless, Aethiopia's swarthy sons.[131]

It is clear, that a strong ancient tradition places Cushites/Blacks in both eastern and western locations, some of whom are memorialized for heroic deeds. Beyond the classical tradition, sources too numerous to list here continued to confuse the location of the two Ethiopias well into modern times. In these sources "Ethiopia" or "India" is variously located in Africa, Arabia or on the Indian subcontinent; and African peoples are called Indians with the

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[123] Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 151.

[124] Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 151.

[125] Bernal, *Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 32.

[126] Bernal, *Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 259.

[127] Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 151-153; Bernal, *Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 32, 259. Cf. Keita, "Africans and Asians," 10-11.

[128] Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 151-153.

[129] Hesiod, *Theogonia*, 985-986; Cf. Bernal, *Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, 258; Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 151.

[130] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1.489. Cf. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 153.

[131] Quintus Smyrnaeus, *The Fall of Troy, trans.* Arthur S. Way (London: Heinemann, 1913), 71.

same frequency with which Indian peoples are called "Ethiopians."[132]

5.2.3 Summary

To summarize this section on the primeval depiction of the geography of Cush, a litany of circumstantial evidence from ANE and classical sources in addition to modern population genetics was marshalled to demonstrate that what is usually dismissed from exegesis of Genesis 10:8-12 as a historiographic error, namely the placing of Nimrod the Cushite in primeval Mesopotamia, is likely an accurate depiction of early Mesopotamian history. It seems highly probable that "Negrito" peoples, to be identified with populations from Arabia to Iran, to Pakistan and India played a significant role in the development of civilization in early Mesopotamia. These peoples are called Meluhhans in Old Babylonian sources, but eponymical place names in the east (Kish, Kesh, Kash, Kush, Kutch) may be an indication that these peoples identified with an eponymous ancestor of this name and thus defined themselves as Kushites. Equally, variations of "Cush" may indicate the dark pigmentation of those thus designated. Cushites/Kushites thus covered a broad geographic area stretching from Africa to India.

Historically it seems likely that Meluhhans/Cushites were understood as peoples who shared common "African" or "Negrito" characteristics, especially having very dark to black-skin, and were seen by the ancients as genetically related populations, hence the identification of an eastern and western Meluhha and the "confusion" between the two Ethiopias.[133] The physical characteristic of skin colour may not have been the only means of identifying a Cushite, but it may be that in certain areas where the toponym "Cush" applied, such populations may have shared the phenotypic characteristic of dark skin colour and possibly Africoid features. Yet, for the author of the Table of Nations, skin colour played no obvious or identifiable role in his ethnographical outline. Thus, there is no assertion of a common phenotypic representation of the Cushite from the perspective of the Table of Nations.

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[132] For a listing of the extensive literature on the subject see Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*, 377-378, and Mayerson, "Confusion of Indias," 169-174.

[133] Some anthropologists suggest that a "Negrito" element was the original population group in India. See Satya P. Sharma, "Some Observations on the Classification of the Tribal Population in India in Racial Terms," *Indian Anthropologist* 1 (1971): 46-49, who cites a number of anthropologists who believe that "the Negrito element is the original or the first racial strain and that it was associated with the aboriginal peoples of India" (48).

Cushites across the broad geographic spectrum of Nubia, Arabia, southern Palestine, Mesopotamia, and the far east would come from a variety of cultural and national backgrounds and exhibit a wide range of somatic characteristics, such as varying degrees of skin colour. What the author of Genesis intends to demonstrate is the *origin* and ethnic affiliation of the various peoples, not their somatic characteristics.

The biblical tradition also demonstrates the shift in toponymical localities which has been so puzzling for biblical scholars. While the Cush of the primeval history is identified with an eastern location, the Table of Nations does not preclude the possibility of an African Cush.[134] But it was the former which first came to prominence and the one which the Genesis primeval story recalls. In later biblical tradition, however, African Cush both because of its proximity and influence on Egypt and the Levant becomes the definitive Cush. The prominence of African Cush in the biblical text has lead biblical scholars to erroneously equate African Cush with the primeval Cush of Genesis. But the Genesis primeval portrait of a Cush in the east, this work maintains, is borne out by the evidence. Yet, it is African Cush, the one which features most in the Hebrew Bible, which will occupy our attention for the remaining chapters. Before turning our attention to African Cush, however, the final section of this chapter looks at the third constituent element of the ethnic construction of Cushites in the Genesis primeval story.

5.3 THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF NIMROD THE CUSHITE

How does the biblical author evaluate Nimrod the Cushite and his empire-building activities vis-à-vis the concept of election (i.e., his relationship to Yahweh the universal God)? To set Nimrod's theological evaluation in context, it is necessary to contemplate briefly how the primeval account constructs Ham (and Canaan) as moral and religious opposites of Shem.

5.3.1 Moral-Theological Evaluation of Ham and Canaan

We have already seen that the Genesis primeval story is not concerned with ethnic

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[134] Michael C. Astour, "Sabtah and Sabteca: Ethiopian Pharaoh Names in Genesis 10," *JBL* 84 (1965): 422-425, suggests that the sons of Cush, Sabtah and Sabteca (Gen 10:7), are to be identified with the pharaohs Shabaka (also spelled, Shabaqo) and Shabataka (also spelled, Shebitqo/Shebiktu) of the 25th Nubian Dynasty. The former he believes is a "quite probable" identification, while the latter he suggests is "certain" (424). See also Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 511, for discussion.

difference *qua* ethnic difference but is concerned with ethnic difference as an expression of religious identity. Since it is through genealogical lineages that religious identity is transmitted, genealogy and religious identity become analogous for the Genesis author. In the closing scenes of the primeval history, Ham and his descendants come to symbolize moral and religious difference. Chapter 2 and Appendix A of this study shows that ethnic identity cannot exist in isolation but must be defined in contrast to an "Other." In the process of constructing ethno-religious identity in the primeval account, it is Hamites who become the outgroup, the "othered." But again, citing Robert Cohn, "The otherness of the Hamites is not biological, not racial, not written into the nature of things, but rather moral, the result of human choices."[135] Inasmuch as Israelite ethnic identity is constructed around moral and religious issues, so too Ham and his descendants are judged and othered based on moral and religious premises.

In the story of Noah's curse (9:18-27), Ham is characterized as the moral and religious opposite of Shem and the postdiluvian "father" of sexual immorality.[136] Ham is not simply morally deficient, but the declaration made by Noah concerning Shem, "Blessed be Yahweh the God of Shem" (or, "blessed be Shem of Yahweh" [NRSV]), implies that Yahweh is not the God of Ham.[137] Ham's wicked deed symbolizes his rejection of Yahweh, while Shem's deed symbolizes his acceptance of Yahweh.[138] Thus Ham is a religious "Other," an idolater. The

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[135] Cohn, "Ancestors and Identity in Genesis," 150.

[136] Gen 1-11 has rightly been characterized as a founding story. It is a story of firsts. Like Ham, the founder of postdiluvian sexual immorality, there are many "fathers" or founders in the primeval story such as Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain, founders of tent-dwellers, musicians, and metallurgy, respectively. Noah is also a founder—of husbandry and viticulture, and thus the father of wine. He is not only the first to plant a vineyard, but he is also the first to experience the moral result of immoderate indulgence of wine, which is regarded unfavourably in the biblical tradition (Hab 2:15-16; Lam 4:21-22). For discussion see, Westermann, *An Introduction*, 11; Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 145-146; Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, 181, 183, 185; Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 28; John Van Seters, *The Pentateuch: A Social-Science Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 118.

[137] Yahweh is also the God of Japheth and thus Japheth too will share in the blessings of Shem: "God will enlarge (יַפְתְּ) Japheth (יֶפֶת) and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (9:27).

[138] Cf. Crüsemann, "Genealogical System of Genesis," 72. There is no consensus as to the birth order of Noah's sons. Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 190, 198, for example, suggest that Japheth is the oldest while Ham is the youngest. Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, 182, Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 324, and Von Rad, *Genesis*, 135, 137, also have Ham as the youngest; whereas Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 483-484, indicates that Shem is the oldest and Japheth is the youngest. Commentators ancient and modern are also divided as to the precise nature of Ham's misdeed. Some suggest sexual incest (Von Rad, *Genesis*, 137, for example), while others suggest the act consisted of seeing only (Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 488, and Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 151, for instance).

misdeed of Noah's youngest son forecasts the perpetuation of moral depravity in his progeny Canaan.[139] The cursing of Canaan (9:25-26) and the delimitation of the geographic boundaries of the Canaanites (10:19) forecast—or more properly—reflect the antagonism between the descendants of Shem, the Israelites, and the descendants of Ham, the Canaanites.[140] Ham's sexually perverse character and presumably his idolatry is reflected in the deeds of the Canaanites who are under the Noahic curse. Further along Israelite theological trajectory, Noah's curse on Canaan transforms into Yahweh's *herem*, an act of judgment against certain Canaanite tribes.[141]

Apart from the Babel account which implicates humanity collectively, only Ham and his progeny are selected for negative appraisal in Genesis 9:18-11:1-9. This evaluation applies not only to Canaanites, but in a sense, all of Ham's descendants are implicated in the misdeed of

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[139] Cf. Cassuto, *Book of Genesis*, 149-150; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 135.

[140] Apart from a moral indictment of Canaanite religious and social practices and an aetiological justification for the dispossession of the Canaanites, Noah's curse does not reflect any particular historical relationship between Hamites, Shemites, and Japhites. Under what situation do Japhites dwell in the tents of Shem? And at what point are Canaanites the perpetual slaves of Shemites and Japhites? That Noah's curse does not have a historical "fulfillment" apart from the dispossession of the Canaanites is borne out by the biblical text itself. First, not all Shemites are worshippers of Yahweh. In fact, only one Shemite—Abraham— is chosen to perpetuate the religion of Yahweh in the earth. And not even all the descendants of Abraham are chosen or remain true to the religion of Yahweh. In the biblical text Ishmaelites, Edomites, and other Shemites like Moabites and Ammonites are idolaters and Israel's enemies. Only the Israelites are "truly" monotheistic Yahwists—at least at ideal moments in the biblical text. Furthermore, the relationship between Canaanites and Israelites requires careful qualification, for the Hebrew Bible does not present a static or homogenous portrayal of Canaanites (cf. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 136). For example, in the conquest narratives Israelites do not come to possess the land of Canaan entirely. Neither do they enslave all Canaanite tribes at any point. As is well known, the narratives of extermination one finds in Deuteronomy becomes softened in the latter parts of Joshua: many nations are not annihilated or driven out of the land. By the time of the Judges Israelites are dwelling among the inhabitants of the land, sometimes as overlords, other times as vassals, and sometimes intermarrying with Canaanite peoples. Later, it is Canaanites of Tyre who furnish craftsmen and materials for David's palace and Solomon's temple (2 Sam 5:11; 1 King 5:1-18; 7:13). And it is Canaanite/Phoenician maritime enterprises which help to enrich Israel under Solomon (1 King 9:27; 10:11, 22). Thus, a variety of relationships ranging from extermination, to servitude, to overlordship, to trade and diplomacy, characterized the relationship between the Israelites and Canaanites according to Pentateuchal, historical and prophetic sources of the Hebrew Bible. The ethno-religious characterization of the Canaanites thus changed over time and in response to socio-political circumstances (cf. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 136). Therefore, apart from moral and religious implications, Noah's curse expresses a wish and not a forecast of future historical realities.

[141] *Herem* was not prescribed against Canaanites only, but was also to be carried out against any Israelite city which departed from Yahweh in order to serve "other gods" (Deut 13.12-16). See discussion in Moberly, "Transformation of *Hērem*," 70-71.

their primogenitor.[142] Nevertheless, it should be noted that moral and theological condemnation does not equate to historical forecast. At no point in historical times can Hamites (such as Egyptians, Philistines, Cushites, etc.) be said to be the perpetual slaves of Shemites and Japhites. Rather, Noah's curse, insofar as it applies to all of Ham's descendants, is limited to moral and religious indictment. The selection of Nimrod for commentary in Genesis 10:8-12, is yet another instance of theological judgment of Ham's progeny. If Ham is an idolater, then Nimrod, said to be a "mighty hunter *before* Yahweh," cannot be a "Yahwistic hero" as Theodore Hiebert has argued,[143] but must be seen within the current of religious otherness as his forebearer. Thus, Ham and Canaan, and as it will be argued here, Nimrod, are subjects of negative theological evaluation by the author of Genesis.

5.3.2 Nimrod and the Tower of Babel

Jewish and Christian exegetical evaluation of Nimrod, both past and present, have overwhelmingly cast him as a rebel, one whose actions are an affront to Yahweh.[144] In this exegetical tradition, Nimrod, who is not mentioned in Genesis 11, is implicated in the Tower of Babel account as the ringleader of an impudent crowd bent on defying the divine command to disperse over the earth. The identification of Nimrod as the mastermind behind the Tower of Babel is first made explicitly by Josephus. In Josephus' retelling of the story, not only is Nimrod incensed against Yahweh for destroying his forefathers, but his tower is meant to be a

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[142] As Cohn, "Ancestors and Identity in Genesis," 149-150, observes, "the logic of the tale [Noah's curse] sets apart all the descendants of Ham, including, for instance, the Egyptians and Philistines, for the sin of their ancestor."

[143] Theodore Hiebert, "The Tower of Babel and the Origin of the World's Cultures," *JBL* 126 (2007): 52. Cf. Knohl, "Nimrod, Son of Cush," 50.

[144] Early Jewish evaluation of Nimrod is found in *Jubilees* (circa 200 B.C.), Philo, Josephus, and numerous Haggadic sources, most of which portray Nimrod as an impious rebel. For the development of post-biblical tradition of Nimrod in Jewish and Christian literature, see, Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 16-29; Theodore Hiebert, "Babel: Babel or Blueprint? Calvin, Cultural Diversity, and the Interpretation of Genesis 11:1-9," in *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, ed. Wallace M. Alston and Michael Welker, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 2:127-145; Hiebert, "Tower of Babel," 29; James L. Kugel, "The Tower of Babel," in *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 228-42; Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 365-366; Mary Katherine Hom, "'. . . A Mighty Hunter before YHWH': Genesis 10:9 and the Moral-Theological Evaluation of Nimrod," *Vetus Testamentum* 60 (January 1, 2010): 64; Petrovich, "Identifying Nimrod," 273.

safeguard against another potential flood.[145] Subsequent commentators both ancient and modern have associated Nimrod with the building of the Tower of Babel.

Exegetes place Nimrod at the Babel scene for several reasons. First, the Genesis text connects Nimrod to Babel: "the beginning" of his kingdom was Babel (10:10); Babel is located in the land of Shinar in both Genesis 10:10 and 11:2. Next, the name Nimrod (נִמְרֹד) is believed to showcase the character of the bearer: נִמְרֹד is explained as a Niphal form of the Hebrew verb *marad* (מרד), to rebel.[146] Further, Nimrod is a "mighty one" (גִּבֹּר) in the earth, a fierce giant in some interpretations, descended in some fashion from the *Nephilim* (נְפִלִים) of Genesis 6:4; for like Nimrod, the *Nephilim* are also *giborim* (גִּבֹּרִים), "giants," "heroes," "mighty ones."[147] Moreover, Nimrod is described as a mighty hunter *before* (לִפְנֵי) Yahweh, wherein the Hebrew preposition *liphne* is understood by many exegetes as a statement of opposition to the divine will, thus placing Nimrod at Babel, the site of rebellion.[148] Finally, from a linguistic perspective, the use of the verb חלל in the Hiphil (which has the meaning "to profane" as well as "to begin") in both Genesis 10:8 and 11:6, ties Nimrod to the Babel event and suggests a negative evaluation of Nimrod's city-building activities—what Nimrod has "begun" to do is "profane" in the sight of Yahweh.[149]

A number of commentators argue against the Babel account being interpreted as a scene of rebellion, while others remove Nimrod altogether from the Babel pericope. John Walton, for example, understands Genesis 11:1-9 as an accurate account of the early history of urbanization in Mesopotamia and locates the Tower of Babel incident potentially centuries before the onset of urbanization in the region.[150] Walton sees Genesis 11:1-9 as a "failed

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[145] See Josephus' accounting of the Tower of Babel in *Ant.* 1:113-114. Text in Louis Ginsberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1956), 177-181.

[146] See Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 18; Hom, "Moral-Theological Evaluation," 64. נִמְרֹד can be understood as the Niphal perfect 3ms of מרד.

[147] Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 18.

[148] For example, Augustine, *Civ.* 16.4, interprets *liphne* as "against," rather than "before." BDB permits *liphne* to mean "against." See BDB, "פָּנָה", definition 4, 816-817. Cf. Hom, "Moral-Theological Evaluation," 64-65.

[149] Cf. Hom, "Moral-Theological Evaluation," 67. For the numerous textual issues related to Gen 10:8-12 and 11:1-9, see Petrovich, "Identifying Nimrod," 277-290; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 515-517; Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 351-352.

[150] John H. Walton, "The Mesopotamian Background of the Tower of Babel Account and Its Implications," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 171.

attempt" at urbanization.[151] If Walton's deduction is correct, then Nimrod—who according to the biblical account was quite successful in establishing cities, including Babylon—would be chronologically later than the tower episode.[152] Theodore Hiebert in challenging the "pride and punishment" interpretation of Genesis 11:1-9, disconnects Nimrod from the Babel pericope, arguing rather that the episode is strictly about the dissemination of human culture and not about Nimrod, a local king of Babylon.[153] In Hiebert's perspective, Nimrod is not the rebel that exegetes ancient and modern have made him out to be. Rather, in the Genesis text "Nimrod is portrayed as a Yahwistic hero."[154]

It is certainly the case that Nimrod is not to be directly tied to the Tower of Babel incident in Genesis 11 as Hiebert argues (and Walton implies), since according to Genesis 10:10-11, his kingdom begins in Babylon and extends to Erech, Accad, and even Assyrian cities like Nineveh, Rehoboth and Calah.[155] Nimrod is an empire-builder whose kingdom extends from southern Mesopotamia into Assyria, whereas the tower builders of Genesis 11, who are said to be the entire postdiluvian unilingual human family, fail in their attempt to build the city and the tower.[156] They are scattered abroad and leave off building the city and tower (11:8). Chronologically then Nimrod's "success" story is to be located well beyond the tower builders' story of failure. Still, even if Nimrod is not to be tied directly to the Babel story in

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[151] Walton, "Mesopotamian Background," 171. Walton does not understand the tower builders as disobeying the command of Yahweh to fill the earth, nor does he see anything intrinsically wrong with urbanization. Yahweh is not condemning the building of the tower or the city. What Yahweh is condemning is "religious hubris," or conforming the deity to the image of man. Thus, Yahweh condemns the religious function of the tower and not the act of building itself. See further, Walton, "Mesopotamian Background," 169-170.

[152] This is the present writer's deduction of Walton's view; Walton does not discuss Nimrod directly.

[153] Hiebert, "Tower of Babel," 29-58.

[154] Hiebert, "Tower of Babel," 52. For Hiebert, Genesis 11 is essentially about cultural diversification and not pride and punishment. Hiebert follows, Van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds*, 84-109, who argues against a pride and punishment interpretation of the tower incident based on "text-syntactic" and "text-semantic" reading of the account. For Van Wolde too, the Babel pericope is strictly about the origin of the world's cultures.

[155] For textual issues related to the enumeration of Nimrod's cities, see William F. Albright, "The End of 'Calneh in Shinar'," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1944): 254–55; Fenton, "Nimrod's Cities," 23-31; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 517-518; Ran Zadok, "The Origin of the Name Shinar," *Zeitschrift Für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 74 (1984): 240-244; John A. Thompson, "Samaritan Evidence for "All of Them in the Land of Shinar" (Gen 10:10)," *JBL* 90 (1971): 99-102; A. S. Yahuda, "Calneh in Shinar," *JBL* 65 (1946): 325-327.

[156] Hiebert, "Tower of Babel," 33-34. Cf. Walton, "Mesopotamian Background," 171.

Genesis 11, it remains clear that the negative evaluation of both Nimrod and the tower builders in commentators ancient and modern is a correct interpretation of the evidence in Genesis 10-11.

Hiebert's particular view that there is no sin or punishment in the Babel account is problematic on a number of fronts.[157] For one thing, the Tower of Babel incident as an act of rebellion fits the pattern of sin and punishment in the primeval history which is well documented among commentators.[158] There is clearly a pattern of rebellion and sin throughout the primeval narrative, each of which evokes Yahweh's intervention. Babel is but the culmination of that narrative pattern of rebellion, and Yahweh's action at Babel stems humankind's overt rebellion. The builders of the tower defy Yahweh's command to fill the earth. Their intention is to build a tower and city in order to "make a name" for themselves, lest they are "scattered over the face of the whole earth" (v. 4). The tower builders are implicated not only for refusal to heed the divine command to multiply and fill the earth, but more importantly their tower and building activities have religious connotations.[159]

The tower at Babel, seen as a ziggurat and religious center by many exegetes, stands as a symbol of idolatry and rebellion.[160] From the perspective of the Genesis author, the builders are attempting to set up for themselves a political and religious system intended to supplant Yahweh's sovereign rule over them. They are being charged by the Genesis author with hubris in their purpose to elevate human achievement.[161] Unlike the Sumerian perspective in which civilization is a "gift" from the gods, in the view of the author of Genesis, "civilization" is a purely human achievement, and one which is accomplished in defiance of Yahweh's wishes.[162]

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[157] See a more thoroughgoing critique of Hiebert in John T. Strong, "Shattering the Image of God: A Response to Theodore Hiebert's Interpretation of the Story of the Tower of Babel," *JBL* 127 (2008): 625-634.

[158] For example, Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 47-56; Westermann, *An Introduction*, 57; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 152-153.

[159] Walton, "Mesopotamian Background," 169.

[160] Walton, "Mesopotamian Background," 167-171; Paul H. Seely, "The Date of the Tower of Babel and Some Theological Implications," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2001): 18-19.

[161] Walton, "Mesopotamian Background," 171. Cf. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 149, 150-151.

[162] This study argues against Westermann, *An Introduction*, 60-61, who sees human ability to achieve civilization as a positive thing in the primeval account. Rather, urbanization and civilization is evaluated negatively, as per our reading of the Nimrod story. For example, Oded's urban-nomadic interpretation of the Table of Nations, while not completely valid as an interpretative framework, supports the view that urbanization is assessed negatively in the Table of Nations. See again, Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 14-31.

Yahweh's intervention puts a halt to "what they have in mind to do" (v. 7), which is, to build an empire. The incipient rebellion is brought to an end before more drastic measures are warranted.[163] The command to overspread the earth given to Adam and Eve (Gen 1:28) and repeated to Noah (Gen 9:1), is enforced at Babel in the face of deliberate defiance. By this act of Yahweh human plans to continue in rebellion is frustrated for the time being. The Babel pericope is clearly an indictment of human pride and self-will and not simply about the origin of ethnic diversity.

Furthermore, the Babel account should not be seen in isolation to the "city" activities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In both instances, Yahweh comes down to see what mankind is up to, and in both scenes, divine action results in confusion, the frustration of a common goal, and judgment. In the latter case, Yahweh's intervention takes place in the context of Canaanite cities, which like Babylon come to represent paradigmatic "sinful" cities and sites of divine judgment. Thus, Babylon and its environs—the land of Shinar/Sumer—and Sodom and Gomorrah, are representation of civic life rooted in idolatry and self-worship, and out of which God calls Abraham and Lot, respectively. The final account of the Genesis primeval story thus sets a theological trajectory which presents Babel as the archetypical site of rebellion against the divine government, and the enemy of Israel. Babylon is an enemy of Yahweh and his people from start to finish.[164]

5.3.3 Nimrod the Empire-Builder

As for Nimrod, he is negatively evaluated by the Genesis author for a number of reasons. Nimrod the Cushite is a descendant of Ham; he is not a Shemite. In Genesis 9-11 only Hamites are singled out for negative appraisal. Genesis 10:8-12 presents Nimrod as the founder of urbanization, kingship and empire.[165] Inasmuch as there are other "fathers" of innovation in the primeval account, so Nimrod is the first to sow the seeds of empire-

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[163] Cf. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 151: "Yahweh's interference has a preventative character."

[164] Cf. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 151.

[165] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 515-516; Brett, *Genesis*, 46; Oded, "Socio-Cultural Approach," 28.

building.[166] He is therefore the first monarch and the founder of Mesopotamian civilization.[167] Significantly, Nimrod is associated with Babylon which is said to be in the land of Shinar, and as we have already pointed out, both Babylon and Shinar represents rebellion and idolatry in innerbiblical interpretation (Josh 7:21; Dan 1:2; Zech 5:11).[168] That Nimrod's kingdom begins from a city which was the subject of divine judgment implicates him in rebellion. In the eyes of the Genesis author Nimrod may even be worse than the tower builders for establishing his kingdom on the "ruins" of a site of divine judgment (Cf. Josh 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34). If read correctly, it appears that what Yahweh thwarts in the Babel story is resumed and succeeds under Nimrod.

Interpreters who see a critique of empire in the Nimrod and Babel account are correct in the view of this writer.[169] But taking this a step further, it is argued here that the primeval critique is not just against the neo-Assyrian and later empires but against the idea of *empire* itself. Primeval Babel serves as the archetype of imperial ambitions and the model which all post-Babel kingship emulates. In light of the theological emphasis of Yahweh's sovereignty in the primeval story, urbanization and Empire-building represent contempt for the divine

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[166] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 515-516. However one may interpret the details of the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel account in the Genesis primeval history, the biblical author understood correctly that the cradle of civilization and the earliest centers of urban development are to be located in Mesopotamia. Thus, the general history of early Mesopotamia is correctly reflected in the biblical account. Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 13, for example, writes: "The sequence of city names [in Gen 10:8-12] roughly reflects the political history of Mesopotamia." Also, Walton, "Mesopotamian Background," 171: "I believe that the account of Genesis 11 has a solid historical foundation in early Mesopotamia. The details are authentic and realistic." Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 359: "Gen. x 8-12 preserves traditions that go back a long time—at least to the twenty third century B.C." See also, Wiseman, "Genesis 10," 20-21; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 150; Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, 211; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 518. During the Late Uruk period (c.3500-3300 B.C.) in Mesopotamia, a "urban revolution" took shape which resulted in the proliferation of towns, villages and cities. See Stiebing, *History and Culture*, 31-32.

[167] Cf. Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 12-13; Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 364.

[168] See Hom, "Moral-Theological Evaluation," 67. Though not without difficulty, scholars have proposed that biblical Shinar is to be equated with Mesopotamian Sumer. See Jerrold S. Cooper, "Sumer, Sumerians," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:233; Speiser, "In Search of Nimrod," 33; Wiseman, "Genesis 10," 20; Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 297. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 516, suggests that Shinar is not to be equated with Sumer, but includes "Sumer and Akkad together."

[169] See again, Uehlinger, *Weltreich und 'eine Rede'*; Kooij, "Babel and Assyrian Imperialism," 1-18; Croatto, "Tower of Babel," 203-23; Brett, *Genesis*, 46-47.

government.[170] Human "kingdoms" are in opposition to the divine kingdom for they are established for the purpose of human glory. The Sumerians clearly valued "kingship" since their genealogical record, appropriately called the Sumerian "King List," is concerned with the descent of kings and the lengths of their reigns. By contrast, a prominent stream of Israelite theology (in which one would situate the primeval story) disparages the whole idea of kingship—Yahweh is the King of Israel! Inasmuch as Israel desiring a king is an affront to Yahweh (1 Sam 8), so the author of Genesis conceive of the primeval quest for kingship by Nimrod as an affront to the divine office.

The kingship of Nimrod, the setting up of himself as a single, perhaps quasi-divine ruler—if later Babylonian kingship ideology is any indication—constitutes a profound challenge to the heavenly government.[171] For the biblical writer, Nimrod is "mighty" *in the presence of* or *openly before* Yahweh to demonstrate both the audacity of his claim to universal sovereignty as well as the fact of Yahweh's true sovereignty.[172] In the primeval story Nimrod the king of Sumer is nothing less than the archetype of *imperial* rebellion. His empire-building endeavour is the celebration of human achievement and therefore, in the eyes of the Israelite author of Genesis, the quintessence of idolatry.[173] Yet, for all that the biblical text attributes to Nimrod, the name Nimrod does not occur in any ancient source outside of Genesis 10:8-12, 1 Chron 1:10 and Micah 5:6. Is it at all possible then to identify a historical personality behind the biblical demigod?

5.3.4 Nimrod as a Historical Personality

Nimrod has been identified with a host of historical personages—both human and divine—ranging in time from the third millennium to the first millennium B.C. Several divine figures known as great hunters in ANE mythology have been proclaimed to be the historical

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[170] Cf. Kooij, "Babel and Assyrian Imperialism," 17. For a more in depth analysis of urbanism in the Hebrew Bible, see the essays in Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak, eds., 'Every City Shall be Forsaken': Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

[171] Naram-Sin (circa. 2200 B.C.) the grandson of Sargon of Agade deified himself as "the god of Agade" and took the title "King of the four quarters of the Earth." See Kramer*, The Sumerians*, 62; and Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 360. In Neo-Assyrian royal ideology, the king's title as "ruler of the universe" is a claim of sovereignty on the order of a god. Cf. Hom, "Moral-Theological Evaluation," 68.

[172] Hom, "Moral-Theological Evaluation," 68.

[173] According to Kramer*, The Sumerians*, 289-290, urbanization and the civic life first originated in Sumer; but so did the art of sculpture and the fashioning of statues, mortal and divine.

Nimrod. Among the notables, Ninurta, the Sumerian god of war,[174] Marduk the chief deity of Babylon,[175] the Mesopotamian deity Nergal (see 2 Kings 17:30), and there are still others.[176] Likewise, many human figures have been identified as prototypes for the biblical Nimrod, including the legendary Gilgamesh, king of Uruk,[177] the great Sargon "king of Kish and Akkad" or a composite of Sargonic dynastic figures,[178] the famed Tikulti-Ninurta I, king of Assyria,[179] the king of Marad,[180] the Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep III, among others.[181] Nimrod has also been identified as a symbolic name for Mesopotamian kings in general.[182] With so many competing prototypes for Nimrod, is it even possible to make any statement as to the "real" Nimrod?

Historically, the first attested Sumerian dynasty was the so-called "First Dynasty of Kish," whose first king, Etana, "a powerful an impressive figure whose life deeds had caught the imagination of the ancient bards and poets," is said to have "stabilized all the lands."[183] According to Kramer, if the Sumerian King List holds any historical kernel, Etana's rule may have extended beyond Sumer to other lands, and therefore he may have been "man's first known empire-builder."[184] Though in the view of this writer Etana could be considered as good a candidate for the historical Nimrod, Nimrod is to be understood as a primordial figure whose specific identification is now lost to history.[185] Though the real Nimrod was no doubt a Cushite from Mesopotamia with whom kingship and valour in hunting were associated

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[174] So Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 7-16.

[175] So Lipiński, "Nimrod et Asshur," 77-93.

[176] See discussion in Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 515-516; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 146-147; Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 337-338; Speiser, "In Search of Nimrod," 32-33; Van der Toorn and Van der Horst, "Nimrod," 7-16; Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 356; Petrovich, "Identifying Nimrod," 29; Kraeling, "Name of Nimrod," 218.

[177] So David P. Livingston, "Who Was Nimrod?" *Bible and Spade* 14 (2001): 67-78.

[178] So Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 361-366. Petrovich, "Identifying Nimrod," 273-305 and Knohl, "Nimrod, Son of Cush," 45-52, follow Levin.

[179] So Speiser, "In Search of Nimrod," 32-36.

[180] So Kraeling, "Name of Nimrod," 218.

[181] See again Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 515-516; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 146-147; Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 337-338.

[182] Kooij, "Babel and Assyrian Imperialism," 12.

[183] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 42-43, 44.

[184] Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 43.

[185] Cf. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 516: "It is not to be assumed then that this Nimrod can be identified with some historical figure or other."

historically, in the primordial story he is an archetype, the paradigmatic founder of imperial enterprise and postdiluvian idolatry which Babylon and Assyria came to represent in the biblical tradition. Thus, it is no longer possible to recover the real Nimrod from the past; he is forever lost to history. His legacy, however, is what the author of Genesis seeks to put in theological perspective.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to establish the basis of Cushite ethnographic representation in the primeval history of Genesis. Like the previous chapter, Cushite ethnic identity in the primeval account was examined on the basis of genealogy, territory and election—with election serving as the basis for a theological evaluation of the Hamitic "other." The genealogical portrait of the Table of Nations is shown to exhibit complexities and anomalies which defies any singular scheme or organization, whether ethnic, geographic or linguistic. Both biblical and historiographic evidence indicate that instead of clearly defined boundaries between Hamites, Shemites and Japhites, the geographic, linguistic and ethnic identification of the descendants of Noah demonstrate a complex of intersecting identities and boundaries.

The location of an eastern Cush in Genesis 10, and especially the related historiographic problem of the two-Meluhhas/two-Ethiopias , demonstrate that Cushites, like Shemites, Japhites, and other Hamites, were never restricted to any singular geographic locality or direction, but were distributed across a wide geography of overlapping ethnic and linguistic identities. The location of an eastern Meluhha in the third millennium B.C. and the subsequent identification of an African Meluhha connects "black" peoples with both eastern and western populations and indicate that the placing of Nimrod, the son of Cush in the primordial east by the author of Genesis is not out of step with the historical evidence. Ethnic collectivities identifying with various expressions of the ethnonym Cush (i.e., Kush, Kish, Kash, Kutch, etc.) may indicate a common genealogical link suggestive of a distinctive eponymous ancestor whose origins may in fact lie in the east.

Through Nimrod, the primordial history gives Cushites a leading role in the beginnings of civilization in early Mesopotamia. Indeed, according to Sumerian historical sources, the first location of "kingship" after the flood was at the Sumerian city of Kish, and the title "king of Kish" held universal political implications. Kish, it is suggested here, is but a variant of Kush, supporting the claim that the early Sumerians, the "black-headed" people, a contingent of

Cushitic and other ethnic collectivities, were the founders of civic life and empire-building in early Mesopotamia.

Nevertheless, from a theological standpoint, the author of Genesis does not view Nimrod or his imperial supporters positively. Rather, like Canaan the "cursed" descendant of Ham (and the political and religious rival of Israel), the physical and political prowess of Nimrod the Hamite is negatively evaluated by the Genesis author. Nimrod the city-builder, imperial strategist and celebrated hero, is an imperial rebel from the perspective of the author of Genesis. As the founder of "kingship" in the earth and one who sought universal dominion, Nimrod is a usurper of divine authority and thus a rival of Yahweh.

Ironically, the beginnings of the very thing which Western civilization celebrates—civilization and human progress—and from which its intellectual history has attempted to exclude Africans, the Table of Nation attributes to Cushites through the person of Nimrod. But to be sure, far from a celebration of Cushite achievement, however, this attribution is intended as a theological and moral indictment of civilization, urbanization, and empire-building. In the eyes of the Genesis author, kingship and human political ambition are not to be celebrated, for there is only one true universal Sovereign—Yahweh, the God of Israel.

CHAPTER 6

The Sovereign Rule of Yahweh and Cush as Military Topos in Isaiah

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the ethnic representation of Cushites in the context of the Table of Nations, particularly through the enigmatic personality of Nimrod, and in relationship to Israelite self-definition. Israelite self-understanding was predicated on two absolute theological premises: a declaration of the sovereign status of Yahweh as universal God, and a declaration of Yahweh's personal and particular relationship to the people of Israel. Israelite self-definition was thus shown to demonstrate both universal and particular elements which were fundamentally theological in nature. In view of such a conceptual arrangement, Israelite collective self-definition was more fittingly apprehended as an ethno-religious construct more so than a purely ethnic one. Israelite election, it was shown, also entailed genealogical significations and territorial claims. The ethno-religious evaluation of non-Israelite peoples was similarly based on the premises of Yahweh's sovereign rule and Israel's special election. Because of the fundamentally theological conception of Israelite self-definition, the foregoing discussion of Cushite ethnic identity had to concern itself perforce with the theological outlook of the Genesis text.

The theological evaluation of Cushites through the personage of Nimrod was shown to be unfavourable. Nimrod's apparent physical strength and stature, and his prowess as a military leader and empire builder, are the very qualities and deeds which the Genesis author condemns. Nimrod is construed as an egoist who arrogates to himself divine prerogatives in his quest for universal dominion. In this capacity he poses a direct threat and challenge to the sovereign rule of Yahweh as conceived of by the Genesis author. Though the deeds of Nimrod are typically venerated in human society, the Genesis author declares them to be an offense to Yahweh; such pursuits are only intended to glorify human achievement.

The ethno-religious evaluation of empire builders like Nimrod which one finds in the Genesis primeval history is also found in other portions of the Hebrew Bible, especially in the prophetic corpus. In the book of Isaiah, which will be the major point of emphasis in this

chapter, the imperial drives of Assyria, Egypt, Cush and Babylon—in the middle of which Israel and Judah find themselves—are subject to prophetic censure.[1]

Moreover, it is precisely in circumstances where Israel and Judah find themselves under the sway of imperial dominions that assertions of Yahweh's sovereign rule become salient.[2] According to the prophetic voice, the apparently inexorable quest for territory, booty, and political preeminence by these world powers, are fully and totally under the sovereign control of the God of Israel.[3] That is to say, the violence of conquests and the devastation which attend imperial expansion are directly attributed to Yahweh's sovereign actions: empires are Yahweh's unwitting agents for the punishment of apostasy—for both Israel and Judah, as well as for surrounding nations.[4]

At the same time, the humiliation of imperial pride in the face of Yahweh's sovereign rule also constitute a fundamental emphasis in Isaiah and the prophetic literature more generally. In the face of their apparently boundless military power, empires become overweening.[5] Yet, according to the prophetic spin, Yahweh will humble the pride of the arrogant and in due course punish the very empires that have devastated Israel and Judah. It is particularly in military contexts whereby imperial arrogance is most ostensibly manifested, and it is likewise in contexts of military engagement that Yahweh's sovereign power over the imperious is best demonstrated. A prophetic critique is thus directed against imperial pride and all human claims to universal sovereignty. And as we shall see, these are the concerns that are brought to bear on the characterization of Nubian Cush in the biblical corpus.

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[1] Göran Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda: Images of Enemies in the Book of Isaiah* (Coniectanea Biblica OTS 56; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 23-132, provides an insightful analysis of Isaiah's evaluation of the four empires, Assyria, Egypt, Kush, and Babylon. For further studies on empire in Isaian background and theology, see Andrew T. Abernethy et al, eds., *Isaiah and Imperial Context: The Book of Isaiah in the Times of Empire* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013); Peter Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983): 719-737; Mordechai Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E* (SBLMS 19; Missoula: Scholars, 1974); Mordechai Cogan, "Judah under Assyrian Hegemony: A Reexamination of Imperialism and Religion," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112 (1993): 403-414. Cf. E. John Hamlin, "Isaiah 47: The End of Empire," *Proceedings of the Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Society* 16 (1996): 127-139.

[2] Cf. Tim Bulkeley, "Living in Empire: What Purposes Do Assertions of Divine Sovereignty Serve in Isaiah?" in *Isaiah and Imperial Context: The Book of Isaiah in the Times of Empire*, ed. Andrew T. Abernethy et al (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 75-79.

[3] Cf. Bulkeley, "Living in Empire," 72, 75, 78.

[4] Bulkeley, "Living in Empire," 72-73.

[5] Bulkeley, "Living in Empire," 73.

While the penultimate chapter will assess the topical and mimetic features of Cushites in relationship to the election of Israel, in this chapter and the next, we take a look at the political and ethno-religious characterization of Cush and Cushites from the perspective of Yahweh's sovereign rule. Two narratives dealing with Cushites in military contexts will be assessed in the course of this chapter and the next: Isaiah 18:1-7 will guide our discussion for this chapter, while 2 Chron 14:9-15 will be the basis for our discussion in the following chapter. Both of these passages deal with similar themes related to Cushites in military contexts. We wish to inquire: how do these biblical passages characterize Cush as a political entity? How important are "ethnic" characteristics in the assessment of Cushites? And what functions are Cushites serving in the theological purposes of these narratives? It will be argued that though Cushites are allies of Judah in Isaiah 18:1-7 and political opponents in 2 Chron 14:9-15, in both narratives Cushites are employed as military topos to demonstrate the superior status of Yahweh above human political and military power. Historical and historiographic concerns also form an integral part of the discussion in this and the following chapter.

6.2 HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF ISAIAH 18

For a number of reasons to be explored below, this study takes the position that the historical context of Sennacherib's campaign to Palestine in 701 B.C. is the most likely occasion for the Cush oracle of Isaiah 18, and the analysis of the passage will be pursued with reference to this historical setting.[6] For this reason, a closer look at Cush's involvement in the historical context of 701 B.C. Palestine will be the starting point of our analysis. The following historical characterization will not unduly repeat details already discussed in Chapter 3; nor is this historical excursus intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the events related to 701 B.C. Only details and issues relevant to our analysis of Isaiah 18 are addressed in what follows.

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[6] A good number of scholars have analyzed the Cush oracle with reference to the historical context of 701 B.C., making the approach taken here far from unique. See for example, Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (The Old Testament Library; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 135-138; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible 19; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 309-310; Matthijs J. De Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Earliest Stages of the Isaiah Tradition and the Neo-Assyrian Prophecies* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 238-239; Paul M. Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder: The Redactional Formation of Isaiah 18-20* (VTSup 147; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 50, 52-53, 55-57; Csaba Balogh, *The Stele of YHWH in Egypt: The Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20 Concerning Egypt and Kush* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 60; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 192.

Equally important for our discussion, moreover, is the theological portrayal of Yahweh's relationship to the nations in the book of Isaiah. It is therefore necessary to preface our discussion of the Cush oracle of Isaiah 18 with an overview of Isaiah's portrayal of the status of the nations with respect to the sovereign rule of Yahweh, the God of Israel. This brief theological analysis will also proceed with a view toward the historical context of the late eighth century B.C.

6.2.1 Cush in the Historical Context of 701 B.C. Palestine

Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 B.C. is one of the most documented events in both biblical and historical sources.[7] It is recorded in three biblical sources (2 Kings 18-19; Isaiah 36-37, 2 Chron 32) and described on several copies of Assyrian annals, and even depicted on multiple reliefs in Sennacherib's palace.[8] This is clearly an event of highest

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[7] A great number of studies have been done on the evidence related to Sennacherib's campaign to Palestine in 701 B.C. Important monographs include, Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (Studies in Biblical Theology: Second Series 3; Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1967); William R. Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah: New Studies* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East XVIII; Leiden: Brill, 1999); Paul S. Evans, *The Invasion of Sennacherib in the Book of Kings: A Source-Critical and Rhetorical Study of 2 Kings 18-19* (VTSup 125; Leiden: Brill, 2009). For edited volumes, see Lester L. Grabbe, ed., *'Like a Bird in a Cage': The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE* (JSOTS 363, ESHM 4; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003); Isaac Kalimi and Seth Francis Richardson, eds., *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). See also, Allan R. Millard, "Sennacherib's Attack on Hezekiah," *Tyndale Bulletin* 36 (1985): 61-77; Arie Van der Kooij, "Das assyrische Heer vor den Mauern Jerusalems im Jahr 701 v. Chr.," *Zeitschrift Deutscher Palästina-Verein* 102 (1986): 93-109; Richard S. Hess, "Hezekiah and Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18-20," in *Zion, City of Our God*, ed. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 23-41; William W. Hallo, "Jerusalem under Hezekiah: An Assyriological Perspective," in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York: Continuum, 1999), 36-50; K. Lawson Younger Jr., "Assyrian Involvement in the Southern Levant at the End of the Eighth Century B.C.E.," in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, ed. Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 235-264; Nadav Na'aman, "Hezekiah and the Kings of Assyria," in *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction: Collected Essays. Vol 1*, ed. Nadav Na'aman (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 98-117.

[8] Sennacherib's campaign to Judah is recorded on the Rassam Cylinder (c. 700 B.C.); Cylinder C (c. 697 B.C.); the Heidel Prism (c. 694 B.C.); the King Prism (c. 694 B.C.); the Jerusalem Prism (c. 691 B.C.); the Taylor Prism (c. 691 B.C.); and the Chicago Prism (c. 689 B.C.). For original references see, Younger Jr., "Assyrian Involvement," 245. For translation and commentary see Grayson and Novotny, *Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib*, 64-66; Cogan, "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem," *COS*, 2.119B: 302-303; and Luckenbill, *ARAB*, 2:119-120, §240. On the archaeological evidence, see David Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib* (Tel Aviv Publications of the Institute of Archaeology 6; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1982); David Ussishkin, "Sennacherib's Campaign to Philistia and Judah: Ekron, Lachish, and Jerusalem," in *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na'aman*, ed. Yaira Amit et al (Winona Lake,

significance for both biblical and non-biblical sources, and so for scholars who continue to write about it. A central component of this episode is the confrontation between the Assyrian and Nubian empires (the latter included Egypt), though one could hardly tell this from the biblical record. The role of Cushite Egypt is hinted at in a single verse in Isaiah 37:9 and 2 Kings 19:9: "And he [Sennacherib] heard a report concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, 'he has come out to fight with you.'" Tirhakah is not mentioned in the Chronicler's retelling in 2 Chron 32.[9]

In a 2002 monograph journalist Henry Aubin argued for what might be called a "Cushite rescue theory" related to the events of 701 B.C. Palestine.[10] Aubin credited the

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Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 339-357; David Ussishkin, "Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah: The Archaeological Perspective with an Emphasis on Lachish and Jerusalem," in *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Seth Francis Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 75-103; Richard D. Barnett, Erika Bleibtreu and Geoffrey Turner, *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, 2 vols. (London: British Museum Press, 1998), 2:322-352; C. Uehlinger, "Clio in a World of Pictures—Another Look at the Lachish Reliefs from Sennacherib's Southwest Palace at Nineveh," in *"Like a Bird in a Cage": The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (JSOTS 363, ESHM 4; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 221-305.

[9] On the basis of the omission of Tirhakah in 2 Chron 32, see Paul S. Evans, "Historia or Exegesis? Assessing the Chronicler's Hezekiah-Sennacherib Narrative," in *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography*, ed. Paul S. Evans and Tyler F. Williams (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 114-115.

[10] See Henry Aubin, *The Rescue of Jerusalem: The Alliance between Hebrews and Africans in 701 BC* (New York: Soho Press, 2002). More recently, Aubin's arguments have been revitalized in a 2010 publication by biblical scholar Alice O. Bellis, "The Rescue of Jerusalem from the Assyrians in 701 B.C.E. by the Cushites," in *Raising Up a Faithful Exegete: Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson*, ed. K. L. Noll and B. Schramm (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 247-260. For assessment and critique of the Jerusalem rescue thesis, see Paul S. Evans, "History in the Eye of the Beholder?: Social Location & Allegations of Racial/Colonial Biases in Reconstructions of Sennacherib's Invasion of Judah," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 12 (2012): 1-25. Though Evan's critique is incisive, and rightly dismisses the positivism of Aubin who asserts that his thesis is "unshakable" and "the obvious solution to the so-called mystery of the Deliverance" (188, 264), Evans nonetheless fundamentally underestimates the power of social location in determining interpretive outcomes. He contends that social factors in biblical interpretation are less significant than Aubin and Bellis would have one to believe. He states, for example, "Despite the influence of social location on interpreters, the evidences available to historians serve as controls in guiding the range of historical reconstructions" (3-4). Chapter 2 of this study (esp. §2.2.) has attempted to substantiate the claim that the intellectual climate of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries fundamentally impacted the interpretation of the histories of non-Western peoples, especially people of African descent, even within biblical studies. The evidences available to Western intellectuals during this period did not guide historians to balanced conclusions. Rather their social location decidedly conditioned their interpretation of the evidence. On the importance of social location in biblical interpretation in the South African context, see Louis C. Jonker, "Social Transformation and Biblical Interpretation: Interdisciplinary Perspectives," *Scriptura* 72 (2000): 1-14; Jonker, "Apartheid Theology," 165-183.

Cushite-Egyptian army with the defeat of Sennacherib's forces and the consequent deliverance of Jerusalem.[11] He also posited that biblical scholarship since the late nineteenth century has denied the Cushites a significant role in Jerusalem's deliverance due to racial bias.[12] Aubin has mounted a formidable case and his work is a valuable and welcomed contribution to the study of Africans in the history of ancient Israel.

It is certainly the case, as this study has made clear, that the role of Cushites in the biblical literature, no less than their significance as a political force in the ancient Mediterranean, has been historically neglected in biblical scholarship. And specific to Aubin's point, the attention that Cushites have received in scholarly recounting of the historical events of 701 B.C. has indeed been negligible.[13] This study thus concedes with Aubin on the point that Nubians fighting alongside Judaeans at a pivotal point in the history of the nation of Judah is highly significant and deserves more recognition in the scholarly literature. Fortunately, since Aubin's publication (and even before), a few studies have attempted to address this deficit.[14] Indeed, several scholars have supported the view of a Cushite defeat of the Assyrians in 701 B.C. (though their analyses lack the depth and optimism of Aubin's);[15]

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[11] Aubin, *Rescue of Jerusalem*, esp., 132-206.

[12] See Aubin, *Rescue of Jerusalem*, 209-265.

[13] See Aubin, *Rescue of Jerusalem*, 117-131. Major works on Sennacherib's campaign gives negligible attention to the role of Cushites; e.g., Childs, *Assyrian Crisis*; Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*.

[14] The most important of these would be Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 205-222, 259-260, 262; Jeremy Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed: Kushite Intervention and the Limits of *l'histoire événementielle,*" in *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Seth Francis Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 105-160; Kahn, "Kush and the Assyrians," 109-128; Kahn, "Sennacherib Against Egypt," 29-41; and James K. Hoffmeier, "Egypt's Role in the Events of 701 B.C. in Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, ed. Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 219-234.

[15] For example, Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 353: "Even though our sources for Eltekeh are confined to the Assyrian records—Egyptian relief and textual material employ stereotyped images of uncertain application—there can be no doubt that it [Assyrian engagement with a substantial Egypto-Cushite military force] was an unexpected and serious reverse for Assyria arms, and contributed significantly to Sennacherib's permanent withdrawal from the Levant"; Lester L. Grabbe, "Of Mice and Dead Men: Herodotus 2.141 and Sennacherib's Campaign in 701 BCE," in *'Like a Bird in a Cage: The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (JSOTS 363, ESHM 4; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 139: "An unexpected defeat or serious setback by the Egyptians could be one of the reasons for his [Sennacherib's] withdrawal without taking Jerusalem." Frank J. Yurco, "Sennacherib's Third Campaign and the Coregency of Shabaka and Shebitku ," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 6 (1980): 333: "It was after the receipt of this rumor [of an advancing Egyptian army], and perhaps at least in part because of it, that Sennacherib suspended operations in Judah and returned ultimately to Assyria." Paul Evan's assessment of Cushite success in 701 is somewhat more ambivalent. In his earlier monograph, *Invasion of Sennacherib*, Evans' interpretation of 2 Kings 19:9 (where

others more cautiously have suggested "inconclusive results" in the aftermath of 701.[16] But there is to be no doubt that Cushite forces came to the aid of their Palestinian allies (or vassals, see below) in 701 B.C., fighting to defend, not only Judah but their own political and economic interests in the region.

