

Ephah

Isaiah 60 Prayer Initiative



Jerusalem, camels and young camels of Ephah will cover you.

Draw the peoples of Ephah to Yourself, Lord!

Day 1

Ephah – Arise and Shine

“A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah...”
Isaiah 60:6

Ephah is documented in ancient Assyrian sources as being one of the nations that lived “in distant Arabia, in the desert...” and “who dwell on the border of the countries of the setting sun.” Ephah is associated with Midian, his father, whose territory included northwestern Arabia. As one of the sons of Midian, Ephah would likely have also had considerable influence along the ancient caravan routes extending across the Arabian Peninsula (e.g., Genesis. 37:25, 28, 36).

In recent decades, some Arabic sources have asserted that the city of Abha in southwestern Saudi Arabia was once called *'Aifa* (Ephah), claiming that it is “the location from which the camels of the Queen of Sheba carried gifts to Solomon.” It is not uncommon to find restaurants, cafes, and other businesses in Abha with the name *'Aifa*.



Ephah Camel Restaurant, Abha

The well-known Qaḥṭān tribe of Saudi Arabia has two subtribes called Āl ʿĪfah (Ephah) that are located in the vicinity of Abha. It is possible that these subtribes are linked with Ephah of the Bible. There is also a village named Ephah (associated with these Qaḥṭān groups) that is

located near the archaeological site of al-Ḥarajah, known to have been a rest stop on one of the ancient caravan routes.

Some Saudi scholars have challenged this increasingly popular association of Ephah with Abha on account of a lack of evidence and historical sources. Although its association with Ephah remains inconclusive, Abha and the surrounding parts of the 'Asir region will serve as the focus for our prayers on behalf the Ephah of Isaiah 60:6.

Prayer Points

- Let us pray that God would reveal Himself to the children of Ephah in an extraordinary way, and that the glorious light of Christ would illuminate and overwhelm the darkness (John 1:5).
- Pray for the beautiful people of Abha and the 'Asir region of Saudi Arabia, that they would readily respond to God's revelation in an unprecedented way.
- Pray that God would lift up the hearts of the families to praise Him.
- Pray that these people would shine for Christ (Matthew 5:16), and that they would be children of light (Ephesians 5:8-11).



Day 2

Ephah – A Costly Tribute

In Isaiah 60, the nations of Midian and Ephah are depicted with vast herds of camels. In ancient Arabia, camels represented tribute, warfare, pilgrimage, endurance, and wealth, among other things. Our prayer is that the Lord would fulfill and redeem all of these things for His glory among the Arab peoples:

- **Tribute** – allegiance, surrendering everything to Christ (Psalm 2:12)
- **Warfare** – engaging battles against powers of this dark world (1 Timothy 6:12)
- **Pilgrimage** – a journey of faith (Psalm 37:23-24)
- **Endurance** – withstanding persecution and hardship; counting the cost (Romans 2:7, 5:3, Hebrews 10:36)
- **Wealth** – seeking eternal things, bearing gifts (Galatians 6:2, Romans 8:18, Matthew 6:21, 33, Matthew 13:44)

Ephah in Arabic can refer to the best of camels or any property that is of the best quality. The camels of Isaiah 60 represent the very best that Arabia has to offer. The camels of Ephah epitomize a precious tribute that is brought to Christ. In ancient history, most Arab tributes included camels. In fact, we are told that Ephah (referred to as *Haiappa* in ancient sources) brought a tribute of camels to the Assyrian king in the 8th century BC, along with gold, silver, herbs, and spices. The sons of Midian, who were known to have once used their multitudes of camels to plunder (Judges 6:5, 7:12), are here depicted as bringing their tribute of camels to Christ the King (Isaiah 60:6).



The Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser III, recorded that Ephah and other Arab tribes brought “their tribute, as one; [and they kissed] my feet,” no doubt out of fear as conquered

subjects. Now, Ephah and the Arab nations come “as one” to kiss the eternal King with hearts of faith (Psalm 2:12, Isaiah 60:13b-14).

Ephah is also mentioned in other Assyrian sources as being a people “who know neither overseer nor commander, who never brought tribute to any king...” In contrast, we read in Isaiah, “I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteousness” (Isaiah 60:17).

The camels of the Arabian caravans were laden with costly gifts. These precious items were a great burden and transporting the goods across the vast Arabian deserts represented danger and sacrifice. Dangers included extreme heat and thirst, warring tribes, and bandits who waited in ambush. If the caravan reached its intended destination, the goods became a source of tremendous wealth and riches. The Arabs brought gifts at the risk of their lives only because they envisioned the wealth that was in store for them. Paul writes: “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:1).

