

## African Proverb of the Month December 2009

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*Wabiute, walya watundila uenyu.* (Bembe)

*Kama siafu, kula sehemu ndogo na peleka nyingine nyumbani.* (Swahili)

*Comme les fourmis, mange peu et amène le reste à la maison.* (French)

*Like ants, eat little and carry the rest back to your home.* (English)

Bembe ( [Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC](#) , [Tanzania](#) ) Proverb

### **Background, Explanation, Meaning and Everyday Use**

Being among the communities living in and near the deep Congo forest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Bembe people (also known as Babembe or Wabembe) are familiar with many types of God's creatures living in the forest. Among these are ants -- very small but very wise. Like the Bembe people, ants are also known as hunters. They leave their nest and walk a long distance away in a long queue in search of their food. Once out ant hunters bear in mind that whatever they find will be shared among the whole community left behind at the nest. While on this journey these creatures may face many bad as well as good things that could divert their mission of eventually coming back home. For example, they may find a dead elephant full of maggots that may attract them to stay there forever. But being loyal

to both their community and to their mission, using their mouths ants will eat whatever they can and carry the rest back to the nest where their elders, mothers and children are waiting.

What is a wonderful lesson we can learn from these God's creatures?

### **Biblical Parallels**

*Matthew 6:20-21*: "Rather store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

### **Contemporary Use and Religious Application**



This proverb is a call to thousands of peoples especially Africans (who for one reason or another have left their homeland in search of better living) to come back and invest at home. Number one on this list is myself. I left my country DRC many years ago when the country was experiencing a civil war. While I am now settled in Kenya, I am still receiving phone calls and mail requesting me not to leave our DRC customs and traditions and mostly not to forget our homeland by visiting there time to time. My family expects me to contribute to all family events such as school fees, weddings, hospital bills and funerals. Despite being far from home, they also want me to invest at home more than where I am presently living. According to them marrying a beautiful young lady from home would bring me closer to the community and help

me achieve all these ambitions.

Think also about the current USA president Barack Obama. From an African father, Obama is seen by African people as their fellow African who only lives and works in the USA. Being the president of the world superpower and a Nobel price winner, Barack Obama is expected by Africans to increase USA aid to poor African countries and to reduce the restrictions for Africans people and goods to enter into the USA. But is he mandated to do so? Must he put Africa as his first priority? Today many Africans believe that through Obama's leadership Africa should benefit more than ever.

To show us that he follows the good example of Jacob's son Joseph and of Moses found in the *Bible*, Obama should help us fight for good governance from our local leaders who hold on to power to enrich themselves. African presidents can to learn from this Bembe proverb too. In 1997 a report was published in Europe showing big investments included villas and bank accounts belonging to the late Mobutu Sese Seko who served more than 30 years as the president of the former Zaire. Yes, our leaders can learn a great deal from this African proverb.

**NOTE:** This proverb is No. 83 in a forthcoming booklet *Collection of 100 Bembe Proverbs*.

Mr. Allan Babunga  
P.O. Box 3253  
00200 Nairobi, Kenya  
Cellphone: 0721-749795  
Email: [alainidya@yahoo.fr](mailto:alainidya@yahoo.fr)

**Illustrations provided by:**

Professor Cephas Yao Agbemenu  
Department of Fine Arts  
Kenyatta University  
P.O. Box 43844  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Cellphone: 254-723-307992  
Email: [cyagbemenu@yahoo.com](mailto:cyagbemenu@yahoo.com)