While the present work has emphasized that social location influences biblical interpretation in powerful ways, and that biblical scholarship has by no means been free from distorted views of Africans in the biblical context, Aubin's position that Africans routed the Assyrians in 701 B.C. must remain one—though an important one—of several possibilities in light of the current evidence.[17] As Aubin so ably demonstrated, there are in reality only three ancient sources which refer to the events related to Sennacherib's campaign to western Asia at the end of the eighth century: the biblical record (the Judean view), Sennacherib's Annals (the Assyrian view) and Herodotus' *Histories* 2.141 (the Egyptian view).[18] The circumstances which prevailed in Palestine in the two decades following Sennacherib's withdrawal, though not often considered, must also be taken into account.

Tirhakah is mentioned) portray the Cushites as having a decisive role in Sennacherib's withdrawal. Thus Evans*, Invasion of Sennacherib*, 177, writes, "the Egyptian force appears to be instrumental in the Assyrian withdrawal from Jerusalem and Sennacherib's return home" (177). According to Evans, 2 Kings contradicts the Assyrian portrayal of a dismal failure of the Egyptian forces. On the principle of counter-ideology, Evans sums up his evaluation of the two sources thus: "we would conclude that the success of the Egyptian force in 701 is likely a piece of genuine historical information. . . . This causal link should be reckoned with in any historical reconstruction of Sennacherib's invasion" (178). Yet in criticizing Aubin*, Rescue of Jerusalem*, who argued for a Cushite rescue of Jerusalem, Evans, "History in the Eye of the Beholder?" 23, writes, "the anachronistic nature of the Tirhakah reference, combined with the evidence of Sennacherib's annals (which claim to have defeated the Egyptian-Ethiopian armies), has served as compelling evidence for most that the Cushites did not rescue Jerusalem in 701 BCE. . . . As this paper has shown, the evidence simply does not support the Aubin-Bellis hypothesis." In his critique Evans does not discuss his earlier assessment of 2 Kings 19:9 (though he mentions his earlier work). And more recently, in assessing the absence of Tirhakah in 2 Chron 32, Evans writes: "Thus, the presence of Tirhakah is not even evidentially true but may be understood to have been just a 'rumor.' Given the compendious nature of his account, there is no reason for the Chronicler to mention the 'rumor,' especially when it does not appear to be the cause of the Assyrian retreat" (Evans, "Historia or Exegesis?" 115). Evans seems to have backtracked on his earlier assessment.

[16] See Kitchen, "Egypt, the Levant and Assyria," 243-253, 383-386, esp., 385, n. 822; Childs*, Assyrian Crisis*, 15; Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 217; Ernst A. Knauf, "701: Sennacherib at the Berezina," in *'Like a Bird in a Cage': The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (JSOTS 363, ESHM 4; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 147-149.

[17] Despite Aubin*, Rescue of Jerusalem*, 83-96, making the case to the contrary.

[18] Cf. Aubin*, Rescue of Jerusalem*, 83-96.

In one form or another, each of the written sources related to 701 B.C. reports a positive outcome of events for its place of provenance, reflecting the ideological point of view from which the account is being told.[19] The biblical perspective, consonant with its theological position, is careful to present the withdrawal of the Assyrians as a response to a deliberate intervention of Yahweh, and so Cush receives only passing mention in 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37.[20] In similar fashion, the Assyrian Annals records a decisive victory over Cushite and Egyptian forces at the battle of Eltekeh; it vaunts of Sennacherib's locking up of Hezekiah in Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage"; and it claims a technical submission of Hezekiah, whom, it is said sent a significant tribute to Sennacherib at Nineveh.[21] Woefully, direct Egyptian record of events is entirely lacking,[22] but Herodotus, as we saw in Chapter 3, credits the victory to "the Egyptians" under the priest-king Sethon (also, Sethos) based on what was told him by Memphaite priests.[23] Additionally, circumstantial evidence related to Shebitku's (c. 706-690

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[19] Cf. Iain Provan, "In the Stable with the Dwarves: Testimony, Interpretation, Faith and the History of Israel," in *Congress Volume: Oslo 1998*, ed. André Lemaire and Magne Sæbø (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 310.

[20] But see again Evans, *Invasion of Sennacherib*, 177-179, who interprets the reference to Tirhakah in 2 Kings 19:9 as a positive evaluation of the Egyptian-Cushite role in the events of 701 B.C. Evans remarks that this positive evaluation of the Egyptians in Kings is a counterpoint to the more pessimistic view expressed toward Egyptian aid elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Isa 31:1-3; 36:6).

[21] See Luckenbill, *ARAB*, 2:119-120, §240; Cogan, "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem," 2.119B: 303; Grayson and Novotny, *Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib*, 64-66. Many scholars have rightly cautioned against an uncritical acceptance of Assyrian record of events. Not only are the annals noted for exaggerations and omissions, but they are also noted for falsifications. See especially Antti Laato, "Assyrian Propaganda and the Falsification of History in the Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib," *Vetus Testamentum* 45 (1995): 198-226. Cf. Provan, "Faith and the History of Israel," 311-312; Younger Jr., "Assyrian Involvement," 247; Grabbe, "Invasion of Sennacherib," 138, n. 45; De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 226. For an in-depth assessment of Assyrian ideology and historical reporting, see K. Lawson Younger Jr., *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (JSOTS 98; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 61-124.

[22] See discussion of surviving Cushite-Egyptian records related to this period in Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 111-130.

[23] See again Herodotus, *Histories* 2.141 and discussion in §3.2.4.1 of this study. Herodotus credits the defeat of Sennacherib's army to the Egyptians under a king "Sethon" who petitions the gods for help against Assyria. Herodotus claims that the night before the battle between the two forces, a horde of field mice render the weapons of the Assyrians useless. As a result, the following day Sennacherib's army flees before the better equipped Egyptian army. Herodotus' account of Sennacherib's defeat is nonetheless beset by historical problems. For example, regarding the setback suffered by the Assyrian army, many commentators believe that Herodotus is alluding to the unleashing of a plague by the mice, since mice are associated with pestilence in Greek thought. But this view is contested by Grabbe, "Invasion of Sennacherib," 136, who argues that the assumption of mice being carriers of the plague in Herodotus is conditioned by reference to the biblical account. To the contrary, Grabbe stresses that, "[T]here is no hint of such an interpretation in Herodotus's account when it is read in its own right. The mice are not plague carriers in Herodotus . . . . Herodotus does

B.C.) adoption of the title "Great of Strength, smiting the Nine Bows; Satisfied by Victory; and Great of renown in all lands" around this time, may indicate that the Cushites also claimed victory at Eltekeh.[24] It seems to be the case that for ideological reasons, each of the parties involved claimed to have been the beneficiary of the outcome of 701. B.C. But to Aubin's point, Herodotus' account clearly attributes the defeat of the Assyrians in 701 B.C. to an Egyptian force—although the Egyptian deity who responds to Sethon's petition by sending the mice is the real hero in Herodotus' story.

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not say that they caused the death of the Assyrians but that they rendered their armour and weapons unusable" (136). Another problem in the Herodotus account relates to the identity of "Sethon." Was he an Egyptian or a Cushite king? Herodotus' priest-king is understood by some scholars as a corruption of "Shebitku," and so would be identified with a Cushite king; e.g. Grabbe, "Invasion of Sennacherib," 135; Brent A. Strawn, "Herodotus' Histories 2.141 and the Deliverance of Jerusalem: On Parallels, Sources, and Histories of Ancient Israel," in *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes*, ed. Brad E. Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 446; New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 218-219. Against this view, Kahn, "Tirhakah, King of Kush," 25-26, for example, advances that details in Herodotus' story reveals that the Memphaite priests had an Egyptian king in mind and not a Cushite. Even so, the Egyptian account credits the victory to the Egyptian army with no mention of the Cushites. The fact that the Egyptians priests attributed the victory to "the Egyptians" without mentioning the Cushites, may be the result of the antipathy which developed toward Cush following the end of Cushite rule in Egypt. Or as Strawn, "Herodotus' Histories 2.141," 230-231, 235-236, more plausibly suggests, the Egyptocentricity of the priests of Ptah may have demanded that a Judean story about Sennacherib's defeat in Jerusalem by the God of the Judaeans become an Egyptian story about Sennacherib's defeat at an Egyptian city (Pelusium) by an Egyptian god. This last point leads to the yet unresolved question of the origin of the Egyptian version of events told by Herodotus and its relationship to the biblical account. According to Grabbe, there are sufficient and significant differences between Herodotus' version and the biblical record—including the setting of the battle at the Egyptian frontier town of Pelusium rather than in Palestine—to suggest separate and independent traditions behind the two accounts (134-140). Similar arguments and conclusions are reached by Kahn, "Tirhakah, King of Kush," 23-33. Despite the obvious differences, however, Strawn, "Herodotus' Histories 2.141," 210-238, esp., 235., contends, contra Grabbe, that the two traditions are parallel; Herodotus' version being dependent on an oral account of the biblical version of events. In the view of this study, Strawn's conclusion seems to better fit the evidence. Cf. discussion in Gallagher*, Sennacherib's Campaign*, 248-251.

[24] Kahn, "Tirhakah, King of Kush," 24; Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 116. This would certainly not be the first time in the history of Syria-Palestine that a battle involving major world powers resulted in each side claiming victory over its rival. For example, though the outcome of the battle of Kadesh (c. 1274 B.C.) was demonstrably a strategic loss and unfavourable to Egypt, Ramses II nevertheless claimed victory over his Hittite rivals with bombastic imperial propaganda. But the aftermath of the war resulted in the loss of Syro-Palestinian territory and the withdrawal of Egyptian military presence from northern Palestine—at least until Ramesses was able to renew his bid for supremacy in subsequent years; see Ogden Goelet, Jr. and Baruch A. Levine, "Making Peace in Heaven and on Earth: Religious and Legal Aspects of the Treaty between Ramesses II and Hattušili III," in *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Meir Lubetski, Claire Gottlieb and Sharon Keller (JSOTS 273; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 252-253; Bietak, "Egypt and the Levant," 439.

Considering the various perspectives related to Sennacherib's campaign, the available evidence militates against claims of an outright Cushite "rescue." Apart from Herodotus and circumstantial evidence related to Shebitku's new title, no firm Egyptian evidence exists to support a clear Cushite victory. Thus, Aubin's contention that there was an ancient tradition that Cushites routed the Assyrians can be sustained, but this interpretation must be placed alongside the two other ancient views; namely, (1) that the premature withdrawal of the Assyrians in 701 B.C. was due solely to a miraculous act by Yahweh of Jerusalem which left Hezekiah and Judah forever free from Assyrian domination; and (2) that the Assyrians had a decisive victory over the Cushites, a technical subjection of Hezekiah, and total control of Syria-Palestine following the campaign.[25] Nevertheless, based on the circumstances which prevailed in the aftermath of 701, the depiction of a total victory by the Assyrians may not in fact reflect the entirety of the historical circumstances.

The view taken in this study aligns to a certain extent with Kitchen's who suggested that a smaller Egyptian-Cushite force sent to check Assyrian advance was defeated at Eltekeh, while Taharqa arriving some time later with a large Cushite army, did not in the end engage in battle with the Assyrians.[26] Kitchens suggested that the second battle did not materialize

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[25] The issue of "what actually happened" remains an open question in scholarship. That Sennacherib withdrew without destroying Jerusalem is clear from the biblical and Assyrian sources and finds unanimous agreement among modern scholars. But the reason or reasons for Jerusalem's survival continue to defy consensus. Many scholars suggest a plague or epidemic brought about the premature departure of the Assyrians and the aborting of the blockade (or siege) of Jerusalem; e.g., Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 386; Laato, "Assyrian Propaganda," 225; Yurco, "Sennacherib's Third Campaign," 234-235, 240. Others believe that Sennacherib's campaign strategy did not include besieging Jerusalem in the first place, hence the reason for the city remaining standing; e.g., Walter Mayer, "Sennacherib's Campaign of 701 BCE: The Assyrian View," in *'Like a Bird in a Cage': The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (JSOTS 363, ESHM 4; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 180-181. Some favour a "deliverance" of Jerusalem as reported by the Hebrew Bible; e.g., Provan, "Faith and the History of Israel," 312-313, n. 66. And Kahn, "Tirhakah, King of Kush," 27, like many others, concludes that "Unfortunately, it is not possible to identify the true cause of the Assyrian defeat." Cf. Lester L. Grabbe, "Reflections on the Discussion," in *'Like a Bird in a Cage': The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (JSOTS 363, ESHM 4; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 321-322.

[26] See Kitchen, "Egypt, the Levant and Assyria," 247; Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 383-386, 584; cf. Yurco, "Sennacherib's Third Campaign," 224-228. Considering how little agreement exists among scholars regarding the details of 701, it should not come as a surprise that the two-battle view of Kitchens and Yurco is challenged by some scholars; e.g., Kahn, "Tirhakah, King of Kush," 35. Furthermore, the statement in 2 Kings 19:9 that Taharqa lead his forces against the Assyrians in 701 has been contested on historical grounds. As is well known, Taharqa ascended the throne in 690 B.C., making his title "king of Kush" in 2 Kings 19:9 at best anachronistic to 701 B.C. Some have argued that Taharqa would have been as young as nine years old in 701 rendering his presence at Eltekeh a historical improbability. Accordingly, Taharqa is sometimes excised

because the Assyrians thwarted the element of surprise and were able to reassemble their divided forces in time to the effect that, "Taharqa and the Egyptian forces swiftly retired homewards to Egypt."[27] Rather than Taharqa's army retiring swiftly to Egypt, this study suggests that the unanticipated setback of the Assyrian army which forced Sennacherib's swift retreat lies behind the failure of a second clash between the Assyrians and the advancing Cushite army under Taharqa. Alternatively, it is quite possible that only a single battle between the Assyrians and Cushites was attempted and fought at Eltekeh. And therefore it

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from 2 Kings 19:9 and replaced with Shabako or Shebitku; e.g., Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 353; Van der Kooij, "Jerusalems im Jahr 701," 106-109; Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 220-224. Another solution proposed for this historical problem, and the one supported in this work, is that Taharqa's summons to Egypt by Shebitku as recorded in Kawa Stelae IV and V, occurs within a military context and is likely related to the events of 701 B.C. Palestine when Shebitku was king over Egypt and Kush. If this is the case, then Taharqa's stated age of twenty years old at the time provides potential corroboration for the biblical account. Supporters of this view (though some with reservations) include, Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 157-158, 164-170, 557; Yurco, "Sennacherib's Third Campaign," 222-223; Hoffmeier, "Egypt's Role in the Events of 701 B.C.," 231-232; Török, *Ancient African Kingdom*, 169-170; Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 117-118; Kahn, "Tirhakah, King of Kush," 35. Cf. Aubin, *Rescue of Jerusalem*, 334-335, n. 54. Still, there are other attempts to reconcile the historical discrepancy presented by 2 Kings 19:9, such as positing a two-campaign hypothesis. The two-battle, one-campaign theory of Kitchens and Yurco is to be differentiated from the two-campaign, two-battle scenario of this latter position. According to this latter view, the biblical text conflates two distinct Assyrian campaigns by Sennacherib separated by more than a decade (2 Kings 18:13-16—1st campaign; 2 Kings 18:17-19:36—2nd campaign), wherein only the second would involve Taharqa—who would have been in actual fact "king of Kush" at this later period. For this view, see John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 296-308; William H. Shea, "Sennacherib's Second Palestinian Campaign," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (1985): 401-418; William H. Shea, "The New Tirhakah Text and Sennacherib's Second Palestinian Campaign," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 35 (1997): 181-187. But this position is replete with difficulties, the most significant of which would be the absence of any Assyrian record of a second campaign by Sennacherib, and the interpretation of the biblical text as reporting/conflating two Assyrian invasions separated by more than a decade. A number of scholars have rightly rejected this view citing lack of evidence. See, example, Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 157-161, 383-386, n. 824, 552-559; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 351-54 nn. 163 and 165; Yurco, "Sennacherib's Third Campaign," 221-240; Frank J. Yurco, "The Shabaka-Shebitku Coregency and the Supposed Second Campaign of Sennacherib against Judah: A Critical Assessment," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991): 35-45; Mordechai Cogan, "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem: Once or Twice?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 21 (2001): 40-45, 69; Kahn, "Tirhakah, King of Kush," 33; Hoffmeier, "Egypt's Role in the Events of 701 B.C.," 231-232; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 217. On the history and chronology of the 25th Dynasty, see additionally Leo Depuydt, "The Date of Piye's Egyptian Campaign and the Chronology of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 79 (1993): 269-274; Dan'el Kahn, "The Inscription of Sargon II at Tang-i Var and the Chronology of Dynasty 25," *Orientalia* 70 (2001): 1-18; Anthony John Spalinger, "The Year 712 B.C. and its Implications for Egyptian History," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt,* 10 (1973): 95-101; Donald B. Redford, "A Note on the Chronology of Dynasty 25 and the Inscription of Sargon II at Tang-i Var," *Orientalia* (1999): 58-60.

[27] Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 385.

cannot be ruled out that Taharqa's army suffered a military setback at Eltekeh forcing a Cushite retreat which left Palestinian territory completely at the disposal of the Assyrians.

But preferring the former scenario, it is reasonable to accept the Assyrian record of a victory at Eltekeh as authentic, while at the same time removing from it the portrayal of decisiveness and finality that it purports. The Assyrian army also devastated Judah as reported by both Assyrian and biblical sources, but in the face of an unexpected setback in the vicinity of Jerusalem the Assyrian forces effected a speedy retreat homewards to Assyria. This position attempts to reconcile the ideological viewpoints expressed in the retelling of events from all sides.[28] But it also takes into account the fact that Sennacherib never personally campaigned again in Palestine in the two decades following this incident[29]—which is by far the longest lacunae of any Neo-Assyrian king who controlled western Asia.[30]

What Redford describes as "Sennacherib's permanent withdrawal from the Levant" following his 701 campaign,[31] was effected either because his victory was so thorough that no western Asian state dared to rebel in succeeding decades, or perhaps some other factor prevented his ever returning to Palestine. Only during the reign of Sennacherib's son Esarhaddon is there clear evidence for Assyrian military activity in the region, and this new wave of Assyrian westward drive was inevitably to clash with Cushite Egypt under Taharqa once again. In view of the fact that the Assyrian army needed 20 000 new recruits following Sennacherib's 701 campaign, Ernst Knauf's assessment of the outcome of the Judaean affair seems to carry the day: "The Assyrian-Egyptian conflict ended in a stalemate, not to be settled until 671."[32]

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[28] Cf. Provan, "Faith and the History of Israel," 310-311, who argues that all accounts reflect the ideological positions of the reporting parties, leaving the reader to adjudicate the likely outcome of events based on the constraints of testimony and interpretation.

[29] This against the view of a second Assyrian campaign by Sennacherib discussed in the preceding notes. See Kahn, "Kush and the Assyrians," 109; Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 109.

[30] For example, in Sargon's 16-year reign (721-705 B.C.), he campaigned in Palestine on at least three recorded occasions (720, 716, and 712), though he may not have appeared in person in 716. There were also Assyrian military activity in 713 in Palestine. See J. E. Reade, "Sargon's Campaigns of 720, 716, and 715 B. C.: Evidence from the Sculptures," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 35 (1976): 99-101. Similarly, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal lead several campaigns against Taharqa in the first half of the seventh century. See again §3.2.4.1 in this study. Cf. Younger Jr., "Assyrian Involvement," 246.

[31] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 353.

[32] Knauf, "Sennacherib at the Berezina," 149. Cf. Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 121.

Knauf's assessment corresponds well to Jeremy Pope's description of the Cushite-Assyrian dynamic of the ensuing years: "During the early seventh century b.c.e., a lull in Assyria's western campaigns corresponds to a marked increase in both the volume of Kushite royal inscriptions and their references to the Near East."[33] Indeed, the intervening decades witnessed increased Cushite-Egyptian commercial and military activities in the Levant.[34] As Redford writes, successful military campaigning in Palestine by the Cushite pharaoh resulted in "Taharqa's dominance of Philistine and Phoenician cities on the morrow of Esarhaddon's accession."[35] Several inscriptions of Taharqa's suggest military victories against "Asiatics."[36] For example, an inscription from Taharqa's Temple of Amun-re at Kawa in Upper Nubia reads:

> He has slaughtered the Libyans. He has restrained the Asiatics. He has [crushed?] the hill-countries that revolted. He causes them to make the walk of dogs. The sand-[dweller]s come—one knows not their place—fearing the king's ferocity.[37]

Another important inscription is found on the Second Pylon of Taharqa's Temple of Amun-Re at Sanam depicting bound captives labelled, "northern hill-countries, southern hill-countries, Phoenicians, all lands, the Shasu, Southland and Northland, bow-men of the deserts, Libyans, and everything that the Euphrates encloses."[38]

Though these claims appear grandiose, it seems likely that a balance of power did in fact ensue in Palestine in the decades following the clash of 701, which as Morkot opines, allowed "the Kushite pharaohs . . . [the freedom] to involve themselves in the affairs of the region."[39] Following in the tradition of his predecessor Shabaka, who, according to Anthony

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[33] Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 118.

[34] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 355.

[35] Donald B. Redford, "Taharqa in Western Asia and Libya," *Eretz Israel* 24 (1993): 188. Cf. Kahn, "Kush and the Assyrians," 110; Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 118-120.

[36] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 355. Cf. Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 118-123.

[37] In Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 119.

[38] In Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 122. Though Pope suggests that "The list appears to have been shaped more by a desire for symmetry and comprehensiveness than by ambitions of event reportage," nevertheless, it is likely that allusions to real military victories over Palestinian states lie behind the royal propaganda, as Redford has posited from his interpretation of the evidence. Similarly, Morkot, *Black Pharaohs* 217, notes that "The lack of evidence for military action by the Kushites might simply be due to accident of survival," though he adds, "but perhaps they were more intent on trade."

[39] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 217. See also, 259-260, 262.

Spalinger "was the first Kushite pharaoh to stress his dominance over the Asiatic peoples,"[40] Taharqa set about to establish Egyptian-Kushite dominance over western Asia. According to Redford, the marked increase in Asiatic goods among the donations to Nubian temples suggests that "a flurry of military activity" in Palestinian territory likely occupied Taharqa from the first decade of his reign.[41] Levantine client states supplied "cedar, juniper, acacia," and "Asiatic" copper and bronze.[42] The Kawa temple was also staffed by "Mentyu-nomads of Asia";[43] and the fact that Taharqa even had "the children of the chiefs of the [Libyan] Tjehenu"[44] brought to Nubia, may be an indication that such a policy was also implemented in his Palestinian holdings. The tantalizing plea of Taharqa to the god Amun following the sack of Memphis and the capture of his wives and children (including the crown prince Ushanuhuru) by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in the spring of 671 B.C., indicates that Syria-Palestine had to a large extent come under Egyptian control in the years leading up to Ashurbanipal's assault on Egypt:

> O Amun, that which I did in the land of Nehesy [Nubia], allow . . . Allow that I might make for you your tribute from the land of Khor [Syria-Palestine] which is turned away from you. O Amun . . . [m]y wives. Allow that my children might live. Turn death away from them for me.[45]

These circumstances seem to support Aubin's view—though not of a Cushite victory in 701—of an outcome which allowed Cushites a solid footing in the affairs of the Levant in the years following.[46] Though Aubin's Cushite rescue theory lack adequate historical support, his point regarding the significance of Cushite involvement in the Levant both before and after

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[40] Anthony J. Spalinger, "The Foreign Policy of Egypt Preceding the Assyrian Conquest," *Chronique d'Egypte* 53 (1978): 28.

[41] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 355.

[42] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 355; Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 105-106, 119-120.

[43] Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 119.

[44] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 355; Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 105-106, 119-120. The mention of the children of the Libyan chiefs in Taharqa's donation list is suggestive of the New Kingdom imperial policy of educating the children of client-kings at the Egyptian court in order to foster imperial loyalty. See discussion in §3.2.3 of this study.

[45] In Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 127, and Kahn, "Kush and the Assyrians," 115. Both Pope and Kahn assign this inscription to the period following the sack of Memphis and the capture of Taharqa's royal house.

[46] Cf. Knauf, "Sennacherib at the Berezina," 147.

the situation of 701 deserves more concentrated study. The recent work of Pope is a salutary endeavour in this direction.[47]

Going back to the biblical text, that the Cushites only marginally appear in the sources reporting on the events of 701 B.C. may suggest some kind of racial bias on the part of the biblical writers. Yet, as we shall explore below, the biblical perspective reflected in 2 Kings 18-19 and Isaiah 36-37 downplays the significance of Cushite intervention *not* because of racial bias, but rather because of a theological imperative: the biblical writer is theologically motivated to demonstrate the superior power of Yahweh above human military strength. Thus, the interpretation of Isaiah 18:1-7 and related passages which is outlined below, demonstrates two essentials: first, that the Cushites do in fact feature significantly in the events related to 701 B.C. elsewhere in Isaiah; and second, that the Cush oracle is intended in large part as a reprimand to Isaiah's Judaean audience pivoting between the choice of putting their confidence in divine strength and trusting in the "arm of flesh." Isaiah ben Amos is intent on establishing the fact of Yahweh' absolute rulership over the nations.

6.2.2 Yahweh's Sovereign Rule and the Nations in Isaiah

Yahweh's sovereign rule and the election of Israel are primary themes in the book of Isaiah.[48] These two overarching concerns govern the prophet's rhetorical and theological aims.[49] A fuller discussion of the status of the nations (including Cush) in relation to Israelite election will be pursued in Chapter 8. Here we are interested in Isaiah's characterization of the nations with respect to Yahweh's kingship on Mount Zion.[50] Isaiah sought to uphold the sovereignty of Yahweh the God of Israel in the face of powerful empires vying for control over the Levant.[51] "YHWH as sovereign, who rules over all, including empires, emperors, and their

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[47] See again Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 105-160. Cf. Pope, *Double Kingdom under Taharqo*.

[48] Joel Kaminsky and Anne Steward, "God of All the World: Universalism and Developing Monotheism in Isaiah 40-66," *Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006): 139-140. Themes of Yahweh's sovereignty and Israelite election are more prominent in what scholars often call Second Isaiah (chps. 40-55), but this study deals with the book of Isaiah as a whole.

[49] Kaminsky and Steward, "God of All the World," 140.

[50] On the theme of Mount Zion as the site of Yahweh's kingship in Isaiah and beyond, see the edited volumes, Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham, eds., *Zion, City of Our God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Archibald L. Van Wieringen and Annemarieke Van der Woude, eds., *'Enlarge the Site of Your Tent': The City as Unifying Theme in Isaiah* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 58; Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[51] See Bulkeley, "Living in Empire," 71-84.

gods," Tim Bulkeley writes, "is a key theme spread through the book of Isaiah."[52] In addition to neighbouring peoples like Edom, Ammon, and Moab, Isaiah's oracles are directed against four major empires of his day: Assyria, Egypt, Cush and Babylon.[53] Each of these empires, driven by ideologies of universal dominion, declared its sovereign status over the earth.

As we have already seen, the Neo-Assyrian kings claimed universal dominion over the "four quarters of the earth."[54] Likewise, Neo-Babylonian ideology presented the king as the ruler and protector of all humanity.[55] And Egyptian royal ideology, as Chapter 3 has outlined, envisioned the pharaoh as the subduer of the "Nine Bows"—the totality of humankind.[56] In the same vein, the royal ideology of the 25th Cushite Dynasty was analogous to and derived in large part from the Egyptian exemplar.[57] We have also seen that the Nimrod passage and the Babel pericope are scathing critique of imperial ambition by the Genesis author. Canonically speaking, by the time of Isaiah in the late eighth century B.C., the imperial seed which Nimrod the Cushite had planted had blossomed into a noxious plant which threatened to overspread the landscape of Israel and Judah. Indeed, Assyria, Babylon and Cushite-Egypt are in many respects the genealogical and imperial offspring of Nimrod.[58] Due to their ever-menacing threat, Isaiah and the prophetic writings demonstrate an intensified critique against these empires.

Isaiah repeatedly declare Yahweh's superior power and sovereign control over the nations (2:4; 13:13; 14:26; 37:16; 40:22; 42:5; 44:23; 45:12, 18, etc.). The nations however, as

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[52] Bulkeley, "Living in Empire," 84.

[53] See Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 23-132. Many of Isaiah's oracles are directed against Israel's immediate neighbours (Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Edom, etc.), who though imperial in aims, appear to be somewhat lesser threats politically than the four major empires.

[54] Neo-Assyrian kings followed a long line of tradition in claiming the titles "King of the four quarters of the Earth," and "ruler of the universe." See, Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 62, and Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty," 360. Hom, "Moral-Theological Evaluation," 6; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 200.

[55] See David S. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 59; Atlanta: Scholars, 1999), 35-36, 41-45.

[56] See again §3.3.2.1. in this study.

[57] See Roberto B. Gozzoli, "Kawa V and Taharqo's BY3WT: Some Aspects of Nubian Royal Ideology," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 95 (2009): 235-248; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 179-180. Cf. Kahn, "Tirhakah, King of Kush," 24.

[58] See again discussion on the genealogy of Cush and the theological evaluation of Nimrod in §5.3.1 and §5.4.3 in this study.

exemplified by Assyria in Isaiah 1-39,[59] assert their superiority over the earth and over all gods, including Yahweh.[60] Thus, Sennacherib boasts that no god, not even Yahweh can deliver from his hand (Isa 36:15, 18-20; 37:10, 12). In fact, Sennacherib directs his war polemic against Israel's God (37:23-24, 28-29) despite his pretensions that he acts against Jerusalem only at Yahweh's behest (36:10).[61] For Sennacherib, the God of Israel is likened to the other impotent gods which he and his ancestors have destroyed or carried away captive to Assyria.[62] Since none of the gods of the nations were able to deliver their respective peoples from his hands, Sennacherib admonishes the people of Judah, "Do not let Hezekiah deceive you for he is not able to deliver you; neither let him cause you to hope in Yahweh, saying, 'Yahweh will surely deliver us'" (36:15-16, 18).

Quite rationally the Assyrian king claims supremacy over the gods of the nations in view of his military victory over them. Iain Provan has underscored that Sennacherib's assertion of supremacy over all gods, including the God of Israel, is in effect a declaration of his own deity.[63] Moreover, Sennacherib presents himself as a viable alternative to Yahweh: the people should trust in his promises of peace and protection, and especially his promise to relocate them to a new land of abundance (36:16-17).[64] Despite Sennacherib's hubris, Isaiah emphasizes that the Assyrians are in fact fulfilling Yahweh's sovereign purposes.[65] As for their

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[59] For a historical, literary and theological portrait of Assyria in Isaiah, see Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image," 719-737.

[60] Cf. Robert P. Gordon, "The Gods Must Die: A Theme in Isaiah and Beyond," in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michaël N. Van der Meer et al (VTSup 138; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 49-52; Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament Series; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 262.

[61] Cf. Gordon, "The Gods Must Die," 49.

[62] Assyrian kings boast of deporting to Assyria not just foreign peoples, but also their gods; see K. Lawson Younger Jr., "Sargon II: The Annals," in *Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 2:118A, 294; Cogan, "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem," 303. Wall reliefs show Assyrian soldiers carrying away the gods of defeated peoples to Assyria. See, e.g., Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 197, and figures 5 and 7 in the illustrations at the end of the volume. Cf. Gordon, "The Gods Must Die," 50.

[63] As Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 262 writes, Sennacherib "thinks himself a god." Cf. Gordon, "The Gods Must Die," 51.

[64] Gordon, "The Gods Must Die," 49-50.

[65] A consistent theme in the prophetic writings is the representation of all military endeavour as being under Yahweh's sovereign control; see John N. Oswalt, *The Holy One of Israel: Studies in the Book of Isaiah* (Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, 2014), 94; Bulkeley, "Living in Empire," 78.

unassailable claim to military superiority,[66] the Assyrians are but instruments in the hand of Yahweh from the prophetic point of view (10:5; 37:26-27).[67] While the Assyrians boast of their military supremacy, the prophet suggests that unbeknownst to the braggarts, Yahweh is controlling their actions for his own purposes of judgement against the nations.[68] In due course, the Assyrians too will become the objects of Yahweh's judgment (10:12).[69] According to this dual image, empires like Assyria are both enemies of Israel *and* instruments in Yahweh's sovereign hand for the punishment of the nations' idolatry.[70] Indeed, Yahweh calls Assyria "the rod of my punishment," decreed even against Israel and Judah for their idolatrous ways (10:5-6).

All of this holds little accord with the Assyrian king who does not recognize the God of Israel as sovereign but rather reviles him. For Sennacherib, his own ability to subdue nations, including Israel and Judah (10:13; 36:18-20; 37:11-13) has gotten him renown, fear and dread. Paradoxically, Yahweh questions the rationality of an axe or a saw (Assyria) inveighing against the one (Yahweh) who is using it to accomplish his own purposes (10:15).[71] But from the perspective of Isaiah, the Assyrians, Yahweh's unwitting allies for judgment, are in the final analysis enemies of God and his people and are also destined for divine judgement. Once Yahweh's work is accomplished through the instrumentation of Assyria, its pride too will be punished: "For it will happen that when Yahweh has finished his work [of punishment] upon mount Zion and upon Jerusalem, then I will punish the proud heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his haughty looks" (10:12).[72] Babylon, the archenemy of Zion in the book of

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[66] Even Hezekiah is forced to admit that the track record of the Assyrians substantiate their claim to military supremacy (37:18-19). Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image," 722, aptly characterizes the image of Assyrian military power in Isaiah thus: "Quite clearly, it is that of an overwhelming military machine, destroying all resistance in its path, devastating the lands of its enemies, hauling away huge numbers of spoils and captives to its capital or elsewhere in its realm, and rearranging by this devastation and deportation the political physiognomy of the entire region."

[67] Cf. Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 130.

[68] Bulkeley, "Living in Empire," 78.

[69] Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image," 722.

[70] Cf. Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 130.

[71] Cf. Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 45-47, 69; Bulkeley, "Living in Empire," 79.

[72] Cf. Bulkeley, "Living in Empire," 78.

Isaiah, is similarly portrayed as hubristic, and she too, along with Egypt and Cush, will become the objects of divine punishment (e.g., 14:13-14; 19:1-17; 20:1-6; 47:7-8).[73]

Another feature of Yahweh's sovereign rule involves the question of "other gods." In the process of asserting Yahweh' sovereign rule, the existence of other gods, the gods of the nations, is denied.[74] Hence, Hezekiah could declare that the reason the Assyrian kings were able to destroy the gods of the nations by throwing them into the fire was because "they were no gods, but rather the work of human hands, wood and stone, thus they have destroyed them" (Isa 37:19). Strong religious polemic against foreign gods and the denial of their authority/existence is a dominant theme in the Hebrew Bible.[75] In this theological vein the book of Isaiah exhibits strong antipathy toward idol worship.[76] Isaiah is also unequivocal that Yahweh's judgment against his people was occasioned by their violation of the covenant on account of idolatry. Ironically, Yahweh's judgment often entailed the subjection of Israel and Judah to the very nations whose gods they had chosen to worship. To Isaiah and the prophets more generally, foreign peoples are dangerous not only because of Israel's predilection for idolatry, but also because of Israel's vulnerability to political domination by larger more powerful nations.

The consequence of this ethno-religious assessment of the nations is the complete disparagement of political alliances with foreign peoples. At stake for the small kingdoms of Israel and Judah caught between competing super powers is the question of where the people of Yahweh will choose to place their allegiance; that is, whether they will demonstrate trust in Yahweh their God or place their confidence in the protection political alliances promise.

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[73] Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 126, 132. Space does not permit an assessment of Babylon in this work. But, Babylon is in fact, the archenemy of Yahweh and Jerusalem in the Book of Isaiah, more so than even Assyria, Egypt and Cush. It is Babylon which destroys Judah and Jerusalem and exiles the Jews, and these actions earn Babylon pride of place in the prophetic condemnation. For the theological evaluation of Babylon in Isaiah, see Vanderhooft, *Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 123-135, 169-188; Hamlin, "End of Empire," 127-139; A. Joseph Everson, "Serving Notice on Babylon: The Canonical Function of Isaiah 13-14," *Word & World* 19 (1999): 133-140; Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 107-129; Archibald Van Wieringen, "Assur and Babel against Jerusalem: The Reader-Oriented Position of Babel and Assur within the Framework of Isaiah 1-39," in *'Enlarge the Site of Your Tent': The City as Unifying Theme in Isaiah*, ed. Archibald L. Van Wieringen and Annemarieke Van der Woude (Oudtestamentische Studiën 58; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 49-62.

[74] Kaminsky and Steward, "God of All the World," 140.

[75] For example, Deut 4:28: "There you shall serve other gods, the work of human hands, which can neither see, nor hear, nor eat nor smell."

[76] Cf. Kaminsky and Steward, "God of All the World," 140.

Alliances with the nations, according to the prophetic assessment is always bad for the people of Israel. The triumph of any empire spells disaster for Israel and Judah. When, for example, Ahaz appealed to Assyria for military aid against the Syro-Ephraimite league (2 Kings 16:7-8), Isaiah prophesied that Assyria would in turn devastate the land of Judah (Isa 7:17, 20; 8:4, 7).[77] While Israel was rendered short-term aid, in the long run Assyrian intervention lead to their subjection and exploitation. In certain prophetic writings, the hankering after political alliances on the part of Israel and Judah is compared to a prostitute going "awhoring" after the nations (e.g., Hos. 2, Eze 16:1-43; 23:1-35).[78] The prophetic appeal is for the people to reject foreign alliances (including the adoption of the religious practices of the nations) and to turn wholeheartedly to their God.[79]

6.2.3 Summary

We have seen that Cush was a significant power on the international scene with imperial reach into the Levant from the late eighth century to the early decades of the seventh

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[77] Cf. Oswalt, *Holy One of Israel*, 96; Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 130. Perhaps because of his forging an alliance with Assyria, in the Chronicler's account of Ahaz (2 Chron 28) he becomes the worst king of Judah, taking the place occupied by Manasseh in 2 Kings 21. In the Chronicler's version Manasseh is repentant; he is therefore supplanted by Ahaz as the worst potentate; see Peter R. Ackroyd, "The Biblical Interpretation of the Reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honour of G.W. Ahlström*, ed. W. Boyd Barrick, Gösta W. Ahlström and John R. Spencer (JSOT.S 31; Sheffield, EN: JSOT Press, 1984), 248. Similarly, unlike Josiah who is the idealized king in 2 Kings 22-23, it is Hezekiah who becomes for the Chronicler the exemplary king, the paragon of faith and righteousness, and whose reign is depicted as the climax of the story of Judah's kings. On this point, see Shannon E. Baines, "The Cohesiveness of 2 Chronicles 33:1-36:23 as a Literary Unit Concluding the Book of Chronicles," in *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography*, ed. Paul S. Evans and Tyler F. Williams (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 143-148. On the historical background to Ahaz's submission to Assyria in 734-732 B.C., see Nadav Naaman, "Tiglath-pilesser III's Campaigns Against Tyre and Israel (734-732 BCE)," in *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction: Collected Essays. Vol 1* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 56-67; De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 193-202.

[78] See Peggy L. Day, "A Prostitute Unlike Women: Whoring as Metaphoric Vehicle for Foreign Alliances," in *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes*, ed. Brad E. Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 446; New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 167-173. Cf. Peggy L. Day, "Adulterous Jerusalem's Imagined Demise: Death of a Metaphor in Ezekiel XVI," *Vetus Testamentum* 50 (2000): 285-309; Brad E. Kelle, *Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

[79] Bulkeley, "Living in Empire," 74. See also, Adele Berlin, "Did the Jews Worship Idols in Babylonia?" in *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded*, ed. Gershon Galil, Mark Geller and Alan Millard (VTSup 130; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 323-333.

century B.C. For this reason, appeals to Cushite Egypt in the face of Assyrian might was always an attractive option in the *Realpolitik* of Levantine states. Israel and Judah were also caught in the vortex of these political maneuverings. Nevertheless, the prophetic message, especially of Isaiah which concerns us, was one which pointed the people of Israel and Judah away from political dependence on other nations. The options for the people of Yahweh may be simplified thus: trust in the power of Yahweh or trust in military alliances with the nations.

From the prophetic perspective, it is better to trust in Yahweh than to put confidence in human strength and achievement. Yet the political leadership of Israel and Judah inevitably sought out alliances with powerful nations in order to avert danger or to secure some political or economic advantage. But such a move repeatedly proves to be disastrous, as the Ahaz-Assyrian case demonstrates. The strong religio-political animus against Assyria in Isaiah is also directed against other imperial enterprises and political alliances, including those of Babylon, Egypt, and Cush.[80] The ethno-religious characterization of Cush in Isaiah 18 which follows is governed by these theological concerns; namely, the need to avoid foreign alliances and the urge to maintain religious purity and political autonomy.

6.3 CHARACTERIZING CUSH IN ISAIAH 18: A PEOPLE MIGHTY AND CONQUERING

Though one can rarely speak with confidence of the historical and socio-political contexts of a particular biblical pericope, Isaiah 18:1-7 may be an exception to this rule in some sense. Barring issues related to compositional history,[81] the passage is nearly always interpreted with reference to the political situation of late eighth century Palestine, with various dates within this historical stretch being advanced.[82] This interpretive approach is due

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[80] Isaiah's anti-Assyrian animus should not be interpreted as evidence for an anti-Assyrian agenda; Isaiah condemns Judah's decision to rebel against Assyria. On this, see De Jong*, Isaiah Tradition*, 240.

[81] Many scholars hold that verse 7 (and sometime verse 3) is a later addition to the passage. See discussion in Balogh*, Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 28, 178-181; Cook*, A Sign and a Wonder*, 49-79. But see Childs*, Isaiah*, 139, who suggests that verse 7 "is not a late scribal gloss, but integral to the editor's intention in shaping the entire passage as a testimony to God's future rule over the nations of the world."

[82] A number of scholars, for instance, interpret the oracle against the background of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis of 722-720 B.C. E.g., Childs*, Assyrian Crisis*, 46; John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, the Eighth-Century Prophet: His Times & His Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 253, 258; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39: With an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 258-62; Alviero Niccacci, "Isaiah XVIII-XX from an Egyptological Perspective," *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998): 226. Others connect the passage to the Ashdod crisis of 713-711; e.g., Ronald E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-*

to both the literary context in which Isaiah 18 appears, and the political significance of Cush at this historical juncture. The Cush oracle in Isaiah 18 constitutes part of the corpus of oracles in Isaiah 13-23 often designated "oracles against the nations" by scholars.[83] And Isaiah 18-20 is widely held to be a sub-unit within the literary context of Isaiah 13-23 because these chapters are clearly prophecies related to Egypt and Cush.[84]

Yet, Isaiah 18:1-7 is also understood by many commentators as comprising a literary unit with 17:1-14 based on both literary and historical considerations, and this view is followed in our analysis below.[85] From a literary standpoint, the משא superscription characteristically positioned at the beginning each oracle in Isaiah 13-23 is missing in 18:1. Rather 18:1 opens with הוי, which is understood by some exegetes as a weaker address than the משא pronouncements.[86] The הוי address of 18:1 is one of only two הוי passages in the משא oracles of 13-23.

This suggests a connection between 18:1 and 17:12-14 where the other הוי address occurs. Another literary connection concerns the use of agricultural metaphors in both passages to signal acts of divine judgment (17:4-6, 10-11; 18:3-6).[87] On the basis of these

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39 (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 163; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 360; Hoffmeier, "Egypt's Role in the Events of 701 B.C.," 228; J. J. M. Roberts, "Isaiah's Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," in *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes*, ed. Brad E. Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 446; New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 205. A good number of scholars also propose Sennacherib's campaign in 701 B.C. as the likely historical context for the oracle; e.g., Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 50, 52-53, 55-57; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 309-310; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 192; De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 238-239. Though in his earlier work (*Assyrian Crisis*) cited above Childs favoured a 720 B.C. context for the Cush oracle, more recently, Childs, *Isaiah*, 135-138, has supported a 701 B.C. context. But see Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39: A Commentary* (TOTL; London: SCM Press, 1974), 92, who eschews with historical interpretations, and posits an eschatological context for the passage.

[83] For analysis of Isaiah 13-23, the various problems related to its formation and interpretation, and for comprehensive citation of sources, see Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 20-27, 69-138; Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 25-45; Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*, 1-12.

[84] Recent works addressing the literary, theological, and historical contexts of Isaiah 18-20 include Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*; Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*; Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*; Niccacci, "Isaiah XVIII-XX," 214-238.

[85] E.g., Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 252-262; Childs, *Isaiah*, 135-139. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 85.

[86] E.g., Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*, 15.

[87] Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 252-255; Childs, *Isaiah*, 135-136.

literary connections, several commentators propose that 18:1-7 is part of the מַשָּׂא cycle which begins at 17:1.[88]

From a historical point of view, 17:1-6 deals with the Syro-Ephraimite war of 722-720 B.C. and its consequences for Damascus and Samaria. The conflict with Assyria resulted in the destruction of Samaria, and the deportation of its denizens *en masse* to Assyria.[89] As a key player in the political scene of western Asia in the later eighth century, Assyria is mentioned explicitly in Isaiah 19 and 20, and implied in the context of the Syro-Ephraimite conflict alluded to in 17:1-6. If chapters 17, 19, and 20 involve Assyria in some form, it becomes highly probable that Assyria is involved in one way or another in the literary and historical context of chapter 18, even if there are disagreements as to which of the Assyrian campaigns in the latter eighth century serves as the background for the oracle.[90] Because the political situation of late eighth century Palestine involved clashes between the super powers of Assyria and Cushite Egypt,[91] any interpretation of Isaiah 18 which gives consideration to Assyria's role in the politics of the Levant at this period is likely a highly contextual reading of the passage; for where Cush is involved in the Levant in the late eighth century, historically speaking, Assyria is not far behind.

A good number of scholars have analyzed the Cush oracle with reference to the 701 B.C. date making the approach taken here far from unique.[92] Yet even where there is agreement on a 701 B.C. date as the background to the Cush oracle, difficulties related to the obscure language, strange vocabulary and elusive images of Isaiah 18:1-7 result in widely

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[88] Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 252-262; Childs, *Isaiah*, 135-139. See further discussion in Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 28, 139, 182-185; Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 36-45, 52-53; Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*, 14-15.

[89] On the historical background of the Syro-Ephraimite conflict and the destruction of Samaria, see Bob Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* (Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East 2; Leiden: Brill, 1992); K. Lawson, Younger Jr., "The Deportations of the Israelites," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 201-227; K. Lawson Younger Jr., "The Fall of Samaria in Light of Recent Research.," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (1999): 461-482; Nadav Na'aman, "The Historical Background to the Conquest of Samaria," in *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction: Collected Essays. Vol 1*, ed. Nadav Na'aman (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 76-93; Na'aman, "Assyrian Deportations," 104-124. Cf. De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 210-214.

[90] See discussion in Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 52-57.

[91] See again, §3.2.4. in this study.

[92] See again, Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 50, 52-53, 55-57; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 309-310; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 192; De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 238-239; Childs, *Isaiah*, 135-138.

divergent answers to the main problems identified in the passage. These may be outlined as follows: the precise meaning of the הוֹי declared in verse 1; the identity of the group or groups of messengers in verse 2; the identity of the people destined for divine punishment in verses 4-6; and the historical occasion and theological implications of Cushites bearing gifts to Jerusalem in verse 7.[93] In the course of our analysis, we will address these issues in turn.

6.3.1 Characterization Cush in Isaiah 18

The analysis of Isaiah 18 below is not intended to be exhaustive, as it is largely concerned with the ethnic and religious characterization of Cushites. Therefore, our analysis of the oracle will proceed with an assertion of the unity of the narrative, while leaving literary development and diachronic discussions to the specialists.[94]

6.3.1.1 Characterization of the Land of Cush

The land of Cush in Isaiah 18, like most biblical references to Cush, has been rightly identified with Nubia.[95] Very few biblical scholars would deny that the "Cush oracle" of Isaiah 18 largely concerns Nubian Cush, or that the people being described are an African people. Hence, it is rather puzzling that John Hayes and Stuart Irvine, along with a few other commentators, believe that the "mighty and subjugating" people of v. 2 whose land is divided by rivers are the Assyrians![96] In the passage, Cush is said to be אֶרֶץ צִלְצַל כְּנָפָיִם (v. 1), which is variously translated as a land of "whirring wings," "buzzing wings," "winged beetle," "sailing ships," "winged ships," or a land "swarming with insects."[97] More will be said on this particular feature below.

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[93] Cf. Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 27, 139, 178-187.

[94] While the literary development of Isa 1-7 lies outside our purview, the excellent work of Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 49-79, and Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20* 28, 178-181, deal with these issues in detail.

[95] See Hidal, "Cush in the Old Testament," 97; Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*, 74.

[96] Hayes and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 254-255, maintain that it is the Assyrians, the people "tall and smooth" who will bring their offering to Mount Zion to express their gratitude for the report brought to them by the swift (Judean) messengers regarding the plans of the Ethiopians to foment rebellion in the region. The Ethiopians were reported to be "up to no good in Syria-Palestine," says Hayes and Irvine. The failure of the Ashdod revolt of 713 B.C., according to Hayes and Irvine, is the result of the revelation to the Assyrians (257). For similar views, see Waldemar Janzen, *Mourning Cry and Woe Oracle* (BZAW 125; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972), 60-61, and John D. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (Word Biblical Commentary 24; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 245-246.

[97] See discussion in Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 142-145.

Cush is described as a riverine culture, a land divided by rivers (נְהָרִים; v. 2).[98] The passage also mentions the "sea" (יָם) and the "waters" (מַיִם; v. 1) which the Cushite envoys traverse in papyrus vessels (v. 2). Some translations take the liberty to translate "the sea" as the Nile (NRSV, for example). But the "sea" may also designate the Red Sea as the kingdom of Kush at this time likely included Punt and other areas which border the Red Sea. It may also refer to the Mediterranean Sea, a faster route to Palestine than overland travel.[99] The geography and general topography of Cush are familiar to the prophet, who chooses to use a number of *hapax legomena* and rare phrases to describe both the land and its people. The difficulty of the vocabulary and the obscure imagery are noted by virtually all commentators. Meir Lubetski and Claire Gottlieb suggest that the use of such strange language is indicative of the prophet's knowledge of and deliberate choice to employ Egyptian (and possibly Cushite?) expressions.[100]

6.3.1.2 Characterization of the People of Cush

If מְמֻשָּׁךְ is rightly understood to mean "tall" in the context of Isaiah 18, then the passage is describing a notable feature of Cushites.[101] In his annals, Herodotus twice calls the Ethiopians "the tallest and most handsome of all men."[102] According to Herodotus, the Ethiopians select the tallest and strongest among them as their king.[103] The exceptional height

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[98] In the context of Isaiah 18:2, the verb בָּזְאוּ ("divided") connotes a land cut through by rivers. In the case of Nubia and Egypt, the Nile runs through the full length of these contiguous lands. Cf. Meir Lubetski and Claire Gottlieb, "Isaiah 18: The Egyptian Nexus," in *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Meir Lubetski, Claire Gottlieb and Sharon Keller (JSOTS 273; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 375.