Gifts are often sacrificial and can only be given at great cost. Midian and Ephah, pictured here as transporting gifts from Sheba, certainly had to count the significant costs of the journey. If they lost their bearings in the desolate wastelands and were not able to find the next well, they would die of thirst. Their only hope of safe arrival was to stick to the beaten path where they could find wells of refreshment and cities of repose (e.g., John 4:10, Matthew 7:13-14, Mark 1:1-4).

Prayer Points

- Pray that Ephah would come to the saving knowledge and acceptance of Jesus as their Savior and King, choosing to come and bow down to the King.
- Pray that the people of Arabia would offer an unprecedented tribute of faith, and that they would bring their very best to Christ (Psalm 2:12, Isaiah 60:13b-14).
- Pray that the Lord would protect believers from spiritual attack, that they would arm themselves for warfare, and that they would endure trials and persecution (Ephesians 6:10-18).
- Pray for the Great Gathering of Isaiah 60 (Isaiah 43:5, 60:4), for an unparalleled growth of the church in Ephah. Pray for a spirit of unity, solidarity, and for mutual encouragement (John 17:20-23).
- Pray that the people of Ephah would seek first the Kingdom of God, that they would count the cost of following Christ, whole-heartedly believing in the promises of Scripture.

Day 3

Ephah – All generations, all families

Isaiah 60 refers to both “a multitude of camels” and “young camels of Midian and Ephah.” The young camels of Midian and Ephah remind us to pray for the youth of Arabia. We pray that all generations would come to Christ, bearing gifts to the King.

A “cloud” of doves is portrayed as alighting upon “window nests” (Isaiah 60:8). It is from these nests that we now envision the Gospel multiplying through families and tribes.

We also read in verse 4: “your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.” Similarly, in Isaiah 49:22, a parallel passage of Isaiah 60, we read, “they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.”

Ephah’s brother Eldaah means “God has called” in both Hebrew and Arabic. We are reminded that God summons individuals, families, and tribes by name (Isaiah 43:1). In Isaiah 49 we see God summoning the nations, signaling them forward with his own hand: “...my highways shall be raised up... Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders” (Isaiah 49:11,22).

Sons and daughters are carried as lambs to Christ. We pray that God would provide pastors and shepherds to humbly serve this church, and for spiritual mothers and fathers to lovingly care for this flock.



Prayer Points

- Pray that the Lord would continue to call the people of Ephah, revealing Himself through dreams, visions, signs and wonders.
- Pray for all generations to respond to the Lord's call and to come to Christ in Arabia, both young and old, men and women, and for families to worship Christ together, sharpening and encouraging one another.
- Pray that the Lord would raise up pastors and shepherds, leaders who love and care for the lambs, who would help to carry them when they have little strength.
- Let us also pray for the major tribes of the 'Asir region, for God to summon and call them forth with his own hand.

Choose one of these tribes to pray for specifically today:

- The Qahtān tribe of Saudi Arabia, named after one of the ancestors of Abraham (Joktan; Genesis 10:25). Pray that they would demonstrate the faith of their father Abraham.
- The 'Asir tribe
- The Shahrān tribe
- The Bilahmar tribe
- The Bilasmar tribe



Day 4 Ephah – Liberated and free, flying like great clouds of doves

Names were very significant in the Semitic world, sometimes carrying a wide range of meanings. The name *Ephah* is multi-faceted, carrying various meanings in both Hebrew and Arabic. For example, the name in Hebrew includes meanings for both to shine forth and darkness (among other meanings). In Job 11:17, we read, “thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning.”

Simultaneously, Ephah in Hebrew can also mean to fly. The same root appears only two verses after the name is introduced in Isaiah 60: “Who are these that fly [ףא ephah] along like clouds, like doves to their nests [or windows]” (Isaiah 60:8)?

Along with the herds of camels that cover the land, God paints the picture of countless people from the Arabian Peninsula coming to Christ, innumerable as flocks of birds “like clouds,” liberated in Christ.



In Psalm 55:6, we read, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly (ephah) away.”

The name *Abha* means most brilliant or most shining, reminiscent of Isaiah’s prophetic words, “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1). The highest mountain range of Saudi Arabia, Jabal as-Sawdah (mount of blackness), is a popular tourist destination in Abha. Jabal as-Sawdah reminds us that “darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples” (Isaiah 60:2). Furthermore, the highest peak of this mountain range is called Jabal Tahallal (mount of praise, joy, exaltation, shining). The Arabic word *tahallal* is related to the Hebrew word for praise

(*tehillāh*) in Isaiah 60:5-6 “then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult...and shall bring good news, the *praises* of the Lord...”