[99] Cf. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 164.

[100] See Lubetski and Gottlieb, "Isaiah 18," 365-366. Cf. Sarah Israelit-Groll, "The Egyptian Background to Isaiah 19.18," in *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Meir Lubetski, Claire Gottlieb and Sharon Keller (JSOTS 273; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 300.

[101] The difficulty in translating the Hebrew מְמֻשָּׁךְ is well noted in commentators. Most understand the terms to refer to the distinctive height of the people. For discussion see Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned,* 53-54.

[102] Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.20. In 3.114 Herodotus writes: "Where south inclines westwards, the part of the world stretching farthest towards the sunset is Ethiopia; this produces gold in abundance, and huge elephants, and all sorts of wild trees, and ebony, and the tallest and handsomest and longest-lived people." Herodotus' favourable evaluation Cushite aesthetics indicate the subjectivity of beauty ideals and how such change according to cultural and historical situations.

[103] Herodotus, *Hist* 2.20.

of southern Nilotic peoples have been recognized well into the modern period.[104] In Isaiah 45:14 the Sabeans, who are grouped with Cushites and Egyptians, and whose eponymous ancestor is listed in Genesis 10:7 as a descendant of Cush, are said to be of "tall stature." And in the previous chapter, it was pointed out that the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* described the men of Gujarat on the western coast of India (which this study has identified as a likely "Cushite" population), as "tall in stature and black in complexion."[105]

Verse 2 also describes the Cushites as מוֹרָט ("polished," "smooth") which most commentators understand to refer to the clean-shaven façade of Cushites (and Egyptians).[106] A few suggest, however, that the term may allude to the "shiny" or "bronzed skin" of the Nilotic southerners.[107] But the former seems to be the case: the Cushites males are smooth or clean-faced as compared to the bearded Semites.[108] If the latter is the case, the Cushite distinctive colour and smooth skin is being noted by the prophet. In either case, Isaiah does not disparage the Cushite's skin colour or physiognomy.[109] The Cushites distinctive skin colour was obviously noticed, and in one case was employed as a metaphor precisely because of its obvious distinction (Jer 13:23). But descriptions of the skin pigmentation of Cushites were devoid of modern racialized sentiments.

For example, the Assyrian king Esarhaddon, upon capturing Memphis, Taharqa's royal residence in 671 B.C., reported: "I entered into his plundered palace. There I found his wives, his sons and daughters, who like him, had skins as dark as pitch."[110] Importantly, neither in this or other records of the Neo-Assyrian kings is the blackness of the Cushite disparaged. The distinctive skin colour of the Cushite was observed by both biblical and extra-biblical sources,

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[104] See Trigger, "Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?" 27. "Some of the southerners portrayed by the Egyptians appear to be tall and linear, resembling modern Nilotes" (33).

[105] Citation in Thapar, "Meluhha, Dilmun and Makan," 12. See §5.3.2.3 in this study.

[106] See Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 93; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 245; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 149; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 309; Lubetski and Gottlieb, "Isaiah 18," 373-374.

[107] Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*, 54, for example, understands the combined מְמֻשָּׁךְ וּמוֹרָט to "refer to the tallness and bronzed skin of the people described." Other commentators suggest this combination "refer to the shining dark-coloured skin salved with oil"; see references in Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 149, n. 34. See also discussion in Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 93; Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 81.

[108] See figures 3, 4, and 5 in §3.3.2 and §3.3.3 of this study.

[109] Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 81.

[110] In Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 269.

but such observations were free from negative value judgments.[111]

The Cush oracle of Isaiah 18 is certainly the clearest description of the physical attributes of Cushites in the Hebrew Bible. Like Herodotus, Isaiah notices and gives a positive, or at a minimum a neutral evaluation of Cushite physiognomy.[112] Nevertheless, the most important characterization of Cushites for Isaiah was their military prowess, not their physiognomy.[113] Even the emphasis on the height of the Cushites (v. 2) may be understood as an expression of an intimidating feature in battle. Göran Eidevall's assessment of the physical description of Cushites in the Isaian passage is to the point: "[T]his brief description did hardly emerge solely, or primarily, out of ethnographic interest. Although the motif of otherness is quite prominent, the main emphasis lies on strength, rather than strangeness. Above all, the ability of this foreign people in warfare is underlined."[114]

6.3.1.3 Political and Military Characterization of Cush

As mentioned, the expression צִלְצַל כְּנָפָיִם (v. 1) describing the land of Cush has been variously understood. Many see the expression as analogous to the "vessels of papyrus" in v. 2, suggesting the idea of "winged ships," or "sailing ships."[115] The translation as "winged beetle" is also supported by a number of commentators.[116] This study takes the position that the Hebrew is a reference to buzzing insects, but unlike many exegetes who understand literal insects,[117] in this context the swarms of insects is a metaphorical denotation for the multitude

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[111] Cf. Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 81: "It is worth noticing that the observations concerning the physical appearance of the Cushites do not entail any kind of negative value judgment (in contradistinction to the racial prejudices of a later era)." Eidevall writes further that Isaiah physical description of Cushites if anything, "stresses the capability, perhaps even superiority—not the inferiority—of the people thus described" (81, n. 225).

[112] Cf. Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*, 208: "The way the Cushites and their land are described (vv. 1-2) is overwhelmingly positive."

[113] Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 92; Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 153; Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 81.

[114] Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 81.

[115] Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 164; Hayes and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 254; Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah*, 359; Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 58; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 245, allows for both insects and sailing ships.

[116] E.g., Lubetski and Gottlieb, "Isaiah 18," 370-371; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 145.

[117] Childs, *Isaiah*, 138; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 93; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 308, n. a, 309; Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*, 52.

of an army.[118] The insect analogy is not meant to be pejorative, as Blenkinsopp has proposed, calling Cush an "insect-infested" country to which "the writer is not well disposed."[119]

For comparative purposes, Isaiah 7:18-19 reads: "In that day Yahweh will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the Nile of Egypt and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And all of them will come and settle on the sides of the valleys, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thorns and on all the bushes." The imagery of a numberless host from the end of the Nile of Egypt and from Assyria is rendered by the hoard of flies and bees imagery. The depiction of insects covering the landscape is analogous to a pestilence which spreads devastation.[120] The fly at the קָצֶה ("extremity," "ends") of the Nile of Egypt in Isaiah 7:18 is almost certainly another means of denoting Cush, a land on the southern border of Egypt which may have been thought of by some to be the source of the Nile.[121] Moreover, in both the literary context of Isaiah 1-39 and the historical context of the late eighth century, the armies of Egypt are at the disposal of Cush. Cush is noted for assembling massive armies elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. For instance, in 2 Chronicles 14:9 and 16:8 which will be analyzed in the following chapter, Cushites are said to comprise an innumerable army of a million men launching an attack against Judah. And in his annals, the Assyrian king Sennacherib reported that the kings of Egypt and bowmen and charioteers of the kings of Cush "assembled a numberless host" against him at Eltekeh.[122]

In Isaiah 18, it seems most likely then that the imagery of the land of Cush abuzz with wings is an emphasis on the numerical capacity of the armies of Cush. That Cushites are

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[118] Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes: Vol 1: Chapters 1 to 18* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 474: "The prophet's purpose, however, is not to show that Ethiopia is an insect-infested land. His purpose rather seems to be to mention Ethiopia to show that its swarming hordes were like insects. . . . Ethiopia's armies are equipped for foraging and conquering. They have all the capabilities of insects provided with wings." Cf. Eidevall*, Prophecy and Propaganda*, 77-78.

[119] Blenkinsopp*, Isaiah 1-39*, 309. Blenkinsopp understands Isaiah's description of the Cushites as a negative evaluation of both their physical characteristics and their land. He thus finds it "curious" that Isaiah does not make mention of the Cushites' skin colour, which he seem to assume would have had all the associated derogation of the modern era. If one follows Blenkinsopp's line of reasoning, Isaiah thus disparages the cushites based on what would be analogous to modern racial classification.

[120] Cf. Eidevall*, Prophecy and Propaganda*, 77.

[121] Herodotus (*Hist.* 2.22) surmised that the source of the Nile was in Libya, and from there it passed through Ethiopia and then into Egypt. In this particular case, "Libya" for Herodotus denotes areas south of Nubia.

[122] Cogan, "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem," 2:119B, 303.

envisioned to be a numerous and formidable fighting force in Isaiah 18 is further supported by their designation as עַם נוֹרָא מִן־הוּא וָהָלְאָה, "a people feared near and far," and גּוֹ קַו־קָו וּמְבוּסָה, "a nation trampling and subjugating" (v. 2, 7). Without a doubt the prophet is emphasizing the military characteristics of the land and the people of Cush. Moreover, in the Hebrew Bible Cushite are most frequently mentioned in contexts of war, often in alliance with Egypt, Libya, Put, the Arabians, and the Sabeans (e.g., Isa 20:3-5; 37:9; 45:14; Jer 46:9; Ezek 30:4; 9; 38:5; Nah 3:9; Zeph 2:12; 2 Chron 12:3; 14:9-12; 2 Chron 16:8).

Furthermore, the political context of the Levant in the eighth century ensured that Israelite and Judean prophets were well aware that Cush was the overlord of Egypt at this time.[123] That Nubia was capable of subjugating the whole land of Egypt (and no doubt extending its imperial control far to the south and east)[124] considering several centuries of Egyptian domination, solidified its reputation on the international stage as a formidable military power. "The implication is that the people of Cush," Eidevall writes, "would be a fear-inspiring military opponent to any other nation."[125] Still, despite the reality behind Cush as a capable military force, the characterization of the seemingly invincible Cushites serves the prophet's rhetorical purposes well. As we shall explore below, Cush as a military topos in the Hebrew Bible is employed for the glory of Yahweh and not for the glory of Cushites *qua* Cushites.

6.3.2 Theological Evaluation: Cush in the Context of Yahweh's Sovereign Rule

As is the case for the nations in general, the ethno-religious characterization of Cush

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[123] Cf. Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 52. Though Lubetski and Gottlieb, "Isaiah 18," 364-384, note that Cush had become a "powerful state" and that the 25th Cushite Dynasty was the ruling power over Egypt (367-368), their discussion of Isaiah 18 focuses disproportionately on Egypt, and their interpretation of the passage almost wholly concerns Egypt. From their reading of the text, one gets the sense that the prophet is in effect addressing the Egyptians, while the Cushites are but an appendage. This practice of ignoring or diminishing the role of Cushites in the biblical text is a main contention of this study. But as Dan'el Kahn, "The Historical Setting of Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations (Zeph. 2:4-15)," in *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded*, ed. Gershon Galil, Mark Geller and Alan Millard (VTSup 130; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 448, contends, the biblical text makes a clear distinction between Egypt and Kush, and the substitution of Egypt for Kush often seen in commentaries is untenable: "Kush, then, is not Egypt and cannot be substituted in a commentary with it . . . the identification of Egypt with Kush should be discarded."

[124] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 154.

[125] Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 81.

must also be understood in relationship to the two major rhetorical purposes of Isaiah: the establishment of the sovereign rule of Yahweh and the affirmation of the chosen status of Israel.[126] As this study has maintained, it is the religious evaluation of the nations with which the biblical text is mainly concerned and less so with any purely ethnic characteristics of the "other." Cushites may stand out for their stature, smoothness, and no doubt their darker pigmentation, but these factors are not in and of themselves subjects of interest or cause of antipathy. Rather, in the book of Isaiah Cush as a foreign—and therefore, idolatrous—nation is evaluated based on its relationship to Yahweh and his people Israel.

6.3.2.1 "Woe" to Cush (v. 1)

As already noted, the Cush oracle forms part of the series of oracles against the nations (Isa 13-23). Commentators are often less inclined to classify Isaiah 18 as a "woe" oracle due to the difficulty in interpreting the passage. Some translations and commentaries prefer to render הוֹי as "Ah", "Ho!", or "Ha!" to denote a more neutral address.[127] But inasmuch as the oracles of chapters 13-23 bear negative overtones and declare judgment against the subjects addressed (especially since in 17:12 הוֹי forebodes judgement), consistency requires that the Cush oracle be considered a "woe" oracle.[128] Moreover, the ghastly pronouncement decreed against Egypt and Cush in 20:2-5 adumbrate misfortune for the addressees and indicate that elsewhere Cush is the object of divine punishment (cf. Zeph 2:12). Nevertheless, according to the reading pursued here, the "woe" declared in Isaiah 18:1 is "fulfilled" in a rather paradoxical way, as we shall see.

6.3.2.2 Cushite Ambassadors and Swift Messengers of Judah (v. 2)

Commentators are divided as to whether the Cushite צִירִים, "ambassadors," "envoys," being sent by sea in v. 2 is a different group from the מַלְאָכִים קַלִּים, "swift messengers," commanded to go (לְכוּ) to the "people tall and smooth," also in verse 2. If the verb הלך is interpreted in its normal semantic range, then it is a command being given to a second group of messengers, Judean most likely. If this is the case, then they are being sent as envoys to the

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[126] Cf. Kaminsky and Steward, "God of All the World," 140.

[127] E.g., Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*, 145-148.

[128] Cf. Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 79-80; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 141-142.

Cushites to forge a political alliance.[129] If the Cushite envoys and the swift messengers are one and the same group, then הלך in this case is a command meaning "turn back," as Paul Cook argues.[130] The Cushites then are being commanded by the prophet (at least rhetorically) to go back the way they came from—they are not welcomed in Judah. If this is the case in other words, Isaiah's oracle is suggesting that the Cushite envoys return home and not engage in political negotiations with Judaean political leaders. Isaiah would thus be discouraging the Cushite-Judean alliance.[131]

There is also a second possibility if the envoys and messengers are the same: the Cushite envoys/messengers are being commanded to go to another local—Assyria—in which case, as we have already noted, the description of the people as "tall and smooth" and the land as "divided by rivers" would be describing the Assyrians and their land.[132] In sum, either two groups of messengers are in view, one Cushite and the other Judean, or one group of messengers, both Cushite, being directed in either of two locales, back to Cush or to Assyria.[133]

First, this latter view which suggests Cushites are being directed to Assyria is the least plausible and can be rejected based on the evidence presented below. Second, this study suggests that evidence from elsewhere in Isaiah and the ANE indicates that Judean messengers were being sent to Cush, and therefore it is safe to assume that a two-way communication between Cushites and Judaeans is being described in Isaiah 18.

6.3.2.3 Excursus: Judean Alliance with Cush in 701 B.C.

Having already laid out the likelihood that Sennacherib's campaign in 701 B.C. is the historical context for the Cush oracle of Isaiah 18, further analysis of the textual evidence demonstrate Hezekiah's complicity in soliciting Cushite support (or acceding to Cushite

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[129] This is the position espoused by Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*, 68-70; Childs, *Isaiah*, 138; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 309-310; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 257.

[130] Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 58-60. Also, Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 246, and Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 93. But see Childs, *Isaiah*, 138, and Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 257, for critique.

[131] So Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 58-60.

[132] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 246; Hayes and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 254-257; Janzen, *Woe Oracle*, 60-61.

[133] There are also variations on this position, such as that divine messengers or Judean messengers are being directed to Assyria.

solicitations) in his plan to rebel against Assyria following Sargon's untimely death in 705 B.C. Isaiah's opposition to both rebellion against Assyria and alliance with Cush is also borne out by the evidence. It is worth noting first, however, that Hezekiah's role in the events of 701 is still a matter of contention in scholarly circles.

In a number of publications James Hoffmeier has argued against Hezekiah's complicity with Egypt in 701 B.C. based on his reading of Sennacherib's annals.[134] Though Hoffmeier admits that "Hezekiah may have supported the popular rebellion" by receiving the deposed king, Padi of Ekron, he nevertheless maintains that the Ekronites seem to have been "the chief instigators."[135] On this basis he proposes that "Ekron alone summoned Egyptian support, and not Hezekiah."[136] Among other reasons, Hoffmeier bases his arguments on the representation of Hezekiah as a hero of faith in 2 Kings 18:5 where it states that, "He trusted completely in Yahweh his God, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah who came after him, nor was there any among those who were before him."[137] Hoffmeier concludes therefore that neither the author of 2 Kings or Isaiah condemns Hezekiah's actions (though the latter he says censures Hezekiah for his defensive build-up leading up to the Assyrian invasion).[138] Rather, Hezekiah is exemplary for both the kings who came before and after him—except of course for David and Solomon.[139] In short order, not only Hezekiah's complicity with Cushite Egypt and Isaiah's condemnation of this action will be demonstrated, but following a host of commentators, Hezekiah's leading role in the rebellion of 701 will also be validated.[140]

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[134] As translated in Cogan, "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem," 2:119B, 303; Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 116.

[135] Hoffmeier, "Egypt's Role in the Events of 701 B.C.," 220.

[136] Hoffmeier, "Egypt's Role in the Events of 701 B.C.," 220, 233; see also James K. Hoffmeier and Avraham Gileadi, "Egypt as an Arm of Flesh: A Prophetic Response," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988), 88-89. From his reading of Sennacherib's annals, Evans, "History in the Eye of the Beholder?" 18, also writes that, "the Egyptians/Cushites came out to rescue Ekron—not Jerusalem."

[137] Hoffmeier, "Egypt's Role in the Events of 701 B.C.," 219.

[138] Hoffmeier, "Egypt's Role in the Events of 701 B.C.," 233.

[139] See Mark A. Throntveit, "The Relationship of Hezekiah to David and Solomon in the Books of Chronicles," in *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie and Gary N. Knoppers (JSOTS 371; London: T & T Clark International, 2003), 105-121.

[140] Based on Hezekiah's extensive war preparations, as well as his attack on pro-Assyrian Philistine cities, among other reasons, a great number of commentators understand Hezekiah as not simply a participant, but *the* leading Palestinian figure in the rebellion. According to Younger Jr., "Assyrian Involvement," 253, Hezekiah's aforementioned actions made him "Sennacherib's public enemy number one." See also J. J. M.

According 2 Kings 18-19 and 2 Chronicles 32, Hezekiah is a righteous king whose act of rebelling against the king of Assyria, and whose attack on the pro-Assyrian Philistine cities are demonstrations of his steadfast trust in Yahweh.[141] 2 Kings 18:7-8 states that "Yahweh was with him so that wherever he went he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and refused to serve him. He attacked the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territories, from watchtower to fortified cities." Already 2 Kings reveal that Hezekiah engages in active military campaigns in Philistine territory, so that he does not simply "receive" the pro-Assyrian Padi of Ekron, but actively attempts to stamp out Assyrian support in the region. De Jong has rightly characterized Hezekiah as the acting "overlord of Ekron, and perhaps of other Philistine cities as well."[142]

In short, for the biblical historian, Hezekiah's military expansion in the region is a clear demonstration of his trust in Yahweh. Hezekiah's speech to his soldiers in the Chronicler's version of events (2 Chron 32:7-8) also exemplifies his portrayal as a trusting servant of Yahweh: "Be strong and courageous! Do not be frightened or disheartened on account of the king of Assyria, nor on account of the multitude that is with him. We have more with us than they do. For with them is an arm of flesh, but Yahweh our God is with us to help us and to fight our battles."[143] In the Chronicler's retelling, it is clear that Yahweh will fight for Israel because Hezekiah has not put his trust "in the arm of flesh," but instead has trusted

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Roberts, "Egypt, Assyria, Isaiah, and the Ashdod Affair: An Alternative Proposal," in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, ed. Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 271-272, 282-283; Provan, "Faith and the History of Israel," 311; Mayer, "The Assyrian View," 172-179; Stephanie Dalley, "Recent Evidence from Assyrian Sources for Judaean History from Uzziah to Manasseh," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28 (2004): 391; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 195-196; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 309, 310; De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 225, 238; Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 155, 385.

[141] Ackroyd, "Ahaz and Hezekiah," 251.

[142] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 225.

[143] As scholars have pointed out, there is a clear theological idealization of Hezekiah in Chronicles (and Kings). In Chronicles Hezekiah's reign is climatic and exemplary. Not only is Hezekiah the idealized king who wholly follows Yahweh, but his reign embodies that of both David and Solomon. As Christopher T. Begg, "The Classical Prophets in the Chronistic History," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 32 (1988): 102, has argued, the Chronicler is theologically motivated to present Hezekiah as a righteous king and a prophetic figure. See also Throntveit, "Hezekiah to David and Solomon," 105-121; Ackroyd, "Ahaz and Hezekiah," 247-259; Baines, "Cohesiveness of 2 Chronicles 33:1-36:23," 143-148. For a comprehensive study of Hezekiah in Chronicles, see Andrew G. Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology in the Chronicler's Account of Hezekiah* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999).

wholeheartedly in his God. Despite such strong emphasis on Hezekiah's dependence on his God, however, Hezekiah does not fare so well in reality; he too is depending on an arm of flesh for deliverance, as we shall see further.

As can be seen in Assyrian reliefs, ahead of the procession of prisoners taken in the capture of Lachish, Cushite soldiers are shown groveling at the feet of the Assyrian king, imploring mercy as it were.[144] Could it be that part of the arrangement with Cushite Egypt included the deployment of mercenaries to defend Judean cities, the most important being Jerusalem and Lachish? If this is the case, as seems most likely, then even before Taharqa's main army moves north, Cushite and Egyptian troops would have been found defending various Judean and Palestinian cities.[145] Thus, when the Rabshakeh mocks Hezekiah for trusting in pharaoh the "broken reed" (Isa 36:6, 9; 2 Kings 18:21),[146] Assyrian forces would have already encountered (and captured) Egyptian-Cushite soldiers in the cities of Judah they were devastating.

Furthermore, according to Sennacherib's annals, Hezekiah's *urbu*, hired to defend Jerusalem, mutinies in the course of the Assyrian blockade.[147] In all likelihood, the mercenaries defending Jerusalem are Cushite (and not Arabs as is sometimes posited) inasmuch as Lachish, Judah's second largest city, was being defended by Cushite soldiers. It would appear that in the

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[144] Barnett, Bleibtreu and Turner, *Southwest Palace of Sennacherib*, 2:322-352; Dalley, "Judean History," 391; Albenda, "Egyptians in Assyrian Art," 10.

[145] Cf. De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 225: "In all likelihood, Hezekiah had concluded an alliance with them [the Cushite rulers] to support him with military aid."

[146] The Assyrians routinely derided their vassals for seeking military assistance from "helpless" allies, like the Elamites and Egyptians. Recounting his 712 campaign into Palestine, Sargon II, for example, writes that the Ashdod leaders and their king Iamani "brought their goodwill gifts to pharaoh, king of Egypt, a king that could not save them, and kept imploring him for assistance." Citation in De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 235.

[147] See Mayer, "The Assyrian View," 183-184. Though the reading of Cogan, "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem," 2:119B, 303, and Grayson and Novotny, *Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib*, 64-66, suggest that Hezekiah's "elite troops" were sent with tribute from Jerusalem to Nineveh, Luckenbill, *ARAB*, 2:119-120, §240, supports this reading: "the Urbi (Arabs) and his mercenary troops which he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem, his royal city, deserted him (lit., took leave)." See also *ANET* 288. Mayer proposes that *urbu* should be understood not as Arabs, but as mercenaries more generally who deserted Hezekiah (183-184). Moreover, Isaiah's oracle against the "Valley of Vision" (22:1-14) is most often read against the background of Sennacherib's blockade of Jerusalem. Verse 3 states that the rulers have deserted the city. This may indicate the departure of military personel as well; on this see Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Hezekiah and the Babylonian Delegation: A Critical Reading of Isaiah 39:1-8," in *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na'aman*, ed. Yaira Amit et al (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 120. If this reading is correct, then in the context of 701 B.C., these mercenaries are likely Cushite.

face of the capture of Lachish and potentially the defeat of an Egypto-Cushite force at Eltekeh, the Cushite soldiers defending Jerusalem alongside native Judaean troops, sensing their vulnerability, deserted Hezekiah and headed for home.

The above scenario seems highly plausible considering that the solicitation of Egyptian assistance in rebellion against Assyria was far from a novelty in Syria-Palestine. While Judah seem to have remained a loyal Assyrian vassal from Ahaz's submission in 734 B.C. until the death of Sargon in 705 B.C.,[148] Assyrian records mentions Egypt or Cush in the context of campaigns to western Asia in 734, 722, 720, 716, 715, 711, and 701.[149] Based on new chronological evidence, Shabaka reconquered Egypt in February of 720 B.C., while an Egyptian Cushite force under the command of Shabaka's general Re'u was defeated at Raphia in the summer of the same year by Sargon II.[150] Shabaka's involvement at this time is clear evidence that Palestinian states sought *Cushite* aid during the 720 revolt, and again in the 712

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[148] Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 204, 208; Dalley, "Judean History," 388-391; De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 240. But see Younger Jr., "Assyrian Involvement," 230, who considers evidence for a 720 B.C. subjugation of Judah by Sargon II.

[149] Roberts, "Egypt, Assyria, Isaiah," 268. Cf. Na'aman, "Conquest of Samaria," 76-93. When Shalmanezer III campaigned against Hamath in 853 B.C., Egyptian troops were among those who fought as allies with Irhuleni, king of Hamath. See Albenda, "Egyptians in Assyrian Art," 5-6. Alliances between Cushite Egypt and Judah during the the eighth century went beyond the political to include deep commercial ties as well. From at least the latter half of the eighth century (probably earlier), Judah facilitated a thriving trade network between Cushite Egypt and Assyria, and profited abundantly as middlemen for goods desired by Assyria; see further, Dalley, "Judean History," 389; Lisa A. Heidorn, "The Horses of Kush," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 56 (1997): 105-114. Cf. De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 225. Aspects of these commercial ties will be explored in Chapter 7 of this study. Importantly, diplomacy between political entities often involved marriages designed to seal political friendships. As Dalley, "Judean History," 390, writes, "Attempts to cement friendly relations by means of diplomatic marriages between members of royal families were as common at this period as they had been in earlier times." Such practices, Dalley writes further, "belong within the sphere of normal political activity" in the latter half of eighth century (390). The pharaohs, for example, regularly wedded foreign princesses to seal diplomatic alliances (390); cf. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 166, 168. That Israelite princesses, along with other Levantine brides, were sent to the 25th Dynasty pharaohs to facilitate diplomatic negotiations is a factor that should not be overlooked. Beneath the surface of the biblical text often lies an iceberg of historical and social unwrittens. Moreover, in the absence of modern racial sentiments, nothing inherent to the Cushite royal house would preclude marriage arrangements with foreign states. In other words, Cushites functioned within the "sphere of normal political activity" in the ANE at all periods. One should therefore envision a complex of international relations between Cushite Egypt and Levantine states in the period leading up to the 701 B.C. debacle.

[150] Kahn, "Chronology of Dynasty 25," 12, points out that the depiction of Cushite soldiers on Assyrian reliefs portraying the summer campaign of Sargon II in 720 should not come as a surprise; pharaoh Shabaka of the 25th Dynasty controlled all of Egypt by February of the same year.

Ashdod rebellion, though in the latter case no support seem to have materialized.[151] Cushite Egypt was thus allied with the Hamath-Samaria-Philistia coalition in 720 against Sargon II of Assyria, and Cushite soldiers are depicted in Assyrian reliefs fighting to defend Palestinian cities such as Raphia, Gabbatuna (biblical Gibbethon; Josh 19:44, 21:23; 1 Kings 15:27, 16:15, 17), and possibly cities as far north as Lebanon, as can be seen on reliefs at Sargon's palace at Dur-Sharruken (Khorsabad).[152] That Cushite soldiers were also defending Samaria at this time is also highly probable.

We might summarize the situation in Judah leading up to and including the events of 701 thus. The inglorious death of Sargon II on the battlefield in 705 B.C. set off a series of rebellion throughout the Assyrian empire. Palestinian states as well, lead by Hezekiah adopt a policy of rebellion against Assyria in their bid for independence. Hezekiah takes every practical measure to prepare for war with Assyria. He attacks pro-Assyrian vassal states and secures a coalition against Assyria. He sends tribute to pharaoh Shebitku in order to hire Cushite-Egyptian mercenaries to defend key Judean cities; he also secures the promise of the backing of the Cushite army in the inevitability of an Assyrian invasion. And he fortifies Jerusalem (and the cities of Judah), securing the city's water supply.[153]

But with the onset of the Assyrian invasion and the consequent devastation of the Shephelah, and in the face of the failure of his defensive measures (including Cushite aid), Hezekiah capitulates to Sennacherib by declaring his guilt, "I have sinned; withdraw from me; whatever penalty you impose on me I will bear" (2 King 18:14).[154] Though he refuses total

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[151] Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 204.

[152] See Reade, "Sargon's Campaigns," 100, 101; Albenda, "Egyptians in Assyrian Art," 8-9; Kahn, "Chronology of Dynasty 25," 12; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 347-348; Younger Jr., "Fall of Samaria," 475-476; Younger Jr., "Assyrian Involvement," 237; Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 203; De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 211-212. Cf. Dalley, "Judean History," 391.

[153] The Chronicler gives details regarding Hezekiah's war preparation which are not found in 2 Kings 18-19 or Isaiah 36-37. Evans, "Historia or Exegesis?" 103-120, provides a valuable discussion of the Chroniclers engagement with his textual *Vorlage*, noting that in addition to 2 Kings 18-19 and Isaiah 36-37, Isaiah 22:8-11 also factor into the Chroniclers critical interpretation of the events surrounding the Assyrian assault on Jerusalem in 701 B.C. Cf. Isaac Kalimi, "Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah: The Chronicler's View Compared with His 'Biblical' Sources," in *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Seth Francis Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 11-49.

[154] A vassal "sins" against Assyria by breaking the suzerainty treaty and withholding tribute. The leaders of Ekron who rebelled against Sennacherib are depicted as disloyal criminals in the Assyrian annals. See Younger Jr., "Assyrian Involvement," 251-252; De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 234-236.

surrender to Sennacherib, he promptly empties the state treasuries—even stripping the gold from the temple of Yahweh! (2 Kings 18:16)—in order to meet Sennacherib's tribute demands. These actions on the part of Hezekiah are clearly significant failures of faith, demonstrating his reliance on political maneuvers and human strength rather than implicit trust in his God.[155] And these are the very actions which are condemned by Isaiah, as we shall see, even if the prophet does not name Hezekiah directly.

Hezekiah is fully complicit in rebellion against Assyria, reliance on Egypt-Cush, and thus distrust of Yahweh his God. However contrarily Hezekiah is presented in the ideology of 2 Kings and Chronicles, he too is depending on "the arm of flesh" for help.[156] Furthermore, as De Jong points out, "anti-Assyrian alliances were of course as formal and binding as pro-Assyrian alliances."[157] "The alliance between Judah and Egypt," he writes further, "was based on negotiations and consisted of a formal and binding agreement concerning military aid from Egypt, ruled by the Cushite (25th) Dynasty, that was paid for by Judah."[158] Thus Hezekiah necessarily had to swear fealty to the Egyptian pharaoh and redirect Judean tribute southward in order to secure support against Assyria, as seems to be the case in Isaiah 30:6-8. We may conclude that Hezekiah, as the overlord of Ekron and a dominant player in Philistine affairs, was *the* leading Palestinian figure in the rebellion against Assyria.[159] His revolt, however, would have devastating consequences for the population of Judah.

6.3.2.4 Excursus: Isaiah's Evaluation of Cushite-Judean Alliance in 701 B.C.

How does Isaiah view the political alliance between Judah and Cushite Egypt? Isaiah's critique of the foreign policies of the Judean administration is summed up thus:

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[155] Ackroyd, "Ahaz and Hezekiah," 257, concludes that "Hezekiah seems to have had a better press than he deserved."

[156] Cf. Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 208.

[157] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 236.

[158] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 233-234.

[159] Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 385: "Hezekiah of Judah and others opened negotiations with the new pharaoh Shebitku to obtain his support against Assyria." Provan, "Faith and the History of Israel," 311: "All this may imply that Hezekiah was one of the moving forces of the revolt." Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 204, 208, argues that the only reason the Assyrian annals seem to give Hezekiah a secondary role in soliciting Egyptian aid is due to the embarrassing outcome of failing to conquer Jerusalem and deposing Hezekiah. De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 323, makes similar arguments in assigning a leading role to Hezekiah. Cf. Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 196.

> Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help; who rely on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek Yahweh! (Isa 31:1)
> Woe to the rebellious sons, says Yahweh, who follow advice, but not from me; who seal alliances not sanctioned by my spirit, that they may add sin to sin. Who go down to Egypt, though they have not enquired of me, to seek refuge in the strength of pharaoh, and to take shelter in the shadow of Egypt (30:1-3).[160]

Like all foreign alliances, Isaiah disparages political alliances with Cushite Egypt.[161] Instead of looking to their God for help, the political leaders of Judah are depending on the military strength of Egypt-Cush to deliver them from the onslaught of the Assyrians. Not only is Isaiah's criticism directed against the leaders of Judah, but without mentioning Hezekiah, he is critical of Hezekiah's decision to rebel against Assyria.[162] This is in contrast to 2 Kings 18:7-8, where, as we have seen, not only Hezekiah's conquest of Philistia but also his rebellion against the king of Assyria are presented as exemplary of his faith in Yahweh.[163] In contrast to Ahaz who trusts in Assyrian aid (2 Kings 16:7-8) in the face of political threat, 2 Kings 18-20 and 2 Chronicles 32 present Hezekiah as the opposite. Hezekiah rebels against Assyria and brings deliverance to Jerusalem through his faith in his God.[164] Nevertheless, Isaiah condemns Hezekiah's decision to rebel against Assyria and furthermore declares disaster upon Judah as a result.

Yet the Assyrian threat, according to the Israelite prophets, was occasioned in the first place by Israel's betrayal of the covenant with their God in going after the idolatrous ways of the nations around them. Thus the Assyrian invasion and the subjection of Israel (both north

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[160] That Isaiah directs his criticism against *Judean* leaders is clear from the context. See further, De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 236: "The 'rebellious sons' are the political leaders of Judah." See also H. G. M. Williamson, "Isaiah 30:1," in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michaël N. Van der Meer et al (VTSup 138; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 185; Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 172, 192. Cf. Willem A. M. Beuken, "Woe to Powers in Israel that Vie to Replace YHWH's Rule on Mount Zion! Isaiah Chapter 28-31 from the Perspective of Isaiah Chapter 24-27," in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michaël N. Van der Meer et al (VTSup 138; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 25-44.

[161] Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 205.

[162] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 240; Blenkinsopp, "Babylonian Delegation," 119-120.

[163] Cf. Ackroyd, "Ahaz and Hezekiah," 251.

[164] Cf. Ackroyd, "Ahaz and Hezekiah," 251. According to Ackroyd, "Assyria did not require religious conformity from vassal states" (254). This view is supported by Cogan, "Assyrian Hegemony," 403-414; and Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*. But see Hermann Spieckermann, *Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit* (FRLANT 129; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1982), who argues otherwise.

and south) and surrounding peoples is declared an act of judgment from Yahweh, making an alliance with Cushite Egypt tantamount to rebellion against Yahweh.[165] It is Yahweh's sovereign hand which has brought the Assyrians upon Judah and Jerusalem.[166] Instead of looking to political alliances, the desired action for the Judaean leadership and people is penitence towards their God.

In the face of Yahweh's impending judgment visited for violation of the covenant, the chosen people are admonished first to look to Yahweh in fasting, weeping, mourning and repentance, with the hope that Yahweh might delay or deter the decreed judgment (Isa 22:12-14).[167] Examples of deterred judgment in the face of penitence abound in the biblical text (1 King 8:47-48; 2 Kings 22:19; Jer 26:3; 2 Chron 7:14; 2 Chron 12:6; 2 Chron 34:27). Secondly, the Judaeans are to wait patiently and trustingly for Yahweh's timing, and for Yahweh to act. In a word, complete reliance on Yahweh will ensure peace and security, while trusting in alliances with foreign powers, while appearing as the best option, in the end brings disaster. In this way, foreign alliances are deceptive because ultimately, the expected outcome will be completed reversed.

But in the context of 701 B.C., instead of turning with repentance towards their God and waiting patiently for his salvation, the Judaeans are bringing their "riches" (חַיִל) and "treasures" (אוֹצָר) on the backs of donkeys and camels down to Egypt, "to a people who cannot save them" (Isa 30: 6-8).[168] Here the prophet envisions a hefty payment to Cushite Egypt for the promise of military support, and this payment comes at the expense of the poor and oppressed: "According to the prophet, a policy of rebellion meant a shift from security grounded in divine strength to security grounded in human might, bought at the cost of

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[165] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 236: "The prophet Isaiah strongly opposed rebellion against Assyria and rejected an alliance with Egypt." Foreign alliances are generally disparaged in the prophetic writings. In the book of Ezekiel for example, Jerusalem is characterized as a prostitute for pursuing political alliances with foreign nations, including Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. See discussion in Day, "Prostitute Unlike Women," 167-173. Cf. Day, "Adulterous Jerusalem," 285-309. Similarly, Hosea, warns against Israel's dependence on Egypt and Assyria: "Ephraim has become a silly dove without reason. They call upon Egypt and they go to Assyria" (7:11; cf. 7:10-13; 8:9-10; Jer 2:14-19, 33-37; 46:8-12; Eze 16:26; 17:15; 29:16; 30:4-26, etc.).

[166] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 208: "Both in the prophecies of Isaiah . . . and in the Assyrian royal inscriptions, the Assyrian king is presented as the agent of the divine anger."

[167] This principle of deferred judgment in response to penitence applies, it would seem, to both Israelites and non-Israelites alike (e.g., Jon 3:5-10).

[168] Cf. Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 207-208. Also, De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 237: "Judah's riches and treasures are carried off to Egypt, but without any profit."

injustice and oppression."[169] In effect what Hezekiah has done is appealed to one imperial oppressor for help against another. Judah has become—even if temporarily—a vassal state of Cush in its bid to be free from Assyria. But in a similar tenor to the Assyrian Rabshakeh's taunting of Hezekiah, Isaiah declares that Cushite Egypt would be of no help against the Assyrians, because the Assyrians are Yahweh's instrument of judgment.[170] Instead of deliverance, those who trust in Cushite Egypt for help will be put to shame:

> But the strength of pharaoh shall become your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt your confusion . . . They shall all be humiliated because of a people who cannot profit them; that provides neither help nor profit but shame and reproach (30:3, 5).
> For the Egyptians are men and not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit. When Yahweh stretches out his hand, both the helper and the one being helped shall fall. All of them will perish together (31:3).
> So will the king of Assyria lead away the prisoners of Egypt and the captives of Cush, young and old, naked and barefooted, with their buttocks uncovered to the shame of Egypt. Then they will be fearful and ashamed because of Cush their expectation and Egypt their pride (20:4-5).

Though the specific late-eighth century contexts for these various Isaianic passages are disputed, this study reads these first two texts against the background of Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B.C as do many other commentators.[171] The latter text though applicable to the Ashdod crisis of 712 B.C., is referenced here because it serves to illustrate Isaiah's

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[169] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 247.

[170] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition* 236, 239, notes the similarity between Isaiah's language denouncing Egyptian aid and Assyrian descriptions of the treasonous alliances with Egypt. The seminal study of Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image," 719-737, demonstrates the strong parallel between Isaiah's images and phraseology concerning Assyria and the phraseology and images of the Assyrians kings themselves. From this he deduces Isaiah's firsthand knowledge of Neo-Assyrian imperialism and royal propaganda.

[171] Scholars variously relate these passages to the Assyrian campaigns of 720 B.C., 712 B.C., and 701 B.C., or even later. Hoffmeier and Gileadi, "Egypt as an Arm of Flesh," 88, and Hayes and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 338-348, suggest the context of 720 B.C.; while Shawn Zelig Aster, "Isaiah 31 as a Response to Rebellions against Assyria in Philistia," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136 (2017): 347-361, argues for the Ashdod crisis of 712 B.C. as the background to Isaiah 31. The greater majority of scholars, however, interpret these texts within the context of 701 B.C. De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 233-249, for example, reads Isaiah 30:1-8, 31:1, 28:15-18, 18:1-2, and 19:1b-b against this background. So too Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 206 (though Roberts reads the Cush oracle (Isa 18) against the background of the Ashdod revolt in 712 B.C [205]); cf. Roberts, "Egypt, Assyria, Isaiah," 271-272, 282-283. Similarly, Williamson, "Isaiah 30:1," 193, writes, "These are the two chapters [30-31] which record in particular Isaiah's bitter condemnation of Hezekiah's planned alliance with Egypt." See further, Blenkinsopp, "Babylonian Delegation," 120; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 283-284.

perennial denouncement of Cushite help under all circumstances. The overall theme is consistent: pharaoh king of Egypt will not be able to deliver any of the western Asiatic states (including Judah) in the face of Assyrian onslaught.[172] Rather than bringing help, the Cushites and Egyptians will bring shame and disgrace, for their armies are doomed to defeat at the hands of the Assyrians.[173] But not only the Cushites, "the helper," but also Judah, "the helped," will suffer devastation (31:3). For while Jerusalem is eventually spared, Sennacherib's army has run rampage in Judah decimating all 46 of its fortified cities and deporting, according to Assyrian records, 200,105 of its inhabitants.[174]

Moreover, the butchery at Lachish depicted on Assyrian sculptures is a testament to the fate of the other conquered cities and their inhabitants. As it turns out, only a remnant is spared from Sennacherib's wrath. Thus, Isaiah's chief complaint against the political leaders of Judah is that they are looking to the "arm of flesh" and not to God; they are looking to the military strength of Cushite Egypt as their hope.[175] But, again, according to Isaiah, Cushite Egypt is completely unreliable in the face of Assyria, Yahweh's instrument of Judgment, and therefore the leaders of Judah (along with their Philistine co-conspirators) are making "a fatal mistake."[176]

For these reasons, Isaiah demonstrates strong contempt toward foreign help, Cushite or otherwise, for good reason: all reliance on foreign aid will in the end serve to the disadvantage of Judah. When, for example, Hezekiah accepted the Babylonian envoys of Merodach-Baladan without Isaiah' knowledge—which was likely for the purpose of concluding an alliance against Assyria on its eastern front following Sargon's death in 705[177]—Isaiah again

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[172] The historical context of these verses indicate that the Egyptian pharaoh is Shebitku, the fourth Cushite king of the 25th Dynasty. See Kahn, "Chronology of Dynasty 25," 1-18; Roberts, "Egypt, Assyria, Isaiah," 272; and De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 237-238. Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 308, makes the salient point that since Ahaz was a lifelong vassal of Assyria, only the Ashdod revolt of 712 B.C. or the rebellion of Ekron in 701 B.C.—both of which occurred during the reign of Hezekiah—provide a suitable historical context for Isaiah's prophecy against alliance with Egypt.

[173] Cf. De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 239.

[174] Mayer, "The Assyrian View," 146, suggests the 200,105 deportees likely represent the total number for the whole Palestinian campaign. But in order magnify his victory over Hezekiah, Sennacherib registers all under "Jerusalem."

[175] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 239.

[176] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 238. Cf. Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 205-206, 208.

[177] See Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 209. Cf. Blenkinsopp, "Babylonian Delegation," 107-122.

declared that Babylon would eventually subjugate Judah and Jerusalem politically and carry off their material and human resources to Babylon (Isa 39:5-7). Cushite Egypt, like the Assyrians and Babylonians is no less imperialistic and expansionistic in its aims. We have already seen that Cush vied with Assyria for political and economic control of Syria-Palestine in the decades following 701 B.C. up to Ashurbanipal's decisive defeat of Taharqa in 671 B.C. Still, by 620 B.C. with the eclipse of Assyrian power in western Asia, Egypt, under the Saite pharaoh Psammetichus I had once again asserted full control over the Levant, even if only temporarily.[178]

The long history of Egyptian imperial control of Palestine from the Old Kingdom forward was ample reason for Isaiah not to trust political assistance from Cushite Egypt. For Isaiah, Egypt and Cush, no less than Assyria and Babylon are oppressors of Israel, and consequently all foreign alliances are characterized in much the same way. As J. J. Roberts appropriately concludes, "Isaiah unalterably opposed reliance or treaty relations with Assyria, Egypt, Nubia, Babylonia, Philistia, Aram, or any other nation. Israel's and Judah's security lay exclusively in their trust in Yahweh and the promises Yahweh had made to the Davidic dynasty and his chosen city Jerusalem."[179] A strong antipathy against foreign aid is thus justifiably advanced by Isaiah, the prophetic writings more generally, and even Samuel-Kings. Yet clearly the vision of the prophets and that of the political leaders of Israel and Judah were out of step.[180]

In relation to Cush, Isaiah's injunction against foreign aid is clearly not based on any ethnic or racial agenda; for as we shall see in the following chapter, the same objection against foreign help is voiced against the Judean king Asa by the prophet Hanani after he forges an alliance with Ben-Hadad of Aram. In the biblical text, foreign aid is disparaged on religious and political grounds. In the context of Isaiah 18, the prophet embodies sarcasm towards the Judean messengers who are being sent to Cush to solicit Cushite help. The physical attributes of Cushites (being tall, for instance) and their military ability are points of emphasis in Isaiah, yet the biblical writer disparages the value of placing confidence in human ability rather than in the power of Yahweh. As far as Isaiah is concerned, Egypt and Cush are enemies of the

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[178] Kahn, "Zephaniah's Oracles," 450.

[179] Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 209.

[180] De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 239-240.

people of Israel, despite the fact that present political exigencies have forged an unwitting political alliance between the parties. The sovereignty of Yahweh and the negative appraisal of trusting in military machinery and physical prowess are important themes which feature in the ethno-religious characterization of Cushites in Isaiah 18.

6.3.2.5 *The World Watches as Yahweh Acts (vv. 3-4)*

Going back to the Cush oracle, in v. 3, the world is invited to be spectators to what Yahweh is about to do. The implication is that what happens on the mountain will have repercussion for the entire world of peoples known to Isaiah. Verse 4 indicates that Yahweh has been patient and silent, watching what is transpiring on the mountains: banners are being unfurled and trumpets are sounding. Clearly, this imagery is an indication of a battle scene about to take place upon a mountain. Verse 4 is also a declaration of Yahweh's sovereign rule: he watches from his vantage point in heaven—presumably sitting upon his throne—with the outcome of the battle completely in his hand.[181] He himself will intervene to bring about the pre-determined outcome.

6.3.2.6 *Lopping off Branches and Dead Bodies (vv. 5-6)*

Employing viticultural metaphors the prophet declares that Yahweh's act of lopping away the spreading branches of the vine "before the harvest" results in dead bodies being left on a mountain for the birds and the beasts of the field. By the use of this metaphor, Isaiah is clearly alluding to an act of judgment that Yahweh is about to perform against an unnamed agent. Agricultural devastation and particularly grape harvest are common metaphors employed in prophetic writing to symbolize Yahweh's judgment (e.g., 5:5-6, 10, 24; 6:11-13; 7:23-25; 10:18-19; 15:6; 16:8-10; 17:5-6, 10-11; etc.).[182] This then raises the question: are these dead bodies those of Cushite soldiers, or some other party? After all, the הוֹי of Isaiah 18:1 is directed against Cush. Many commentators have not without reason understood verses 5-6 as a reference to the defeat of the Cushite army at some unspecified battle taking place at some

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[181] Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 153; Young, *Isaiah 1 to 18*, 477. Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 310.

[182] Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 311.

point during the late eighth century or early seventh century B.C.[183] Others, however, understand the oracle as describing judgment against Judah.[184] Following a good number of commentators who understand vv. 5-6 as depicting judgment against the Assyrians,[185] this study proposes that from a reading of Isaiah 18:7 within an intertextual context, the dead bodies are more plausibly those of the Assyrians, and the historical context doubtless 701 B.C.[186]

6.3.3 The Intra-textual and Intertextual Context of Isaiah 8:7

בָּעֵת הַהִיא יוּבַל־שַׁי לַיהוָה צְבָאוֹת עַם מְמֻשָּׁךְ וּמוֹרָט וּמֵעַם נוֹרָא מִן־הוּא וָהָלְאָה גּוֹי קַו־קָו וּמְבוּסָה אֲשֶׁר בָּזְאוּ נְהָרִים אַרְצוֹ אֶל־מְקוֹם שֵׁם־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הַר־צִיּוֹן

And at that time gifts will be brought to Yahweh of Hosts from a people tall and smooth, and from a people feared near and far, a nation powerful and subjugating whose land is divided by rivers, to the place of the name of Yahweh of Hosts, to mount Zion (18:7).

The picture of Cushites bearing "gifts" to Yahweh "at that time" invites two questions: What is the nature of the "gift" (שַׁי), and when is "at that time?" First, it is suggested by the intertextual analysis below, that the gift is tribute of extraordinary value. The gift-giving is unusual because tribute typically flows from Syria-Palestine to Egypt and not the other way around. The tribute is not imposed military but voluntary; nevertheless, it is compelled in response to Yahweh's actions described in vv. 5-6. Secondly, "at that time" means at the time when Yahweh's actions which begins in verse 4 is completed in verse 6. The divine action, is described again in viticultural language, and involves dead bodies being left on a mountain for

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[183] Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 153-154; Lubetski and Gottlieb, "Isaiah 18," 380-381; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 192-193; Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 165-166. Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 82, 85, thinks this interpretation is likely but not beyond reasonable doubt. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 95 suggests the destruction of the "Ethiopians" is in view, but he sees this destruction in an eschatological rather than a contemporary historical context. Cf. Hayes and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 256.

[184] Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 252-255; Childs, *Isaiah*, 138; Lavik, *A People Tall and Smooth-Skinned*, 207-210.

[185] E.g., T. K. Cheyne, *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1895), 95-97; Young, *Isaiah 1 to 18*, 478; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 311; Childs, *Assyrian Crisis*, 44-46; Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah*, 363-363. De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition*, 150, suggests the destruction of both Cushites and Assyrians is in view.

[186] On the intertextual field of Isaiah 18:7, see discussion in Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 66-70; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 185-187.

scavenging animals (vv. 5-6). The end of this action, the text indicate, will solicit from the Cushites gifts being brought אֶל־מְקוֹם שֵׁם־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הַר־צִיּוֹן; that is, to the temple in Jerusalem. The gift is given to Yahweh of Hosts. The image of יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת dwelling upon mount Zion evokes both Yahweh's victory in battle and his sovereign status over all earthly (and heavenly) armies.[187]

6.3.3.1 Isaiah 18:7 in the Context of Isaiah 17:12-14

Isaiah 17:1-6, has been correctly understood by commentators as an oracle against the Syrian-Ephraimite coalition which met its demise at the hands of the Assyrians in 722-720 B.C. Verses 7-11 have both localized and universal themes and are variously understood by commentators. Verses 12-14, however, constitute a distinct הוֹי oracle concerning "the raging of many peoples" (הֲמוֹן עַמִּים רַבִּים), rushing in like "mighty waters" (מַיִם כַּבִּירִים; v. 12).[188] In the Hebrew Bible military devastation is very frequently associated with the destructive force of rushing water (e.g., 8:7; 15:9; 28:2, 17; 30:25; 51:15; 59:19; Jer. 6:23; 31:35; etc.).[189] The multitude that is rushing in as a destructive force is rebuked (גער) by Yahweh and chased like chaff of the mountain before the wind (v. 13). Significantly, verse 14 describes "a terror"

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[187] J. J. M. Roberts, "Solomon's Jerusalem and the Zion Tradition," in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, ed. Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 165: "The fundamental theologoumenon in the Zion tradition is that Yahweh is the great king. . . the suzerain not only over Israel, but over the other nations and their gods as well." Cf. Thomas Renz, "The Use of the Zion Tradition in the Book of Ezekiel," in *Zion, City of Our God*, ed. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 77-103.

[188] The brief analysis proposed here proceeds with the awareness that a good number of scholars dehistoricize Isa 17:12-14, preferring to see the passage as evoking the primordial chaos motif to forecast the eschatological judgement of the nations. On this, see Childs, *Isaiah*, 137-138; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 150-151; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 307; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 87-89; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 241-242. Some interpret the passage as an allusion to the judgment against Aram and Ephraim described earlier in vv. 1-6; e.g. De Jong, *Isaiah Tradition* 147-148. Still, a good many scholars understand the passage as an allusion to the destruction of the Assyrian army mentioned elsewhere in Isaiah (eg. 14:24-27; 29:1-8; 30:27-33; 31:4-9). For Cheyne, *Book of Isaiah*, 95-97, both 17:12-14 and 18:4-6 alludes to the destruction of the Assyrian army in 701 B.C. See also, Joseph A. Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 340; Hayes and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 252; Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 161. Childs, *Assyrian Crisis*, 50-53, suggests the chaos motive is being employed to cast an indirect threat in the direction of the Assyrians. His more recent commentary supports the chaos motif without reference to the Assyrians.

[189] Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 307. Reporting on his battle against a coalition of states at Carchemish, the Assyrian king Shalmanezer III claimed that he "rained down" upon his enemies like "a devastating flood." See K. Lawson Younger Jr., "Shalmaneser III," in *Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 2:113A, 262.

(בַלָּהָה) which strikes "at evening time" (לְעֵת עֶרֶב), with the effect that "before the morning, they are no more" (בְּטֶרֶם בֹּקֶר אֵינֶנּוּ). The enemy which came in as a rushing river is destroyed by the terror (of Yahweh) overnight. Then the writer concludes: "This is what happens to those who despoil and plunder us" (v. 14). The "us" here must necessarily be Judaeans in the context of 701 B.C, as is assumed here.[190] Thus, there is intimation of a sudden, unexpected judgment which takes place "before the morning." Before the morning the enemy who "robs" and "plunders" Judah "is no more."

The devastation which occurs overnight and on a mountain in 17:12-14 seems to be related to the dead bodies on the mountains in chapter 18:4-6, due to similar imagery, but also based on the presumed literary unity between 17:1-14 and 18:1-7.[191] Many commentators understand these verses as a description of the devastation of the Assyrian army which is reported in Isaiah 37:36.[192] Verse 7:14, in particular, is understood as Yahweh's judgment against Assyria, "those who spoil" Israel and Judah. The destruction of the Assyrians is explicitly mentioned in Isaiah 29:7-10 in similar language (cf. 14:24-27). If the connection between 17:12-14 and 18:4-6 is secure, then, Yahweh's destruction of the enemy who has come to plunder his people elicits an uncustomary response from the Cushites. In response to this act of divine destruction of their most dreaded enemies, the "tall and smooth" people of Cush bring extraordinary gifts to Mount Zion to Yahweh of Host (v. 7). Three other innerbiblical references to gifts being brought to Jerusalem by foreign peoples seem to secure the connection between the routing of the Assyrians in 701 and the response of Cushites and other nations in bringing tribute to Jerusalem.

6.3.3.2 *Isaiah 18:7 in the Context of Psalms 68:29-32*

Apart from Isaiah 18:7, variations of the rare phrase יוּבַל־שַׁי (gift/tribute will be brought) only occurs two other places in the Hebrew Bible, both in Psalms (68 and 76).[193]

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[190] Some argue, however, for an unspecified, universal and eschatological setting; e.g., Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 241-243.

[191] Cheyne, *Book of Isaiah*, 95-97.

[192] See commentary and references in Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 85; though Kaiser himself takes the eschatological view of 17:12-14.

[193] The verb יבל also occurs in Hosea 10:6 and 12:2 in similar tribute scenes but without שַׁי. See discussion in Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 66-70; Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 185-187.

Combining both "historical" and "eschatological" themes, Psalm 68 celebrates Yahweh's deliverance of his people.[194] Appropriately, the psalm begins with the words, "May God arise and his enemies scatter; May those who hate him flee from before his face" (v. 1). In verse 30(31) Yahweh rebukes (גער) the "wild animals" and "multitudes of bulls"; he tramples "those who crave tribute," and he scatters "those who delight in war."[195] Those whom the "Almighty" scatters are called "kings" (v. 14). Thus God rescues his people from death (v. 20), by shattering the heads of his enemies (v. 21). Jerusalem/mount Zion is celebrated as the mount where God abides and where he has chosen to dwell forever (v. 16). Significantly, verse 29 reads,

מֵהֵיכָלֶךָ עַל־יְרוּשָׁלָ͏ִם לְךָ יוֹבִילוּ מְלָכִים שָׁי

From your temple above Jerusalem kings bring gifts to you.

As in Isaiah 18:7, the act of bringing gifts are described with the words יוֹבִילוּ and שָׁי. And it is kings (מְלָכִים) who are the subjects of the gift giving. Then, in verse 31 Egypt and Cush are mentioned by name as the bearers of gifts:

יֶאֱתָיוּ חַשְׁמַנִּים מִנִּי מִצְרָיִם כּוּשׁ תָּרִיץ יָדָיו לֵאלֹהִים

Nobles will come from Egypt; Cush will hasten to stretch out its hand to God.

This passage which is clearly connected to verse 7 of the Cush oracle in Isaiah, once again speaks of Yahweh's intervention to thwart the purpose of an enemy of Israel, whose army is compared to beasts and bulls. The routing of the enemy elicits from the nobility of Egypt and Cush (i.e., kings) gifts to Jerusalem. In the case of Cush, its nobles will "hasten" to stretch out their hands to God, or hasten to fulfill their vows and bring their gifts to Yahweh.[196] To be sure, the psalm is often dated to the Solomonic or even Davidic period[197] and does not

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[194] On the dating, literary features, major themes and interpretations of Psalm 68, see Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, trans. Herbert Hartwell (The Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press , 1962), 477-490.

[195] So NRSV. Cf. Isa 14:25: "I will break the Assyrian in my land, and on my mountains trample him under foot; his yoke shall be removed from them, and his burden from their shoulders" (NRSV).

[196] The translation of Weiser*, The Psalms*, 479, "Kush hastens to come before God with hands full of gifts," captures precisely the idea that the "hand" of Kush symbolizes the act of gift giving.

[197] Cf. Weiser*, The Psalms*, 481.

mention the Assyrians. But the Assyrians are not explicitly mentioned in Isaiah 18:5-6 or 17:12-14 either. Nevertheless, the strong parallels between Psalm 68:29-31 and Isaiah 18:7 suggest that some parts of the psalm may be dependent on Isaiah 18:7 or vice versa.[198] If this the case, the psalm may allude in some way to the Assyrian defeat of 701 B.C. The following themes may be detected:

(a) the mountain of God, Jerusalem and the temple (vv. 16/17; 29/30)

(b) an enemy or company of enemies have attacked Jerusalem (v. 21/22; 30/31)

(c) "kings of armies" flee from before Yahweh; Yahweh scatters kings; Yahweh tramples the enemy (v. 12/13; v. 14/15; 30/31)

(d) "kings" bring gift to Jerusalem; Egyptian princes and Cushites stretch out hands to God (v. 31/32;)

(e) יוֹבִילוּ שַׁי used to describe tribute bringing (v. 29/30)

In sum, Psalm 68 is clearly connected to Isaiah 18:7 as several commentators have pointed out.[199] Yet, it is not stated clearly who the enemies are who are rebuked in the psalms. But this is similar to Isaiah 17:12-14 and 18:5-6 where the enemy remains unnamed.

6.3.3.3 *Isaiah 18:7 in the Context of Psalms 76:1-12*

The only other occurrence of the phrase יוֹבִילוּ שַׁי is in Psalms 76:11(12):

נִדְרוּ וְשַׁלְּמוּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כָּל־סְבִיבָיו יוֹבִילוּ שַׁי לַמּוֹרָא

Make your vows and pay them to Yahweh your God; all who surround him bring your gifts to the one who is to be feared.[200]

Psalm 76 celebrates Yahweh's defense of his people and the routing of an enemy who has attacked Jerusalem.[201] While some commentators take a "salvation-history" approach to this psalm, many also take a "historical" view, connecting it in particular to the siege of Jerusalem

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[198] See Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 67-69 argue for the dependency of Isa 18:7 on the Psalm 68 passages, rather than the other way around.

[199] Cf. Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 185-187.

[200] Cf. Childs, *Assyrian Crisis*, 51, who highlights the similar employment of the Zion tradition in Isaiah 17:12-14 and Psalm 76.

[201] See John A. Emerton, "A Neglected Solution of a Problem in Psalm LXXVI 11," *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974): 11.

in 701 B.C. following the lead of the LXX which has the added title, "with reference to the Assyrians."[202] With the occurrence of יוֹבִילוּ שַׁי here and only in Isaiah 18:7 and Psalm 68:29/30 (the latter two texts mention Cush specifically bringing offerings), it seems safe to connect this psalm to the historical context of 701 B.C and the Assyrians. In the psalms, Yahweh's shelter (סֹךְ) and his dwelling place (מְעוֹנָה,) is in Salem, and Zion (v. 2/3). And it is here, at Jerusalem, Yahweh is said to have "broken the arrows of the bow, the shield, the sword, and the battle" (v. 3/4). In verse 5, Yahweh is extolled for spoiling the "stouthearted" (אַבִּירֵי לֵב, i.e., the proud), and significantly, the enemies who have attacked Jerusalem "have fallen into sleep" so that none of their men or war are able to lift their weapons. Even their horses and chariots are said to have fallen into a "deep slumber" (רדם).[203] Yahweh sent forth his judgment from heaven and the earth feared and was still (v. 8/9). Yahweh arose to save the oppressed, by cutting off "the spirit of princes" and by being a terror to the "kings of the earth" (vv. 9, 12). Consequently, Yahweh is to be feared. Similar themes to Psalm 68 are detected:

(a) Zion and Jerusalem is said to be Yahweh's dwelling (v. 2/3)

(b) an enemy or enemies have attacked Jerusalem (vv. 3, 5-6/6-7)

(c) the enemies are identified as "kings of the earth" (v. 12/13)

(d) a deep sleep from Yahweh fall on the enemy (vv. 5-6/6-7)

(e) the enemy is routed (vv. 5-6/6-7, 12/13)

(f) Vows and made and gifts are brought to Jerusalem (v. 11/12)

(g) יוֹבִילוּ שַׁי is used to describe tribute bringing (v. 11/12)

In response to Yahweh's victory over the attackers, vows are to be made and gifts are to be brought by all those who are around; that is, by the nations, but particularly from those who have survived Yahweh's immediate wrath.[204] This is precisely John Emerton's interpretation of v. 11/12: "The first line states that God crushes the angry attackers of Jerusalem, and the second that he restrains, controls, and subdues those who have survived the crushing."[205] Who has survived the crushing but the Cushites who are, fortunately, not

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[202] See discussion in A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms, Vol. 2: Psalms 73-150* (New Century Bible; London: Butler & Tanner, 1972), 551; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 525.

[203] Cf. Isaiah 29:7-10.

[204] Anderson, *Book of Psalms*, 555.

[205] Emerton, "Psalm LXXVI," 145.

there to fight against but for Jerusalem? This act of Yahweh inspires fear and dread upon the Cushites who vow gifts and offerings and bring them to Jerusalem.

In a word, Yahweh's actions against the Assyrians result in the submission of surrounding kings—Cushite and otherwise—to Yahweh.[206] That the vow of "all those around" (i.e., surrounding nations and particularly the Cushites) in this specific historical context means their wholesale conversion to Yahweh is evidently not the case. While other passages we shall examine in Chapter 8 do envision an eschatological conversion of the nations (including Cushites) to the religion of YHWH, the context of Isaiah 18:7, Psalm 68:29-31, and Psalm 76:11 seem to be connected to the specific historical situation of 701 B.C.[207] However, a secondary eschatological application of these texts should not be ruled out.[208] Nevertheless, this latter passage suggests an acknowledgement of Yahweh's superior power and elicits from the awestruck Cushites and their allies vows and pledges of gifts to Jerusalem. In the views of the Psalmist, what the Cushites were unable to do—that is, to decisively route the Assyrians— Yahweh has done!

6.3.3.4 *Isaiah 18:7 in the Context of 2 Chronicles 32:23*

2 Chronicles 32:23 provides perhaps the clearest support for the interpretation of Isaiah 18:7 proposed here. In his retelling of the Sennacherib's story the Chronicler diverges significantly from the accounts in 2 Kings 18-19 and Isaiah 36-37 by both omissions and additions.[209] The Chronicler omits to mention Hezekiah's rebellion, his payment to Assyria, the Assyrian conquest of Judah's cities, the intervention of Tirhakah, and the blockade against Jerusalem.[210] In terms of his additions, the Chronicler provides details of Hezekiah's war preparation that are absent from his sources: Hezekiah stops up the water sources to prevent

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[206] Cf. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 154, 155.

[207] Cf. Kaminsky and Steward, "God of All the World," 144, who writes, "Turning to God, then [by the nations], does not function as a metaphor for "conversion" or inclusion within Israel's salvation. Rather, it illumines the universal recognition and exaltation of Israel's God." Kaminsky argues that Isaiah 40-55 does not envision the "conversion" of the nations at any point, but rather their recognition of Yahweh as sovereign. In Chapter 8 it will be argued that certain passages of Isaiah and other writings embrace an eschatological vision for the conversion of the nations and the universal ingathering of Yahweh's faithful.

[208] See §8.2.2.2.

[209] See again, Evans, "Historia or Exegesis?" 103-120, and Kalimi, "The Chronicler's View," 11-49.

[210] See Evans, "Historia or Exegesis?" 107.

Assyrian access; he fortifies the walls of Jerusalem; and his pre-war address to his soldiers encourages faith in Yahweh. The Chronicler is careful to demonstrate that in the face of great odds against Jerusalem Hezekiah has chosen to trust in Yahweh rather than in the "arm of flesh." In response, Yahweh comes to the help of Jerusalem and destroys the mighty men of Sennacherib's army, forcing Sennacherib to abandon his campaign against Hezekiah. All of these divergencies in the Chronicler's account are in service of his theological agenda—which will be the subject of the next chapter. What is significant for our purposes, however, is the way the Chronicler chooses to end the story. The Chronicler provides an interesting addition that is not present in either 2 Kings 19 or Isaiah 37. That the Chronicler also connects Isaiah 18:7 and potentially the psalms discussed above to the outcome of 701 B.C. is evident from the way he chooses to end the account in verse 23:

וְרַבִּים מְבִיאִים מִנְחָה לַיהוָה לִירוּשָׁלַם וּמִגְדָּנוֹת לִיחִזְקִיָּהוּ מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה וַיִּנַּשֵּׂא לְעֵינֵי כָל־הַגּוֹיִם מֵאַחֲרֵי־כֵן

> And many brought gifts to Yahweh to Jerusalem and choice presents to Hezekiah king of Judah. And he was magnified in the eyes of all the nations thereafter.

In the Chronicler's retelling of the events of 701 B.C. he emphasizes that the result of the Assyrian defeat at the hand of the God of Israel was the outpouring of tribute (מִנְחָה) to Yahweh and choice gifts (וּמִגְדָּנוֹת) to Hezekiah himself. The Chronicler thus connects the bringing of gifts *to Yahweh* of Jerusalem by all the nations around to the outcome of the events of 701 B.C. The Chronicler does not mention Cushite directly, for as we shall see, again the following chapter, Cushites are enemies of Israel in the book of Chronicles. Nevertheless, it is to Yahweh first, and then to Hezekiah that gifts are given. It is thus clear from the Chronicler's accounting that Hezekiah and Judah have achieved a new imperial status.[211] As Ralph Klein, remarks, Hezekiah has become a world renown monarch, like David and Solomon, receiving copious tribute from the surrounding nations.[212]

Yahweh's mighty deed against the Assyrians has won for himself and for Hezekiah great renown and the wealth of surrounding peoples. Indeed, Hezekiah who had given all of Jerusalem's wealth to the king of Assyria, even stripping off the gold from the temple doors

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[211] Ralph W. Klein, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 466.

[212] Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 466.

and the posts of his palace according 2 Kings 18:14-16 (though omitted from 2 Chron 32), is suddenly said to become very rich (2 Chron 32:27-29).[213] The Chronicler underscores that palpable means of appreciation was shown by the surrounding nations to the God of Israel and to Hezekiah for routing such an indomitable foe as Assyria. If the Chronicler's tribute scene in 32:23 is missing from his most obvious *Vorlage* for the Sennacherib story (2 Kings 18-19 and Isa 36-37), from whence then did he derive this addendum? It appears highly likely that the Chronicler read Isaiah 18:7 in conjunction with Psalms 68 and 76 within the context of 701 B.C.

6.3.4 Summary

The preceding exegetical excursion has served to firmly situate Isaiah 18:7 and the Cush oracle more generally within the historical context of 701 B.C. The concept of kings, nobility and nations bringing gifts to Jerusalem in the aftermath of 701 which Chronicles depicts, seem to be derived from an interpretation of Isaiah 18:7 possibly in conjunction with Psalm 68:29-32 and Psalm 76:1-12. We may safely assume therefore as other exegetes have done, that Isaiah 18:1-7 describes the historical situation leading up to and including the 701 B.C. campaign of Sennacherib in Palestine. Interpreted in this way, the oracle provides a good assessment of the Cushite role in the events and suggests that the brief mention of Tirhakah in Isaiah 37:9 and 2 Kings 19:9 is but part of the story of Cush and Jerusalem. From our interpretation, we may also safely conclude that the literary and historical contexts of Isaiah 18 prefers an interpretation which places Assyria at the center of the entire corpus of Isaiah 17-20.

The irony of the הוֹי pronounced against Cush in Isaiah 18:1 is that the destruction of the Cushites is not in view—at least not at the hands of Yahweh directly. Rather, the הוֹי signifies Yahweh's disapproval of Cushite-Judean alliance, but even more pointedly, it parallels the הוֹי of 17:12 where the destruction of the Assyrians is in view, according to our reading. Thus the הוֹי pronounced against Cush in Isaiah 18:1 in the context of 701 B.C. does not result in their destruction, such as that which meets the Assyrian army, but rather results in their submission to Yahweh and confession of his superior power.

One important reason why the narratives Isaiah 36-37 and 2 Kings 18-19 only give

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[213] Though commentators typically understand the episode with the Babylonian envoys as chronologically earlier than the 701 confrontation with Assyria (e.g., Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 209), the Chronicler's retelling seem to place it chronologically later.

passing acknowledgement of Taharqa and his forces, is because as far as these texts are concerned, the Cushites are not *the* decisive factor in the outcome of the events. From the perspective of the biblical writers, the showdown is strictly between the Assyrians and the God of Israel. Like the nations who are summoned to the mountains to watch (Isa 18:3), the Cushites get to observe what Yahweh does to Assyrian imperial pride. And in the face of Yahweh's sovereign power the imperial pride of the Cushites is also subdued. Cushite Egypt is mentioned specifically among the nations as bringing gifts to Yahweh (Isa 18:7; Ps 68:20,31) because this act of tribute bearing to Jerusalem, marks their submission and acknowledge of Yahweh, the God who dwells in Mount Zion.[214] As Brevard Child, concludes, "The gift represents an act of submission to the sovereignty of Yahweh as Lord to which the Ethiopians now bear witness as a result of Yahweh's intervention."[215]

The lesson for Isaiah's Judean audience could not be more compelling: it is better to trust in the sovereign power of Yahweh than to put confidence in the horses and chariots of Cush, Egypt, or any other earthly political power. For this reason, the theme of reliance on Yahweh is central to the message of Isaiah 18:1-7 as it is elsewhere in Isaiah. Indeed for much of the biblical writings, single-hearted reliance on Yahweh and the categorical rejection of alliances of any sort with world powers are central emphases.[216] The same emphases are found in heightened fashion in the theological outlook of Chronicles, as demonstrated for instance in the story of king Asa and Zerah the Cushite, to which will turn in short course.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to characterize Cush as military topos in the biblical text through an analysis of Isaiah 18:1-7 one of most compelling passages involving Cushites and Israelites in military contexts. Like the Assyrian forces which are depicted as invincible and

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[214] Cf. Joy Hooker, "Zion as Theological Symbol in Isaiah: Implications for Judah, for the Nations, and for Empire," in *Isaiah and Imperial Context: The Book of Isaiah in the Times of Empire*, ed. Andrew T. Abernethy et al (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 107-121.

[215] Childs*, Isaiah*, 138-139. See also, Kaiser*, Isaiah 13-39*, 96: "The title Yahweh Sebaoth recalls the universal power of God over the nations."

[216] Cf. Ehud Ben Zvi, "Malleability and its Limits: Sennacherib's Campaign against Judah as a Case Study," in *'Like a Bird in a Cage': The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (JSOTS 363, ESHM 4; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 82, who writes that "the futility of relying on mighty world powers (e.g., Egypt) rather than YHWH," constitute an important emphasis in Kings.

numerous in Isaiah, the military prowess of Cush is similarly amplified in Isaiah 18. Inasmuch as the Assyrians are depicted as swarms of bees (7:18-19), the Cushites are represented as hordes of flies (7:18-19; 18:1) in order to amplify the numerical characteristics of the armies of Cush.[217] The Cushites are "mighty and subjugating," inspiring fear "near and far" (18:2, 7) by their reputation for war. In a word, the Cushites are a force to be reckoned with in comparison to Israel's and Judah's military abilities.

But, the political glory of Cush, like the empires of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, far from an aspect of admiration by the prophet, perfectly serves his rhetorical aims. His sole purpose is to demonstrate Yahweh sovereign rule and superior power over earthly empires, as well as Yahweh's ability to protect his people in the face of improbable odds. Hence, the image of the "mighty and conquering" Cushites, like that of the formidable Assyrians, ultimately serve to showcase the superior power and sovereign status of Yahweh, the God of Israel.[218] As Kaiser writes, "Not only Assyria and Babylon, but Ethiopia and Egypt must also fall before the harvest is ripe."[219] The magnificent glory and power of the nations only amplifies Yahweh's humiliation of them.

Nevertheless, for the people of Israel and Judah faced with the real threat of political manipulation by vying world powers, the temptation to look to military alliances for security was an ever-present reality. Palestinian states repeatedly looked to Egypt for military assistance against Assyria—more often than not with a negative outcome. The political ascendance of Cush and its control of Egypt in the second half of the eighth century meant Cush became this symbol of hope against Assyria. Nevertheless, Isaiah and other prophets unrelentingly disparaged their people from engaging in political alliances with foreign nations, including Cushite Egypt.

Instead, their messages encouraged the people to turn to Yahweh with penitence, trust and expectation. Isaiah 18 is but another chapter in this story set within the political context of the late eighth century B.C. Like the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel, Judah's "righteous" Hezekiah also fails to heed the prophetic warning with devastating consequences for Judah. In the end, however, Yahweh's intervention results in the two-fold humiliation of

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[217] Cf. Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 77.

[218] Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 1-39, 153; Kaminsky and Steward, "God of All the World," 140.

[219] Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 92.

the imperial ambition of Assyria and Cush and the deliverance of the "remnant" left in Jerusalem—at least this is the picture presented in the historiographic reporting of the Hebrew Bible.

CHAPTER 7

The Sovereign Rule of Yahweh and Cush as Military Topos in Chronicles

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Like the previous chapter which sought to characterize Cush as a military power in the prophetic outlook of Isaiah 18:1-7, the current chapter aims to characterize Cush as a military power in the historiographic outlook of 2 Chronicles 14:9-15. The two chapters are thematically related since both deal with Cush as military topos in the biblical text. Furthermore, the portrayal of Cush in Isaiah and Chronicles bear both similarities and differences. In terms of differences, the former passage represents a pre-exilic view of Cushites as a military power in the history of Israel, while the latter presents a post-exilic assessment of Cushite interaction with the people of Judah in the distant past. The former narrative is set within the historical context of the late eighth century, while the latter, incidentally, is set at an earlier period, sometime in the early ninth century B.C. Moreover, in the former instance Cushites are allies, fighting alongside Judaeans against a common Assyrian threat; in the latter, Cushites *are* the immediate threat, intent on invading Judaean territory. In fact, in the historiography of Chronicles Cushites are enemies of Judah from start to finish.

In terms of similarities, both Isaiah and Chronicles employ the Cushite military topos to the same theological end. Bot intend to showcase Yahweh's sovereign power and to encourage faithful reliance upon him; and both seek to disparage political alliances with foreign nations and to advocate a course toward political autonomy and religious purity. Additionally, both texts present historical and historiographic concerns which require some explorations into the historical contexts purported in the narratives. And one final point of convergence and divergence worth mentioning: like the previous chapter, the current chapter attempts to provide an appreciable depth of engagement with the relevant authoritative sources; but unlike the preceding chapter, the present chapter is considerably less dense, and the finish line, the reader will find to be much closer in view. Having previewed the course,

our discussion must inevitably begin with a brief overview of the Chronicler's historical and theological outlook.[1]

7.2 THE THEOLOGICAL OUTLOOK OF CHRONICLES: A SHORT OVERVIEW

The book of Chronicles is a multi-faceted work which defies any single classification of its genre or purpose.[2] Yet the book is universally accepted as a post-exilic historiography which

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[1] Scholars have emphasized different aspects and purposes of the book of Chronicles, variously defining it as a midrash, an exegesis or commentary, a theological interpretation, a critical interpretation, a "reformed history," a "rewritten Bible," an ancient historiography, a discourse on identity formation, among other perspectives. Issues related to composition—such as, the nature and scope of the Chronicler's *Vorlage*, date of composition (early or late exilic, or Hellenistic period), authorship (e.g., the relation of Chronicles to Ezra-Nehemiah), etc.—continue to intrigue Chronicles scholars. On history and theology, see H. G. M. Williamson, *Israel in the Books of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Sara Japhet, "The Historical Reliability of Chronicles: History of the Problem and Its Place in Biblical Research," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 10 (1985): 83-107; M. Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund and Steven L. MacKenzie, eds., *The Chronicler as Historian* (JSOTS 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Jonathan E. Dyck, *The Theocratic Ideology of the Chronicler* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie and Gary N. Knoppers, eds., *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein* (JSOTS 371; London: T & T Clark International, 2003); Ehud Ben Zvi, "A Sense of Proportion: An Aspect of the Theology of the Chronicler," in *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi (London: Equinox, 2005); Isaac Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian: Studies in the Chronicler, His Time, Place and Writing* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica 46; Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2005); Louis C. Jonker, "Reforming History: The Hermeneutical Significance of the Books of Chronicles," *Vetus Testamentum* 57 (2007): 21-44; Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009). On literature and composition, see M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture* (JSOTS 263; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Louis C. Jonker, *Reflections of King Josiah in Chronicles: Late Stages of the Josiah Reception in II Chr. 34f* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2003); Ehud Ben Zvi, ed., *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles* (London: Equinox, 2005); Isaac Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005); Raymond F. Person, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Chronicles: Scribal Works in an Oral World* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010); Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana Vikander Edelman, eds., *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011); Paul S. Evans and Tyler F. Williams, eds., *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013); Louis C. Jonker, "Within Hearing Distance? Recent Developments in Pentateuch and Chronicles Research," *Old Testament Essays* 21 (2014): 123-146. On identity formation, see Jonathan E. Dyck, "The Ideology of Identity in Chronicles," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 89-116; Louis C. Jonker, "Who Constitutes Society? Yehud's Self-understanding in the Late Persian Era as Reflected in the Books of Chronicles," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 703-724; Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth A. Ristau, eds., *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009); Louis C. Jonker, ed., *Historiography and Identity (Re)formulation in Second Temple Historiographical Literature* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010); Louis C. Jonker, *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles: Multi-Levelled Identity Negotiation in Late Persian-Period Yehud* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

[2] For helpful commentaries, see Jacob M. Myers, *II Chronicles* (The Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965); H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 chronicles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982); Sara Japhet,

selectively reworked older literary traditions to form a new and unique synthesis.[3] Among its varied purposes, it is a work intended to bridge the gap between Israel's past and Israel's present in a new socio-political context of Persian Yehud.[4] The Chronicler attempts to establish continuity with the past in order to foster social and theological cohesion in a changing world.[5]

Theological continuity can be discerned, for example, in the historical philosophy of the book centered as it does around two theological fundamentals already identified in this study: the sovereign rule of Yahweh and his special relationship to the people of Israel.[6] These overarching assumptions are expressed implicitly or explicitly through various themes emphasized in Chronicles: Yahweh as universal and particular God, justice and retribution, the people of Israel, the Jerusalem Temple, the Davidic dynasty, the hope of redemption, among other emphases.[7] The centrality given to the role of God in the Chronicler's rewriting of the past, what Sara Japhet describes as the Chronicler's "theocentric historiography,"[8] means the history of Israel is not simply described but is rather explained according to theological rationale, with extensive commentary underscoring the outworking of divine providence.[9] Any

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I & II Chronicles: A Commentary (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993); William Johnstone, *1 and 2 Chronicles: Volume 2: 2 Chronicles 10-36 Guilt and Atonement* (JSOTS 254; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 10-29: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); Ralph W. Klein, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006); Klein*, 2 Chronicles*.

[3] Cf. Knoppers*, 1 Chronicles 1-9*, 133-134; Jonker, "Reforming History," 26-27.

[4] Cf. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 49; Jonker*, Defining All-Israel*, 12; Jonker, "Reforming History," 24-25.

[5] Jonker, "Reforming History," 21-44, for example, understands Chronicles as a "reforming history" which describes the past from the perspective of and in reference to the circumstances of the present (i.e., the author's time and place). The concept of Chronicles as a "reforming history" for Jonker entails *inter alia*, the reappropriation of old traditions, albeit as a "sanitized" reinterpretation, in the service of identity formation in the present context of Persian Yehud. See also, Jonker*, Defining All-Israel*, 11-16.

[6] Japhet*, Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 9, 42-98. Japhet suggests that God's sovereignty in Chronicles is "expressed in His creation, domination, rule, and providence," while his relationship to the people of Israel is "the focal point of His relationship with the world" (9). Cf. Japhet*, I & II Chronicles*, 44.

[7] Cf. Japhet*, I & II Chronicles*, 43-49.

[8] Japhet*, Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 9, defines the book of Chronicles as "theocentric historiography" as a means of emphasizing the centrality of God and his relationship to the world in the Chronicler's historical reconstruction. Cf. Dyck*, Theocratic Ideology*, 1, 3, who describes the Chronicler's Jewish community as "theocratic in constitution," as a means of emphasizing the centrality of the temple to both the Chronicler and his community.

[9] Cf. Japhet*, Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 120.

assessment of Cush in Chronicles must inevitably grapple with the theocentric historiography of the Chronicler—at least to some extent, and perhaps at the risk of a less than thorough analysis.[10] Nevertheless, in the following discussion we are concerned first with the theology of Chronicles as it relates to the religious and ethnic characterization of Cushites; and second, we are appreciably concerned with the book's historiography, as it relates to the political characterization of Cush in the early centuries of the first millennium B.C.

7.2.1 Retribution Theology in Chronicles

The theocentric outlook of the Chronicler is expressed to a great extent by his programmatic emphasis on reward and punishment, or what has been identified by scholars as his philosophy of retribution.[11] Divine retribution constitute a fundamental and definitive aspect of the Chronicler's theology.[12] Whether such reward and punishment are always immediate, or delayed in some instances, or whether divine retribution is inexorable or deferred in certain situations is not overly concerning for our purposes. Whatever implications these diverse perspectives entail for the Chronicler's theology of retribution need not delay us here.[13] What is important is that the Chronicler's retelling of the stories of the kings of Judah

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[10] On the Chronicler's ideology/theology, see again Williamson, *Books of Chronicles*; Japhet, *Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*; Dyck, "The Ideology of Identity," 89-116; Dyck, *Theocratic Ideology*; Ben Zvi, "Theology of the Chronicler," 160-173.

[11] Some scholars argue that "retribution theology" presents a negative view of the Chronicler's concept of reward and punishment. Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 651-653, for instance prefers the term "correspondence between actions and effects." He is followed by other scholars; e.g., Ben Zvi, "Theology of the Chronicler," 160. Cf. Raymond B. Dillard, "Reward and Punishment in Chronicles: The Theology of Immediate Retribution," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984): 165, n. 2.

[12] On the centrality of divine retribution in Chronicles, see Raymond B. Dillard, "The Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14-16): An Example of the Chronicler's Theological Method," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23 (1980): 207-218; Dillard, "Reward and Punishment in Chronicles," 164-172; Japhet, *Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 117-120, 122-123, 127, 129; John W. Wright, "Divine Retribution in Herodotus and the Book of Chronicles," in *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography*, ed. Paul S. Evans and Tyler F. Williams (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 195-215.

[13] Japhet, *Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 118, for instance, argues that in the Chronicler's concept of reward and punishment, the twin pillars of divine providence and divine justice guarantee that God will always reward obedience and punish disobedience according to established rules. Thus divine retribution is "mandatory, immediate and individual"; see Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 44. On the other hand, Ben Zvi, "Theology of the Chronicler," 160-165, suggests a more complex picture of the Chronicler's concept of "correspondence between actions and effects" (i.e., divine retribution), as can be seen by a number of accounts which seem to contract this principle. Wright, "Herodotus and the Book of Chronicles," 207-212, following

pointedly illustrate the outworking of divine providence through the concept of reward and punishment, and this theologizing has a bearing on the Chronicler's characterization of Cushites in the story of king Asa.

7.2.1.1 *Political Alliances as Topoi in Chronicles*

In the course of pursing his "theocentric historiography," the Chronicler employs *topoi* as ideological vehicles to structure the past.[14] Gary Knoppers identifies alliances of various sorts as important topoi in Chronicles, with political and military alliances taking on special significance.[15] If alliances with foreign nations was proscribed in pre-exilic Israelite religious ideology, as the preceding discussion has demonstrated, then the book of Chronicles—which not only aims to establish theological continuity with the past but also advocates religious purity in the present[16]—exhibits even more circumscription against alliances with foreign peoples by demonstrating their futility and inevitable failure in the life of the kings of Judah.[17] For the Chronicler alliances become important vehicles for demonstrating the outworking of divine retribution.[18] Alliances with foreign peoples consistently leads to negative results for the people of Yahweh; hence, the Chronicler disparages alliances with neighbouring peoples like Moab, Edom, and Aram, as much as with distant peoples like Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon.[19]

Ben Zvi also cautions against characterizing the retribution theology of the Chronicler as a universal, absolute principle without qualification. For Wright, divine retribution in Chronicles is both universal and not universal. It is universal insofar as "YHWH's temple, personnel, and prophetic word" (i.e., divine authority) are concerned, but is not universal in every respect (e.g., "Judean maltreatment of humans" [209]). See also Brian E. Kelly, "'Retribution' Revisited: Covenant, Grace and Restoration," in *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie and Gary N. Knoppers (JSOTS 371; London: T & T Clark International, 2003), 206-227, who challenges the common view by emphasizing aspects of grace and restoration in the Chronicler's concept of reward and punishment. He writes: "Retribution for *persistent and impenitent evil* is certainly one of the book's themes, but such punishment is never 'immediate,' nor is it always inevitable. Far from stressing the outworking of a strict theodicy in the world, the Chronicler is concerned primarily to highlight the offer of God's prevenient and undeserved mercy to a sinful yet penitent people—an offer, moreover, that is tied to the concrete form of the Jerusalem temple and its cultus of prayer and sacrifice" (226; emphasis original).

[14] Gary N. Knoppers, "'Yhwh Is Not with Israel': Alliances as a Topos in Chronicles," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 (1996): 602.

[15] Knoppers, "Alliances as a Topos," 601-626.

[16] Cf. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 4, 49; Jonker, *Defining All-Israel*, 12.

[17] Cf. Knoppers, "Alliances as a Topos," 611.

[18] Knoppers, "Alliances as a Topos," 611, 612.

[19] Knoppers, "Alliances as a Topos," 603, 621.

But significantly, as Knoppers points out, not only are foreign alliances disparaged, but the Chronicler even denounces alliances with the northern kingdom of Israel, imputing religious and political illegitimacy to the north.[20]

7.2.1.2 Summary

The Chronicler's retribution theology demonstrates that reliance on Yahweh will yield peace, prosperity, and political autonomy, while reliance on human strength leads to war, decline, and political subservience.[21] For the Chronicler, religious purity, reliance on Yahweh, and political independence are mutually reinforcing; and these theological emphases are paramount for the Chronicler's Judaean audience living in the heterogenous milieu of Persian Yehud.[22]

7.3 CHARACTERIZING CUSH IN 2 CHRON 14:9-15: A MILLION-MAN ARMY

The story of Asa is important to the Chronicler's theology in two significant ways. First, Asa's story illustrates both positive and negative aspects of the Chronicler's retribution theology; and second, the emphasis on the superior military power of Cushites gives rhetorical force to the Chronicler's message that unwavering trust in Yahweh on the part of the Judaeans assures their victory over the superior forces of the enemy.[23]

7.3.1 King Asa: Reliance on Yahweh Brings Peace and Military Victory

In the Chronicler's opening evaluation of Asa, he is a good king; he did "what was good and right in the sight of Yahweh his God" (14:2). His initial religious reforms aim to purge Judah of the foreign cults, their symbols, sancta, and cultic practices (14:3), and he directs the people to seek Yahweh, and to keep all his precepts (14:4). As a result of Asa's faithful adherence to the way of Yahweh, he is rewarded with peace "on every side" for a period of ten

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[20] Knoppers, "Alliances as a Topos," 603, 621, 624-625.

[21] Cf. Knoppers, "Alliances as a Topos," 607; Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 736; Johnstone, *2 Chronicles 10-36*, 72-73.

[22] Cf. Knoppers, "Alliances as a Topos," 611, 626.

[23] On aspects of the Chronicler's theology in the story of Asa, see Dillard, "Chronicler's Theological Method," 207-218; Knoppers, "Alliances as a Topos," 601-626; Louis C. Jonker, "The Cushites in the Chronicler's Version of Asa's Reign: A Secondary Audience in Chronicles?" *Old Testament Essays* 19 (2006): 863-881. Note also the valuable commentary in Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 208-244.

years (14:1, 5-6, 7).[24] The rewarded peace means Asa can pursue building programs and the equipping an army of five hundred and eighty thousand (300 000 from Judah and 280 000 from Benjamin [14:8]). The Chronicler thus establishes Asa as a king who demonstrates loyalty to Yahweh, and Yahweh in turn shows fidelity to Asa by granting him peace, prosperity and a well-equipped military.

In 2 Chronicles 14:9-15, the Chronicler sets the scene for the confrontation between Asa and the army of Zerah the Cushite. The Chronicler is careful to demonstrate that despite the sizable number of Asa's army, the Cushites represent a superior military power. Asa's 580 000 is set against Zerah's one million (אֶלֶף אֲלָפִים). In addition to their much greater number, the Cushites are also said to possess 300 chariots; chariots are not mentioned for the Israelites. 2 Chronicles 16:8 adds that the Cushite forces also have cavalry, the number of which is not given. The dynamics are unequivocal: the Cushite forces greatly outnumber Asa and his Judaean army both in number and military technology.

The enumeration of the enemy's forces is not unusual in Chronicles; emphasizing the superior number of Judah's opponents renders Yahweh's victory over them even more spectacular.[25] For example, Abijah's four hundred thousand are no match for the "great multitude" represented by Jeroboam's eight hundred thousand (2 Chron 13:3, 8). Yet Abijah's affirmation that Judah has remained faithful to Yahweh, means that Jeroboam and his great

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[24] On the chronological problems related to Asa's reign in Chronicles, see Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 210-212; Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 732-733; Dillard, "Chronicler's Theological Method," 213-218.

[25] The problem of the large numbers in Chronicles is well known by scholars. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 251, for example, suggests a "symbolic" or "rationalistic" approach for understanding the large number of Israelite and Judean soldiers in the story of Abijah. The rationalistic approach is based on the hypothesis proposed by George E. Mendenhall, "The Census Lists of Numbers 1 and 26," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 77 (1958): 52-66. Mendenhall's argument that אֶלֶף ("a thousand") indicated a military unit or subsection of a tribe reduces the large numbers to drastically smaller, more "realistic" figures. Ralph W. Klein, "How Many in a Thousand?" in *The Chronicler as Historian*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund and Steven L. MacKenzie (JSOTS 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 270-282, argues however that the evidence from Chronicles does not substantiate Mendenhall's view that the 340,822 Israelites mentioned 1 Chronicles 12 can be reduced to 15,290 based on the unit system. Neither does the unit system apply to the Chronicler's use of numbers more generally. Klein suggests that the Chronicler's use of exaggerated numbers in military contexts may serve to amplify Yahweh's power in guaranteeing Judah's victory over more numerically superior foes (281). Kenneth G. Hoglund, "The Chronicler as Historian: A Comparativist Perspective," in *The Chronicler as Historian*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund and Steven L. MacKenzie (JSOTS 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 26-27, on the other hand, suggests that the method of employing such specific and exaggerated numbers was meant to lend credibility to the Chronicler's historical reporting.

host cannot prevail if they presume to fight against Yahweh's army (13:12). The Israelites are soundly defeated by the numerically lesser Judaeans because Abijah and the people of Judah "relied on Yahweh the God of their forefathers" (13:18).[26] Similarly, in 2 Chronicles 12:2-9 the Egyptian pharaoh Shishak—identified by scholars as Shoshenq I of the 22nd Libyan Dynasty[27]—invades Judah with a "numberless" host (אֵין מִסְפָּר). In this pericope, however, Shishak's mighty host overwhelms Judah's fortified cities, and Jerusalem barely averts destruction.[28] The rationale for such a devastation of Judah is fairly straightforward: both Rehoboam and the people have sinned by abandoning the law of Yahweh, therefore the invasion of the numberless horde of Egyptians is Yahweh's means of punishing Israel for its unfaithfulness (2 Chron 12:1, 2). The contrast is clear: with Yahweh's presence, the numberless host of the enemy forces are defeated; without Yahweh's help (and in service of his judgment), the numberless host of the enemy forces overwhelms Judah.

By the same token, the enumeration of the greater number of Zerah's troops in 2 Chronicles 14:9 anticipates their defeat by Asa, who has thus far demonstrated unyielding faithfulness to Yahweh. Even Asa's prayer before the battle once again highlights the numerical superiority of the Cushites, but importantly also emphasizes Asa's reliance on Yahweh: "So Asa cried to Yahweh his God, 'O Yahweh, you place no difference between helping the mighty or the powerless. Help us, O Yahweh our God, because we are depending on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude'" (14:11).[29] Asa thus affirms Yahweh's omnipotence and his sovereign power over the outcome of the battle. He also

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[26] Cf. 2 Chron 20:2, 12.

[27] See Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 293-300; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 312-315; Donald B. Redford, "Shishak (Person)," in *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:1221-1222; John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 172-202; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 107-108.

[28] See discussion in André Lemaire, "Tribute or Looting in Samaria and Jerusalem: Shoshenq in Jerusalem?" in *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded*, ed. Gershon Galil, Mark Geller and Alan Millard (VTSup 130; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 167-177. Cf. Andrew D. H. Mayes, "Pharaoh Shishak's Invasion of Palestine and the Exodus from Egypt," in *Between Evidence and Ideology: Essays on the History of Ancient Israel Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Oud Testamentisch Werkgezelschap, Lincoln, July 2009*, ed. Bob Becking and Lester L. Grabbe (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 129-144.

[29] Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 711, suggests Asa's prayer employs "Chronistic vobulary" and reflects the Chronicler's theology.

affirms Israel's special claim to Yahweh's protection.[30] The outcome of the battle is thus guaranteed: Asa has demonstrated confidence in Yahweh despite being grossly outnumbered, now Yahweh's faithfulness and justice oblige him to fight for Israel.

In the course of the battle the Cushites are routed before Asa and his Judaean army. Not only do the Cushites suffer a terrible defeat, but in the course of their retreat to the Philistine region of Gerar their army is in complete disarray—or, if one follows the NRSV, "no one remains alive"(14:13).[31] Zerah's million-man army is vanquished because Yahweh has fought for Israel. The Judaeans recover great spoils from the defeated Cushites and from the Philistine cities which they subsequently sack and plunder. They also plunder the surrounding Bedouins and haul away a great number of sheep, goats and camels (14:14-15). The Chronicler's retribution theology is immaculate: Asa has demonstrated unwavering faith in Yahweh and as a reward Yahweh has given Asa and the people of Judah the victory over the vastly superior Cushite army.[32] The victory is also a clear statement about Yahweh' sovereign power over the nations. As Japhet appropriately comments, "The theme of the whole is divine rule and omnipotence: God's unrivaled power will inevitably determine the outcome of human conflict. At the same time, the self-representation of the people of Judah is that of the people of the Lord: they act in God's name and rely on his help; with the emphatic declaration 'O Lord, thou art our God' they claim their God's exclusive protection."[33]

The lesson is further reinforced by the message the prophet Azariah gives to Asa: Yahweh rewards those who put confidence in him, but he will abandon those who abandon him (15:2).[34] The prophets message is clear: it is better to trust in Yahweh than to put

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[30] Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 711.

[31] Perhaps a more appropriate indication of לְאֵין לָהֶם מִחְיָה is that the Cushite army was completely scattered, and unable to recover any cohesion. Cf. Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 220.

[32] Cf. Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 210.

[33] Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 711.

[34] Cf. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 712. On the modes of prophetic address in the Chronicler's narrative, see Simon J. De Vries, "The Forms of Prophetic Address in Chronicles," *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986): 15-36; Begg, "Prophets in the Chronistic History," 100-107; Pancratius C. Beentjes, "Isaiah in the Book of Chronicles," in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michaël N. Van der Meer et al (VTSup 138; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 15-24; Amber K. Warhurst, "The Chronicler's Use of the Prophets," in *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana Vikander Edelman (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 165-181; Gary N. Knoppers, "Democratizing Revelation? Prophets, Seers and Visionaries in Chronicles," in *Prophecy and Prophets in*

confidence in horses, chariots and superior numbers. Furthermore, on account of Asa's improbable victory and in view of his further religious reforms, the Chronicler assesses Asa at this point as one whose heart "was faithful all his days" (14:17). Consistent with Yahweh's fidelity, political peace is restored to Asa's realm. A period of prosperity follows. In fact, according to the Chronicler's account, the war with the Cushites was the war to end all wars—at least for a couple decades. Asa would not experience war again till the thirty-sixth year of his reign (14:19). Yet it is precisely at this point that his fortunes take a turn for the worst.

7.3.2 King Asa: Reliance on Aram Lead to War and Political Subservience

According to 2 Chronicles 16:1, thirty six years into Asa's reign, king Baasha of Israel invades Judah and establishes a blockade in the heart of Judaean territory by fortifying Ramah. In view of Baasha's invasion Asa empties the temple and palace treasuries of the gold and silver which he had earlier dedicated to Yahweh (1 Kings 15:18; 2 Chron 15:18). He sends this tribute (or שֹׁחַד, "bribe" according to 1 Kings 15:19) to Ben-hadad of Syria enticing him to break his league with Israel. Asa's substantial payment to Ben-Hadad is meant to reestablish an alliance between Judah and Syria which was in effect in the days of their fathers (16:3). Asa's decision to transact wealth from Yahweh's temple to Ben-Hadad marks the shift in his allegiance. In effect, he becomes a vassal of Syria in his bid to be free from military aggression by Israel.[35] After receiving the substantial bribe, Ben-Hadad accedes to Asa and violates his treaty with Israel, attacking cities in the northern territory of Israel (16:4). The news of this sudden turn of events forces Baasha to abandon his fortification at Ramah and attend to matters with Aram. Asa then diverts the stones and timber from Ramah and fortifies Geba and Mizpah on his northern border (16:6). Asa's strategic success is short-lived however, as the prophet Hanani arrives to declares to him Yahweh's assessment of his actions.

Hanani employs Asa's previous defeat of Zerah's Cushite forces to illustrate the folly of Asa's actions. According to Hanani's rhetorical question to Asa: "Were not the Cushites and the Libyans a great army (חַיִל לָרֹב) with exceedingly many chariots and cavalry?" (16:8). Yet, according to Hanani, because Asa relied on Yahweh against this great company they were

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Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar, ed. John Day (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 531; New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 391-409.

[35] Cf. Knoppers, "Alliances as a Topos," 604, 608.

handed over to him (16:8). But now, in the face of a similar though less numerical threat Asa has capitulated in his faith and payed off a foreign army to come to Judah's defense. Asa has backpedaled on his earlier confidence and has relied on the king of Aram instead of Yahweh. Hanani tells Asa that his decision to rely on Ben-Hadad has two important consequences: the Syrian army would now have permanently escaped from his grasp, and Asa would know only wars where he had expected peace (16:7, 9). The peace that Asa had previously enjoyed as a reward for relying on Yahweh would now be shattered; peace would be replaced by perpetual wars because of Asa's reliance on Ben-Hadad.

Upon hearing the prophetic declaration, Asa flies into a rage and imprisons Hanani for his insolence. He then begins to oppress some of the people, presumably those who remain loyal to Yahweh (16:10). These actions of Asa mark a turning point in his relationship to Yahweh. He has turned decidedly from his previous allegiance. Imprisoning the messenger who brings him Yahweh's rebuke is the ultimate indication of his rejection of divine guidance. Afflicted with a severe foot disease in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa refuses to seek Yahweh's help (16:12). Instead, he seeks healing from the physicians (i.e., he relies on human help). Impudent to the very end, Asa eventually dies from his foot disease in his forty first year, with no indication from the Chronicler of his repentance.