Abha, the most brilliant and shining one and the broader ‘Asir region is known for its vibrant and colorful heritage, a reminder of Christ’s life-giving light in the midst of a world filled with darkness.

Prayer Points

Pray for freedom and deliverance from:

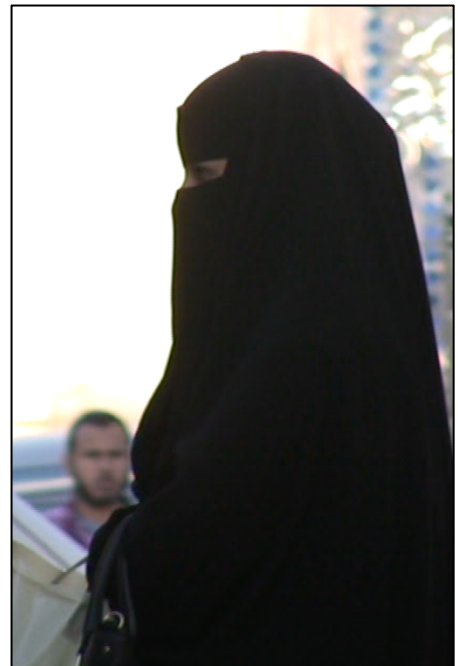
- A yoke of slavery: religious legalism and the bondage of Islam (Galatians 5:1).
- A life of sin, death, and darkness (Romans 8:2, Isaiah 61:1).
- A spirit of fear (Psalm 27:1, Psalm 34:4, Romans 8:15, Hebrews 2:15-16).

Pray for freedom and liberty to:

- Follow Jesus whole-heartedly, living as His children in His glory and presence (Romans 8:21, 2 Corinthians 3:17).
- Walk in obedience and holiness (Psalm 119:45, Romans 6:22).
- Serve one another humbly in love (Galatians 5:13).
- Live by the Spirit of righteousness and truth, and according to the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25, Romans 6:18, John 8:32).

Pray for a great multiplication of God’s kingdom:

- For the nation of Ephah to come to Christ like great clouds of doves (Isaiah 60:8, Acts 12:24).
- Pray that God’s promise to Abraham (Ephah’s grandfather) would be gloriously fulfilled through Christ in the Arabian Peninsula (Genesis 22:17).



Day 5

Ephah – Thirsting for righteousness in a weary land

In addition to the other meanings presented earlier [e.g., shining (in the darkness), the best (of tributes), and flying (free)], Ephah also means to be faint, weary or thirsty.

“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and **weary** land where there is no water” (Psalm 63:1).

“Like cold water to a **thirsty** soul, so is good news from a far country” (Proverbs 25:25).

Surely those who truly thirst shall be truly satisfied in Him!

The precious wares of Arabia were not normally transported on a single camel. Large groups provided a sense of solidarity, encouragement and fellowship, collective wisdom, the sharing of resources, and safety. Isaiah prophesied of this unity and solidarity when he said, “they all gather together,



they come to you” (Isaiah 60:4). Let us pray for this spirit of unity in the Church of Arabia, that families and tribes would gather and journey together in faith, and that they would be the body of Christ. May the children of Ephah journey together in the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Prayer Points

- Let us call out to the Lord for thirsty souls in a dry and weary land. Let us pray that the people of the nation of Ephah would have an insatiable thirst for the living water that only Jesus gives.
- Pray for an utter discontentment with the broken cisterns of Islam, and for eyes of faith that would recognize the deceptive mirage of any false hope found outside of Christ (Jeremiah 2:13).
- Pray for an unprecedented spirit of repentance, that the people of Ephah would humble themselves before God (2 Chronicles 7:14).
- Pray that the Lord would refresh, strengthen, and encourage those who inhabit physically and spiritually desolate lands (Psalm 63:1, 143:6, Proverbs 25:25, Jeremiah 31:25).

In summary of days 1-5, we beseech the Lord that the nation of Ephah would:

1. **Shine** with the light of Christ.
2. **Offer tribute** to the King.
3. **Come as families** and tribes to the Father.
4. **Experience freedom** in Christ.
5. **Thirst** for righteousness

Thank you for praying for Ephah! May God bless you for praying for these people that God loves so dearly. May those for whom we have been praying come to know why we have been praying for them: *“For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.”* (2 Corinthians 4:15 ESV).