Several of Asa's actions mark his turning from divine to human trust. First, he surrenders Judah's independence for Ben-Hadad's protection instead of pointing his people to Yahweh; second, he imprisons Yahweh's prophet and oppresses the people; and third, he consults human physicians regarding his illness instead of turning to Yahweh for help (and repentance). As a result of Asa's failure of faith, the consequences are certain: he is punished with wars, sickness, and an ignominious death.[36] The lesson for the Chronicler's readers is clear: reliance on Yahweh brings peace, prosperity, and wellbeing, while faith in human strength is tantamount to rejection of Yahweh and results in misfortune, decline, and death. Jonker summarizes the *Leitwörter* of the Asa story thus: "Those seeking Yahweh and relying on him, experience rest, peace and absence of war. Successful building projects, religious reforms and victory in battle are associated with this style of existence. . . .Those who do not

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[36] Cf. Knoppers, "Alliances as a Topos," 607-608.

seek Yahweh and do not rely on him (or rely on worldly powers such as foreign kings and doctors!), will experience war and unrest."[37]

7.3.3 The Cushite Topos in 2 Chronicles 14:9-15 and 16:7-9

In the Chronicler's story of Asa Cushites are employed to demonstrate both the positive and negative results of divine retribution. The Cushites represent an enemy force of overwhelming proportion. Militarily they epitomized both numerical as well as technological strength: the numberless army has chariots and cavalry at its disposal. Asa's army, though modest in number, is inferior to the Cushites numerically and technologically. Humanly speaking, the Judaeans do not stand a chance against the might of the Cushite army.

On the other hand, the daunting Cushite army is no match for the God of Israel; they are likewise no match for Asa and the Judaeans when the latter put their confidence in Yahweh. Yahweh's victory over the mighty foe serves to demonstrate both Yahweh's superior power and sovereign control over humankind's numerical, physical and technological strength.[38] Yahweh's power is amplified in his victory over the mighty Cushite hosts. When Asa trusts in Yahweh, the Cushites become topical symbols for demonstrating both Yahweh's superior power and the benefits of placing unwavering confidence in him. When Asa turns from reliance on Yahweh and places his trust in the military strength of Syria, this decision flies in the face of reason, according to the Chronicler, given the earlier example of the improbable victory over the Cushites. The Cushites are then employed once again to demonstrate the folly of Asa's decision.

With Yahweh's help Asa had defeated so mighty an enemy, but faced with a similar situation, he seeks a league with a foreign power inimical to the welfare of Judah. Nothing but disaster can attend such a decision. The rhetorical value of Cush as a numerically superior and technologically advanced fighting force in Chronicles is analogous to Isaiah's employment of Cush for similar rhetorical purposes. For Isaiah, Chronicles, and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, Cush becomes paradigmatic of military strength. To defeat so mighty an enemy requires more than human strength; it requires absolute reliance on the superior power of Yahweh, the God of Israel. Here again Cushites are employed in these examples without the slightest

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[37] Jonker, "The Cushites," 869.

[38] Cf. Klein, "How Many in a Thousand?" 281.

reference to any racial qualities. Rather their reputation in military contexts ensures their topical and theological value for the purposes of the biblical writers.

7.4 CUSH IN THE CHRONICLER'S HISTORIOGRAPHY

Scholars have proposed three main scenarios related to the identity of Zerah the Cushite in 2 Chronicles 14. Two of these consider the historical context of ninth century Palestine (i.e., the reign of Asa, c. 913-873 B.C.)[39] as important for understanding the identity of the larger than life figure.[40] For the majority of interpreters, Zerah is likely a local leader of a small band of Arab marauders, and the Chronicler's account is a theologically motivated elaboration of a local conflict between Zerah's band and Judean forces.[41] A number of scholars also identify Zerah as a Nubian general of pharaoh Osorkon I, the son of Shoshenq I (biblical Shishak noted above), perhaps sent to reassert Egyptian control in Palestine in the face of Asa's military build-up.[42] A third position posits an explanation for Zerah the Cushite not with reference to the historical context of the ninth century, but in relation to the Chronicler's own time and in view of the author's Persian period audience.[43] In general, this position advances a

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[39] Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 309, gives 897 B.C. as the fourteenth year of Asa and the likely date for Zerah's campaign.

[40] Although no apparent *Vorlage* for 2 Chron 14:2-15:15 is known, Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 703, writes, "Nevertheless, given the Chronicler's methods of composition, it is unlikely that these portions are pure fiction." As for the story of Zerah the Cushite, she departs from the non-historical view in stating, "there are details which clearly point to a realistic and concrete episode" (709). She interprets the account in the historical context of the pre-exilic rather than the Chronicler's own time in the Persian period. Japhet has addressed the problematic issue of the historical reliability of Chronicles elsewhere; see Japhet, "Historical Reliability of Chronicles," 83-107. For further discussions of the Chronicler's historical method, see Hoglund, "Chronicler as Historian," 19-29; Isaac Kalimi, "Was the Chronicler a Historian?" in *The Chronicler as Historian*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund and Steven L. MacKenzie (JSOTS 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 73-89.

[41] Eg. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 265; Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 709-710 (Japhet, however, mentions Nubia, Midian and southern Palestine as possible places of origin for Zerah); Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 217-219, 221.

[42] So Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 309. Cf. Myers, *II Chronicles*, 85; Johnstone, *2 Chronicles 10-36*, 62-63. This particular view has certain variations such as that Osorkon created a buffer zone around Gerar in which he stationed Nubian mercenaries, or that Zerah is to be identified with Osorkon himself based on putative phonetic similarities in the names. Most scholars have abandoned this latter position.

[43] This position was reinvigorated by Peter Welten, *Geschichte und Geschichtsdarstellung in den Chronikbüchern* (WMANT 42; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973). Jonker, "The Cushites," 863-881, following Welten in affirming a Greek background to the Cushite narrative in 2 Chron 14:9-15, suggests that the Chronicler may have drawn upon the relationship between Persia and Nubia in classical Greek tradition (esp. Herodotus and Diodorus) which lauds Nubian military reputation, often at the expense of the

non-historical view of the Zerah pericope in Chronicles while emphasizing the rhetorical value of Cushites for the Chronicler's polemical purposes. With few exceptions, scholars in all three camps agree that the size of the Cushite army is characteristic of the Chronicler's *tendenz* for numerical amplification (e.g., 2 Chron 12:3; 13:3;).[44] Before positing an alternative scenario for the identity of Zerah and his Cushite army within the tradition of a ninth century historical context and with reference to Nubian Cush, it is first necessary to briefly survey the presentation of Cushites in the broader historiography of Chronicles.

Apart from the abbreviated genealogy of Cush which occurs in 1 Chronicles 1:8-10,[45] Cushites are mentioned in four other scenarios in Chronicles, two of which involves Zerah's Cushite army as already discussed (14:9-15; 16:8).[46] In 2 Chronicles 12:3 Cushites are

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Persian Empire. Jonker argues that the Chronicler may have evoked this Cushite-Persian background in order to cast subtle polemic in the direction of a secondary implied audience—the Persian officials in Yehud (who were likely Judaeans/Samarians). In recent decades the importance of classical Greek influence on the Chronicler has been advanced by several scholars; e.g., Gary N. Knoppers, "Greek Historiography and the Chronicler's History: A Reexamination," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 627-650; Wright, "Herodotus and the Book of Chronicles," 195-214; Diana Edelman and Lynette Mitchell, "Chronicles and Local Greek Histories," in *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana Vikander Edelman (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 229-252.

[44] On the problem of the large numbers in Chronicles, see again Klein, "How Many in a Thousand?" 270-281.

[45] In the Chronicler's version of Cush's genealogy adopted from Genesis 10, the account regarding Nimrod is redacted: "And Cush sired Nimrod and he began to be a mighty one on the earth" (1:8). The statement in Gen 10:9-12 regarding Nimrod's Mesopotamian kingdom is omitted. The omission of Nimrod's sphere of influence, as Sadler, *Cushite*, 123, suggests, is likely to alleviate the problem related to the identification of a Cushite presence in Mesopotamia. The placement of Nimrod in an eastern location by the Genesis author would likely have been lost to the Chronicler writing at a time when Cush had long since been associated with Nubia. For a discussion of the Chronicler's reformulation of the genealogies of Genesis, see Gary N. Knoppers, "Shem, Ham and Japheth: The Universal and the Particular in the Genealogy of Nations," in *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie and Gary N. Knoppers (JSOTS 371; London: T & T Clark International, 2003), 13-31. On the genealogies of Chronicles more generally, see Magnar Kartveit, *Motive und Schichten der Landtheologie in I Chronik 1-9* (ConBOT 28; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989); Roddy L. Braun, "1 Chronicles 1-9 and the Reconstruction of the History of Israel: Thoughts on the Use of Genealogical Data in Chronicles in the Reconstruction of the History of Israel," in *The Chronicler as Historian*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund and Steven L. MacKenzie (JSOTS 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 92-105; James T. Sparks, *The Chronicler's Genealogies: Towards an Understanding of 1 Chronicles, 1-9* (SBL Academia Biblica 28; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008); Steven Schweitzer, "The Genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9: Purposes, Forms, and the Utopian Identity of Israel," in *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography*, ed. Paul S. Evans and Tyler F. Williams (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 9-27.

[46] As pointed out in the previous, the terse reference to Tirhakah in 1 Kings 19:9 and Isa 37:9 does not occur in the Chronicler's retelling of Sennacherib's invasion in 2 Chron 32.

mentioned in connection to the invasion of Shishak/Shoshenq I (1 Kings 12:2-9).[47] According to 1 Kings 11:40, Shishak provides asylum for Jeroboam when he fled from Solomon. Later however, Shishak invades Palestine leaving devastation in his wake (1 Kings 14:25-26; 2 Chron 12:2-9). Shoshenq's victory stele lists 154 Palestinian towns destroyed during his punitive expedition.[48] The Bible records this invasion as taking place in the fifth year of Rehoboam (c. 925).[49] Shoshenq's invasion was essentially a reestablishment of Egyptian control of Palestine, and this control, though short-lived, may have persisted toward the end of the 10th century.[50] According to 2 Chronicles 12:3, Shishak came with an innumerable company consisting of Libyans (לוּבִים), Sukkites (סֻכִּיִּים), and Cushites (כוּשִׁים).[51] Though the account in 1 Kings 14:25-26 does not elucidate the ethnic composition of Shishak's army, the scenario in Chronicles is quite logical however, given the historical role of Cushites in the Egyptian army.[52] Moreover, other passages in the Hebrew Bible place Egyptians, Cushites, Libyans, Sabeans, Lydians, and other southerners in contexts of military cooperation (see, Isa 20:3-4; Jer 46:9; Ezek 30:4-5; 38:5; Nah 3:9; cf. Isa 43:3; 45:14; Dan 11:43).

Taking another look at 14:9-15, only Cushites are mentioned as constituting Zerah's army. However, in 16:8, Libyans are also mentioned as part of the innumerable company. But clearly, it is the Cushites that are emphasized in both scenarios. The similarities between Shoshenq's forces in 2 Chronicles 12:3 and that of Zerah's in 14:9 has lead many scholars to posit, with good reason, a relationship between the two. Apart from literary and historical proximity, in both scenarios a numberless company invades from the south. Besides an innumerable infantry, Shoshenq's forces consists of 1200 chariots and 60 000 cavalry, while Zerah's has 300 chariots and an unspecified number of cavalry. Shishak's "Egyptian" forces

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[47] See again, Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 293-300; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 312-315; Redford, "Shishak," 5:1221-1222; Currid, *Egypt and the Old Testament*, 172-202; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 107-108.

[48] See Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 312.

[49] Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 295.

[50] Redford, "Shishak," 5: 1222. But see Nadav Na'aman, "Forced Participation in Alliances in the Course of the Assyrian Campaigns to the West," in *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction: Collected Essays. Vol 1*, ed. Nadav Na'aman (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 16, who suggests that Shishak's control of Palestine was short-lived.

[51] The Sukkites are identified as Libyan tribes from the western deserts; see Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 295, n. 291.

[52] See again, §3.3.2.3 in this study.

consists of Libyans, Sukkites and Cushites, while Zerah's "Cushite" forces consist of Cushites and Libyans. Shoshenq's army is clearly superior to Zerah's, at least technologically: 1200 chariots and 60 000 cavalry against 300 chariots and presumably also a smaller number of cavalry.

Nevertheless, as pointed out above, the similarities between the two accounts have lead many scholars to propose that Zerah is a Nubian general of Osorkon I. This is quite plausible, and apart from the point of view which will be suggested below, in the view of this writer, the connection of Zerah with Osorkon (as the latter's general) remains the best scenario for the explanation of Zerah the Cushite along historical lines.

Cushites are mentioned in 2 Chronicles 21:16 as follows:

<div dir="rtl">

וַיָּעַר יְהוָה עַל־יְהוֹרָם אֵת רוּחַ הַפְּלִשְׁתִּים וְהָעַרְבִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־יַד כּוּשִׁים

</div>

And Yahweh stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabians which were (lit.) upon the hand of the Cushites.

Translators typically translate עַל־יַד as "beside" or "near" (e.g., NRSV, ESV) thus rendering the phrase וְהָעַרְבִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־יַד כּוּשִׁים as ". . . and the Arabs who are near the Ethiopians."[53] This translation however, may be misleading since the majority of the time עַל־יַד (also עַל־יְדֵי) is translated as "under the authority of," "in the charge of," or "under the hand of," elsewhere in Chronicles (e.g., 1 Chron 25:2; 26:28; 2 Chron 12:10; 26:11, 13; 34:10; 17).[54] For example, in 1 Chronicles 25:2, the sons of Asaph are said to be עַל־יַד Asaph, while Asaph and his sons are collectively עַל־יְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ. Clearly a translation which suggests Asaph's charge over his sons and the king's charge over Asaph and his sons is intended, and is so translated

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[53] Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 814, for example, underscores the Cushite presence around Gerar (2 chron 14:13) during the time of Asa. She suggests that the geographic relationship between the Cushites, the Arabs and the Philistines presented in 2 Chron 21:16 represents "a plausible historical continuum, from the days of Asa on." The Cushites are thus the neighbours of the Arabs and the Philistines. However, Japhet does not provide an adequate scenario for how Nubians might have arrived in the vicinity of Gerar since she does not see a political connection between Zerah the Cushite and Libyan Egypt (709-710). Myers, *II Chronicles*, 122, connects the Cushites around Gerar with the invasion of Shishak in 2 Chron 12, and believes the geographic proximity of the Cushites, Philistines, and Arabs, indicated in 21:16 "has all the earmarks of authenticity" (123). Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 308, does not equate the Cushites mentioned here with Ethiopians/Nubians; rather they are "'Cushites,' a bedouin tribe to the south of Judah." See also Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 308, for the view that the Cushites are near or next to the Arabs.

[54] See discussion in Sadler, *Cushite*, 129-130. The translation of עַל־יַד as "next to" in a couple other instances in Chronicles do seem to fit the context (2 Chron 17:15, 18; 31:15).

by translators. While it is geographically correct to say that the Arabians are "near" or "next" to the Cushites, in the wider literary and historiographic context of Chronicles, the verse is more likely an indication that both the Arabians and the Philistines are "under the authority of," or "at the direction of" the Cushites during the time of Jehoram (c. 848-841 B.C.).[55] William Johnstone makes the point quite clearly: "This time it is stated explicitly that they [the Philistines and Arabs] are invading Judah 'at the direction of the Cushites' (1 Chron 1:10)."[56]

This interpretation would fit with the leading role given to Cushites in 2 Chronicles 14:9-15/16:8 and their connection to the city of Gerar and Bedouin tribes of the Syro-Arabian desert. In view of the Cushites' retreat to Gerar and the subsequent plundering of the Philistine cities by the Judean army, it seems more than likely that the Philistine are at the service of the Cushites in this scenario;[57] whereon at the defeat of the Cushites (and presumably their Philistine and Arab vassals) defenseless cities and surrounding Bedouin tribes fall easy prey to the looting Judaeans. The Chronicler's historiography seems to indicate that between the reigns of Asa (c. 913-873 B.C.) and his grandson Jehoram (c. 848-841 B.C.) Cushites assumed (or attempted to assume) a leading role in affairs around northwestern Arabia and southern Palestine. The Chronicler does not indicate, however, that Arabians and Philistines are constantly at the Cushites' disposal.

Again in the Chronicler's historiography, during the times of Asa and Jehoshaphat, surrounding peoples are subjected to the kingdom of Judah. Both Arabians and Philistines are mentioned as bringing tribute to Jehoshaphat the son of Asa (2 Chron 17:11).[58] Yet by the reign of Jehoram not only do Arabs and Philistines invade Judah, but Edomites and Libnaites also revolt, implying that these two latter peoples were previously subjected to Judah as well (2 Chronicles 17:10-11; 21:8, 10, 16).[59] Perhaps a scenario wherein control of these areas passed

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[55] Sadler, *Cushite*, 129-130.

[56] Johnstone, *2 Chronicles 10-36*, 113. Johnstone writes further, "Others take the phrase to mean, 'who are beside the Nubians' (cf. NRSV), but a mere geographic sense seems too weak. For the meaning, 'at the direction of', see for example 2 Chron. 26.18."

[57] Even where the identity of the Cushites is disputed (Nubians or Arab bedouins), many commentators understand the Cushites' retreat to Gerar as an indication of their affiliation with the area. E.g., Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 814; Myers, *II Chronicles*, 122; Johnstone, *2 Chronicles 10-36*, 62, 113; Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 308; Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 308.

[58] Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 814.

[59] Cf. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 814.

between Cush and Judah during the time of Asa and Jehoshaphat is implied. Asa's victory over the Cushites ensured that his son Jehoshaphat was not only free from war (2 Chron 17:10) but also received tribute from surrounding peoples, with specific reference to the Arabians and Philistines, Edomites and Libnaites. Later however, in the time of Jehoram (and in the face of Jehoram's apostasy—"because he had forsaken Yahweh the God of his forefathers"; 2 Chron 21:2-3), Cushites may have once again asserted control over the region. If the scenario proposed here is correctly deduced from Chronicles, then Nubia is depicted as an international power exerting political influence on the borders of Judah from at least the close of the tenth century. Historically speaking, this scenario is certainly a possibility given the shroud of mystery which surrounds Nubian history from the collapse of New Kingdom imperialism in Nubia around 1070 B.C.[60] It is against this background we seek to propose a historical location for Zerah and his Nubian army.

7.4.1 A Historical Setting for Zerah the Cushite?

According to scholarly reconstruction, New Kingdom imperialism in Nubia ended abruptly due to internal weakness within Egypt. Correspondingly, it is assumed that without direct Egyptian control from the eleventh century to the rise of the 25th Kushite Dynasty in the eighth century, Nubia relapsed into a state of tribalism for several centuries—a period appropriately labeled the Nubian "Dark Age."[61] But Morkot and others have vigorously challenged such unwarranted views of both the end of Egyptian imperialism in Nubia as well as the characterization of Nubia during the intervening centuries.[62]

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[60] Cf. Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 129-144.

[61] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 129-130. Of this alleged Dark Age Adams, *Nubia*, 244-245, writes, "Nubia vanish entirely from history. Its erstwhile Egyptian conquerors had returned to their native soil, and the indigenous populated had retreated somewhere into the wilderness of Upper Nubia, when they were to emerge with a vengeance three centuries later . . . it took some time for the lesson of the pharaohs to sink in." Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 130, vigorously challenges such "bizarre" views.

[62] See his more extensive challenge to the Nubian "Dark Age" hypothesis in Robert Morkot, "The Empty Years of Nubian History," in *Centuries of Darkness: A Challenge to the Conventional Chronology of Old World Archaeology*, eds., Peter James et al. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991) 204-219. In a chapter entitled, "A Long, Silent Interlude?", Török *Between Two Worlds,* 285-309, similarly poses a number of challenges to the idea of silent centuries leading up to the emergence of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty. Following a number of scholars, Török has rejected the idea of a depopulation Lower Nubia during the Third Intermediate Period. According to Török, "The disappearance of the native population proved to be an optical illusion of archaeology" (195).

Furthermore, Morkot has argued repeatedly that the emergence of a strong centralized Cushite state in the eighth century may have been directly related to antecedent dynamics deriving from the long history of kingship within Nubia:

> This, indeed, has been a general presumption about Nubia: Nubia became powerful *because* Egypt was weak. The opposite might actually have been the case: the emergence of powerful states in Nubia may have resulted in the weakness of Egypt, now, with the Kerma state, and also at the end of the New Kingdom.[63]

Indeed, during the reign of the last 20th Dynasty Pharaoh, Ramesses XI (c. 1105-1075 B.C.), the Viceroy of Kush, Panehesy, had invaded Egypt with his Nubian army, ruling Upper and Middle Egypt for several years, even attacking cities as far north as the Delta. He was eventually driven back to Nubia with great difficulty.[64] Andrzej Niwinsi even suggests that Panehesy may have had it in mind to liberate Nubia with his Nubian army.[65] Panehesy's invasion might be a portent of a strengthening Kush during this tumultuous period in Egypt.

Based on archaeological evidence from the royal cemetery of el Kurru in Upper Nubia, which Morkot interprets within a "long chronology" framework, he emphasizes that "there were significant powers in Upper Nubia during the Libyan period [10th-8th centuries]."[66] Both Morkot and Kendall have redated a line of Nubian kings previously associated with the later Meroitic period (4th-3rd centuries) to precisely the ninth or eighth centuries B.C., several

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[63] Robert G. Morkot, "The Foundation of the Kushite State: A Response to the Paper of Lásló Török," *Cahiers de Recherces de L'Institut de Payrologie et D'Egyptologie de Lille* 17 (1994): 230, emphasis original. For similar arguments, see Morkot, "Egypt and Nubia," 244-246; Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 129-144. Morkot, "The Empty Years of Nubian History," 218, argue that the misconception of Nubia from the collapse of Egyptian viceregal administration in the 11th century B.C. persists because "[T]he Nubian evidence, whatever it suggests internally, is usually made to conform to the accepted Egyptian chronology" (218). Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 201, more cautiously writes, "It remains obscure whether the withdrawal of the Egyptian administration from Upper Nubia was accelerated by indigenous aggression or was carried out concurrently with the conclusion of contracts made with some native polities in the abandoned regions." See also, Edwards*, Nubian Past*, 75.

[64] See Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 204-207; Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 98-104; Andrzej Niwinski, "Le passage de la XXe à la XXIIe dynastie. Chronologie et histoire politique," *Bulletin de L'Institut Français D'Archéologie Orientale* 95 (1995): 329-360; Kitchen*, Third Intermediate Period*, 247, 248, 253; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 285.

[65] Niwinski, "XXe à la XXIIe dynastie," 337: "Il est possible que Panehsy, en menant à la lutte son armée constituée de Nubiens, ait exploité l'idée de libérer la Nubie de la domination égyptienne."

[66] Morkot*, Black Pharaohs*, 144. Cf. Morkot, "The Empty Years of Nubian History," 216-217.

centuries earlier.[67] They suggest that these five "Neo-Ramesside" kings represent the emergence of a post-New Kingdom Nubian kingdom in Upper Nubia, separate from (though perhaps indirectly related to) and predating the 25th Dynasty by several generations.[68] Though Török still supports the later date for the Neo-Rameside kings,[69] his "long chronology" also places the beginning of burials at the el Kurru royal cemetery between 1020-1000 B.C."[70]

Significantly, the well-known relief and inscription of the queen variously called Katimala/Karimala/Kadimalo at the Semna West temple of Dedwen/Senusret II, is dated by a number of scholars to this pre-Twenty-Fifth Dynasty period.[71] Morkot calls her a "Kushite queen" and suggests she may have been the wife of one of these early Neo-Rameside Upper Nubian kings (the inscription also mentions an anonymous king), or that she may have ruled in her own right.[72] And more recently, John Darnell proposed a date for the reign of Katimala sometime between 1069-945 B.C. (the period of the 21th Dynasty in Egypt), arguing that her

[67] See Morkot, "Nubia in the New Kingdom," 294-301; Morkot, "The Empty Years of Nubian History," 216-219; Morkot, "Foundation of the Kushite State," 234; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 149-154; Timothy Kendall, "The Origin of the Napatan State: El Kurru and the Evidence for the Royal Ancestors," in *Studien zum antiken Sudan: Akten der 7. Internationalen Tagung für meroitistische Forschungen*, ed., Steffen Wenig (Meroitica 15; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), 63-66. See discussion in Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 292-293.

[68] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 149.

[69] Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 292-293.

[70] Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 301. In support of a long chronology, see also Ahmed Ali Hakem, *Meroitic Architecture: A Background of an African Civilization* (Khartoum, Sudan: Khartoum University Press, 1988), 241-244. The "long chronology" is in opposition to the "short chronology" first proposed by Reisner. Reisner, who excavated the site in the early twentieth century, believed that royal burials at the el Kurru cemetary began around 860-840 B.C.; see George. A. Reisner, "Discovery of the Tombs of the Egyptian XXVth Dynasty at El-Kurruw in Dongola Province," *Sudan Notes and Records* 2 (1919): 237-254; George. A. Reisner, "Note on the Harvard-Boston Excavations at El-Kurruw and Barkal in 1918-1919," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 6 (1920): 61-64. Reisner's short chronology was later corrected by Dows Dunham, *El Kurru* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1950). Kendall who intitially proposed a long chronology for the el Kurru site, dating the duration of the cemetary from the New Kingdom to the 25th Dynasty (see Timothy Kendall, *Kush, Lost Kingdom of the Nile: A Loan Exhibition from the Museum of Fine Art* [Brockton, Mass.: Brockton Art Museum, 1982], 21-25), has more recently reaffirmed Reisner's early conclusions by dating the beginning of the site between 885-835 B.C.; see Kendall, "The Origin of the Napatan State," 3-117.

[71] For discussion see, John C. Darnell, *The Inscription of Queen Katimala at Semna: Textual Evidence for the Origins of the Napatan State* (Yale Egyptological Studies 7; New Haven, Conn.: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 2006); Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 294-298; Morkot, "The Empty Years of Nubian History," 216-217; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 152-153; Morkot, "Foundation of the Kushite State," 236.

[72] Morkot, "Foundation of the Kushite State," 236; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 153. But Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 295, 298, places the monument in the second half of the eight century and connects Katimala with the early phases of the 25th Dynasty.

monument represents either "a glimpse at the birth of the Napatan state, or a glimpse of one of the predecessors—perhaps the most important—of the Napatan state."[73] Though not everyone agrees with this early dating for Katimala, scholars such as Darnell, Morkot, Kendall and others are willing to consider evidence for the emergence of multiple, even competing states in the period following the end of the New Kingdom.[74] Morkot, as we have seen, would even attribute the demise of New Kingdom imperialism—at least in part—to the rise of such states in Nubia. Thus, rather than Nubia relapsing into a Dark Age, Morkot suggests that vibrant political and economic activity likely characterized Nubia in these intervening centuries, and it is with respect to these earlier dynamics that one should seek the foundation of the later Napatan state.[75]

One such aspect of early Cushite activity entails its commercial involvement in the Mediterranean market. Some of the most prized luxury goods were obtained primarily from Nubia during this period. In addition to Nubia being one of the main gold producing regions of the ANE, exotic items like apes and animal hides (elephant, leopard, etc.) were obtained from the central Sudan. More significantly, however, ivory and ebony and "Kushite" great horses were some of the most sought after commodities in Syria-Palestine and beyond.[76] It is almost certain, as Morkot suggests, that a constant supply of African Bush elephant tusks from the central Sudan was the primary contributor to the flourishing of ivory working in Palestine,

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[73] Darnell, *Queen Katimala at Semna*, 48, 60. Citation also in Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 297.

[74] Some scholars, Morkot among them, has argued against focussing on el Kurru as the only (or even the primary) site for investigating the beginning of state development in post-New Kingdom Nubia. For example, excavations at the large 25th Dynasty-Napatan cemetery at Sanam reveals that elite burials began at this site in the 19th Dynasty and continued into the early 25th Dynasty period; see Irene Liverani, "Hillat el-Arab," in *Sudan: Ancient Treasures: An Exhibition of Recent Discoveries from the Sudan National Museum*, ed. Julie R. Anderson and Derek Anthony Welsby (London: British Museum Press, 2004), 138-147. From her excavation of post-New Kingdom burials at the site, Liverani concludes that "The tombs . . . reflect only the positive effects of this political situation [i.e., the end of Egyptian domination] and are, if possible, even richer [than previous burials]. Commerce with Egypt still appears to have been flourishing" (138; cf. Török *Between Two Worlds*, 288). This type of evidence is in line with Morkot's approach which focuses on more regional developments, including looking at trade connection between Nubia and other regions.

[75] Cf. Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 129-136. Though Morkot argues elsewhere that a lower chronology would also resolve the apparent hiatus; see Morkot, "The Empty Years of Nubian History," 204-219.

[76] Stephanie Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry and Cavalry in the Armies of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II," *Iraq* 47 (1985): 38, calls ivory "a luxury material par excellence." See also Heidorn, "Horses of Kush," 105-114; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 154-155.

Phoenicia, Syria, and as far away as Assyria from at least the tenth century B.C.[77] Tribute imposed on western Asian and Arabian rulers by Assyrian kings from the ninth century onwards included gold, elephant hides, elephant tusks (ivory), and ebony.[78]

Even Hezekiah's tribute which Sennacherib said was sent after him to Nineveh included "large blocks of . . ., ivory beds, armchairs of ivory, elephant hides(s), elephant ivory, ebony."[79] These items Morkot suggests are of Nubian origin, and they were some of the most important exports for Nubia at this early period.[80] Shabaka's nomina has been found on many jar-seal impression from Megiddo, and even as far as Assyria, attesting to diplomatic and trade relations with these areas.[81] But, as Pope points out, "Many other objects of probable Levantine provenance bear Kushite nomina, but most are not from excavated contexts like that at Megiddo."[82] Some of these objects could conceivably date to even earlier periods than the reign of Shabako, attesting to Cushite commercial and diplomatic relationship to the region at an earlier time.

Further, the gold, silver, ivory, and variety of apes[83] which Solomon's maritime enterprises brought home every three years (1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chron 9:21) most certainly indicate strong commercial ties between Israel and northeastern Africa as early as the tenth century B.C.[84] Trade connections begun with Solomon doubtless would have continued into later times, especially the trade in luxury items like ivory and ebony. Ahab's ivory house in Samaria known from both text (1 Kings 22:39) and archaeology provides a glimpse into the

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[77] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 154-155. Because the indigenous Syrian elephants were extinct by the tenth century, it is doubtless that the major supply for ivory in western Asia came from Nubia. And though Assyria likely obtained ivory from India via Babylonia, Morkot suggests that the Nubian trade was also the more likely means by which this luxury item arrived in Assyria (154).

[78] William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds., *Context of Scripture*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 2: 276, 284, 285, 286, 287, 290, 303.

[79] Grayson and Novotny, *Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib*, 66. Cf. Hallo and Younger Jr., *COS* 2: 303.

[80] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 155; Morkot, "Foundation of the Kushite State," 237-238.

[81] Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 116.

[82] Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 116.

[83] The Hebrew word תֻכִּיִּם in 1 Kings 10:22 which is often translated "peacocks" mostly likely indicated a species of apes: "peacock on the contrary seems less likely since in the time of Solomon the peacock was not known in the Near East"; see "תֻכִּיִּם תוּכִּיִּם," *HALOT*, 4:1731.

[84] The location of Ophir (1 Kings 9:26-28; 10:11-12; 2 Chron 8:17-19; 9:10-11) where the fleet of Solomon and Hiram obtained gold and other commodities is likely a region in east Africa or southwestern Arabia. See Barry J. Beitzel, "Was there a Joint Nautical Venture on the Mediterranean Sea by Tyrian Phoenicians and Early Israelites?" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 360 (2010): 37.

luxurious life of the elite in Israelite society; their lifestyle became the subject of prophetic condemnation.[85] Amos, for example, directed his invective against the decadence of those who reclined on "beds of ivory" and engaged in revelry (Amos 9:4-7). Ivory works recovered from Samaria, Philistia, and else in western Asia show strong Egyptian influence.[86] The prevalence of Nilotic scenes in the iconography of west Asian ivory works,[87] may not simply be "Egyptian" but may also reflect Nubian craftsmanship. Well into the Persian period, the Nile was known as "the ivory river," and both Persian and Greek texts indicate that ivory was obtained from India and Kush.[88]

Of great significance also, the especially large breed of chariot horses sought after by Levantines, Assyrians, and others, were bred in Nubia and traded via Egypt and Arabia to northern markets.[89] Known in Assyria as the *kusaya*, "the Kushite," these large horses were highly prized by the Assyrians and used exclusively for chariotry in the Assyrian army.[90] To obtain these prized animals, Assyria actively cultivated trade with Egypt.[91] Horses were also obtained as spoils or tribute.[92] Sargon II reported that he received from pharaoh as gifts "twelve large horses of Egypt, the like of which did not exist in . . . [his] country."[93] And Sennacherib claimed that at Eltekeh he captured Egyptian and Nubian charioteers,[94] which he

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[85] See Eleanor Ferris Beach, "The Samaria Ivories, Marzeah and Biblical Texts," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 55 (1992): 130-139.

[86] Beach, "Samaria Ivories," 134-138; D. Ben-Shlomo and Trude Dothan, "Ivories from Philistia: Filling the Iron Age I Gap," *Israel Exploration Journal* 56 (2006): 1-38; Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 155.

[87] See Ben-Shlomo and Dothan, "Ivories from Philistia," 8-16.

[88] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 155.

[89] Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry," 31-48; Heidorn, "Horses of Kush," 105-114. Dalley writes further, "From this evidence there is a strong possibility that many of the chariotry horses used in the Levant during the 9th and 8th centuries were imported from Nubia via Egypt, and possibly too via Arabia; and that if the Levantine states bred their own horses for chariotry in addition to importing them, the home-bred animals were also based on the Nubian breed" (44). Cf. Morkot, "Foundations of the Kushite State," 237-238.

[90] Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry," 32, 38. Again Dalley emphasizes, "Almost certainly the Kushite breed of chariot horse was one of the most prized goals of that trade [between Egypt and Assyria]" (45).

[91] Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry," 38, 43, 46-47; Dalley, "Judean History," 389.

[92] Cf. Nadav Na'aman, "Ahab's Chariot Force at the Battle of Qarqar," in *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction: Collected Essays. Vol 1*, ed. Nadav Na'aman (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 7.

[93] Ernst F. Weidner, "Šilkan(he)ni, König von Musri, ein Zeitgenosse Sargons II. Nach einem neuen Bruchstück der Prisma-Inschrift des assyrischen Königs," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 14 (1941): 42, 11. 8-11. Citation in Heidorn, "Horses of Kush," 107.

[94] Luckenbill, *ARAB*, 2:119-120, §240; 143, §311.

kept alive no doubt to serve in his army. Heidorn demonstrates that these "Egyptian" horses so highly prized by the Assyrians and others for their size and agility, were bred in the Dongola Reach around the 3rd cataract in Nubia, potentially as early as the Middle Kingdom.[95] Cushites evidently became skilled in breeding, employing, and exporting this special horse breed for chariot warfare across the ANE. Horses, as Nadav Na'aman points out, "were extremely expensive" in the ANE, and compared to other animals, the cost for a horse was "immeasurably higher."[96]

From at least the mid-eighth century Cushite equestrian experts were employed in Assyria for their specialized skills, as can be seen in the Assyrian wine lists.[97] And importantly, Cushite pharaohs (such as Piye, Shabako, and Taharqa) had teams of horses buried with them to demonstrate their great love for these animals.[98] Samarians also appear in Assyrian wine lists as expert equestrians, especially as charioteers, demonstrating that they had specialized training and a long history of obtaining Cushite horses.[99] According to the Assyrian annals, of the twelve western Asian kings who formed an alliance against Shalmaneser III at the battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C., Ahab supplied 2000 chariots, the most of all the allied kings.[100] Samarian expertise in Egyptian horse chariotry likely began with Solomon who in the tenth century not only facilitated trade in great horses from Egypt to "the kings of Syria and the Hittites" (1 Kings 10:28; 2 Chron 1:16-17), but also made extensive use of equestrian technology for both

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[95] Heidorn, "Horses of Kush," 105, 111-114. Cf. Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry," 43; Younger Jr., "Assyrian Involvement," 240.

[96] Na'aman, "Ahab's Chariot Force," 6.

[97] Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry," 44, 47; Heidorn, "Horses of Kush," 106-110. From the available evidence Dalley deduces that "some of the Nubians in the wine list of Tiglath-Pileser III were employed as equestrian experts in the Assyrian army, and that their activity continued down into the reign of Ashurbanipal" (46). Cf. Na'aman, "Ahab's Chariot Force," 8, who notes that in the ANE charioteers were part of the ruling class of society who were highly skilled and highly paid by their respective governments. Heidorn, "Horses of Kush," 109, also writes that "the horses of Kush were a breed prized by Assyrian charioteers. . . . Several documents mention Kushite horse-experts living in Assyria" (109). Cushites were also employed as palace officials, scribes, musicians, temple personnel, cooks, bakers, among other professions in Assyria (109). Cf. J .V. Kinnier-Wilson, *The Nimrud Wine Lists: A Study of Men and Administration at the Assyrian Capital in the Eighth Century B.C* (Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud 1; London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1972), 91-93.

[98] Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry," 44, 47; Heidorn, "Horses of Kush," 105-106, 111.

[99] Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry," 32-34; 38-43.

[100] Hallo and Younger Jr.*, COS,* 263. Cf. Na'aman, "Ahab's Chariot Force," 4-12, who believes the number of Ahab's chariots are deliberately exaggerated by the Assyrian scribe.

chariotry and cavalry (1 Kings 9:19; 10:26; 2 Chron 8:6; 9:25, 28).[101] Cushite expertise might likely have been instrumental to Israelite equestrian development in the time of Solomon as would later be the case in Assyria. It thus becomes evident that from the collapse of New Kingdom imperialism in Nubia around 1070 B.C. to the Cushite conquest of Egypt in the eighth century, rather than relapsing into barbary, Cush was an active participant in the economic affairs of the ANE.

Yet rather than simply being a passive supplier of luxury goods, it is more likely that Cush became increasingly wealthy and powerful in view of the high demand for its commodities,[102] and as such may have actively sought to control important trade routes through military expansion. As Morkot suggests of Cushite power during the intervening centuries prior to the rise of the 25th Dynasty, "We should seriously consider whether the Kushite powers—in this case, those of the Berber-Shendi, Meroe, Butana region—were able to benefit from the changing trade axis, and take advantage of the Israelite, Phoenician or Arabian activity along the Red Sea and Arabian routes."[103] Morkot envisions a potential scenario wherein an Upper Nubian state (or states) could have "expanded northwards" militarily in order to control important trade routes.[104] Such an expansion could conceivably have attempted to bypass Egypt in order to establish direct control over trade routes in Arabia and Philistia. All of this suggests that rather than an anomalous emergence of a 25th Cushite Dynasty which conquers Egypt in the middle of the eighth century B.C. and vied with Assyria for control of the Levant, it may be necessary to envision a much longer process of Cushite presence and even dominance in the region.

Thus, the Chronicler's historiographical depiction of Cush, if read correctly, may in fact support such a hypothesis since it envisions a powerful Cushite state from the late tenth century with a powerful military, exerting political control over Arabian tribes and southern Palestinian peoples. As Japhet puts it, "'Zerah the Cushite is here presented as the ruler of a major world power, launching a military offensive on the grandest scale, with an army of a

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[101] Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry," 43. Cf. Na'aman, "Ahab's Chariot Force," 7.

[102] This is certainly the case in the later eighth century as Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry," 47, underscores: "Nubia benefited enormously from an expanding market, and reached a peak of power and prosperity."

[103] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 154.

[104] Morkot, *Black Pharaohs*, 154.

million soldiers."[105] Though Japhet concludes that the story of Zerah the Cushite is a Chronistic elaboration of what was likely a "local skirmish,"[106] if our reading of the "swarms of flies" metaphor in Isaiah 18:1 correctly identifies the numerical characteristic of Cushite forces (cf. Nah 3:9), then the Chronicler's portrait of a million man army of southerners in the early ninth century plausibly depicts a large-scale Cushite invasion, given room for hyperbole and the Chronicler's penchant for large numbers.

The episode of Zerah could conceivably be rooted in a real memory of an attempt by an ascendant Cushite kingdom to exert political control in the southern Levant. Perhaps as early as the late tenth to early ninth century Cush was making an imperial bid for Palestinian territory. The Chronicler's portrait of Cushites extending political control over Arabian tribes and southern Palestinian peoples may suggest a Cushite kingdom pursuing strategic expansionist policies precisely for the purpose of bypassing Egyptian interference in its bid for control of important commercial avenues. Indeed, a long history of interaction and cultural continuity characterized the relationship of the peoples on both sides of the Red Sea.[107]

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[105] Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 709. Japhet suggests that the Chronicler's depiction of Zerah invokes the imagery of a pharaoh, perhaps Osorkon I, as some scholars have concluded. Japhet, however, does not make a connection between Zerah and the Egyptians. For Japhet, Zerah is a "dark-skinned leader" of a local band of Cushites, originating from "the southern parts of the land." Zerah capitalizes on Shishak's invasions to launch raids of his own into Judean territory (710).

[106] Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 710.

[107] See Richard Pankhurst, "Across the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden: Ethiopia's Historic Ties with Yaman," *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale di Studi e Documentazione DellIstituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 57 (2002): 396: "[T]here can be no denying that northern Ethiopia and Yaman, in the half millennium or so prior to the Christian era, shared a related civilisation, or civilizations. This is evident from the at least limited use in Ethiopia of the Sabaean language and script, as found on ancient Aksumite inscriptions and coins, and an apparently identical religion." See also David W. Phillipson, *Ancient Ethiopia: Aksum, Its Antecedents and Successors* (London: British Museum, 2002), 41: "The highlands of the two regions [Ethiopia/Eritrea and South Arabia] have much in common physically and environmentally. The cultural traditions of their inhabitants have been closed linked for at least three thousand years, only superficially obscured by the rise of Islam. . . . On several occasions . . . there have been close political connections also." See further, David W. Phillipson, "From Yeha to Lalibela: An Essay in Cultural Continuity," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 40 (2007): 1-19; Rodolfo Fattovich, "The Development of Ancient States in the Northern Horn of Africa, c. 3000 BC-AD 1000: An Archaeological Outline," *Journal of World Prehistory* 23 (2010): 146-147, 168; David W. Phillipson, "Relations between Southern Arabia and the Northern Horn of Africa during the Last Millennium BC," *Proceeding of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 41 (2011): 257-266; Rodolfo Fattovich, "The Northern Horn of Africa in the First Millennium BCE: Local Traditions and External Connections," *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 4 (2012): 1-60.

We are suggesting here that Zerah, to the extent that Chronicles reflects the historical situation of the early ninth century, would not be a general of the Libyan pharaoh Osorkon I, but rather a bona fide Cushite king with aspirations for political influence in Palestine. If this is the case, then the defeat of Zerah's massive force by Asa and his Judean army would have significantly retarded Cushite political ascendance and could have delayed its conquest of Egypt for another century and a half.

Granted, there is no way to be certain that the Chronicler's historiography is rooted in historical reality, nor is there a claim that the reconstruction of an ascendant Upper Nubian state with political reach into the southern Levant in this early period is "factual" in every respects. The current evidence does not commend such a claim. As Morkot appropriately comments, "I do not need to stress here the gaps in our knowledge of the archaeology of the Sudan. . . we tend to forget how little of it there is. We also perhaps too easily forget the rather fragile nature of our evidence. We rarely, if ever, are dealing with anything which might justifiably be termed a 'fact.'"[108] In light of such a caution, the preceding reconstruction is based on plausibility, and therefore deserves a place alongside the other hypotheses related to the Zerah pericope of 2 Chronicles 14:9-15. In sum, the depiction of a strong state in Cush in this early period as suggested by the Chronicler's historiography certainly makes more sense than conventional interpretations which envision the kingdom of Cush as a chimera which emerges from "a historical vacuum" to conquer Egypt in the second half of the eighth century.[109]

7.5 CONCLUSION

Though Cushites collectively are a topical symbol for military power in Chronicles, the representation of Cush as a world-reaching political power in the early ninth century may in fact depict historical realities. Providing some of the most sought after goods in the ANE, including luxury items like gold, ebony, ivory, and elephant hides, in addition to the favoured Kushite war horses, Cush may have been much more than simply a supplier of luxury goods to foreign markets in the early first millennium B.C. More than likely, Cush *attempted* to benefit maximally from its lucrative trade through political maneuvers intended to bypass Egypt and

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[108] Morkot, "Foundation of the Kushite State," 234.

[109] Morkot, "The Empty Years of Nubian History," 217.

establish direct control over important trade routes through Arabia and the Palestinian coastal regions. Cush's involvement in the economic and political activities in the ANE from this early period provides a better scenario for the emergence of a powerful Cushite state which accomplishes the conquest of Egypt in the middle of the eighth century B.C. to contend with Assyria for dominance in the affairs of Syria-Palestine. The Chronicler's depiction then of a powerful Cushite kingdom from at least the early ninth century, if read correctly, is to be preferred above current explanations which fail to consider these antecedent dynamics.

From a theological standpoint, Cush as a topos in Chronicles takes on negative characteristics. Like the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians, Cush is also presented as an imperial power inimical to the interest of Judah. Cushites are part of Shishak's vast multi-ethnic army which spoils Judah and Jerusalem; they comprise a massive force under Zerah intent on invading Judah; and the Philistines and Arabians raid Judaean territory at the direction of the Cushites. In all these instances, but especially in connection to Zerah, Cush represents a formidable military power attacking the people of Yahweh. However, Cushites are enemies defeated by Yahweh when the covenant people demonstrate faith in their God (2 Chron 14:9-15). But by the same token, Cushites are also enemies employed by Yahweh to plunder Judah when the people violate the covenant (2 Chron 12:2-3; 21:16-17).

Moreover, as a topical symbol for military strength in the story of Asa, Cushites are employed to demonstrate both the positive and negative consequences of the Chronicler's retribution theology. Asa's wholehearted dependence on Yahweh results in many blessings, including military victory over the mighty forces of the enemies of Israel—Cushites in this instance. For Asa and his Judean kingdom—and so too for the Chronicler's post-exilic audience—Yahweh's victory over the mighty Cushites is a definitive affirmation of the positive outcome of unwavering trust in him. Therefore only negative consequences could attend Asa's subsequent misstep of faith in his political maneuverings with Ben-Hadad.

In sum, for both Isaiah and 2 Chronicles Cush is a topical symbol of military strength employed to demonstrate Yahweh's absolute status and victory over the nations. For these biblical writers, Cush too, like all imperial power, must in the end submit to Yahweh's sovereign rule and bear its tribute, the symbol of its submission, to mount Zion, the place of the name of Yahweh of Hosts. One of the main characterizations of Cush then in the Hebrew Bible is as a military power, employed in service of establishing the sovereign rule of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

CHAPTER 8

Topos and Mimesis: Cush and the Election of Israel

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The last two chapters have demonstrated that a major theological emphasis of the biblical writers is the establishment of the sovereign status of Yahweh. Yahweh rules over the nations irrespective of their ostensible political and military power. We have seen that Cushites, as a symbolization of military strength, play an important role in the biblical assertion of Yahweh's sovereign rule—the first and foremost theological premise of the Hebrew Bible. Before formally tying up the arguments presented in this study in the next chapter, this penultimate chapter provides a final perspective on the representation of Cushties in the biblical literature. The chapter intends to demonstrate that Cush and Cushites also play a significant role in the articulation of the second most important theological premise in the Hebrew Bible—the notion of the special election of Israel. In the process of demonstrating this connection, we will discover that Cushites are depicted by the biblical writers in topical roles yet again for the purpose of establishing the special status of Israel. The topical analysis, though not limited to, will focus largely on the prophetic literature beginning again with Isaiah, and will occupy the first section of our investigation.

Though we have discovered the names of Nimrod and Zerah in the course of this study, thus far our discussion of Cush and Cushites has been topical and therefore one-dimensional. We have investigated Cushites solely as outsiders in well-defined formulaic roles. We have yet to discern how ethno-religious dynamics impact the day to day experience of Cushites *within* Israelite society. The second half of the chapter aims to bridge this gap. Our discussion of mimesis—the actual lived experience of individuals—in Chapter 3 will be relevant in this section.[1] The mimetic view will be clarified through an investigation of two case studies involving Cushites within Israelite society, and will illuminate the ways in which Cushites are presented at the individual level in relation to the notion of Israel's special status as Yahweh's covenant community. The account of the Cushite wife of Moses in Numbers 12:1, and the story of Ebedmelech the Cushite in Jer 38-39 will illustrate this relationship. We wish to

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[1] On the topical-mimetic contrast in Egyptian society see again §3.3.2 of this study.

inquire: Who are these individuals? What are their places of origin? How are they evaluated as Cushites *within* Israelite society as opposed to the topical representation of Cushites up to this point? And most importantly, how are they viewed with relationship to the election of Israel? We expect to find marked divergences between the topical and mimetic picture of Cushites in the biblical literature. As always, historical considerations will be discussed in the course of our investigation.

8.2 TOPOS: CUSH AND THE ELECTION OF ISRAEL IN ISAIAH AND BEYOND

As we have seen, all evaluation of foreigners takes place under the umbrella assertions that Israel are the chosen people of Yahweh, and that Yahweh is the universal God, with claims to human allegiance. That Yahweh will punish foreign nations for their wicked deeds—chief of which is idolatry—is a constant theme in the prophetic oracles against the nations. But the restoration and eschatological ingathering of the nations also find emphasis in the prophetic literature. Not surprisingly, Cush is situated among the foreign nations which will experience both Yahweh's judgement and restoration. The collective image of Cush in Isaiah and other prophetic writings which we shall explore, suggest that Cush too will abandon its idols and become part of Yahweh's eschatological covenant community. However, the theological significance which the biblical writers attach to the images of the nations' ultimate restoration remain an area of contention, as we shall see below.

From our discussion of election in Chapter 4, it is evident that Israel is the primary (perhaps sole) beneficiary of the covenantal blessings of Abraham. However, in various sections of the Hebrew Bible, and particularly in the prophetic corpus, there are hints of a universal sharing of the nations in the commonwealth of Israel in what appears to be largely eschatological contexts. This eschatological universalism has been shown to embody two divergent and seemingly oppositional characterizations.

One view seems to suggest that while all the nations will ultimately be compelled to acknowledge the absolute, uncontested rule of Yahweh the God of Israel, this act of acknowledgment, it implies, does not result in the wholesale conversion of the nations to the religion and worship of Yahweh. In this view, though abjectly subjected to both Yahweh and his chosen people, the nations remain unconverted and excluded from the eschatological

community of Israel.[2] This position emphasizes the *submission* but not the salvation of the nations. On the other hand, another view establishes an eschatological picture wherein the nations are equal partners with Israel, sharing in the blessings of the eschatological community. The book of Isaiah is central to the discussion of both the particular and the universal views of the ideal, eschatological age.

In support of the position for the exclusion of the nations from the future ideal community, Joel Kaminsky writes, "In Isa 45:22, for example, YHWH proclaims: 'Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!' In the very next verses, however, Isaiah depicts the nations as subservient to Israel and elsewhere as even licking the dust of the former exiles' feet (49:23)."[3] Kaminsky maintains that Isaiah envisions the submission, *not* the conversion of the nations: "Second Isaiah does envision a universal recognition of YHWH, but this does not equal a universal conversion to the worship of YHWH."[4]

By contrast, Christopher Begg supports the universal conversion and eschatological ingathering of the nations. He concludes that the book of Isaiah "foresees the nations as Yahweh's worshippers, entering fully and equally into the privileges of Israel."[5] Exegetes are thus presented with the classic dichotomy between a staunchly nationalist view and a universalist view of the relationship between Israel and the nations in Isaiah.[6] Can these apparently paradoxical views be reconciled? And where do Cush and Cushites fit into this picture?

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[2] E.g., Kaminsky and Steward, "God of All the World," 140.

[3] Kaminsky and Steward, "God of All the World," 139. See also N. H. Snaith, "The Servant of the Lord in Deutero-Isaiah," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy. Presented to Theodore H. Robinson on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday, August 9th, 1946*, ed. H.H. Rowley (Edinburgh: Clark, 1950), 191.

[4] Kaminsky and Steward, "God of All the World," 140.

[5] Christopher T. Begg, "The Peoples and the Worship of Yahweh in the Book of Isaiah," in *Worship and the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of John T. Willis*, ed. Rick R. Marrs et al (JSOTS 284; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 55. See also, Charles C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1928), 118; Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 176.

[6] Cf. Discussion in D. W. Van Winkle, "The Relationship of the Nations to Yahweh and to Israel in Isaiah 40-55," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985): 446-447; Michael A. Grisanti, "Israel's Mission to the Nations in Isaiah 40-55: An Update," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 9 (1998): 39-61; Kaminsky, "Election and Second Isaiah," 139; Rikk E. Watts, "Echoes from the Past: Israel's Ancient Traditions and the Destiny of the Nations in Isaiah 40-55," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28 (2004): 482; D. E. Hollenberg, "Nationalism and 'The Nations' in Isaiah XL-LV," *Vetus Testamentum* 19 (1969): 23-25.

D. W. Van Winkle attempts to reconcile these apparently divergent views in writing that:

> The tension between universalism and nationalism may be resolved by recognizing that for Deutero-Isaiah the salvation of the nations does not preclude their submission to Israel. The prophet does not envisage the co-equality of Jews and gentiles. He expects that Israel will be exalted, and that she will become YHWH'S agent who will rule the nations in such a way that justice is established and mercy shown. This rule is both that for which the nations wait expectantly and that to which they must submit.[7]

For Van Winkle, the salvation of the nations *is* in fact in view in Isaiah, yet even here the nations are subservient to the exalted Israel in the eschatological community. In what follows, we will explore the ways in which representation of Cush and Cushites in Isaiah and other prophetic literature support the national, universal, or Van Winkle's conversion-submission view which attempts to alleviate the national-universal tension.

8.2.1 The Particular: The Ingathering of Israel and the Submission of the Nations

A constant theme in Isaiah and other prophetic literature concerns Yahweh's punishment of Israel on account of its breach of covenant. This punishment typically entails the devastation of the land and the population and the scattering (הֵפִיץ; hiph. of פוץ) of the survivors, "the remnant" (שְׁאֵרִית) among the nations of the earth (e.g., Deut 4:27; 28:64; 1 Kings 14:15; Neh 1:8; Jer 9:16; 13:24; Eze 5:2; 12:14; Amos 5:15, etc.). One cannot help but see strong parallels between the scattering of Israel into the nations and the scattering of the original human group at Babel, since both result from transgressing the divine will. In most instances, the same verbal root is employed. We shall return to this analogy further on in this chapter.

In spite of Yahweh's judgment and dispersal of his chosen people, however, the prophets repeatedly affirm the continued chosen status of Israel (e.g., Isa 2:3-5; 10:20; 14:1; 41:8-9; 43:1-21; 44:1-8; 48:10; 49:7, etc.).[8] Not only does this affirmation indicate that the dispersed remain under the sovereign care of Yahweh, but it also means that ultimately,

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[7] Van Winkle, "Relationship of the Nations," 457. Cf. Watts, "Destiny of the Nations," 506-597; Oswalt, *Holy One of Israel*, 94. Norman K. Gottwald, *All the Kingdoms of the Earth: Israelite Prophecy and International Relations in the Ancient Near East* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 332.

[8] Cf. Kaminsky and Steward, "God of All the World," 144-145.

Yahweh will recover his scattered elect from the "four corners" of the earth and place them back into the safety of Israel and Jerusalem.[9] The ingathering of the dispersed is found throughout the writings of the Hebrew Bible and appear to involve both temporal and eschatological dimensions (cf. Deut 30:3; Isa 11:12; 43:5; 54:7; 56:8; Jer 23:3; 29:14; 32:37; Eze 20:34, 41; Mic 2:12; Zech 10:10 etc.).[10] Thus the theme of Israel's punishment and restoration find strong emphasis in Isaiah and the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible.[11]

8.2.1.1 *Subjection of the Nations in Isaiah*

Significantly, Isaiah envisions the nations as active participants in the final ingathering of the chosen people.[12] Not only will the nations participate in Israel's repatriation, but Israel's ingathering also means the submission of the oppressive nations to both Yahweh and his elect. This is perhaps best captured in Isaiah 49:22-23:

> Thus declares Yahweh Elohim, Watch, I will lift up my hand to the nations (אֶשָּׂא אֶל־ גּוֹיִם יָדִי) and I will raise my standard to the peoples, and they will bring your sons in their bosom, and they will carry your daughters upon their shoulders. Kings will be your foster fathers and queens your nursing mothers. They will bow down to you with their faces to the ground and lick the dust of your feet; then you will know that I am Yahweh.

Isaiah envisions the gentile nations (including their kings) escorting the scattered exiles of Israel back to their homeland and groveling at their feet with reverent submission.

It is evident that the "lifting up" of Yahweh's hand to the nations signal some act of judgment which will precipitate, (1) the escorting of the exiles back to their homeland; (2) the abject submission of the nations to the former exiles; and (3) the recognition of Yahweh's sovereign rule by the nations. The phrase "then you will know that I am Yahweh" (וְיָדַעַתְּ כִּי־ אֲנִי יְהוָה) is used repeatedly in the context of the Exodus from Egypt on account of both Israel

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[9] Geo Widengren, "Yahweh's Gathering of the Dispersed," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honour of G.W. Ahlström*, ed. W. Boyd Barrick, Gösta W. Ahlström and John R. Spencer (JSOTS 31; Sheffield, EN: JSOT Press, 1984), 227-229.

[10] Cf. Widengren, "Gathering of the Dispersed," 227. Widengren writes further, "Both God and his Anointed will carry out their actions in a near future, which, however, tends to be postponed into an eschatological future" (239).

[11] Cf. Widengren, "Gathering of the Dispersed," 227-229.

[12] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 179.

and the Egyptians coming to a knowledge of Yahweh (E.g., Exod 6:2; 6:6; 6:29; 7:5; 7:12; 8:22; 10:2; 14:4, 18; 16:12; 29:46, etc.). Indeed, the final ingathering of Israel is quite frequently envisioned as a second Exodus and conquest.[13] In short, Yahweh will judge the nations and this judgment will bring about the liberation and restoration of the dispersed—the nations being active participants in this action.[14]

Significantly for our purposes, Cush is mentioned as one of those nations where the scattered exiles may be found and against which Yahweh will stretch out his hand:

> And it will happen in that day (וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) that Adonai will stretch out his hand (יוֹסִיף אֲדֹנָי שֵׁנִית יָדוֹ) a second time to ransom (קנה/לִקְנוֹת) the remnant of his people from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the isles of the sea. He will raise a signal to the nations and he will assemble the dispersed of Israel, and the scattered ones of Judah he will gather from the four corners of the earth (Isa 11:11-12).[15]

The emphasis on Yahweh's hand being "lifted up" or "outstretched" "a second time" to "ransom" his people invokes once again the Exodus motif. Inasmuch as Yahweh "redeemed" Israel "with an outstretched arm" in the initial Exodus (Exod 6:6; Deut 7:8; 9:26), so too the final, messianic Exodus is couched in the same redemption language.[16] Here again, Yahweh's outstretched arm invokes his judgement against the nations in as much as in the context of the first Exodus, the language signified the plagues upon Egypt.[17] Thus, Yahweh's "raising" of a signal to the nations (11:11; 49:22) imply a universal act (of judgment?) which will precipitate the restoration of his people from the "four corners" of the earth.[18] Not only is Cush

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[13] See Rikk E. Watts, "Consolation or Confrontation? Isaiah 40-55 and the Delay of the New Exodus," *Tyndale Bulletin* 41 (1990): 32-35; Walter Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple: L'Universalisme d'Is 19:16-25," *Biblica* 57 (1976): 496; Childs, *Isaiah*, 104; Hayes and Irvine, *Eighth-Century Prophet*, 217-218.

[14] Cf. Oswalt, *Holy One of Israel*, 104.

[15] Though a few exegetes have suggested that the Cush of Isa 11:11 is a reference to the land of the Kassites, the mention of Egypt (Lower Egypt), Pathros (Upper Egypt) and then Cush, indicates a north to south geographical movement and thus point to African Cush. Furthermore, Zeph 3:10 indicate that Yahweh's "dispersed ones" are indeed "beyond the rivers of Cush." The majority of translators correctly recognize Nubia as the Cush of 11:11; e.g., Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 267-268; Childs, *Isaiah*, 104; Hidal, "Cush in the Old Testament," 97.

[16] Cf. Alexander, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, 256; Childs, *Isaiah*, 104; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 178.

[17] John Goldingay and David F. Payne, *Isaiah 40-55: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary. Volume 1* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2006), 275.

[18] Cf. Childs, *Isaiah*, 104.

mentioned among the nations in which the exiles of Israel and Judah are scattered, but Cushites, along with Egyptians and Sabeans, are specifically singled out as those nations that are given as the exchange currency for Israel's and Judah's repatriation:

> For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. For your ransom (כפר) I give Egypt, Cush and Seba in your place. Since you were precious in my eyes and honoured, and because I have loved you, I will also give peoples in exchange for you and nations for your life. Fear not, for I am with you. I will bring your offspring from the east and from the west I will gather you. I will also say to the north, 'give them back,' and to the south 'do not restrain them.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Everyone who is called by my name; because for my glory I have created him; I have formed him; indeed I have made him (Isa 43:3-7).[19]

Importantly, Israel's chosen status is juxtaposed against the unchosen status of the nations, here represented by Egypt, Cush and Seba, three descendants of Ham (Gen 10:6-7).[20] Furthermore, the verbs קנה in Isaiah 11:12 and כפר in 43:3 has monetary exchange implications.[21] The image of Yahweh giving Egypt, Cush and Seba in Israel's stead evokes Exodus 13:15 where the firstborn males are redeemed by a substitute animal.[22] Israel is thus Yahweh's firstborn, and where his life is required, again evoking the Exodus motif, Egypt, Cush, and Seba are given in exchange for Israel.[23] Thus Isaiah envisions the restoration of Israel at the expense of the nations, and specifically three descendants of Ham are singled out as representative of the nations, and as the redemption cost of Israel's restoration.[24]

These three nations are mentioned once more in Isaiah with reference to Israel's restoration, except this time in connection to Cyrus' release of the Judaean captives:

> Thus says Yahweh, the wealth of Egypt and the profits of Cush, and the Sabeans, men of tall stature, will come over to you and be subject to you. They shall seek after you; in chains they shall cross over and bow down to you. They shall make supplication to you

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[19] According to Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 118, in v. 4 is "one of the most beautiful and profound statement of what the Bible means by 'election'."

[20] Alexander, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, 148-149.

[21] Cf. Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40-55*, 276.

[22] Alexander, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, 148-149. Cf. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 116, who relates the redemption to payment given in exchange for an imprisoned relative; and Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 53, who suggest the imagery evokes the exchange of prisoners or slaves.

[23] Alexander, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, 148-149; Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40-55*, 273.

[24] Alexander, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, 149, 150.

saying, "Surely, God is with you, and besides him, there is no other God." . . .They shall be ashamed and also confounded; the makers of graven images, all of them together shall go into confusion. But Israel will be saved by Yahweh with an everlasting salvation. You shall never be put to shame, neither will you be confounded for eternal ages (45:14, 16-17).

Immediately preceding the picture of the subjection of Egypt, Cush and Seba, are verses 1-13 which extol Cyrus as the redeemer who sets the Judean captives free. Verse 13 reads:

I have raised him [Cyrus] up in righteousness, and I will establish all his ways in uprightness. He will build my city and my exiles he will release; not for price nor reward, declares Yahweh Sabaoth.

One must necessarily see a connection between Isaiah 43:3 and 45:14 where Egypt, Cush and Seba are mentioned in the context of the restoration of the Israelite community and in connection to monetary exchange. According to this latter text, in Israel's restoration effected by Cyrus, the three nations descended from Ham will be in abject subjection to Israel and all their wealth will be at the disposal of the chosen people.

Like the nations mentioned in 49:22-23, these three *Hamitic* nations "bow down" to Israel "in chains" and confess Yahweh—they "lick the dust." That they come over to Israel "in chains" also suggest their captivity.[25] Is this an indication that Cyrus, Yahweh's "messiah" will conquer Egypt, Cush, and Seba and turn over their wealth and prisoners to the returned exiles? This can hardly be the case, since the statement "the wealth of the nations will come over to you," also appears in Isaiah 60:5, and this chapter presents a litany of nations and peoples whose wealth will be brought to Israel: Midian, Ephah, Sheba, Kedar, Nebaioth, the coastlands, Tarshish, foreigners, Lebanon, the offspring of Israel's former oppressors, and the kings and nobles of the nations (vv. 1-22).[26] Furthermore, Childs argues that the picture presented here also involves Cyrus' liberation of "African tribes as well,"[27] though this position is rather difficult to justify on any grounds. But it is clear that Cyrus' restoration is an idealized picture of Israel's future, no different from other depictions of the final state of the redeemed.

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[25] See John Goldingay and David F. Payne, *Isaiah 40-55: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary. Volume 2* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2006), 44, who suggest the chains may indicate voluntary submission.

[26] On this see Westermann*, Isaiah 40-66*, 169.

[27] Childs*, Isaiah*, 355.

Isaiah thus depicts Cyrus' restoration in an ultimate sense, because Israel's salvation is an "everlasting" salvation, and Israel is beyond shame "for eternal ages" (45:17).

As for the three descendants of Ham, their recognition of the true God is emphasized, for they proclaim, "there is no other God" besides Yahweh (45:14).[28] A similar image is evoked by Zechariah 8:23: "In those days, there will be ten men from the nations of every language who will take hold of the garment a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you because we have heard that God is with you." The confession of the Hamites in Isaiah is followed by the prophetic condemnation of idolatry and a declaration of the fate of idolatrous nations. All idol worshipers will be "confounded," whereas Israel's eternal salvation is to be found in Yahweh. Here again, Cush, Egypt and Seba serve as a collective representation of the nations in total submission to the repatriated exiles. We will see this emphasis on the sons of Ham standing as symbolic representation for the nations once again in the context of Zephaniah's prophecies discussed below.

These texts from Isaiah in which Cush is mentioned appear to support Kaminsky's contention that the *subjection* and not the conversion of the nations is in view in Isaiah. In any case, the subjection of these nations is clearly emphasized. But it is also evident that these nations acknowledge the sovereign rule of Yahweh. Is this acknowledgement a statement of conversion? When these texts are read in conjunction to Isaiah 60:6, where the nations bringing their wealth "declare the praise of Yahweh," there may be clearer intimations of the conversion of the nations as well. While we will return to Isaiah momentarily, it is necessary to look beyond Isaiah to Amos 9—a context in which Cush also appears—in order to find more firm support for Van Winkle's conversion-subjection view.

8.2.1.2 Conversion and Subjection of the Nations in Amos 9:7

הֲלוֹא כִבְנֵי כֻשִׁיִּים אַתֶּם לִי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נְאֻם־יְהוָה הֲלוֹא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל הֶעֱלֵיתִי מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
וּפְלִשְׁתִּיִּים מִכַּפְתּוֹר וַאֲרָם מִקִּיר: הִנֵּה עֵינֵי אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בַּמַּמְלָכָה הַחַטָּאָה וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֹתָהּ מֵעַל פְּנֵי
הָאֲדָמָה אֶפֶס כִּי לֹא הַשְׁמֵיד אַשְׁמִיד אֶת־בֵּית יַעֲקֹב נְאֻם־יְהוָה

> Are you not like the sons of the Cushites to me O sons of Israel, declares Yahweh? Did
> I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor, and the

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[28] Childs, *Isaiah*, 355, again sees this confession as an acknowledgement of Yahweh's sovereignty, and the sharing of the nations with Israel in the worship of Yahweh.

Aramaeans from Kir? Behold, the eyes of Adonai Yahweh is against the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth—except that I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob, declares Yahweh (vv. 7-8).

The analogy between the sons of Cush and the sons of Israel in Amos have created endless difficulty for commentators.[29] Most frequently, the reference to Cush is interpreted in geographical terms and with an overarching negative view of Cushites.[30] The view of Jörg Jeremias is representative of mainstream exegetical conclusions: "From the perspective of Palestine, the inhabitants of Cush, encompassing geographically modern Ethiopia and the southern Sudan, were the southernmost, most distant, and at the same time—because of their skin color—the strangest people with whom one came into contact (cf. Isa 18:1f)."[31] In this interpretive trajectory, Israel is being compared to the distant and strange Cushites in order to suggest that God does not consider Israel any better than these odd people.[32] Or, put differently, Israel means as little (or as much) to Yahweh as the remote and strange Cushites.[33]

Based on a careful analysis of the poetic structure of verse 7, Brent Strawn has argued another view; namely, that the comparison is meant to suggest that just as Yahweh has brought up Israel from Egypt, so "Cush, too, is to be seen as the beneficiary of Yahweh's Exodus activity."[34] This perspective would appear to suggest that Cushites, Israelites, the Philistines, and the Arameans, have all been transplanted to their current lands by the Exodus

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[29] Göran Eidevall, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Yale Bible; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 233.

[30] See discussion in Smith, "A New Perspective," 36-37; Brent A. Strawn, "What Is Cush Doing in Amos 9:7? The Poetics of Exodus in the Plural," *Vetus Testamentum* 63 (2013): 100.

[31] Jörg Jeremias, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 164. Other examples of this type of reasoning are found in §1.2.2., n. 36, in this study. But see Eidevall*, Amos*, 235, who notes that the history of exegesis of Amos 9:7 (as reflected for example in Jeremias' comments) have been influenced by "racist prejudices" of the past. "As shown by several recent studies, however," Eidevall writes further, "the depictions of the Cushites in the Hebrew Bible are never characterized by contempt, but sometimes, on the contrary, by admiration" (235). Note also Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 869, who writes that "The dialectic of v 7 could be, 'Aren't you like the Cushites, just another enslaved and exploited people under the Egyptians?' Answer: 'No! There is a difference. You [Yahweh] delivered us [Israel] from bondage in Egypt.'"

[32] Strawn, "What Is Cush Doing in Amos 9:7?" 100.

[33] See Smith, "A New Perspective," 36-37.

[34] Strawn, "What Is Cush Doing in Amos 9:7?" 101.

activity of Yahweh.[35] Basing his argument in part on the historical setting of Amos in the middle of the eight century B.C. or somewhat later,[36] Strawn conceives of the rise of 25th Cushite Dynasty as a "people movement" that may be in view in Amos' analogy.[37] Strawn of course, acknowledges that if his reading is correct, then Cush is being brought *to* and not *from* Egypt.[38]

In positing an alternative to the largely negative view of Cush expressed by commentators on Amos 9:7, a perspective similar to Strawn's is presented by Regina Smith. Smith too finds explanatory power in the 25th Cushite Dynasty's political success. Smith suggests that Amos 9:7 demonstrates Yahweh's sovereign hand in the life of the Cushites in the same way that Israel remains under Yahweh's watch care: "The Kushites are mentioned in Amos 9:7a, as an example of God's freedom and prerogative to act favorably and beneficently on behalf of all the people of the earth."[39] In short, Smith sees a positive evaluation of the military, economic, and political activity of the 25th Cushite Dynasty in Amos 9:7.[40]

Admittedly, the terse mention of Cush in Amos 9:7 is difficult to characterize.[41] Nevertheless, without denying the possibility that Cush too has been the beneficiary of Yahweh's Exodus activity or that Cush is the object of Yahweh's sovereign care and beneficence, it appears that within the overall literary and thematic context of Amos 9, Cush too, like Aram, Philistia, and Israel, is one of the "sinful kingdoms" which Yahweh will judge. Thus, Eidevall's argument that "YHWH appears to be pictured as a universal judge who punishes sins and crimes without regard to national or ethnic boundaries,"[42] appears to reflect

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[35] Strawn, "What Is Cush Doing in Amos 9:7?" 116.

[36] Strawn, "What Is Cush Doing in Amos 9:7?" 119.

[37] Strawn, "What Is Cush Doing in Amos 9:7?" 101. Strawn suggests further that the "Exodus" of Cush may even be referring to a much earlier unknown event (120). Cf. Eidevall, *Amos*, 236, who likewise note the hypothetical nature of Strawn's proposal of a "large-scale people movement" of Cushites into Egypt. But Eidevall supports the possibility that Amos 9:7 could indeed be a reference to the rise of the 25th Dynasty.

[38] Strawn, "What Is Cush Doing in Amos 9:7?" 121.

[39] Smith, "A New Perspective," 47.

[40] See Smith, "A New Perspective," 47: "The utilization of the name of Kush in Amos' time would undoubtedly remind the Israelites that just as they were enjoying an era of profound prosperity and wealth, so were the Kushites enjoying one of the zeniths of their political, military and economic power."

[41] Cf. Eidevall, *Amos*, 233, who suggests two possible interpretations: "either as a negation of the Exodus and election tradition or as an indication that YHWH might perform new acts of liberation."

[42] Eidevall, *Amos*, 236.

the intention of the Cushite-Israelite analogy in Amos 9:7. Several points obtain from this deduction.

First, Amos 9:7 falls within a literary context which is all about Yahweh's judgement against Israel. Amos 9:1-10 sets out Yahweh's judgment against Israel often in intense language. Yahweh will "shatter the heads" of Israelites and kill the survivors with the sword— "not one of them will escape" (v. 1). Not even those who try to hide in Sheol or climb up to heaven or hide in the bottom of the sea will escape; Yahweh's hand will find them wherever they are and destroy them (vv. 1-4). "All the sinners of my people will die by the sword" (v. 10). Thus any comparison with Israel in vv. 1-10 cannot hold positive connotations, for Israel is destined to harsh judgment in these verses.[43] The difference, however, between the "sinful" nations and "sinful" Israel is that because of his covenant, Yahweh will severely punish but not completely destroy Israel. The same does not appear to be a guarantee for non-elected "sinful" peoples. Thus verses 11-15 speak of the restoration of the remnant of Israel only.

Though no judgment is pronounced explicitly against Cush in Amos—unlike Aram and Philistia whose destruction is specifically declared (1:3-8)—a parallel passage in Zephaniah 2:12 supports the reading that Cush is also destined for divine judgment in Amos 9. Zephaniah 2 declares Yahweh's judgment against Philistia (vv. 4-7), Moab, and Ammon (vv. 8-10). Moab, it is said, for example, will suffer the same fate as Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 9). Then v. 11 reads, "Yahweh will be terrible to them; he will consume all the gods of the earth; and people will worship him, everyone from their places of origin—even all the islands of the sea." Then the Cushites are mentioned in the following verse just as tersely and haphazardly as Cush appears in Amos 9:7: "And you Cushites, you also will be slain by my sword" (2:12). Then the chapter ends with the more detailed destruction of the Assyrians (vv. 12-15).

Like Amos 9:7, the reference to Cush in Zephaniah 2:12 is terse and parenthetical and devoid of further context.[44] Nevertheless, in this latter passage, the punishment of the Cushites is situated alongside that of Philistia, Moab, Ammon, and Assyria. Except, unlike the more extensive details which describe the punishment of Philistia, Moab, and Assyria, only a few words in a single verse capture the punishment of Cush. The reference to Cush's

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[43] Cf. Eidevall, *Amos*, 237.

[44] See Kahn, "Zephaniah's Oracles," 446; Robert D. Haak, "Cush in Zephaniah," in *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, ed. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 238-239.

punishment is truncated, bracketed, and devoid of an immediate context. Here then is another text which poses a problem for interpreters, the first of which involves a correct identification of the geographic entity being addressed.[45] What is important for our purposes, however, is the similarity between the broader literary and thematic contexts of Amos 9 and Zephaniah 2. In both passages, Yahweh's judgment against "sinful" nations (including Israel in Amos 9) is being declared. In Amos 9:10, the "sinful" kingdom will be destroyed by Yahweh, while in Zephaniah 2 Cush is listed among the nations (and on par with Assyria) who receive Yahweh's judgment.

It can be safely deduced therefore that Israel is being compared to Cush in Amos 9:7 to

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[45] Ivan J. Ball, *Zephaniah: A Rhetorical Study* (Berkeley: BIBAL Press, 1988), 141, 244-252, and Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible, Vol 25a; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 112-113, both argue that the Cush of Zeph 2:12 is to be identified with the Kassites. Haak, "'Cush' in Zephaniah," 242-251, proposes a tribal group on the southern borders of Judah, based in part on the fact that the 25th Dynasty of Egypt had ceased to exist prior the time of Zephaniah's oracle. However, scholars who seem to suggest that Cush was only significant while the 25th Dynasty ruled Egypt is once again influenced by Egyptocentric commitments. Against the notion that Cush faded into oblivion after the end of the 25th Dynasty in Egypt, as noted in Chapter 3, Cush remained a united kingdom and a major power for another thousand years. The mention of Nubia then on par with Assyria in Zephaniah should not be seen as anachronistic. Moreover, the broader literary context of the book makes the identification with Nubia nearly indisputable. For example, the "rivers of Cush" is mentioned again in Zeph 3:10, echoing Isaiah 18:2, 7 (see further below), and Zephaniah is said to be the "son of Cushi" possibly indicating his Cushite ethnic background; on this see Gene Rice, "The African Roots of the Prophet Zephaniah," *The Journal of Religious Thought* 36 (1979): 21-31; Roger W. Anderson Jr., "Zephaniah ben Cushi and Cush of Benjamin: Traces of Cushite Presence in Syria-Palestine," in *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, ed. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 54. Most commentators are in agreement that Nubia is meant; e.g., J . M. Powis Smith, William Hayes Ward and Julius A. Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1974), 232; Ehud Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 176-179; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Zephaniah: A Commentary*, ed. Paul D. Hanson (Hermeneia— A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 145-148; J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary* (The Old Testament Library; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 202. And Kahn, "Zephaniah's Oracles," 439-453, affirming Nubian Cush as the subject of Zephaniah 2:12, affirms the reign of Josiah (640-609; Zeph 1:1) as the historical setting of the book. Kahn argues that the mention of Judaean mercenaries fighting alongside Psammetichus' army against Cush as stated in the *Letter of Aristeas* (2nd century B.C.), should be placed in the time of Josiah who was a vassal of Psammetichus I (664-610 B.C.), and not during the time of Psammetichus II (595-589). Aristeas stated: "Previously many (Jews) had come into the country (Egypt) along with the Persians, and even before this others had been sent out as auxiliaries to fight in the army of Psammetichus against the king of the Ethiopians; but these were not so numerous a body as Ptolemy son of Lagus transported"; see Moses Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)* (New York: Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1951), 101. Since Aristeas did not specify which Psammetichus was meant, scholars have generally assumed Psammetichus II.

suggest that Israel too behaves no differently from the Cushites, Philistines and Arameans, all of whose destiny Yahweh's sovereign hand has guided.[46] Thus, Yahweh will punish Israel and these nations alike. Nevertheless, unlike these nations who destinies seem to hang in the balance, there is concrete hope for "the remnant" of Israel. For while Yahweh will "shake the house of Israel among the nations, as one sifts with a sieve "(v. 9), yet Yahweh will also "return the captives of his people" so that they may "rebuild the ruined cities" (v. 14). Here again in Amos, the theme of the gathering and repatriation of the dispersed finds strong emphasis. So complete will Israel's restoration be that "never again will they be plucked up from the land which I have given them, declares the Lord your God" (v. 15). The finality of Israel's restoration in Amos 9:15 is comparable to the passages of Isaiah discussed above which envision an "eternal" state of restoration for Israel. They will never again transgress and therefore they will never against be plucked up from the land.

The nations, however, are included in the eschatological restoration of Israel in Amos but again in a subservient manner. Like the Isaian passages mentioned above, in the eschatological vision of Amos, the people of Yahweh will be replanted in their land so that "they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations *which are called by my name*, declares Yahweh who will perform this" (v. 12). The fact that the nations bear Yahweh's name does seem to indicate their conversion, but even this does not preclude their being "possessed" by the former Israelite exiles. Like the Egyptians, Cushites and Sabeans, whose persons and wealth are at the disposal of the former exiles in Isaiah (Isa 43:3; 45:14), so too in Amos 9, the former exiles possess the Edomites and the nations which are called by the name of Yahweh. Presumably, the nations (including Cushites) are converted but remain subservient to the repatriated Israelites.

8.2.1.3 Summary

The foregoing discussion of Isaiah seems at first to support the claim that the salvation of the nations is not specifically in view in Isaiah. Without further context it would appear that the nations' recognition of Yahweh's sovereign rule and their subjection to the chosen people

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[46] The idea of an Exodus of Cushites in Amos 9:7 could possibly relate to our discussion in Chapter 3 concerning the shift of Meluhha from an eastern to a western location. It is possible that a transplantation of an eastern population to regions of Nubia is in view.

are emphasized by the images of Egypt, Cush, and Seba in Isaiah 43:3 and 45:14. In response to Yahweh's act of judgment, these nations come "in chains" bowing before Israel and licking the dust off the former exiles' feet. By the same token, there is also a picture of the nations calling on the name of Yahweh. Cush is specifically mentioned as being one these nations. Nevertheless, while the election of Israel is emphasized in contrast to these foreign nations, and Israel's restoration means the submission of the nations to the former exiles, it would also appear that the nations' confession of Yahweh goes beyond simply an acknowledgement of Yahweh's sovereign rule, as Kaminsky argues. It seems that the nations, though subservient to Israel, are in fact worshippers of Yahweh in these passages of Isaiah.

In Amos, moreover, where Cushites find a terse mention in a literary and thematic context that deals with the punishment and restoration of Israel, there seems to be further support for Van Witten's idea of the conversion and submission of the nations to Israel. Though the nations are punished, the fact that the "remnant" of the nations are called by Yahweh's name (9:12) indicates his acceptance of them, and likely their conversion. Nevertheless, that Israel will "possess" (ירש) them, indicates Israel's dominion over them—the nations are Israel's property. Notwithstanding, this conversion-submission picture, the universal view is also to be found in Isaiah and a related passage in Zephaniah, both of which includes Cush either implicitly or explicitly. These passages emphasize the punishment, restoration, and apparently equal status of the nations with Israel.

8.2.2 The Universal: The Gathering of the Nations

8.2.2.1 Isaiah 19:25: "Egypt My People"

One of the clearest expressions of what appears to be an unqualified universal salvation of the nations concerns the oracle against Egypt in Isaiah 19.[47] Commentators often categorize

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[47] See John F. A. Saywer, "'Blessed Be My People Egypt' (Isaiah 19:25): The Context and Meaning of a Remarkable Passage," in *Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane*, ed. James D. Martin and Philip R. Davies (JSOTS 42; London: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 1986), 57. On the universalism of Isaiah 19, see André Feuillet, "Un sommet religieux de L'Ancien Testament: L'oracle d'Isaïe XIX (vv. 16-25) sur la conversion d'Égypt," in *Études d'exégèse et de théologie biblique. Ancien Testament* (Paris: Gabalda et Cie, 1975), 261-279; Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 494-514; Saywer, "'My People Egypt'," 57-71; Jože Krašovec, "Healing of Egypt Through Judgement and the Creation of a Universal Chosen People (Isaiah 19:16-25)," in *Jerusalem Studies in Egyptology*, ed. Irene Shirun-Grumach (ÄAT 40; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), 295-305; B. Wodecki, "The Heights of Religious Universalism in Is xix: 16-25," in *'Lasset uns Brücken bauen'*, ed. Klaus-Dietrich Schunck and Matthias Augustin (International Organization

the final section (vv. 16-25) of this oracle as exceptional for the book of Isaiah where depictions of Egypt is almost wholly negative. Some would even suggest that Isaiah 19:18-25 is the most universal of Isaiah's prophecies concerning the nations.[48] While a thorough exegesis of this passage is beyond our aim here, an overview will shed light on the ways in which Egypt, Assyria (and Cush by implication), are comprehended in relationship to the election of Israel.[49] Though Cush is not mentioned specifically in this oracle, the oracle is appropriate for assessing Cush's relationship to the elect in several ways.

First, because Egypt, Cush, and Seba are mentioned in the Isaian texts discussed above as abjectly subservient to the repatriated exiles, the apparently unqualified salvation of Egypt in this passage (concerned as it is with themes of restoration and repatriation), would equally apply to Cush, Seba and the nations more generally.[50] Second, Isaiah 19 falls within the literary context of Isaiah 18-20 (or 17-20) discussed in Chapter 6, which deals with Egypt, Cush, and Assyria.[51] And finally, some scholars read 19:1-25 to 20:1-6 as a literary unit addressing the same historical context. That Cush and Egypt are equally addressed in 20:1-6, the Egypt of 19:1-25, from a historical perspective, would be an Egypt under the 25th Cushite Dynasty.[52] For all these reasons, the overall implications of the oracle of Isaiah 19, would seem to equally apply to Cush specifically, and to the nations more generally.

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for the Study of the Old Testament; Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1998), 171-191; Widengren, "Gathering of the Dispersed," 227-245; Begg, "Peoples and the Worship of Yahweh," 35-55; Shawn Zelig Aster, "Isaiah 19: The 'Burden of Egypt' and Neo-Assyrian Imperial Policy," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135 (2015): 453-470.

[48] Cf. Saywer, "'My People Egypt,'" 57; Aster, "Isaiah 19," 453; Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 494.

[49] The chapter is generally divided into two main sections from a literary standpoint. Verses 1-15 comprise the first major section, while the second section, vv. 16-25, consists of six "in that day" oracles. Thematically, vv. 1-17 describes the nature of the judgement against Egypt, while vv. 18-25 describes the impact of Egypt's "conversion."

[50] Saywer, "'My People Egypt,'" 61. Cf. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 110: "The ancient enmity between the people of God who were once called out of Egypt and the nations and powers along the Nile and in the region of northern Syria and Mesopotamia comes to an end when they turn to Yahweh. Their former enmity now becomes a unity in which the people blessed by Yahweh become at the same time a blessing for the nations . . . . Together they form a *single* new and permanent people of God."

[51] See again §6.3 in this study.

[52] Note, for example, Childs, *Isaiah*, 139-145, who interprets 19:1-20:6 as a literary unit. Child's sees the Ashdod crisis as integral to understanding the oracular unity of 19:1-20:6. See also Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 252, 253, who proposes that the "cruel master" of 19:4 is Shabako, the Cushite pharaoh.

Isaiah 19 is a מַשָּׂא oracle in which vv.1-17 declare Yahweh's judgment against Egypt. Yahweh's judgement directed against Egypt *and* its gods brings social, political, and economic chaos to Egypt. Among other pronouncements, Yahweh will inspire internecine conflicts within Egypt: neighbour will fight against neighbour, city against city, kingdom against kingdom (v. 2). Furthermore, Egypt will be given over into the hand of a "cruel master" (אֲדֹנִים קָשֶׁה) and a "fierce king" (מֶלֶךְ עַז; v. 4). From an economic standpoint, the rivers of Egypt will dry up causing the failure of crops and all the livelihoods which depend on the Nile (vv. 5-10). Great distress and economic turmoil will be the outcome of this act of judgement. Moreover, Yahweh will confound the wisdom of pharaoh's counselors (vv. 11-15), causing the Egyptians to become like women, frightened by Yahweh's hand raised against them, and terrified by the "land of Judah" (v. 16-17).

Despite such vivid declaration of judgement against Egypt, the historical context for this oracle is wholly lost to commentators. Dates ranging from the eight to the second century is quite commonly advanced by very competent biblical scholars.[53] The historical ambiguities of the passage permits this range of chronological application.[54] On the other hand, Walter

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[53] Numerous historical contexts have been proposed for the oracle against Egypt in Isaiah 19. Suggestions range from the late eighth to the mid-second century B.C. For instance, Aster, "Isaiah 19," 453-470, proposes that the oracle should be understood against the Assyrian campaign of 734 B.C., which involved Egypt; Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, 333, n.75, believes the oracle is to be situated in the historical period just prior to the reestablishment of Cushite rule over Egypt around 716 B.C under Shabaka. This general historical context is also proposed for the oracle by Roberts, "Egyptian and Nubian Oracles," 206, and Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 261-262. Balogh, *Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20*, 302, relates the oracle to Esarhaddon's invasion of Egypt in 671 B.C. and the early years of Ashurbanipal. Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 85-86, understands vv. 1-4 as likely related to the rise of the Cushite dynasty in the eight century, while vv. 16-17 he believes aptly describes the historical situation of Cambyses' invasion of Egypt in 525 B.C. (100), while vv. 19-22 he imagines as potentially applicable to the Jewish community of Elephantine attested in the *Letter of Aristeas* (116-117). Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 171, and Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 99, advances the fourth century B.C. as the most plausible historical context for the oracle. At the far end of the spectrum, many commentators understand the overwhelmingly positive tone toward Egypt in vv. 16-25 as *vaticinium ex eventu* prophecy, which somehow reflects the interests of the Judeo-Egyptian diaspora of a much later period. J. Todd Hibbard, "Isaiah 19:18: A Textual Variant in Light of the Temple of Onias in Egypt," in *Concerning the Nations: Essays on the Oracles against the Nations in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel*, ed. Else K. Holt, Hyun C. P. Kim and Andrew Mein (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 612; New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 32-52, for instance, following a host of commentators, sees verse 18 as a reference to the second century Jewish temple at Leontopolis (Egypt), built by Onias IV as a rival to the temple in Jerusalem (as told by Josephus). Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 317-319.

[54] As Krašovec, "Healing of Egypt," 296, comments, "The very general nature of the political allusion, however, makes it extremely difficult to come to any sure conclusion regarding the historical setting and the date of the chapter."

Vogels suggests that the oracle may equally represent the eschatological age and pursues an interpretation along these lines. He writes that the six-fold repetition "in that day" (vv. 16-25) "semble suggérer également qu'il s'agit d'un avenir imprécis et que ces oracles, come d'autre du genre, expriment plutôt un espoir, un idéal à venir."[55] Thus, without discounting the possibility that some concrete historical context lies behind the oracle, the utopian vision of Egypt, Assyria, and Israel in vv. 18-25 best fits with other depictions of the future ideal age of salvation in the Hebrew Bible, rendering an assessment of the theological outlook of the passage a more preferable approach to a historical one (e.g., Isa 11:11-16; 43:3-7; 49:22-23; 60:1-22, etc.).[56]

A number of exegetes have highlighted the prominence of the Exodus motif in Isaiah 19, especially vv. 19-25.[57] But even Egypt's judgement in 19:1-17 is comparable, in many respects, to the Yahweh's judgment against Egypt in the Exodus account. According to Vogels, there are in fact different outcomes for the two acts of judgment. Unlike the first Exodus in which Egypt remained obdurate and defiant, in the Second Exodus the chastisement of Yahweh accomplishes the conversion of Egypt to the worship of Yahweh.[58] In this view, though Yahweh brings judgement against Egypt a second time, Yahweh's chastisement is meant for the ultimate restoration of Egypt: "For Yahweh will smite Egypt; smiting and healing. And they will return to Yahweh and he will be entreated of them and will heal them" (19:22).[59]

Not only so, but no longer will Egypt be a place of idols. Rather, "in that day" altars to Yahweh will be found in the midst of the land of Egypt and on its borders (v. 19); this will be a testimony to Yahweh's presence in the land of Egypt (v. 20).[60] When the Egyptians cry to

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[55] Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 496. Cf. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 126.

[56] Cf. Krašovec, "Healing of Egypt," 296. According to Krašovec, the primary concern of the passage, "transcends any particular historical situation" (304).

[57] These themes include: (1) calling out to Yahweh as a result of oppression; (2) Yahweh sending a deliverer for the Egyptians; (3) Yahweh becoming known to the Egyptians; and (4) Yahweh smiting and healing Egypt; see Aster, "Isaiah 19," 462-465. Cf. Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 496-514; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 106; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 319; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 255; Saywer, "'My People Egypt,'" 60; Cook, *A Sign and a Wonder*, 100, 109-110; Krašovec, "Healing of Egypt," 296, 297-298.

[58] Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 499; Cf. Krašovec, "Healing of Egypt," 298-302; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 108-109.

[59] Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 506, 509.

[60] Cf. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 108-109, who interprets vv. 19-22 as a depiction of the conversion of Egypt.

Yahweh because of oppression he will hear them and deliver them (v. 20); Yahweh will make himself known to the Egyptians and the Egyptians will indeed know Yahweh "on that day" (v. 21); and the Egyptians will worship, sacrifice, and fulfill their vows to Yahweh (v. 21). Furthermore, lasting peace will ensue between Egypt and Assyria as evinced by a "highway" (מְסִלָּה) which facilitates safe travel between the two countries (v. 23). By implication, all that applies to Egypt also applies to Assyria (i.e., Assyria will also abandon its idols and turn wholeheartedly to Yahweh), for "the Egyptians and the Assyrians will worship [Yahweh] together" (v. 23).[61]

Most importantly, Yahweh's chosen people "on that day" will include, not only Israel but also Egypt and Assyria: "And on that day, Israel will be a triad with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth. Whom Yahweh of Host will bless, saying 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance'" (19:24-25). In this pericope, Egypt is being treated as a son of Yahweh comparable to Israel.[62] For inasmuch as Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant brings about its humiliation, even so Egypt's unfaithfulness through idolatry brings about its humiliation.

Yet in the same way that Israel's restoration is in view in Isaiah and other prophetic literature, even so the ultimate restoration of Egypt (and Assyria) is also in view.[63] Inasmuch as Yahweh's punishment is meant as a corrective for Israel, so Yahweh's judgment against Egypt is meant as a corrective. In the end, both Israel and the nations—represented by Egypt and Assyria—respond positively to Yahweh's judgement, abandon idol worship, and are forever loyal to the worship of Yahweh.[64] Thus, in Isaiah 19 Egypt and Assyria stands for the nations more generally.[65]

What Rikk Watts writes concerning Isaiah's depiction of the nations in 40-55 equally applies to our passage: "Like Israel, the nations too will be judged (e.g. 41.11-16; 45.14; 49.22-26), but also like Israel there is room for a remnant who turns to Yahweh (45.20; cf. 44.5; 49.6;

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[61] Cf. Saywer, "'My People Egypt,'" 61; Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 511-512; Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 172.

[62] Cf. Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 505-508.

[63] Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 503; Krašovec, "Healing of Egypt," 304.

[64] Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 512.

[65] Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 512: "L'Égypte et Assur sont ici comme l'image du monde païen qui participera à la bénédiction de Dieu."

51.4-5).”[66] Oswalt expresses the same sentiment differently: “As with Israel, so with the nations; God’s purpose in judgment is not extermination, but restoration.”[67] Here there is a seemingly unqualified parity between the nations and Israel; all will share in the promised blessings after Yahweh’s punishment brings about the wholehearted surrender of idol worship and total commitment of the nations to Yahweh. In a word, Egypt and Assyria, representing the nations as a whole, are also God’s chosen people. The parity between Israel and Cush in an eschatological context of punishment and restoration is also specifically taken up by Zephaniah.

8.2.2.2 Israel and Cush in Zephaniah 3:8-13

The theme of a universal judgment and restoration of the nations is once again picked up in Zephaniah, 8-13, a passage which “draws heavily on the Isaian oracles concerning Egypt and Ethiopia in Isaiah 18:1-7 and 19:1-25.”[68]

לָכֵן חַכּוּ־לִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה לְיוֹם קוּמִי לְעַד כִּי מִשְׁפָּטִי לֶאֱסֹף גּוֹיִם לְקָבְצִי מַמְלָכוֹת לִשְׁפֹּךְ עֲלֵיהֶם

זַעְמִי כֹּל חֲרוֹן אַפִּי כִּי בְּאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי תֵּאָכֵל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ

Therefore, wait for me declares Yahweh, until the day I arise once and finally. Because my resolution is to gather the nations, to assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them my indignation, all of my wrath. For the whole earth will be consumed by the fire of my jealousy (v. 8)

Like other passages discussed already, Zephaniah also envisions a future divine judgment against the nations, except here the judgment is unambiguously universal and eschatological: all the earth, all nations and kingdoms are being judged.[69] The theme of Yahweh’s absolute rule over the nations is once again asserted. Yahweh has a contention against the nations which will be pacified only by the outpouring of his wrath. Nevertheless,

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[66] Watts, “Destiny of the Nations,” 507.

[67] Oswalt, *Holy One of Israel*, 99.

[68] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 184.

[69] Cf. David L. Petersen, “Israel and the Nations in the Later Latter Prophets,” in *Constructs of Prophecy in the Former and Latter Prophets and Other Texts*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Martti Nissinen (SBL Ancient Near Eastern Monographs; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 159-160; Smith, Ward and Bewer, *Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum*, 247-248.

like other passages noted above, Yahweh's judgment does not result in the extermination, but rather the restoration of the nations:

כִּי־אָז אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל־עַמִּים שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה לִקְרֹא כֻלָּם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה לְעָבְדוֹ שְׁכֶם אֶחָד

> For then I will turn back to the peoples a pure speech, that they may all call upon the name of Yahweh with one consent (v. 9).

As expected, the judgement results in the people calling upon the name of Yahweh. Thus, Adele Berlin comments, "The idea is that after the conflagration, all will acknowledge the Lord."[70] Similarly, Paul House writes, "Certainly Zephaniah shows the day of Yahweh as a time of great destruction, but from the destruction unfolds a theme of forgiveness.[71]

And it is in this immediate context that Cush is mentioned:

מֵעֵבֶר לְנַהֲרֵי־כוּשׁ עֲתָרַי בַּת־פּוּצַי יוֹבִלוּן מִנְחָתִי

> From beyond the rivers of Cush, my worshippers, the daughter of my dispersed ones will bring my offering (v. 10).

Before explicating this reference to Cush, it is necessary to include the wider context of vv. 11-13:

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֹא תֵבוֹשִׁי מִכֹּל עֲלִילֹתַיִךְ אֲשֶׁר פָּשַׁעַתְּ בִּי כִּי־אָז אָסִיר מִקִּרְבֵּךְ עַלִּיזֵי גַּאֲוָתֵךְ וְלֹא־תוֹסִפִי לְגָבְהָה עוֹד בְּהַר קָדְשִׁי: וְהִשְׁאַרְתִּי בְקִרְבֵּךְ עַם עָנִי וָדָל וְחָסוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: שְׁאֵרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־יַעֲשׂוּ עַוְלָה וְלֹא־יְדַבְּרוּ כָזָב וְלֹא־יִמָּצֵא בְּפִיהֶם לְשׁוֹן תַּרְמִית כִּי־הֵמָּה יִרְעוּ וְרָבְצוּ וְאֵין מַחֲרִיד

> In that day you will not be ashamed because of the all your deeds whereby you have revolted (פָּשַׁעַתְּ) against me. For then I will put away from your midst the arrogant boasters and you will never again be haughty in my holy mountain. For I will leave in your midst a humble and lowly people; and they shall take refuge in the name of Yahweh. The remnant of Israel shall practice no injustice, nor utter lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths. For they shall pasture and lie down and none shall make them fearful.

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[70] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 133. Petersen, "Israel and the Nations," 159, likewise, notes that the theme of Yahweh's judgment against the nations, and the nations turning to Yahweh as a result is also exemplified in the images of the nations in later latter prophetic books such as Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

[71] Paul R. House, *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 79.

Though missed entirely by some,[72] a good number of commentators have noted the strong allusions to the Babel pericope in Zephaniah 3:8-10 as well as the many references to the primeval history in the book of Zephaniah more generally.[73] On this Berlin writes,

> Themes from the early chapters of Genesis appear in all three chapters of Zephaniah. Chapter 1 begins with a description that is a reversal of creation: human beings, animals, birds of the sky, fish of the sea. And, indeed, creation is being reversed; the created world is about to be destroyed. The phrase "everything from upon the surface of the earth" (1:2, 3—cf. Gen 2:6; 4:14; 6:1, 7; 7:4, 23; 8:8) reinforces the association with the stories of creation, expulsion from Eden, and the Flood."
> Chapter 2 . . . plays on the view of the world of Genesis 10. The prophecy against the nations, while a common component of prophetic writing, in this case is structured on the "geography" of the Table of Nations. *It equates the nations with the sons of Ham*, over whom the descendants of Shem will ultimately triumph.
> Chapter 3 contains a hint of a reference to Genesis 11 in the phrase "I will turn over to peoples pure speech" (3:9), and in the emphasis on correct speech (v. 13) and the uniting of all peoples. *It is as if the story of Babel were being reversed* and all peoples reunited in the worship of the Lord. That others have seen this connection may be evident in the fact that in the triennial cycle of Torah reading (used in earlier times by Jewish communities in the Land of Israel and Egypt), Zephaniah 3 is the prophetic reading (*hapṭara*) assigned to Gen 11:1.[74]

As already noted, strong parallels exist between the images of Yahweh dispersing the Israelites as a consequence of idolatry and Yahweh's dispersal of mankind at Babel as a consequence of rebellion. Images of the dispersal of Israel most often employ the verb פוץ in the hiphil (e.g., Deut 4:27; 28:64; 30:3; Neh 1:8; Isa 11:12; Jer 9:16; 13:24; 30:11; Eze 11:16; 12:15; Amos 5:15, etc.).[75] The same verb is found twice in Gen 11:8 where Yahweh scatters the rebellious at Babel, and also in Gen 10:18 with reference to the Canaanites spreading abroad. It is the passive participle of פוץ which is employed in the phrase בַּת־פּוּצַי, "daughter of my dispersed" in Zephaniah 3:10. More is to be said on this below, but a number of other literary

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[72] E.g., Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 216-217; Smith, Ward and Bewer, *Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum*, 246-254.

[73] For instance, Ball, *Zephaniah*, 236; Ben Zvi, *Book of Zephaniah*, 24-25; Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 13-14; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 182, 183-184; Aron Pinker, "The Book of Zephaniah: Allusions to the Tower of Babel," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 28 (2000): 3-11.

[74] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 13-14; emphases mine. Cf. Ball, *Zephaniah*, 236: "In this case we have a reversal of the account in Genesis, just as Zephaniah 1:2-3 was a reversal of the creation story in Genesis." See also, Ben Zvi, *Book of Zephaniah*, 24-25; Pinker, "Tower of Babel," 4.

[75] The verb זרה is also used (e.g., 1 Kings 14:15, Eze 5:2; 12:14, etc.).

and thematic parallels may be discerned between Zephaniah 3:8-13 and the Babel pericope. These connections are explored more closely by Aron Pinker.[76]

Note, for example, the similarities in language: כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, "all the earth" (Zeph 3:8 and Gen 11:1, 4); שָׂפָה, "lip," "language," "tongue" (Zeph 3:9 and Gen 11:1, 6, 9); עַמִּים, people (Zeph 3:8; עַם, Gen 11:6); בְרוּרָה, "plain" or "pure" (Zeph 3:9) as a counterpart and opposite to בָּלַל "confused," "confounded" (Gen 11:7, 9); שְׁכֶם אֶחָד, "one shoulder," "one accord," "one portion" (Zeph 3:9), as a parallel to דְבָרִים אֲחָדִים, "one thing," "one speech," "same words," (Gen 11:1).[77] Additionally, קְרֹא כֻלָּם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה, "all of them call on the name of Yahweh" and חָסוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה, "they will take refuge in the name of Yahweh" (Zeph 3:12), counteracts the phrase נַעֲשֶׂה־לָּנוּ שֵׁם, "let us make a name for ourselves" (Gen 11:4).

Further thematic similarities include reference to the pride and haughtiness which Yahweh will remove from the people (Zeph 3:11).[78] Clearly, Zephaniah understands the Babel pericope as a pageantry of hubris.[79] Moreover, the reference to speech employs שָׂפָה as noted above. The nations' speech is restored to a "pure speech" (שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה), suggesting a reversal of the confusion brought about by the Babel experience.[80] According to Smith et al, the restoration of a purified speech here is symbolic of the nations no longer swearing to false deities but mark their return to the true worship of Yahweh.[81] Hence, the people call upon

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[76] Pinker, "Tower of Babel," 3-11. Cf. Ball, *Zephaniah*, 236.

[77] Pinker, "Tower of Babel," 5-6, indicates that שְׁכֶם אֶחָד invokes a four-fold association with the Babel story. In addition to that noted above, Pinker suggests שְׁכֶם אֶחָד elicits the image of the tower builders working shoulder to shoulder (i.e., in unison); the expression also stands for Shechem, the city with a migdal-tower (Judg 9:46-47) which would also recall the city of Babel and its tower; and from a textual standpoint, שְׁכֶם אֶחָד parallels בְּהַר קָדְשִׁי, "my holy mountain" (Zech 3:11) and evokes the image of ziggurats as cultic mounds. In his own words, "We see that Zephaniah makes artful use of the word "*shekhem*" to elicit multiple connotation in the story of the Tower of Babel. When assuming the meaning of "shoulder" it brings up the image of the builders of the Tower of Babel working in unison. When considered as the name of the city of Shechem, it recalls the Tower of Shechem in the clever ruse used by Abimelech to conquer it. When textually analyzed it is parallel to "my holy mountain," a reminder of the ziggurats as equivalents to holy mountains. And when interpreted as "thing" it connotes the simplicities of early rites. Thus, in the single word "*shekhem*" Zephaniah established a fourfold link to the story of the tower of Babel: United effort, city and tower, tower as holy mound, and plainness."

[78] Assyria's proclamation that "I am and there is none else besides me" (2:15) is a categorical declaration of divinity (cf. Deut 4:35; 1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 7:22; Isa 45:5-6, 21); Assyria is also linked to Nimrod (Gen 10:11).

[79] Cf. Pinker, "Tower of Babel," 8.

[80] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 14.

[81] Cf. Smith, Ward and Bewer, *Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum*, 248: "Contact with other gods, was from the point of view of Yahweh-worship, fraught with uncleanness and impurity of the most pronounced type."

Yahweh and serve him with one consent (שְׁכֶם אֶחָד, lit. "one shoulder"; 3:9). The people's speech is restored, the curse of Babel is reversed, and the people are once again united in one purpose, but this time for the singular objective of a "pure" monotheistic worship of Yahweh (cf. Jer 32:39; Eze 11:19-20). And like Genesis 11, in Zephaniah 3 it is divine action—and only divine action—which is able to undo the confusion of speech and the dispersal brought about by Babel. The primeval-eschatological connections in Zephaniah betrays the prophet's conception of an eschatological reversal of the original primeval sin of mankind, which was a fundamental departure from the monotheistic worship of Yahweh.[82]

This leads to the main reason for including this passage in our discussion: the invocation of Cush in the context of Zephaniah's conception of an eschatological reversal of the Babel event is vexed with meaning. To begin, Berlin emphasizes that Genesis 10 provides the conceptual and literary model for Zephaniah's oracle against the nations (2:5-15), and it is largely nations associated with Ham (Cush, Assyria, Nineveh, Philistia, Canaan, Sodom, Gomorrah) which stand to represent the nations.[83] We have already seen that the descendants of Ham become symbolic for moral failure and imperial rebellion in the Genesis primeval story (§5.4). Hamites are "othered" on moral and religious grounds. Similarly, we have seen that Isaiah also employs the sons of Ham (Egypt, Cush, and Seba) as proxy for the nations who will inevitably submit to the repatriated exiles. And yet again, "Zephaniah's prophecy is about the sons of Ham"[84]—as objects of both judgement and restoration. It is clear that the nations connected to Ham in the Genesis primeval story (Cush, Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, etc.), like their primogenitor, are represented as idolaters, and additionally as imperial oppressors of Israel. This is quite evident in Isaiah, Zephaniah, and other prophetic writings.

By the same token, we have also seen that the universalism of Isaiah 19 presents Egypt and Assyria (both associated with Ham in Gen 10:6, 11) as equal participants with Israel in the ultimate restoration, bearing equal status as the chosen people of Yahweh. Now in Zephaniah's

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Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 133, "Here the idea seems to be that the impure speech of idolatry is replaced with pure speech by means of which one can praise the Lord." See also S. R. Driver, *The Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (The New-Century Bible; New York: Henry Frowde, 1906), 135.

[82] Cf. Pinker, "Tower of Babel," 8; Ball, *Zephaniah*, 238.

[83] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 14, 113, 120-122.

[84] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 14, 122.

depiction of the eschatological restoration of Israel, construed as a reversal of Babel, Cush stands, among other functions, as a proxy for both Israel and the forgiven gentile nations.[85] In seeking to establish this more firmly, several points obtain. First, the expression בַּת־פּוּצַי, "daughter of my dispersed" is significant. While some have limited this expression to dispersed Israelites in Cush (cf. Isa 11:11), the literary and thematic contexts suggest that the dispersed from Cush in Zephaniah 3:10 is to be seen as representative of both Israelite exiles *and* the dispersed nations of Babel who now call upon Yahweh. In this respects, Zephaniah employs Cush for a two-fold purpose. Hence, the expression בַּת־פּוּצַי in v. 10 is immediately followed by feminine singular verbs in v. 11, תוֹסְפִי, פָּשַׁעַתְּ, תֵבוֹשִׁי; and the expressions מִקְּרְבֵּךְ and גַּאֲוָתֵךְ occur with second person feminine singular suffixes. Clearly, these expressions compliment the antecedent בַּת־פּוּצַי in the preceding verse. In other words, what follows in vv. 11-13 applies to the returning Cushite-Israelite exiles who are being addressed as the collective community of Yahweh.[86] It is this community that returns to mount Zion and experiences Yahweh's blessings.[87]

Additionally, Isaiah 11:11 has established that Yahweh's exiles are in Cush. However, the same passage also indicates that there are Israelite exiles in Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Elam, Shinar, and the coastlands of the sea as well. Why has Zephaniah chosen Cush specifically to represent the returning exiles? One could argue that Zephaniah's Cushite identity disposes him to this choice.[88] Even if this is so, it is far from the main reason. Rather, in a similar way that Hamites are singled out for divine judgment in Zephaniah 2 (and in Isaiah) as discussed above, they are also singled out for divine favour—as Egypt and Assyria in Isaiah 19:19-25, for

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[85] For example, Ben Zvi, *Book of Zephaniah*, 230, understands the nations as the expressed referent in the text while Israel is implied. See also Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 135, who suggests that the "dispersed ones" represent the nations who will return to worship of Yahweh: "I see in vv. 9 and 10 the idea of universal worship of the God of Israel."

[86] Cf. Many commentators suggest that vv. 9-10 deal with the nations while vv.11 onward deals with Israel. E.g. Ben Zvi, *Book of Zephaniah*, 230. But it appears to the present writer that the image of Cush embodies the totality of the dispersed, both Israel and the nations.

[87] Cf. Ben Zvi, *Book of Zephaniah*, 230.

[88] Zephaniah is called בֶּן־כּוּשִׁי in Zeph 1:1. While it is important to recognize that Cushi in Zeph 1:1 and elsewhere in the biblical text (Jer 36:14; Psalm 7 superscript) is a proper name, it is equally important to recognize that names had meaning in the biblical context. In other words, a name often suggests something about the identity of the bearer. For discussion of "Cushi" and "Hezekiah" in the genealogy of Zephaniah, see Rice, "African Roots," 21-31; Anderson Jr., "Zephaniah ben Cushi," 45-70; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 47-49; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 164-166; Ben Zvi, *Book of Zephaniah*, 41-51.

instance. Here too Cush, as a descendant of Ham stands as a recipient of divine favour. Thus, the "othered" is treated as—indeed, stands as a vicarious representative of—the people Yahweh. Cush *is* Yahweh's chosen people—both Israelites and gentiles. There is already a precedent for this in Amos 9:7 where the Israelites are compared to the Cushites in a context of judgment. So here, the Cushites stand in the place of the Israelites in a context of restoration and hope.

And equally important, Zephaniah's conceptual framing of the restoration of Israel around the Babel event, suggests that his selection of Cush, and specifically, the בַּת־פּוּצַי of Cush, attributes a leading role to the Cushites in the Babel story. Therefore the בַּת־פּוּצַי of Cush specifically represent the "dispersed ones" of Genesis 11:8-9 returning to the true worship of Yahweh. In Zephaniah it is not Cush's geographical distance that is being emphasized, but its primordiality. Zephaniah is therefore connecting Cush—and specifically Nimrod the Cushite—to the Babel event. This study has suggested that the Genesis author conceives of Nimrod as an egoist who arrogantly challenges divine authority. Nimrod's empire building activities is seen as a bid for universal sovereignty. The reference then to "pride" and "haughtiness" (3:11) is again an indication that Zephaniah understands hubris and self-will as chief sins of Babel. And Cushites are here again implicated as leaders in the revolt against divine authority.

In representing the reversal of Babel as the ingathering of the dispersed of Cush, Zephaniah unites primeval and eschatological Cush together, demonstrating Yahweh's grace toward the rebellious. According to Zephaniah, "on that day" Yahweh will remove from the midst of the people the pride of the haughty ones, and only the lowly and the humble will dwell in Yahweh's holy mountain (3:11). Consequently, on the one hand, the בַּת־פּוּצַי of Cush, representing the Israelites scattered into the nations, are reassembled on "my holy mountain"—Zion, while at the same time the בַּת־פּוּצַי of Cush, representing the nations scattered at Babel, are also reassembled on Mount Zion. Standing on Mount Zion—the opposite of Babel—they are forgiven, restored, and equal participants with Israel in status and destiny.

A final point worth bearing out is that Zephaniah 3:10 is connected to Isaiah 18:7 and Psalm 68: 29-31 on a number of fronts implying that a secondary eschatological understanding

may lie behind these passages as well.[89] Zephaniah 3:10 employs the phrase בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא "On that day" while Isaiah 18:7 utilizes בָּעֵת הַהִיא, "at that time." And as we have seen, a number of other passages already discussed employ some equivalent of the phrase "on that day" (e.g., Isa 11:11, 19:16-25; Amos 9:11). While often applicable to a specific historical context, such as the political situation of Palestine in 701 B.C., this expression can also plausibly indicate a secondary (or primary) eschatological timeframe.[90] In Zephaniah the phrase is surely a reference to the eschatological "Day of the Lord."[91] Another point of connection involves the expression יוֹבִלוּן מִנְחָתִי, "they will bring my offering/gift," employed in Zephaniah 3:10, which is the counterpart to יוּבַל־שַׁי, "gifts will be brought" in Isaiah 18:7. In both contexts the Cushites/Cushite-Israelite exiles bring their offering to Jerusalem, for in Zephaniah's conceptualization of the age of salvation, Mount Zion replaces Babel.[92] In sum, Zephaniah 3:9-13 portrays the universal salvation of Israel and the nations,[93] and Cush stands front and center in this vision of the ideal future age of salvation.

8.2.2.3 Summary

In answering the question raised at the beginning of this section—namely, how do biblical representations of Cush inform the debate regarding Israel's relationship to the nations in Isaiah and beyond?—it is important to point out first that the theme of Yahweh's judgment against foreign peoples is consistently presented in virtually all the texts discussed above. Wherefore Cush, like all foreign nations is destined for divine punishment (Isa 11:11; 45:16; Amos 9:7-8; Zeph 2:12). Nevertheless, the nations are also depicted as calling upon Yahweh, or even being called by the name of Yahweh (Amos 9:12), intimating their turning to the worship of Yahweh.

Importantly, the preceding analysis supports two of the views presented at the beginning of this section; namely, the conversion-submission perspective and the universal view. On the one hand, certain texts represent Hamitic nations (including Cush) as both active

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[89] Cf. Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 183.

[90] Cf. Vogels, "Égypte Mon Peuple," 496-497.

[91] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 135.

[92] Cf. Ben Zvi, *Book of Zephaniah*, 230.

[93] Ben Zvi, *Book of Zephaniah*, 320: "[T]he universal announcement of judgment in Zeph 3:8 turn out to be the first act of the divine action that leads to universal salvation."

participants in the ingathering of Israelite exiles and subservient subjects of the chosen people. The nations, represented by Egypt, Cush, and Seba (among others of Ham's descendants) are depicted as groveling in abject self-reproach before the former exiles and imploring for the chance to worship the God of Israel (Isa 45:14). Moreover, in the ultimate restoration, Israel will "possess" the remnant of the gentiles whom, the evidence seem to suggest, will have turned to the worship of Yahweh. In this view, though the nations worship Yahweh, they do not stand on equal footing with the chosen people. Rather they *are* the possession of the chosen.

Ironically, despite the prophetic ire against imperial ambition (such as that of Egypt, Assyria, Cush and Babylon) discussed in Chapter 6, the vision of Israel's glorified future presented in this conversion-submission view is rooted in an imperial worldview and imbued with imperial images. Wherefore, the future age of salvation is one in which "Israel" will be the center and focus of a worldwide empire. In this picture, the glorified age represents a complete reversal of Israel's national fortunes—at the expense of the nations. Instead of Israel being the object of imperial domination, it is the nations which will be completely dominated by the people of Yahweh. Instead of Israel's wealth being plundered by predatory empires, it is the wealth of the nations which comes streaming into Israel's borders; the perpetual despoliation of the nations result in endless material benefit for the Israel of the golden age. Rather than Israel bowing in abject subjection to the imperial pride of Assyria, Egypt, Cush, Babylonia, and other kingdoms, it is these kingdom which will lick the dust of the feet of the people of Yahweh they formerly oppressed. And perhaps most significantly, instead of Israel hankering after the gods of the nations through idolatry, it is the God of Israel which is universally acknowledged by the nations in this scenario; the nations essentially beg to worship Yahweh.

On the other hand, the picture of Egypt and Assyria in Isaiah 19:19-25 and the depiction of the בַּת־פּוּצַי of Cush in Zephaniah 3:10 presents a universal perspective of the ingathering and restoration of Israel. In both views, "pagan" nations achieve the same status and enjoy the same blessings as the people of Yahweh. In the case of Egypt and Assyria, they stand on par with Israel as "my people" and "the work of my hands" (Isa 19:25). As for Cush in Zephaniah 3, this nation stands as a two-fold representation of the redeemed gentile nations and the redeemed people of Israel. Yahweh speaks to the exiles of Cush as his collective chosen people. In this universal picture, the images of submission and empire are entirely missing. All the redeemed are Yahweh's chosen people.

Rather than seeking to reconcile these opposing views of the relationship between Israel and the nations, it seems appropriate to allow both views to stand. Clearly, the biblical texts present (at least) two perspectives on the relationship between Israel and the nations, and these positions are not fully reconcilable. Nevertheless, an important conclusion here is that images of Cush in the prophetic literature and the Hebrew Bible more generally is fraught with religious concerns and cannot be sufficiently understood apart from an assessment of these concerns. Now having looked at Cush as an outside foreign nation in relation to the election of Israel, the final section of this penultimate chapter will consider the ethno-religious dynamics between Cushites and Israelites on the mimetic level.

8.3 THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF CUSHITES IN ISRAELITE SOCIETY

In the previous chapters we have seen Cush and Cushites employed as topical symbols for imperial rebellion and military antagonism; and we have just seen Cush and Cushites playing an important symbolic function in the prophetic casting of the relationship between Israel and the nations. Though all of these roles are crucial to the biblical understanding of Cush and Cushites, the texts discussed thus far present Cushites as "outsiders" in topical roles. Here we wish to inquire, how are Cushites represented at the individual level with respect to the important concept of Israelite election? Put differently, what kind of theological evaluation do biblical writers make of Cushites in their society? Given that the concept of election implies exclusion, can Cushites become legitimate members of the society of the elect from the perspective of the biblical text? If so, under what conditions?

Joel Lohr, who has taken a special interest in the status of the unchosen, states that even though election implies exclusion, Israel's election does not necessarily or in all cases bar the unchosen from divine will or purposes: "it does not follow that the unchosen fall outside of the economy of God's purposes, his workings, or his ways."[94] He argues against a firm dichotomy between chosen and unchosen as it relates to the Israelites and other groups.[95] Lohr suggests further that the Hebrew Bible presents a more complex picture of the status of the unchosen, as evidenced by the fact that the ethnically unchosen often functions in ways

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[94] Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, xii.

[95] Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 1-31.

that are approved by Yahweh:

> In looking at examples in the Pentateuch of unchosen figures or nations in relation to the chosen, we can clearly see that the unchosen are not automatically to be opposed or destroyed (or necessarily deemed evil) but can display 'fear of God,' operate in ways that please God, work on God's behalf, and at times display a more appropriate religious response than the chosen.[96]

Though space does not permit a thoroughgoing analysis, here we wish to follow Lohr's lead by considering two case studies where Cushites demonstrate favourable responses to Yahweh and find positive theological evaluation by the biblical writers. The case of Moses' Cushite wife in Numbers 12:1, and the story of Ebedmelech the Cushite in Jeremiah 38:7-13; 39:15-19 will be considered below following a historical survey of the long view of Cushite presence in Palestine.

8.3.1 Excursus: The Long View of Cushites in Palestine

As we saw in Chapter 3, Cushites were a major force in the Egyptian army since at least the Old Kingdom. Their presence in Egyptian military exploits and occupation of Palestine is attested for almost two thousand years *before* an ethnic group called Israel is recognized within Canaan.[97] The Amarna Letters, for instance, which date from the 14th century B.C., demonstrate that Cushite military presence was a significant factor in the New Kingdom Egyptian Empire, which included both Nubia and Syria-Palestine. We have already seen that the Medjay of Lower Nubia served an essential function as paramilitary police in both Egypt and Nubia during this period. And in a similar fashion, Nubian military units were employed to police the Egyptian province of Canaan as was also pointed out.[98] Redford emphasizes the significance of this when he writes: "As in Egypt so in Asia, Egypt employed in addition to garrison troops and commissioners a sizable police force comprised largely of Nubians originally of the Medjay tribe."[99]

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[96] Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, x.

[97] See again §3.3.2.3 of this study.

[98] See Donald B. Redford, *Egypt and Canaan in the New Kingdom*, ed. Shmuel Aḥituv (BEER-SHEVA: Studies by the Department of Bible and the Ancient Near East Volume IV; Cairo: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1990), 37; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 207; and §3.3.2.3 of this study.

[99] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 207.

That Egyptian colonialism in Canaan lasted for well over three hundred years is a testimony in part to the effectiveness of this police force; but more importantly, this length of time means that a significant portion of Nubian soldiers would without a doubt have taken up residence in Canaan.[100] Requests to the pharaoh by Canaanite kings for troops from Meluhha and Kaši "according to the practice of your ancestors," and evidence that Nubian soldiers were mistreating the Canaanite nobility of Jerusalem, clearly indicate that for *centuries* Nubian troops occupied positions of power and lived among the Canaanite population.[101] From where did these overlords of Canaan obtain wives (and concubines), if not from the local population? How did their presence affect population dynamics over several centuries, given the socio-sexual dynamics of colonialism?

Furthermore, during the New Kingdom occupation of Nubia and Palestine, the pharaohs routinely deported and resettled "rebellious" populations into different parts of their empire—a practice that would be followed en rigour by the Neo-Assyrian Empire centuries later.[102] This policy as Redford outlines, continued unabated for the duration of New Kingdom occupation of the north and south.[103] In the fourteenth century B.C., for example, Akhenaton writes to his overseer in Damascus, "Send me the ʿApîrū of the pastureland(?) concerning whom I sent you as follows: 'I will place them in the cities of the land of Kush to dwell in them, inasmuch as I have plundered them.'"[104] As another example, 7,300 Asiatics were deported to Egypt during a 20 year period according to the Karnak annals, while a stupendous 89,600 captives are said to have been brought to Egypt in the ninth year of Amenophis II.[105] Hence, over the course of several centuries, Asiatic population were removed to different parts of the Egyptian empire, and particularly to Cush. According to Redford, "Asiatic prisoners

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[100] Cf. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 204, 206.

[101] See again, Moran, *Amarna Letters*, EA 95, EA 108, EA 112, EA 117, 127, EA 131, EA 132, EA 133, EA 287, EA 288. Cf. Pope, "Beyond the Broken Reed," 155.

[102] Redford, *Egypt and Canaan*, 37-39; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 207-208; Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 88-89.

[103] Redford, *Egypt and Canaan*, 37-39.

[104] Redford, *Egypt and Canaan*, 38-39. Cf. Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 88-89.

[105] Redford, *Egypt and Canaan*, 38. Though some Egyptologists believe this number to be a gross exaggeration, Redford supports its accuracy.

filled the workhouses of Nubian temples, and those of Egypt as well."[106]

In a similar fashion, the pharaohs deported Nubian populations to various parts of their empire, both to Egypt as well as to Syria-Palestine. For example, a New Kingdom pharaoh writes to his officer,

> [The foreign land beg]inning at the southern frontier of Kush . . . Pharaoh I.p.h. has given them into your keeping for the security of her border. . . Now [if it is] reported that some foreign peoples who know not how they should live are come. . . then the All-Powerful shall send his victorious sword before [his host in order to] slay them and destroy their towns, and set fire [to tho]se foreign lands, and put other people in their places.[107]

Clearly, a policy of deportation was put in place for Nubia in similar fashion to Syria-Palestine. Hence, Winnicki writes that "According to available data this ethnic group [*pꜣ-Nḥs;* Nubians] was resettled in Syria as early as the 18th dynasty to replace the Apiru, a group that constituted one of the major threats to Egyptian rule over this territory."[108] Winnicki notes further that the Cushite population said to occupy the region of Gerar (2 Chron 14:9-15; 21:16) may be linked to deportations by the New Kingdom pharaohs.[109] Nubian presence appear to have continued in the region even into Greco-Roman times.[110] It is quite possible that other (perhaps many other) Nubian ethnic groups were deported to Syria-Palestine over several centuries if surviving Egyptian records of deportations are any indication.[111]

Along these same lines, Winnicki points out that a Nubian settlement in the eastern Delta was referred to as *Nḫr-Nḥsj.t* ("the river of the Nubian"), which he believes might indicate a sizable Nubian settlement near the Pelusian branch of the Nile.[112] The presence of Nubians in the eastern Delta, he suggests, is further reflected in the names *Tꜣ-ḥw.t-pꜣ-Nḥs*,

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[106] Redford, *Egypt and Canaan*, 39. Ramses III boasts of how he "filled his (Amun's) temple with the male and female slaves . . . brought back from the lands of the Asiatics" (39). Cf. Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 14-15, 37, 40, 85.

[107] In Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 208.

[108] Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 88.

[109] Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 108: "The presence of Kushites in this region is the result of their earlier settlement during the New Kingdom."

[110] Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 88.

[111] Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 89, notes that other Egyptian records of deportation does not specify the population being deported.

[112] Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 88.

"[town?] . . . of the Nubian," and *Tḥpnḥt*, "Tahpanhes"; and similarly that the eastern Delta location *Nȝ-ꜥ.wj.w-ꜥȝm-pȝ-Nḥs*, "Lands of the Asiatic and the Nubian," may indicate the settlement of both Asiatics and Nubians in this region from at least the 26th Dynasty and potentially from the New Kingdom period.[113] Jeremiah makes several references to the city of Tahpanhes) as one of the places where exiled Jews of Jerusalem settled in the aftermath of the Babylonian destruction (Jer 2:16; 43:7, 8; 44:1; 46:14.; cf. Ezek 30.18).[114]

A further connection to the presence of Nubians in the eastern Delta may be reflected in the biblical name תַחְפְּנֵיס, Tahpenehes, (Egyptian, *Tȝ-pȝ-Nḥs*, "[of the] land of the Nubian"), referring to a queen of Egypt whose sister was given in marriage to Hadad of Edom who had fled from Solomon (1 King 11:19-20).[115] We have already seen that the pharaoh Nehesy of the 14th Dynasty based in Avaris in the Delta was the son of a Nubian queen and a Hyksos king.[116] Relatedly, the Cushite influence on the name Phinehas (Egyptian, *pȝ-Nḥs*) is also well recognized (Exod 6:25; Num 25:11, 31:6; 1 Sam 1:3, etc.).[117] Though the eastern Delta lies outside of Palestine proper, its proximity implies much for the Nubian presence and influence in the borders of Syria-Palestine.

This brief background is presented to suggest that Cushites were never strangers to

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[113] Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 68, 88, 106-108, 484-486. It should also be noted here that both Herodotus, *Hist.* 2. 29.4 and Strabo, *Geography*, 1.2.32, indicate that Egyptians and Nubians lived side by side on Elephantine. A Jewish colony was also established on Elephantine from perhaps as early as the 6th century B.C.; see Sami S. Ahmed, "The Jewish Colony at Elephantine," *Iliff Review* 22 (1965): 11-19; Bezalel Porten, "Settlement of the Jews at Elephantine and the Arameans at Syene," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 451-470; Stephen G. Rosenberg, "The Jewish Temple at Elephantine," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 67 (2004): 4-13; Karel Van der Toorn, "Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews of Elephantine," *Numen* 39 (1992): 80-101. Indeed there were coextensive Egyptian, Nubian, Jewish, Aramean, Greek, and possibly other ethnic groups in the frontier region between Egypt and Nubia in the first millennium B.C.; see Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 3-6, who speaks of a "cultural syncretism" in the Egyptian-Nubian frontier.

[114] The Septuagint renders the name Ταφνὰς (Daphne), and Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.30, 107, writes of Δάφνα αἱ Πελούσιαι. Herodotus' story of Sennacherib's defeat at the fortress town of Pelusium may connect Nubians to the story since the general region seem to have been a major Nubian settlement even into and beyond Roman times. For a host of toponyms and nomina influenced by *Tȝ-Nḥs* see, Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 480-481.

[115] Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 479: "With the influx of Kushites, personal names alluding to this ethnic group become very popular."

[116] See again §3.2.2.1.

[117] Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 479, and n.67; Alan H. Gardiner, "The Egyptian Origin of Some English Personal Names," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 56 (1936): 191-192.

Syria-Palestine at any period. Far from the exotic, strange, and distant foreigner spoken of by scholars, Cushites were a familiar face on the ethnic scene of Palestine long before and after Israelites settled the land in the Iron Age.[118] They were key players in the social and political affairs of Jerusalem for centuries before David adopted it as his capital city.[119] Furthermore, this background serves to indicate that since Cushites and Asiatics lived and worked at various levels of Egyptian society for millennia, there would have been without a doubt significant conflux of the ethnic boundaries between these populations inasmuch as there were considerable Nubian-Egyptian and Egyptian-Asiatic biological convergence.

Taking as a point of departure the historicity of several centuries of Israelite enslavement in Egypt followed by an Exodus from the land of bondage in the early Iron Age,[120] there would have been without a doubt the crossing of ethnic boundaries between Israelites and Cushites within Egyptian society for a prolonged period. The evidence for this may be discerned in the "mixed multitude," which according to the biblical text, left Egypt with the liberated Israelites: "And also a mixed multitude (עֵרֶב רַב) went up with them, also flocks and herds and a great number of cattle" (Exod 12:38).[121] This is not to suggest that only Cushites would have constituted the עֵרֶב רַב, but given a historical situation of an Israelite escape from Egypt on the order of the Exodus account, doubtless there would have been countless Nubian slaves who would have jumped at the opportunity to escape the life of

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[118] Cf. J. Daniel Hays, "The Cushites: A Black Nation in the Bible," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (1996): 396-409; Hays, "Black Nation in Ancient History," 270-280.

[119] Cf. Moran, *Amarna Letters*, EA 287.

[120] Disregarding the relatively recent "minimalist" view, the major challenge to the Exodus and conquest model of Israelite emergence has come from the "Sociological School" associated with George E. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," *Biblical Archaeology* 25 (1962): 66-87, and Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979). Though serious criticisms have been levied against the sociological model, it continues to enjoy strong support; for example from Dever, *The Early Israelites*; William G. Dever, "The Identity of Early Israel: A Rejoinder To Keith W. Whitelam," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 21 (1996): 3-24; Dever, "Ethnicity and the Archaeological Record," 49-66; Dever, "Cultural Continuity," 22-33; Dever, "Israel's Origins," 200-213. Still, biblical scholars to varying degrees are prepared to defend the historicity of the Exodus. See for example, Kitchen, *Old Testament*, 241-312; James K. Hoffmeier, "The Exodus and Wilderness Narratives," in *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 46-90; Hoffmeier, Millard and Rendsburg, *Exodus Narratives*; Graham Davies, "Was there an Exodus?" in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 23-40.

[121] In Nehemiah 13:3 the כָּל־עֵרֶב refers to residents among the Judaean population who were of foreign extract.

slavery alongside the Israelites.[122]

Thus, it is worth emphasis that Israelite population from earliest times were an "Afro-Asiatic" people.[123] According to the Hebrew Bible, Israel became "a people" within an Egyptian-Cushite-Asiatic social, cultural, and political nexus. And it may also be worth remembering that *Egypt is in Africa*, with all the inherent implications.[124] Moreover, exogamous relationships were characteristic of the chosen people at virtually every stage of their history.[125] Abraham, for example, married Hagar, an Egyptian slave (who verily could have been a Cushite), and other concubines of unknown origins (Gen 16:3; 25:1-6). And Joseph's marriage to Asenath, daughter of an Egyptian priest produced two of the largest tribes in Israel (Gen).[126] Finally, as noted earlier, the name of Aaron's grandson Phinehas, is but another indication of a Nubian element in the population that left Egypt. That the vast majority of Cushites in Egyptian society adopted Egyptian names and identity, so too Cushites in early Israelite society would have adopted Israelite names and assimilated into the group over time. And this brings us to the issue of the Cushite wife of Moses.

8.3.2 Case Study #1: Numbers 12:1: The Cushite Wife of Moses

Though no consensus currently exist,[127] scholars have proposed two main scenarios

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[122] Cf. Sadler, "The Cushite Other," 131.

[123] Of the five to eight Afroasiatic language families identified by linguists, only one is found in Asia, the rest are all located in Africa; see Daniel McCall, "The Afroasiatic Language Phylum: African in Origin, or Asian?" *Current Anthropology* 39 (1993): 139. This reality leads the vast majority of linguists to postulate a northeastern African origin for the Afroasiatic language family—including Semitic. Thus, McCall citing Philip D. Curtin, *Why People Move: Migration in African History* (Waco, TX: Markham Press, 1995), writes that "linguists today believe that this language family [Afroasiatic] originated in Africa, probably somewhere in northern Ethiopia or in the Red Sea hills" (139). Though a minority of linguists argue for a southwestern Asian origin of Afroasiatic, McCall himself concludes: "My prediction is that Africa will turn out to be the cradle of Afroasiatic, though the speakers of Proto-Asiatic were a reflux population from Southwest Asia" (143).

[124] On this see Theodore Celenko, ed., *Egypt in Africa* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1996).

[125] Even during the exilic period serious measures had to be put in place to mitigate the infiltration of foreign blood in the Judaean population. Cf. Karen S. Winslow, "Ethnicity, Exogamy, and Zipporah," *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 4 (2006): 1-13.

[126] There may even be hints of a Nubian connection in the name צָפְנַת פַּעְנֵחַ, Zaphenath-paneah given to Joseph. Though no concrete evidence exists for this connection at the moment, the suffix "paneah" is eerily similar to the Egyptian, *p3-nḥs, panehas*, "the Nubian."

[127] Meik Gerhards, "Über die Herkunft der Frau des Mose," *Vetus Testamentum* 55 (2005): 164.

related to the identify of Moses' Cushite Wife in Numbers 12:1. Either she is Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro the Midianite (Exod 2:16-22), or she is a woman of Nubian origin whom Moses subsequently takes as a wife. A number of ancient and modern sources support this latter position.[128] Josephus, for example, writes that Moses' military campaign against Cush which he undertook as an Egyptian military leader, resulted in his marriage to Tharbis, the daughter of the Ethiopian king.[129] It is quite plausible that Moses did marry a Nubian woman given the background presented above. There is nothing in the historical or social background that would preclude this possibility.[130] Nevertheless, the biblical evidence would seem to favour the first scenario; namely, that the Cushite woman of Numbers 12:1-2 is Zipporah, the Midianite.[131] Though the narrative context does seem to suggest a recent marriage,[132] it does not *require* that Moses should have had a second marriage. As argued below, a *new situation* likely caused this emphasis on the foreignness of Moses' wife, Zipporah.

As other biblical scholars have pointed out, the main link between Zipporah the Midianite and Cush, or more properly "Cushan," comes from Habakkuk 3:7:

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[128] For example, both the Septuagint and Vulgate connect Zipporah to Ethiopia/Nubia. Also, David T. Adamo, "The African Wife of Moses: An Examination of Numbers 12:1-9," *Africa Theological Journal* 18 (1989): 1-9; Philip J. Budd, *Numbers* (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 5; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 136; Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 328; Hays, "Black Nation in the Bible," 397-401; Mukti Barton, "The Skin of Miriam Became as White as Snow: The Bible, Western Feminism and Colour Politics," *Feminist Theology* 27 (2001): 68-80.

[129] Flavius Josephus, "The Antiquities of the Jews," in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 69-70. Cf. Gerhards, "Der Frau des Mose," 167, n. 31.

[130] But note Martin Noth, *Numbers: A Commentary* (The Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), 94, who suggests this is not possible because Nubia is "far removed from Moses' sphere of activity." See also John Sturdy, *Numbers* (The Cambridge Bible Commentary: New English Bible; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 89; and Gerhards, "Der Frau des Mose," 169, for similar views.

[131] See Gerhards, "Der Frau des Mose," 167-175; Roland De Vaux, "Sur L'origine Kénite ou Madianite du Yahvisme," 9 (1969): 28; Sturdy*, Numbers*, 89-90; Alice O. Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 103; Noth*, Numbers*, 98. Noth's position is baffling since he claims that Num 12:1 indicates that Moses did take a wife from Cushan (Hab 3:7) in Arabia, but that she is to be distinguished from Zipporah, who evidently was not a Cushite but a Midianite.

[132] George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1965), 121.

תַּחַת אָוֶן רָאִיתִי אָהֳלֵי כוּשָׁן יִרְגְּזוּן יְרִיעוֹת אֶרֶץ מִדְיָן

I saw the tents of Cushan under affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian trembled.

It seems certain that Cushan is in synonymous parallelism with Midian in this text.[133] Chapter 5 of this study has already indicated that a complex of Hamitic and Semitic peoples inhabited Arabia,[134] and further that "African" people occupied a wide geographical area from Africa, to Arabia, to Iran, all the way into the Indus valley.[135] We have seen, for example, that "Sheba and Dedan" are descendants of Cush in the Genesis genealogy, and so are the Sabeans (Gen 10:7). These ethnonyms are known to Arabia since historical times.

Yet in Genesis 25:1-3 the children of Keturah, the wife of Abraham (whose origin is unknown) bear him six sons including Midian and Jokshan. The sons of the latter are also listed as "Sheba and Dedan" (Gen 25:3). Did both Cushites and Shemitic Abraham give rise to the ethnonyms "Sheba and Dedan"? On what account do the biblical authors link Sheba and Dedan and other ethnonyms already discussed with both Cushites and Shemites?[136] A clue may be deduced from the biblical text which indicates that Ishmael's wife, like his mother, was Egyptian and thus Hamitic (Gen 21:21). Hence, already in the descendants of Abraham there is the confluence of Shemitic and Hamitic peoples. Moreover, the biblical text places Abraham's descendants by Hagar and Keturah in regions of Arabia and the Syro-Arabian desert (Gen 21:14-21; 25:6).[137]

Therefore, eschewing reductionistic conceptions that would isolate "Africans" from "biblical" peoples, one should envision a complex of Hamitic and Shemitic peoples inhabiting Arabia since historical times. These genealogical and social confluences gave rise to various ethnic, linguistic, and cultural affiliations which became known collectively as "Arabs,"[138] or

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[133] De Vaux, "Kénite ou Madianite," 28. Note a similar parallelism between "Teman" and "Paran" in Hab 3:3; on this see Gerhards, "Der Frau des Mose," 168.

[134] Cf. Israel Eph'al, *The Ancient Arabs: Nomads on the Borders of the Fertile Crescent, 9th-5th Century B.C* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1982), 78, 227-229, 231-240. Phillipson, *Ancient Ethiopia*, 26, 50-54, 123-125, 141-142.

[135] See again §5.3.2.

[136] Cf. §5.3.1.

[137] See Eph'al, *Ancient Arabs*, 231-240.

[138] Eph'al, *Ancient Arabs*, 231.

from a modern perspective, Afro-Asiatic peoples.[139] Proximity, historical duration, socio-political dynamics, no less than recent genetic studies all indicate that ancient Arabia had very strong ties to African populations.[140] The movement of populations (through wars and colonization, migration, trade, etc.) occurred in both directions of the Red Sea for thousands of years more or less unabated. Thus, any notion that "Africans" were restricted to the western side of the Red Sea for millennia is simply a modern invention.[141]

Moreover, if one subscribes to the Out-of-Africa worldview described in Chapter 5, then Arabia would be the main route by which "Africans" left Africa to people the rest of the globe.[142] In any case, ancient historians are quite clear that Africans were a central feature of virtually every part of the known world. As Meghan Keita emphasizes, "For Herodotus and the rest of the ancient world, there was a clear association of mythic and historical events that placed Africans in every quadrant of their world, not only as servitor, but as brother, sister, cousin, husband, wife, lady, and lord."[143]

This means that the tendency of many biblical scholars to locate Cush or Cushan in southern Palestine or the Syro-Arabian dessert regions is simply an attempt to distance these groups from "Africa." However, Cushites in Arabia were no less "African" than people who occupied the northeast quadrant of what would later become known as the "African"

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[139] Cf. McCall, "Afroasiatic Language Phylum," 139-143. See also, Keita, "Africans and Asians," 1-30, who argues that Western epistemology has all but denied the age long interaction between Africans and Asians. The "Afro" of "Afro-Asiatic" he maintains is far less emphasized in modern conceptions since the ancient Arabs are typically conceptualized as "Asians" in order to deny their intimate interaction with and connection to African peoples (8).

[140] Cf. W. Raunig, "Yemen and Ethiopia—Ancient Cultural Links between Two Neighbouring Countries on the Red Sea," in *Yemen: 3000 Years of Art and Civilisation in Arabia Felix*, ed. Werner Daum (Innsbruck: Pinguin-Verlag, 1987), 409-418; Pankhurst, "Ethiopia's Historic Ties," 393-419; Fattovich, "External Connections," 1-60; Fattovich, "Northern Horn of Africa," 145-175; Phillipson, "Southern Arabia," 257-266; Priya Moorjani et al, "The History of African Gene Flow into Southern Europeans, Levantines, and Jews," *PLoS Genet* 7 (2011): 1-13.

[141] See Keita, "Africans and Asians," 2, who writes that, "The exigencies of modern racial construction have erected paradigms that are accepted globally and that militate against critical examination of African and Asian interaction. . . . This is particularly true in the examination of Africans and people of African descent. The vision imposed on Africans is temporally and geographically fixed: movement to the western hemisphere in the wake of the Columbian voyages. The vehicle, and therefore, the socio-political economic icon of this experience is the slave ship. It is here that the histories of Africa, Africans, and people of African descent are 'known.'"

[142] See again §5.3.2.3; Oppenheimer*, The Real Eve*, 175-176.

[143] Keita, "Africans and Asians," 11.

continent.[144] That Midianites and many other Arabic populations were considered Cushitic peoples based on real or perceived genealogical ancestry and kinship ties, as well as on account of their conspicuously dark somatic features can only be precluded if one imports modern racial ideas into the ancient context.[145] It may even be argued that the majority of ancient Arabia were darker skinned peoples.[146] That the lover in Song of Songs compare her black (שחר) skin colour to the "tents of Kedar" (Song 1:5), does more than allude to the black goat skin tents of the Kedarites.[147] That the verb קדר means "to darken," "become dark," or even "blackened" (pass. pt.), equally suggests the darker hue of the politically influential Kedarites (Ishmaelites; Gen 25:13).[148]

As for the biblical pericope under discussion, Moses' father-in-law who is called Jethro, Reuel, and Hobab, is said to be a Kenite in addition to a Midianite (Exod 2: 16-22; 4:18; 18:1-27; Judg 1:16; 4:11).[149] Kenites are generally taken as a sub-clan of the wider Midianite tribal

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[144] Cf. Keita, "Africans and Asians," 9-10; Brent D. Shaw, "Who Are You? Africa and Africans," in *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Jeremy McInerney (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 527-540. See also Martha Wells Lewis and Kären Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 157, who groups Southwest Asia and North Africa together in their "world regions" geography based on historical and cultural connections. Intriguingly, many ancient geographers used the Nile as the division between "Asia" and "Libya." Strabo, *Geography*, 1.2.25-27 and others contested this division. See Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, 22.

[145] Cf. Keita, "Africans and Asians," 2.

[146] For scientific perspective related to the distribution of skin colour, see Nina Jablonski, "The Evolution of Human Skin and Skin Color," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 585-563; Nina G. Jablonski, "Human Skin Pigmentation as an Example of Adaptive Evolution," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 156 (2012): 45-57; Nina G. Jablonski and George Chaplin, "Epidermal Pigmentation in the Human Lineage Is an Adaptation to Ultraviolet Radiation," *Journal of Human Evolution* 65 (2013): 671-675; Nina Jablonski, "The Evolution of Skin Pigmentation and Hair Texture in People of African Ancestry," *Dermatologic Clinics* 32 (2014): 113-121.

[147] Athalya Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1982), 49, suggests שחר, "black," is comparable to a raven in the biblical text; cf. Song 5:11.

[148] Kedar (קֵדָר) is a son of Ishmael in Gen 25:13, and a significant tribe in the Syrian-Arabian desert attested from the 8th century in Assyrian records (cf. Isa 21:16-17; 42:11; 60:7; Jer 2:10; 49:28). For the Kedarites, see Eph'al, *Ancient Arabs*, 54-56, 147-169, 222-227; Ernst A. Knauf, "Kedar (Person)," in *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4: 9-10. On the meaning of קדר, see "קדר," *HALOT*, 3:1072.

[149] On the problems with the multiple names for Moses' father-in-law, see De Vaux, "Kénite ou Madianite," 28-29; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 92-94, 334-335.

group.[150] Zipporah thus bore multiple identities: She's a Kenite, a Midianite, and a Cushite. None of these identities need be exclusive. The Kenite tribal group is a sub-clan of the larger tribal league called Midian, and the Cushite connection may have been inferred as genealogical linkages to an eponymous ancestor Cush, and/or to a geographical and biological entanglement with Cushitic peoples, and perhaps no less based on the dark skin pigmentation characteristic of Cushites. Based on our discussion in Chapter 4 of this study, it would appear that *Cush* and related terms carried overt or implicit reference to the generally darker pigmentation of those thus designated.[151] The unqualified statement in Jeremiah 13:23 seems to bear this out: "Can a Cushite change his skin or a leopard his spots." This statement takes it for granted that the Judaean audience could immediately understand the epidermous and even geographic comparison without further qualification.[152] They would automatically associate a Cushite with dark skin pigmentation.[153]

Though this study supports the view that Moses Cushite wife in Number 12:1-3 was Zipporah, it matters little for her Cushite identity: whether of Nubia or Midian, a Cushite was a Cushite. Thus, if the Kenite-Midianite-Cushite connection is secure (it is certainly plausible), this Cushite clan becomes an instrumental group to the Israelites in their wilderness journey. First, Jethro provides crucial guidance to Moses in terms of the social organization of the Israelites leading Moses to divide the judiciary burden among the people as a result (Exod 18:13-26). Later on, this Cushite clan becomes part of the Israelite community, and dwell among the children of Judah (Num 10:29-33; Judg 1:16; 4:11).

According to Numbers 10:29-33, Moses invites the clan of Zipporah's kinsman Hobab, the son of Reuel his father-in-law, to join the Israelites on their journey to the land of promise. Hobab is at first hesitant, but eventually caves to Moses' persistence and agrees to sojourn with the Israelites (v. 31). Moses promises that they would function in a key role to the Israelite company. As a people of the desert, they would serve as guides to the Israelites; they

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[150] Gerhards, "Der Frau des Mose," 170. But De Vaux, "Kénite ou Madianite," 29 disputes this. Cf. William J. Dumbrell, "Midian: A Land or a League?" *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975): 323-337. The land of Midian is generally placed in northwestern Arabia; see Levine*, Numbers 1-20*, 93; Gerhards, "Der Frau des Mose," 166.

[151] See Brenner*, Colour Terms in the Old Testament*, 47, 168; Sadler, "The Cushite Other," 127.

[152] Cf. Sadler, "The Cushite Other," 127; Hays, "Black Nation in the Bible," 404.

[153] If one would argue that Jeremiah is disparaging the dark skin pigmentation of the Cushite, then one also has to be prepared to argue that Jeremiah is equally disparaging the leopard for his spotty skin.

would be the "eyes" of the Israelite company, directing their journey and scouting out places for them to camp (v. 31). Not only would the Kenites provide crucial guidance, but according to Moses, they would also share equally in the blessings Yahweh has promised to his people (v. 32). Moses' request for the Kenites to join the Israelites on their journey is nothing less than an invitation to become a part of Yahweh's covenant community.[154] How large a company of Kenites joins Moses, is not clear, but based on their later presence in Israel their number appear sizable. The pivotal role given to the Kenites should not be overlook in the episode involving Moses' Cushite wife in Numbers 12.

8.3.2.1 Race or Spiritual Authority?

Though explicit reference to skin pigmentation is missing from the account in Numbers 12:1-3, a number of scholars have, with good reasons, deduced a racial motive behind Miriam's disparagement of "the Cushite woman" whom Moses had married.[155] Pointing to the fact that Yahweh's punishment resulted in Miriam's skin becoming "white as snow"—an apparently classic case of "poetic justice"—and her being "shut out" of the camp, some scholars assert that Miriam was disparaging Moses' marriage to a black African woman.[156] Phylis Trible, for example, writes that "By the irony of the implied contrast, the text would seem to set female against female, native against foreigner, white against black, power against powerlessness."[157] Before addressing the issue of "power against powerlessness" below, it is

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[154] Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 335: "In effect, Moses offered Hobab a share in the Promised Land."

[155] See Sadler, *Cushite*, 32-40; Sadler, "The Cushite Other," 128-132; Barton, "Skin of Miriam," 130-131. Though Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters*, 42, had earlier embraced the view that racial prejudice precipitated Miriam's reaction in Numbers 12, he would later retract this position (see Felder, "Racism," 135-136) in favour of the social elitist view offered by Randall C. Bailey, "Beyond Identification: The Use of Africans in Old Testament Poetry and Narratives," in *Stony The Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 165-184. According to Bailey, black skin colour was highly regarded as a symbol of beauty and elite status. Thus, Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman conferred upon him an even a higher social standing than before, spurring jealousy in his siblings. This view is also reiterated by Sadler, "The Cushite Other," 130, who writes that "Moses has somehow by his marriage elevated himself above his siblings."

[156] E.g., Barton, "Skin of Miriam," 73-77; Sadler, "The Cushite Other," 130-131.

[157] Phyllis Trible, "Bringing Miriam out of the Shadows," in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 177. Cf. Barton, "Skin of Miriam," 74.

first important to point out that except for one highly symbolic instance (cf. Lam 4:7-8),[158] the biblical text associates skin pigmentation and whiteness only in contexts of skin diseases like psoriasis and leprosy (e.g., Exod 4: 6; Lev 13:1-46; Num 12:10; 2 King 5:27).[159]

Thus, Trible's assertion that Miriam, and her Israelite ex-slaves were "white" is fundamentally flawed.[160] "White" with its attendant connotations of the modern era is completely anachronistic to the Ancient Near Eastern context. Again, Israel as a nation was birthed in an Afro-Asiatic social and political *ecumene*, where no value judgment akin to the modern era was attached to skin colour. That Miriam's skin colour was lighter than the Cushite woman may be assumed, but the difference need not be between "white" and "black," but rather one of degree.[161] Such contrasts is readily apparent even among so-called "black" peoples with differing shades of skin pigmentation.[162]

While it must be argued from scattered hints in the wilderness narrative,[163] a defensible case can be made for the view that the real issue in Numbers 12:1-16 is not skin colour, but the exercise of spiritual authority.[164] The former is not mentioned in the Numbers passage while the latter becomes the primary site of contention. A passage in Exodus 4 provides the first hint. Though the episode is somewhat ambiguous, a number of scholars have noted that Zipporah functions as a figure of salvation in Exodus 4:24-26.[165] According to the pericope, in journeying from Midian to Egypt with his wife and his son(s), Yahweh meets Moses "on the

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[158] Lam 4:7-8 describe the pre-siege Judaean Nazarites as "purer than snow, whiter than milk"; their "bodies" are "more ruddy than rubies, their hair like sapphire." However, due to the famine, now their faces are "blacker than coal." That there is no known mechanism for turning ruddy complexion "blacker than coal," suggests a poetic and symbolic usage of colour in this context. Cf. Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament*, 49, 52, 82, 89-90.

[159] Cf. Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament*, 49, 52, 82, 89-90, 168.

[160] See also critique in Barton, "Skin of Miriam," 74.

[161] Cf. Sadler, "The Cushite Other," 131; Barton, "Skin of Miriam," 74.

[162] Going back to the example in the Introduction to this study, some Ethiopian groups—even some sub-groups within the Falasha—assume a different skin colour based on very slight variation in skin tone. See again §1.1 and §3.3.3.1.

[163] As Sadler, "The Cushite Other," 130, notes, the only thing that is immediately clear from the narrative "is that Miriam implies that the Cushite woman was Other and that the difference mattered."

[164] See Bellis, *Women's Stories*, 104-105, who argues along this same line.

[165] Bernard P. Robinson, "Zipporah to the Rescue: A Contextual Study of Exodus IV 24-6," *Vetus Testamentum* 36 (1986): 447-461; Susan Ackerman, "Why is Miriam also among the Prophets? (And Is Zipporah among the Priests?)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 71-80; Winslow, "Ethnicity, Exogamy, and Zipporah," 4-5.

way" and attempts to kill him (v. 24).[166] The reason for Yahweh's assault is not clear but it seems related to circumcision since Zipporah instinctively "cuts off her son's foreskin" with a flint knife and smears the bloody foreskin on Moses' "feet" (i.e., his genitals; v. 25).[167] This vicarious circumcision of Moses satisfies Yahweh's demands and Moses is left alone (v. 26).[168]

Since Zipporah is neither Israelite nor male, her assertion of a role typically reserved for Israelite males, is a highly significant event in the text of Exodus. What is its primary function? First, though Zipporah is a foreign woman, her act is acceptable to Yahweh. Second, she becomes a "saviour" to her husband whose life is threatened by the deity. Third, her act is tantamount to a vicarious sacrifice, investing her with "priestly" authority reserved for male figures such as her father.[169] Bernard Robinson goes so far as to argue that Zipporah "By undertaking the circumcision of her son . . . has taken the place of her father Jethro. Henceforth she is not only Moses' wife, but also his surrogate father-in-law."[170] Zipporah thus functions in a mediatory and even a priestly role.[171]

Miriam too, the ringleader of the charges against Moses,[172] is a figure of spiritual authority: she is called a "prophetess" (הַנְּבִיאָה; Exod 15:20), and she claims that Yahweh has also spoken through her (Num 12:2).[173] Based on her role in Exodus 15:20, Gordon Wenham

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[166] Robinson, "Zipporah to the Rescue," 455.

[167] See Ackerman, "Zipporah among the Priests?" 73-74. Though Robinson, "Zipporah to the Rescue," 456, suggests that Moses was circumcised, other scholars have argued that Moses' uncircumcision triggered Yahweh's attack.

[168] Ackerman, "Zipporah among the Priests?" 74. See also Robinson, "Zipporah to the Rescue," 456-461, who argues that the episode serves as a prefiguration of the passover sacrifice and deliverance in Exod 12: "Gershom's blood saves Moses, just as the blood of the Passover lamb will save the Israelites" (460).

[169] See again Ackerman, "Zipporah among the Priests?" 73-75. On the basis that Jethro extols Yahweh, offers sacrifice, and presides over a religious meal near the "mountain of God" (Exod 18:10-12), several scholars hold the view that Jethro is a priest of Yahweh, a Midianite deity. De Vaux, "Kénite ou Madianite," 31, 32, for example writes, "Ce prêtre madianite est donc un prêtre de Yahvé. . . rien ne permit de conclure qu'il était prêtre de Yahvé et qu'il a trasmis sa foi à Moïse." Cf. S. Abramsky, "On the Kenite-Midianite Background of Moses' Leadership," *Eretz Israel* 12 (1975): 35-39.

[170] Robinson, "Zipporah to the Rescue," 458.

[171] See also Ackerman, "Zipporah among the Priests?" 71-75; Bellis, *Women's Stories*, 103-105.

[172] That Miriam is listed before Aaron in v. 1, and the fact that the verb תְּדַבֵּר , "she spoke," is the feminine singular, as well as that Yahweh's punishment falls on Miriam singularly, suggests that she is the primary instigator in this episode. On this see Gray, *Numbers*, 120.

[173] Cf. Ackerman, "Zipporah among the Priests?" 63-71.

describes her spiritual authority as "the head of the spirit-filled women."[174] Further, as the older sister of Moses (cf. Exod 2:7), Miriam is clearly in a position of spiritual, and even filial authority. Aaron, too, vested with a perpetual priesthood is also in a position of spiritual and filial authority. Consider, for example, that the unique humility of Moses (v. 3) renders him incapable of offering a defense of his position to his older siblings; Yahweh must take up his cause.[175]

Contra Noth who argues that the primary issue is Moses marriage to the Cushite woman,[176] it is suggested here that the main issue in Numbers 12 is the challenge to Mosaic spiritual authority, whereas his foreign marriage becomes simply a pretext to prosecute this primary charge.[177] George Gray makes more or less the same point when he argues that, "at most the marriage is the occasion, whereas the real cause of the complaint against Moses is the wounded pride of Miriam and Aaron."[178] That Miriam articulates her dissatisfaction with Moses' spiritual authority and sets herself and Aaron as viable alternatives to Moses for divine revelation, and that Yahweh's reproof rests chiefly in his defense of Moses' special spiritual privileges (vv. 6-8), all point to authority as the main issue in the narrative.[179]

Given the fact that Zipporah is already presented in the Exodus narrative as exercising spiritual authority which is acceptable to God, and since for a foreigner Zipporah would undoubtedly exercise a considerable amount of influence on her husband, this places her in a position of influence beyond her immediate family circle and sets her on par with Miriam. Not only so, but the crucial role assigned to Zipporah's clan as guides to the Israelites means that they too, as foreigners would develop very close kinship ties to Moses (and the Levites) and thereby exercise seemingly disproportionate influence on Moses' decision making.[180] That the

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[174] Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; Leicester, Eng.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 110.

[175] Cf. Katharine D. Sakenfeld, *Journeying with God: A Commentary on the Book of Numbers* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 79.

[176] Noth*, Numbers*, 93.

[177] See Budd*, Numbers*, 134, for support for this view.

[178] Gray*, Numbers*, 121. Gray suggests further that "marriage with a foreigner as a ground of offense" indicates a later editorial addendum (likely post-exilic).

[179] See J. De Vaulx, *Les Nombres* (SB; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1972), 161, who suggest that "family jealousy" is the main issue in the narrative. The challenge to Mosaic spiritual authority would derive yet again from Levitical circles in the personage of Korah (Num 16:1-50).

[180] Cf. Abramsky, "Kenite-Midianite Background," 35-39.

son of Eleazar by the daughter of Putiel was named Phinehas ("the Nubian"; Exod 6:25), may be a further indication of Cushites in the Levitical family—or at a minimum, evidence for the presence of Cushites in the wider Israelite community.[181]

Regardless, what is clear is that the close kinship ties existing between Moses and the Kenites would place the latter in a special position of influence.[182] It appears that the growing influence of Zipporah and her clan—the "new situation"—became a cause of concern, especially for Miriam in her role as "the prophetic matriarch,"[183] leading her to emphasize and disparage the foreignness of her sister-in-law. By emphasizing Zipporah's *Cushite* identity, Miriam disavows the genealogical kinship between Zipporah and the Israelites (Midian is a son of Abraham [Gen 25:2]) and places her in the distant lineage of Ham-Cush. Here then is a situation where intersecting identities is manipulated to gain leverage in a kinship dispute.

It may be plausibly argued that Miriam and Aaron were jealous of Moses' spiritual authority but were even more indignant toward the influence of Zipporah and her clan in the direction of the affairs of the Israelite community.[184] Why should these Cushite outsiders be given such influence over the affairs of Israel when this might mean a diminished role for Miriam. Again, as Baruch Levin has rightly claimed, "race could not have been the point at issue."[185] The ancient context had no concept of colour prejudice such as that which developed in the modern west.[186] Yet as we have seen throughout this study, ancient Israel, like all other

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[181] See Winnicki, *Foreign Population*, 87, who writes that "the influx of Nubians in Egypt made the name popular."

[182] Cf. Abramsky, "Kenite-Midianite Background," 35-39.

[183] Sadler, "The Cushite Other," 130. Cf. Wenham, *Numbers*, 110. Note Noth, *Numbers*, 94, who seems to support this view when he writes that Miriam's reaction to the Cushite woman is "perhaps to be explained on the grounds that she [Miriam] was the only female figure in Moses' circle known to tradition." See also Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 93, 334, who notes the "intimate" and "familial relationship" between Moses and the Kenites.

[184] Reiterating one of Frank Cross' chief assertion regarding this passage, Sakenfeld, *Book of Numbers*, 80 writes that, "If Cush was a subgroup of Midian, then the criticism of Moses' wife in Num. 12 may reflect a conflict between a pro-Moses group and a pro-Aaron group during the era of the monarchy." Cf. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 203-204. Whether this is so or not, clearly a background conflict which is now largely lost is behind Miriam's attack against her sister-in-law. Cf. Bellis, *Women's Stories*, 104.

[185] Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 328. Levine suggests that Moses' taking of a second wife in addition to Zipporah may have become a concern for Miriam. This seems highly unlikely, however.

[186] See Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice*, 63; Adrian N. Sherwin-White, *Racial prejudice in imperial Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 1.

peoples, harboured deep-seated religious and cultural prejudices, and no less xenophobic regard for the foreigner. Hence, the injunction in Exodus 23:9 and other texts: "You must not oppress the resident immigrant (גֵּר; "stranger," "sojourner," "alien"); for you know the heart of an immigrant since you were immigrants in the land of Egypt." Rather, the Israelites are instructed to "love the immigrant (גֵּר) as yourself seeing you were immigrants in the land of Egypt" (Lev 19:34).[187]

Wherefore, rather than a disparagement of Zipporah based on skin pigmentation (again which is not mentioned in the narrative), it is the apparent disproportionate influence of this foreign people, connected to Moses by marriage, and of whom Zipporah is chief, which unsettles Miriam and Aaron—bona fide Israelites and siblings of the leader of the Israelite community.[188] Thus, a rivalry between Miriam and her sister-in-law (and her clan) may in fact lie behind Miriam's invidious assessment of the "Cushite woman."[189] Contrary to Trible, Zipporah is therefore not in a position of powerlessness,[190] but rather it is her occupation of a position of power, evidently more influential than Miriam's, which is the real issue. Miriam would have these foreigners excluded from the community of Yahweh in order to preserve her own status and influence.

Forgetting the benefits that have come by way of these Cushite foreigners, Miriam deigns to fashion her challenge to Moses' spiritual authority on the pretext of his foreign marriage. It is Moses' exogamous alliance which Zipporah which Miriam seem to be contesting.[191] To Miriam, Moses' marriage to a foreign woman is evidence that his spiritual authority is compromised. As Wenham puts it, Miriam's "personal grumble" becomes another pretext for challenging Mosaic spiritual authority.[192] Nevertheless, Jethro's family has responded favourably to Yahweh's community, and consequently Yahweh has demonstrated his acceptance of Jethro, Zipporah, Hobab, and their entire clan. It should again be

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[187] On the גֵּר in Israelite society, see Rolf Rendtorff, "The *Gēr* in the Priestly Laws of the Pentateuch," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 77-87.

[188] See Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 92.

[189] Renita J. Weems, "In Law, In Love: Miriam and Her Cushite Sister-in-Law," in *Just A Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible* (San Diego: LuraMedia, 1988), 71-84, makes the same point in arguing that rivalry between the sister-in-laws lies at the root of the problem in the narrative.

[190] Cf. Trible, "Miriam out of the Shadows," 177.

[191] Cf. Winslow, "Ethnicity, Exogamy, and Zipporah," 7.

[192] Wenham, *Numbers*, 110.

remembered that Moses' first encounter with Yahweh happens in Midianite territory while he is watching the sheep of his Midianite father-in-law. Not to mention that the mountain of God, Sinai, is in Midianite country.

Furthermore, as noted, Zipporah's vicarious sacrificial act preserves the life of Moses, and both Moses' father-in-law and brother-in-law provides crucial guidance to the Israelites. In all these ways the Kenites have demonstrated faithfulness to Yahweh and his chosen people. And by his firm rebuke of Miriam (and ironically not Aaron), Yahweh is demonstrating that any people who comes to trust in him finds full acceptance and is treated equally as members of the Israelite community. Moses' marriage to a Cushite finds full approval from the deity. Here the Abrahamic promise is fully applied to Zipporah and her clan: "I will bless those who bless you" (Gen 12:3). The punishment meted out to Miriam demonstrates that the "chosen" status is not exclusive to Israel but is open to any individual or group who demonstrate faith in Yahweh—Cushite or otherwise. Indeed, Zipporah's priestly function in Exodus 4:24-26 means that Yahweh even bypasses gender barriers to demonstrate his acceptance of the faithful foreigner. The story of Ebedmelech the Cushite is yet another demonstration of Yahweh's acceptance of a foreigner who exhibits faith toward him.

8.3.3 Case Study #2: Jeremiah 38-39: Ebedmelech the Cushite

Jeremiah 38:7-13 narrates the account of Ebedmelech, the Cushite (עֶבֶד־מֶלֶךְ הַכּוּשִׁי) who rescues the prophet Jeremiah from certain death. Copher and others plausibly suggest "Ebedmelech the Cushite," like "Uriah the Hittite," could be a Judaean national with Cushite/foreign ancestry, especially given the history of Cushite engagement in Israel and Judah.[193] Though this is certainly a possibility, Yahweh's message to Ebedmelech would seem to suggest that his demonstration of faith is exceptional and thus contrasts with the native-born officials who at this point have abandoned faith and are determined to eliminate Jeremiah (Jer 39:18).[194] The origin of Ebedmelech should therefore be sought elsewhere. How Ebedmelech comes to be at Zedekiah's court is not known, but his foreign origin seems certain.

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[193] Charles B. Copher, "The Black Presence in the Old Testament," in *Stony The Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 162.

[194] Cf. Sadler, *Cushite*, 94.

Though עֶבֶד־מֶלֶךְ, "servant of the king," could be personal name, some interpreters suggest the name is titular, given to him by the Judaean leadership who could not pronounce his foreign name.[195] Meik Gerhards' suggestion that Ebedmelech could not have come from distant Ethiopia, but like Zipporah and the Cushite in David's army, derives from a tribe in northern Arabia, is untenable.[196] However, given the history of Cushites in the Egyptian army and the habitual military alliances between Egypt and Cush, Hays' suggestion that Ebedmelech is an Egyptian-Cushite military representative in Jerusalem is not only plausible but likely.[197] Jeremiah's prophetic ministry witnesses the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. by the Babylonians (Jer 39), and Jeremiah is unequivocal that Judah—yet again—has resorted to Egypt for military assistance (Jer 2:18, 36; 37:5, 7).

Here then is another scenario (similar to our discussion in Chapter 5 regarding Hezekiah and the Assyrians) where Judah concludes a military alliance with Egypt against the threat from the north. But like Isaiah, Jeremiah not only opposes alliance with Egypt, but he too declares the futility of Egyptian help (Jer 2:36), and proclaims the defeat of Egypt and its allies, Cush, Put, and Lud at the hand of Babylon—Yahweh's instrument of judgment (Jer 43:11-13; 44:30; 46:2, 8-11). Jeremiah's contemporary, Ezekiel, also disparages Egyptian aid and similarly declares the defeat of Egypt and its allies Cush, Put, Lud, Libya and Arabia at the hand of the Babylonians (E.g., Ezek 16:26; 17:15; 23:27; 29:1-20; 30:4-5, 9; cf. 38:3). According to Eze 29:16, Yahweh's drastic punishment of Egypt by the hands of the Babylonians, will once and finally end Judah's reliance on its southern neighbour. Moreover, both Jeremiah and Ezekiel declare the imminent destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians as a consequence of Judah's breach of the covenant (e.g., Jer 20:4-5; 21:4, 7, 10, 22:25, etc.; Eze 12:19; 14:21-22; 24:2, etc.). Jeremiah nonetheless admonishes the leaders of Judah to surrender unconditionally

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[195] See Sadler, *Cushite*, 93-94; Hays, "Black Nation in the Bible," 405.

[196] Gerhards, "Der Frau des Mose," 169. According to Gerhards, "Doch wird kaum daran gedacht sein, dass Äthiopier oder Männer aus einem anderen weit entfernten südlichen Land in Davids Diensten gestanden hätten. . . . Wenn wir aber ausgehend von Hab. iii 7 einen nordarabischen Stamm Kusch annehmen, lässt sich an einen „arabischen Diener" denken, also einen Mann, dessen Heimat wesentlich näher liegt. . . .Was für den Kuschiten von 2 Sam. xviii gilt, lässt sich ebenso für den in Jer. xxxviii und xxxix erwähnten Retter des Propheten, den Kuschiten Ebed-Melech, vermuten, einen Höfling (אִישׁ סָרִיס) Zedekias (Jer. xxxviii 7). Am Hof von Jerusalem, von wo aus auf das Ganze des damaligen Orients gesehen ein Duodezfürstentum regiert wurde, ist ein „äthiopischer Palastbediensteter" kaum zu erwarten, dagegen böte ein Mann aus Nordarabien keinen Anlass zur Verwunderung."

[197] Hays, "Black Nation in the Bible," 405. Cf. Sadler, *Cushite*, 94-95.

to the Babylonians in order to avert total disaster. His warning ultimately goes unheeded (e.g., 37:7-10).

Jeremiah's declaration of the city's imminent doom and his persistent urging to open the city to the Babylonians render him an enemy of the state. Those among the leadership who advocate rebellion against Babylon consider him a traitor of his nation, and one whose words are affecting the morale of the army (38:1-4). Despite Jeremiah's influence at court, he must be silenced. The king, bowing to pressure and admitting his incapacity to save the prophet, grants permission to his officials to do as they see fit with him (38:5). But instead of summarily executing him, perhaps out of a semblance of respect for the prophet, they decide to abandon Jeremiah to starvation by lowering him into a muddy well. He sinks into the mud forthwith (38.6). Jeremiah's imminent death prompts Ebedmelech to plead with the king for his release (38:7). As Brueggemann puts it, only Ebedmelech "stands between Jeremiah and death."[198]

Though it is uncertain how Ebedmelech has come to display such concern for Jeremiah, it is clear that the former has a deep regard for the personal safety of the latter. But how is Ebedmelech singlehandedly able to convince the king to spare Jeremiah when the king had already given permission to dispose of him? Ebedmelech evidently would have had to be in a position of considerable influence in Zedekiah's court in order to persuade the king under such duress. His title is given as סָרִיס, which has traditionally been taken to mean a "eunuch," someone who has been castrated.[199] This traditional understanding along with Ebedmelech being "a servant of the king" and an "Ethiopian" have lead some scholars to presuppose him a "slave."[200]

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[198] Walter Brueggemann, *To Build, to Plant: A Commentary on Jeremiah 26-52* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 149.

[199] See Robert North, "Palestine, Administration of: Postexilic Judean Officials," in *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5: 87.

[200] In his passing treatment of Ebedmelech, John Bright, *Jeremiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 231, 232, suggests that he was a "palace servant," and likely literally a eunuch (and thus not an official). Thus, Ebedmelech as a palace servant "was very bold . . . to accuse them [the princes mentioned in 38:1-4] of a crime." Nevertheless, it seems rather astonishing that a palace servant would be able to convince Zedekiah to effect the release of Jeremiah, considering the king has already admitted his incapacity to deny the princes' request to rid the court of Jeremiah. Moreover, that a palace servant would be commanded to take "thirty men" (following the MT) to rescue Jeremiah (Jer 38:10) is highly unlikely. See also R. K. Harrison, *Jeremiah & Lamentations* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 1973), 155, who maintains that

Firstly, the title, "servant of the king" is a common place term for officials who serve the king in various capacities (1 Sam 22:17; 29:3; 2 Sam 15:15; 18:29; 1 King 1:9; 2 King 25:8; 2 Chron 34:20, etc.).[201] And secondly, "eunuch" is certainly one of the ways in which סָרִיס is employed in the Hebrew Bible, but it is neither the primary nor the only meaning.[202] For instance, pharaoh's official, Potiphar, is called a סָרִיס (Gen 37:36), but not only is he in a position of authority, but the text also speaks of wife (Gen 39:7). The main sense of the title connotes an administrative official of high rank serving in either a political or military capacity (e.g., Gen 40:2; 1 Sam 8:15; 2 King 8:6; 18:17; 24:15; Jer 29:2; Esth 1:10, etc.); while secondarily the title signifies a eunuch.[203] The two terms are by no means exclusive, however, as eunuchs were often high ranking officers in the courts of Ancient Near Eastern kings.[204]

Cushites have without a doubt served in such official capacity in Egypt and the Egyptian Empire since the earliest periods, but there were also Cushite *ša rēši* in Assyria, and likely elsewhere. Dalley points out, for example, at least two Cushite officials serving in this capacity who "held high office on a permanent basis among the Assyrians."[205] Thus, Cushites serving in this capacity in Judah was far from a novelty. Their military and political expertise were highly valued. Moreover, סָרִיסִים were typically foreign officials.[206] If Ebedmelech is the Nubian official of the allied forces in Jerusalem, as Hays suggests, then this would explain his ability to override the judgment of Zedekiah's most trusted officials. He clearly exercises considerable authority in Zedekiah's court.[207]

"because of his nationality," Ebedmelech's designation as a סָרִיס in this instance means that he "may actually have been a castrate," and therefore not a palace official in the sense of how the term is used elsewhere. For Harrison, Ebedmelech is a "palace menial" who was guaranteed protection from the princes he had accused of wrong doing (159).

[201] Cf. Nahman Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah: Remnants of a Burnt Archive* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 23-25.

[202] On this see North, "Palestine, Administration," 87. See the detailed treatment of eunuchs in the ANE and the Hebrew Bible in Sakkie Cornelius, "'Eunuchs'? The Ancient Background of Eunouchos in the Septuagint," in *Septuagint and Reception: Essays Prepared for the Association for the Study of the Septuagint in South Africa*, ed. Johann Cook (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[203] "סָרִיס," *HALOT*, 2:769-770; North, "Palestine, Administration," 87.

[204] Cf. North, "Palestine, Administration," 87.

[205] Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry," 45. Cf. Heidorn, "Horses of Kush," 110.

[206] North, "Palestine, Administration," 87.

[207] Cf. Hays, "Black Nation in the Bible," 405.

Ebedmelech's presence in Judah would also not be considered anomalous. That Jeremiah would speak of the Cushite's skin in such matter-of-fact terms (Jer 13:23) indicates that Cushites were well known to Judaeans. Ebedmelech would be only one of many foreign Cushite-Egyptian soldiers in Judah at this period. Moreover, two contemporaneous individuals in the Judean aristocracy are called כּוּשִׁי, one even tracing his ancestry to "Hezekiah" (Jer 36: 14; Zeph 1:1).[208] The genealogical contexts and lack of the definite article indicate that "Cushi" is a personal name in these passages.[209] The names nonetheless may intimate something about the physical characteristics and ancestry of individuals so named, and/or may simply indicate the wider presence of Cushites in Israelite/Judaean society.[210] In any case, Ebedmelech is notable for being a foreign official of Nubian background who exercises his influence to save a native Judaean from sure demise.

But Ebedmelech is noted in Jeremiah for more than simply rescuing the prophet. Significantly, this Cushite foreigner has come to demonstrate personal faith in Yahweh, and to believe Jeremiah's predictions regarding the fate of the city (Jer 39:15-18).[211] Unlike the vast majority of Judaeans who consistently reject Jeremiah's counsels, this Cushite demonstrates confidence in Jeremiah's message and puts himself on the line to secure the freedom of Yahweh's servant. Thus, according to Yahweh's message tailor-made for Ebedmelech, in the face of Jerusalem's destruction, Ebedmelech's life would be guaranteed to him "because you have trusted in me, declares Yahweh" (39:18). As Brueggemann comments, Ebedmelech, along with Baruch, "constitutes an important remnant" comparable to Caleb and Joshua.[212] Unlike the other officials at court, Ebedmelech is promised protection from those whom he fears (i.e., the Babylonians; cf. Jer 22:25). Since it goes almost without saying that court officials suffer the worst fate when rebellions are unsuccessful, Ebedmelech has good reasons to fear. The fate of Zedekiah's royal officials, to say nothing of his sons who are all slain before his eyes, is indicative of the fate that would otherwise have awaited Ebedmelech (39:6). But according to

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[208] Edward R. Dalgish, "Cushi (Person)," in *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:1220.

[209] See discussion in Anderson Jr., "Zephaniah ben Cushi," 51-54; Hays, "Black Nation in the Bible," 406-407.

[210] Cf. Rice, "African Roots," 21-31.

[211] Cf. Brueggemann, *Book of Numbers*, 160.

[212] Brueggemann, *Book of Numbers*, 160. Cf. Christopher R. Seitz, "The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1989): 16-27.

Jeremiah, because he saved the life of Yahweh's servant, his life would also be saved.

Finally, Ebedmelech's demonstration of faith in Yahweh is theologically significant. At a time when Judaeans had largely abandoned faith in their God, even while threatened with impending doom, a Cushite foreigner who also finds himself among the Israelites, receives the assurance of Yahweh's acceptance and protection. The Cushite may not be able to change his skin, but according to Jeremiah he can certainly change his religious allegiance, demonstrate faith in Yahweh, employ his authority for the benefit of Yahweh's messenger, and as a result be considered a faithful member of Yahweh's community. Ebedmelech thus represents a sharp contrast between the faithful foreigner and the unfaithful native born Judaean.[213] In this regard, the Cushite proves to be more of an "Israelite" than the children of Abraham who have by and large abandoned their God. Here he stands above Jerusalem's king, it's nobles, and its people. As Oswalt concludes, "The point seems to be that the evidence of being a member of the covenant people is not birth, but behaviour. God's salvation is for the ends of the earth, and any, whether they be foreigners or eunuchs, may participate in it if they will live God's life. The temple is to be a house of prayer for all nations."[214]

8.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has endeavoured to demonstrate how Cush and Cushites are represented in the biblical text in relationship to the central tenet of Israel's election. As we have seen, an understanding of the relationship between Israel and the nations as presented in the prophetic literature is crucial for a proper assessment of the symbolic representation of Cush in Isaiah, Amos, and Zephaniah. Based on our assessment, the nations are featured in the prophetic depiction of Israel's ideal future age in two primary ways.

First, Israel's ideal future is envisioned as a final restoration of the exiles to the land of promise. The nations feature centrally in this vision, in that Yahweh's judgment against the nations precipitate the restoration of the exiles. The nations are not only active participants in the repatriation of the exiles, but they themselves, their wealth, and their lands become the possession of the former exiles (e.g., Isa 60:1-22). The nations bow down in servility to the exiles and literally beg to participate in the worship of their God. In this view, the nations'

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[213] Cf. Sadler, *Cushite*, 93-97.

[214] Oswalt, *Holy One of Israel*, 104.

conversion to Yahweh only serves to further their subjection and humiliation before the Israelites. Eschatological Israel is therefore depicted as a universal *empire* ruling over the very nations which have historically plundered, exiled, and enslaved them. Israel's final state of affairs is thus glorious, imperial, and monotheistic. Furthermore, the descendants of Ham, in particular, stand to represent the nations in this role of abject submission and humiliation (e.g., Isa 45:14-17). And this is one of the primary ways in which Cush is represented in relationship to the election of Israel in the prophetic literature.

The second view, however, appears to stand in stark contrast to this conversion-submission perspective. While the nations must also be judged in the universal perspective (e.g., Isa 19:1-17; Zeph 2:12), the nations are likewise restored to a glorified future equal in every respects to Israel's. Thus, Amos' assertion that the sons of Israel are like the sons of Cush to Yahweh (9:7), means first that Yahweh will punish Israel with the same punishment meted out to other "sinful kingdoms" such as Cush (9:8; cf. Zeph 2:12). But the comparison also means that Cush (and the nations) like Israel, will experience Yahweh's restoration, love and acceptance in the same measure given to Israel. Hence, in the eschatological age depicted by Isaiah's universalism, Egypt and Assyria stand on equal footing with Israel as Yahweh's chosen people (Isa 19:24-25); and similarly, in Zephaniah's universalism, it is the dispersed of Cush which stand to represent both Israel and the nations, restored as it were from the original, primordial dispersal at Babel (Zeph 2:9-13; Gen 11:1-9). Thus, for both the conversion-submission and the universal views, Cush serves a central role in the prophetic depiction of the relationship between Israel and the nations in the ideal age.

Beyond such topical depictions of Cush, however, one also finds the mimetic portrait of Israel's real-time interaction with Cushites. The two case studies discussed above, demonstrate how Cushites fair at this mimetic level as outsiders negotiating their place within the community of the chosen people. This study has argued that the Cushite wife of Moses is to be identified with Zipporah, the Midianite-Kenite. Her status as the wife of one of the most important prophetic figures of Israelite history as well as her designation as a Cushite are significant. Her marriage to Moses legitimizes her place within and at the highest levels of Israelite society, and the important function granted to her Kenite tribe means that this foreign group enjoy a privileged position within the society of Israel. But when Zipporah's Cushite identity become a site of contention and her foreignness is amplified due to petty jealousy, Yahweh's response settles the issue once and finally. Any foreigner who comes to

take refuge in Yahweh and who works on Yahweh's behalf is to be fully accepted into the community of Israel.

But there is something else to be said regarding the benefits that the Cushitic Kenites render to Israel in their quest to settle the land of promise. Compared to the refusal of the Shemitic Moabites, Edomites and Ammonites to render aid to their blood relatives, this foreign people abandon their people and former way of life and willingly employ their resourcefulness to assist the Israelites in settling the land of promise. This action highlights once again that a faithful response to God is not determined by biology and/or kinship ties but is inspired by a willing heart and demonstrated in concrete actions.

In a similar fashion, Jeremiah's depiction of Ebedmelech the Cushite provides another contrast between the actions of a believing foreigner and those of the unbelieving sons of Abraham. This Cushite official not only seeks to remedy the injustice done to Jeremiah, but his action is indicative of his acceptance of Yahweh's message at a time when the descendants of Abraham obdurately refuse to heed the prophet's counsels. To such a foreigner Yahweh sends a personal message of assurance guaranteeing that his fate will be different from that of his fellow courtiers. This theme of the faithful foreigner can be seen in the portrayal of figures like Rahab, Ruth, Uriah the Hittite, Namaan the Syrian, among others, and creates a theological trajectory for the teachings of the New Testament which envision the salvation of Israel and the foreigner alike.[215]

Incidentally, at two crucial historical points when Jerusalem is under attack by foreign powers (Assyria in 701 and Babylon in 587 B.C.), Africans are present to stand in defense of Yahweh's chosen people. Thus, from the point of view of the Hebrew Bible, Cushites, whether at the national or individual level, whether in topical or mimetic roles, provide important perspectives for self- and other-representation in the biblical literature, and their presence can usefully inform the doctrine of Israelite election.

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[215] Cf. Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 196-197.

CHAPTER 9
Conclusion and Potential Areas for Further Studies

9.1 INTRODUCTION

As we have come to the end of this focused study, we must necessarily review the course we have taken to this point. The main goal of this study was to discern the basis of Cushite representations in the Hebrew Bible. The examination of Cushite representation in the Hebrew Bible was predicated on establishing a theoretical and historical background to better accomplish this task. Thus, chapters 2 to 4 of this work provided the background for our discussion of Cushite ethnic identity in chapters 5 through 8. The analysis of Cushites was also predicated on an examination of the theological outlook of the biblical passages which discuss Cushites. Key theological premises were discovered to undergird representations of Cush in the biblical literature.

9.1.1 Summary of Study

Chapter 3 presented a contrast between the nineteenth century construction of world history which was delineated in Chapter 2. As was shown, Western intellectual tradition which matured in the nineteenth century dehistoricized Africa and consigned all things African to a place of nonsignificance. This intellectual trajectory was also reflected to a good degree within biblical studies, impacting the interpretation of Cushites in biblical history. Thus, Chapter 3 sought to demolish ideas of African backwardness and black inferiority by examining both the political history of Cush via-à-vis ancient Egypt, and by probing the topical and mimetic perspectives of Cushites in ancient Egyptian society. Not only was Nubia shown to be a formidable rival of ancient Egypt through much of their shared history, but the ancient Egyptians, it was also shown, did not discriminate against Nubians based on skin colour, as argued by nineteenth century theorists of race. Rather all "foreigners," irrespective of their ethnic origin, represented the chaotic forces of *Maat* and were consequently outsiders and therefore objects of imperial propaganda. At the same time, the day to day experience of Nubians and other foreigners was qualitatively different from the topical perspective seen in Egyptian state ideology. Foreigners who acculturated to Egyptian norms advanced to every social and economic level of Egyptian society, and Nubians benefited equally in this situation.

Chapter 4 explored the theological basis of Israelite self- and other-representation, demonstrating the ideological significance of Yahweh's sovereignty and the doctrine of Israelite election for identity construction in the Hebrew Bible. Chapter 5 discussed Cushites in the context of the Table of Nations of Genesis 10, outlining the complexities that attend ethnic representation in this universal ethnographic portrait in the primeval history. The geographic dynamics of Cushites/"Africans" was demonstrated to be far more extensive and complex than the typically restrictive view of the modern era which attempts to locate the historical and geographic reach of Sub-Saharan African peoples within the confines of Africa. Cushitic or "African" peoples were shown to represent a continuum of peoples stretching from Africa to Arabia, into Pakistan, all the way into the Indus Valley. Moreover, it was maintained that these peoples likely had a formative influence on the development of "civilization" in early Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, a negative theological judgment of Hamites (and Cushites through the personage of Nimrod) was demonstrated by the author of Genesis.

Chapter 6 and 7 examined African Cush and Cushites as military topos in the biblical books of Isaiah and Chronicles, and as a political power in the Ancient Near East. Based on the Chronicler's historiography and related extra-biblical evidence, it was argued that African Cush was a formidable military power with imperial reach into southern Palestine even before the emergence of the 25th Cushite Dynasty in the eighth century B.C. Furthermore, the 701 B.C. debacle between the Cushites and the Assyrians resulted in a situation which allowed Cush a solid footing in the affairs of Syria-Palestine until Esarhaddon's decisive victory over Taharqa in 671 B.C. From the theological outlook of Isaiah and Chronicles, Cush as a military topos was important for demonstrating the sovereign rulership of Yahweh. In both theological contexts Cushites were negatively appraised as a foreign military power and therefore an enemy of "Israel," Yahweh's people. The biblical writers endeavoured to demonstrate that Cush, like other world empires, must ultimately bow to the sovereign rule of Yahweh.

The final chapter examined Cush and Cushites in relationship to the cardinal doctrine of Israel's election. In the prophetic corpus, Cush and Cushites served once again to demonstrate the special status of Israel. Cush functions in both negative and positive ways in this representation. Negatively, in the conversion-subjection view, Cushites are among the nations which will grovel in abject subjection to the repatriated Israelites in the biblical vision of the ideal age of salvation. Positively, in the universal view, "the dispersed" of Israel from Cush come to represent the collective community of Yahweh consisting of both Israel and the

nations. Thus, in the prophetic texts, Cush symbolizes (at least) two perspectives of the relationship between Israel and the nations which are not easily reconcilable. Finally, the examination of Zipporah and Ebedmelech demonstrated the dynamics surrounding the experiences Cushites within Israelite society. Cushites, as גֵּר, could demonstrate faith in Yahweh, act in ways that benefit the community and Yahweh, and receive positive theological evaluation by the biblical writers.

What conclusions then can we draw from the investigation of Cush and Cushites pursued in this study? What contribution can this study make to the investigation of the Cushites in the Hebrew Bible? A few specific observations are outlined as follows.

9.2 CONTRIBUTION

9.2.1 Theological and Ethnographic Conclusions

It is an important premise of this study that Cushite ethnic identity within the Hebrew Bible cannot be fully understood without a contemplation of the wider theological outlook of the biblical writers. Indeed, our study reveals that the Hebrew Bible demonstrates no systemic concern for "ethnicity" as defined by modern criteria. Rather, ethnicity was concerning to the writers of the biblical texts only insofar as it related to their greater concern which was of a religious nature. The ethnic identity of both Israelite and the "other" was conceived of in theological terms, and thus the notion of an ethno-religious identity better captures the biblical conception of ethnicity.

Moreover, the theological basis of identity construction in the Hebrew Bible was demonstrated to involve both universal and particular points of view. Specifically, the universal perspective emphasized the absolute status of Yahweh and the common origin and common destiny of all human collectivities, Israelite and non-Israelite alike; while the particular perspective emphasized the special status of Israel vis-à-vis the universal God, and the unique spiritual destiny of Yahweh's covenant community. Furthermore, Israel's ethno-religious particularity was constructed around notions of election, genealogical descent and attachment to a territorial homeland. And similarly, the ethno-religious identity of Cushites also involved an examination of these particular differentials. In short, the sovereignty of Yahweh and the election of Israel were shown to be major theological emphases which directly impacted conceptions of ethnic identity. The interpretation pursued in this study attempted to

demonstrate how ethno-religious conceptions of Cushites were deployed in the service of establishing Yahweh's sovereign rule and the special election of Israel.

9.2.2 Historical and Historiographic Conclusions

Another important premise of this study is that an adequate understanding of Cushites in the Hebrew Bible requires a more in-depth knowledge of the historical background related to African Cush. As we have seen, Nubian studies has demonstrated that Cush was *the* major political rival of Egypt in Africa for millennia, and further than Cushites were a permanent fixture within pharaonic Egypt, represented at all social, political, and economic levels of Egyptian society. Furthermore, a more focused analysis of Cushite ethnic identity within ancient Egypt demonstrated that Cushites were never held in contempt because of their dark skin pigmentation, for Egyptians too on the whole were rather dark-skinned African peoples who identify genetically with populations from Northeast Africa and the African Great Lake regions. Instead, the evidence showed that Cushites who acculturated to Egyptian mores were readily assimilated within Egyptian society and benefitted from all that it meant to be Egyptian.

By the same token, a knowledge of Nubian history helped to characterize the presence of Cushites in Israelite society, particularly during the eighth to seventh centuries when Cushite pharaohs dominated Egypt. This background helped to shed light on the interpretation of passages like Isaiah 18, 36-37 and 2 Kings 18-19 which deal with Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 B.C.

Finally, a related aim of this project was to broaden the geographic horizon of Cushite presence in the Ancient Near East. Consonant with nineteenth century historical construction, it has been common practice to distance "Africans" from the biblical world. But, this study has marshalled a host of evidence which, taken together, indicate that Cushitic peoples occupied and intermixed with other populations all across the Ancient Near East. The bounds of "Africans" went well beyond the confines of the African continent. And this brings us to some hermeneutical considerations.

9.2.3 Hermeneutical Conclusions

What all of this means then, is that biblical interpretation should consider seriously the presence of people of "African" heritage in the biblical text and the biblical world. The quick

dismissal of Africans in the biblical text as slaves can no longer be sustained. At no point were Africans *the* slaves of the ancient world. The interpreter of the Bible should therefore be cognizant of his or her intellectual tradition and historical horizon which invariably influence the interpretation of the biblical text.

More broadly, discussions of biblical history and the biblical world should consciously incorporate discussion of Nubia, and so should maps of the Ancient Near East include this region. Cushites were active participants in the ancient Mediterranean world at all periods, and their contribution to the history of this region should no longer be ignored. The ancient Mediterranean world was a confluence of peoples of all hues, culture, and language and Africans fully participated in this social interchange.

9.2.4 Specific Contributions to the Study of the Hebrew Bible

Because Cush and related terms occur in all major sections of the Hebrew Bible, our investigation of Cushites has necessarily had to grapple with some of the hermeneutical issues involved in these specific areas. The study of Cushite genealogy as pursued here, for example, can contribute to the interpretation of the Table of Nations and the construction of ethnic identity in Genesis 10 and the primeval history more generally. Our investigation of Nimrod the Cushite king of Mesopotamia, moreover, can also add perspective to discussions of the Babel narrative. Further, our investigation of the basis of Israel self-definition in Chapter 4 can contribute to the overall discussion of Israelite ethnic identity (from a literary standpoint), and our discussion of Cush in the prophetic corpus in Chapter 8 can contribute to the overall discussion of the relationship between Israel and the nations. Likewise, the discussion of the historical background of Isaiah 18 undertaken in Chapter 6 can provide historical context for discussions of Sennacherib's campaign to Judah in 701 B.C. And our discussion of the Cushite woman in Numbers 12:1 can add perspective to the overall discussion of this pericope.

9.3 FURTHER STUDIES

This study is by no means intended to be the final word on the representation of Cushites in the Hebrew Bible. Much remains to be done. For example:

- From a theological perspective, there is more to be said about how Cushites are represented in the Hebrew Bible. How might the theological premises laid out in this

study impact the characterization of other "Cushites" not discussed in this study, such as Cush of Benjamin (Psalm 7), the Cushite in David's army (2 Sam 18:21-32), and Cushan-Rishathaim of Aram-naharaim (Judg 3:8-10)? Interpreting these passages in the context of Yahweh's sovereign rule and the election of Israel may provide additional exegetical insights. Moreover, other theological dimensions not considered in this study remains to be fleshed out.

- As another example, the Kassites, often cited by scholars as an alternative to African Cush, upon further investigation may turn out to be another Cushite population. Both the name, location, and historical context of the Kassites make it highly likely that these easterners were part of the continuum of Cushitic peoples discussed in Chapter 5. It could plausibly be argued that Cushan-Rishathaim (כּוּשַׁן רִשְׁעָתַיִם), king of Aram-naharaim, is to be identified as a Kassite king.

- The idea that the Cush of Genesis 2:13 is a land to the east is worth further investigation also. Such an investigation could contribute to discussions regarding the "location" of the Garden of Eden, and may resolve perplexities of trying to identify the Nile with the גִּיחוֹן.

- More could also be said about the military involvement of Cushites in the wider Mediterranean. The idealization of Ethiopia by Greek writers such as Homer and Herodotus, may have more historical significance than previously thought.[1]

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[1] Recent genetic studies have demonstrated that the population of Greece has a significant substratum of sub-Saharan genetic admixture. See, A. Arnaiz-Villena, K. Dimitroski, A. Pacho, J. Moscoso, E. Gómez-Casado, C. Silvera-Redondo, P. Varela, M. Blagoevska, V. Zdravkovska and J. Martínez-Laso, "HLA Genes in Macedonians and the Sub-Saharan Origin of the Greeks," *Tissue Antigens* 57 (2001): 118-127. The researchers observed: "Much to our surprise, the reason why Greeks did not show a close relatedness with all the other Mediterraneans analyzed . . . was their genetic relationship with sub-Saharan ethnic groups now residing in Ethiopia, Sudan and West Africa (Burki-na-Fasso). . . . The conclusion is that part of the Greek genetic pool may be sub-Saharan and that the admixture has occurred at an uncertain but ancient time" (125). See also A. Arnaiz-Villena, E. Gomez-Casado and J. Martinez-Laso, "Population Genetic Relationships Between Mediterranean Populations Determined by HLA Allele Distribution and a Historic Perspective," *Tissue Antigens* 60 (2002): 111-121. Arnaiz-Villena et al, writes that "HLA genomics shows that: 1) Greeks share an important part of their genetic pool with sub-Saharan Africans (Ethiopians and west Africans) also supported by Chr 7 Markers. The gene flow from Black Africa to Greece may have occurred in Pharaonic times or when Saharan people emigrated after the present hyperarid conditions were established (5000 years B.C.)" (118, 126).

9.4 CONCLUSION

This project has endeavoured to make a contribution to the study of the Hebrew Bible by undertaking an investigation of the ways in which Cushites are represented in the biblical literature. The study has endeavoured to understand Cushites in the Hebrew Bible with reference to the historical and theological contexts of the biblical writers. But it is worth reemphasis that no interpretation of the past, including this one, is undertaken simply for its own sake.

Rather, interpretations of the past, as this study has maintained, impact outcomes in the present. This study of Cushites in the biblical text is no different. This study has consciously attempted to present a more balance representation of Cushites/Africans in the biblical text and the biblical world since such an interpretation has ramifications for Africans and people of African descent in the present. Whether this objective has been achieved is left to the reader to judge.

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APPENDIX A

Ethnicity: Paradigms and Problems

A.1.1 The Problem of Discipline

A significant issue as it relates to discussions of ethnicity is the approach or emphasis of each discipline which attempts to delineate the ethnic phenomena. Anthropology, sociology, political science, history, and a growing number of disciplines are applying notions of ethnicity without necessarily agreeing on the fundamentals of definition, or the constituent elements of ethnicity.[1] This raises the issue of paradigm. What aspect of ethnicity is being emphasized by each discipline and its particular methodological approach to the issue (qualitative vs quantitative analysis; emic vs etic perspective)? And how are competing models of ethnic behaviours influencing what is discussed and emphasized about the ethnic phenomena?[2] Such divergence in emphasis and methodology and the lack of sufficient interdisciplinary dialogue creates a host of disciplinary silos and oppositional or mutually exclusive viewpoints.[3]

A.1.2 The Problem of Paradigm

From the large body of literature published on the ethnic phenomenon since the second half of the twentieth century, three theoretical approaches have emerged in the field: *primordialism*, *instrumentalism*, and *constructivism* (sometimes called *situationalism*).[4]

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[1] Cf. Anja K. Becker, "Introduction: Ethnicity as a Political Resource Viewed by Scholars from Different Academic Disciplines," in *Ethnicity as a Political Resource: Conceptualizations across Disciplines, Regions and Periods*, ed. University of Cologne Forum (Bielefeld: Kordula Röckenhaus, 2015), 11. Cf. Banks*, Ethnicity*, 49-50.

[2] Historically, disciplines like anthropology has tended to view ethnicity as politically motivated group cohesion; and in terms of method, anthropologists generally evaluate the subjective dynamics of ethnicity by studying populations outside their home countries—typically nonwestern countries. Sociologists, on the other hand, tend to study ethnic dynamics within their home countries and attempt to draw objective conclusions regarding group interaction within specific political contexts. Political scientists tend to emphasize the social and political consequences of ethnic identity for the liberal state while often paying little attention to theoretical aspects of ethnicity. See, Banks*, Ethnicity*, 49; Becker, "Introduction," 12-13. Cf. Hall*, Ethnic Identity*, 17-26.

[3] Cf. Becker, "Introduction," 12; Banks*, Ethnicity*, 49-50.

[4] For a good historical overview of the ethnic phenomena, see the group of essays in the classic volume, Werner Sollors, ed., *Theories of Ethnicity: A Classical Reader* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996). Also, John

Primordialism, a perspective first introduced into sociology by Edwards Shils, argues that ethnic identity of a group is based on deep emotional and psychological attachments to notions of kinship, common descent, religion, and shared territory, and that such identities are bounded, immutable and more or less embedded in group cohesion.[5] Furthermore, primordialists generally understand group identity to be *emic* in orientation; that is, such identities reflect the *inner* perspectives of group members.

Instrumentalists, on the other hand, link ethnic identities to contemporary power relations. In this view, ethnic identities are understood to be constructed (or fabricated) and rationally manipulated to serve the interests of power groups.[6] Consequently, such identities are believed to originate from political or economic expediencies, are most often asserted in situations of opposition or oppression, and are therefore fluid, contested and ephemeral taxonomies. Moreover, instrumentalists generally hold that group cohesion based on ethnicity is a post-industrial phenomenon, and therefore relatively recent. As such, the instrumentalist approach most often reflects the perspective of outsiders like anthropologists—the *etic* orientation—or groups whose ethnic identities are not under threat.[7]

Constructivism is considered as a subset of instrumentalism in that it acknowledges the situational and constructed nature of ethnic identities; it differs however, in that it allows for the persistence of ethnic identities over time (not just for specific situations) by emphasizing the maintenance of ethnic boundaries as a key instrument in the *negotiation* of belonging and the governance of group interaction.[8] Fredrik Barth in his seminal essay in the volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, introduced the idea that ethnic identities are defined and maintained more by cognitive boundaries between social groups than by the "cultural stuff" of ethnic

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Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Ellis Cashmore, ed., *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

[5] Edward A. Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957). Cf. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, "Theories of Ethnicity," in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 32-34; Jones*, Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 56-64; Miller, "Ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible," 172.

[6] Hutchinson and Smith, "Theories of Ethnicity," 33-34; Fenton*, Ethnicity*, 73-90; Hall*, Ethnic Identity*, 17-18; Jones*, Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 72-79. Cf.

[7] Hall, Ethnic Identity, 18.

[8] Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston: Little Brown, 1969). Cf. Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," 75-82.

identities (religion, language, customs, etc.).[9] In contrast to specific cultural markers serving as the organizing principle of ethnic identity, Barth suggested that symbolic boundaries defines what anchors are subjectively selected for group differentiation in the course of interaction between different groups.[10]

It is thus in the course of interaction with other differentiated collectivities that ethnic identities are formed, negotiated and maintained. Ethnic identity is therefore not a thing (i.e., the *content* of culture) with a life of its own, but symbolic relationships which persist in group interaction. The shared cultural norms or collective asset of a group, according to Barth, become the *result* or *effect* of social boundaries and not the cause of them. This highlights again the dynamism and permeability of ethnic boundaries even in the face of the persistence of ethnic identities. While Barth's approach has received its fair share of criticism and refinement, constructivism remains the dominant paradigm in contemporary ethnicity scholarship.[11] Still, many scholars (though not without criticism) argue for an eclectic approach which emphasize specific aspects of each paradigm.[12] Our study of ethnic identity in ancient Israel falls within such an eclectic paradigm.

A.1.3 The Problem of Definition

Problems of definition is related to the problem of paradigm. Scholars tend to emphasize different definitions of ethnicity, and as Marcus Banks notes, such an array of definitions may reveal more about the *scholars* writing on ethnicity than about the ethnic phenomena itself.[13] Is an ethnic group the same as a "tribe" or cultural unit? What are the constituent elements or principal characteristics of ethnicity? Does an ethnic identity exist if a people believe they share kinship or decent? Does an ethnicity exist if a social group exhibit commonality in language, religion, or customs, or assert connection to a "primordial" territory? Some theorists have tended to emphasize one defining feature of ethnic identity,

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[9] Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," 79-80.

[10] Cf. Banks, *Ethnicity*, 12-17.

[11] Becker, "Introduction," 12; Banks, *Ethnicity*, 17; Fenton, *Ethnicity*.

[12] Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 79-105; Di Hu, "Approaches to the Archaeology of Ethnogenesis: Past and Emergent Perspectives," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 21 (2013): 378-381. Cf. Fenton, *Ethnicity*, 73-89.

[13] Banks, *Ethnicity*, 50.

while others take an "umbrella" approach where virtually all cultural characteristics become subsumed under ethnicity. Still, more recent scholarship emphasizes that no one particular element or even a specific configuration of these can categorically define an ethnic group.[14]

Steve Fenton, goes so far as to argue that "there cannot be a theory of ethnicity, nor can 'ethnicity' be regarded as a theory."[15] This is because "there is not a single unitary phenomenon 'ethnicity' but rather an array of private and public identities which coalesce around ideas of descent and culture." Therefore, what needs analysis, according to Fenton, is the actual social contexts—in this case, modernity—in which ethnic differentiation become decisive.[16]

Study of ethnicity is ongoing, but whether interpreters will finally be able to agree upon a universal definition of the ethnic phenomena remains to be seen.

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[14] Hall, Ethnic Identity, 19.

[15] Fenton, *Ethnicity*, 179.

[16] Fenton, *Ethnicity*, 179-180.