

Psalm 83: Prophecy or Prayer for Deliverance

Did Asaph compose a psalm of deliverance or did he write a prophecy describing a confederation of nations that will at sometime in the future attack the nation-state of Israel?

Perhaps no other individual has gained more attention in the genealogical listings of the book of Genesis than the historical character known as Nimrod. He was the son of Cush and the grandson of Noah's son Ham, and in Scripture we learn that the beginning of his kingdom began in lower Mesopotamia.

Nimrod was also branded as a "mighty hunter before Jehovah. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar" (Gen. 10:8-10, LITV). This land of Shinar is generally considered to be within the general location of Sumer, and in Scripture we read that this was the "beginning of his kingdom," and from these early settlements Nimrod became a usurper before God.

Then we learn that it was Nimrod—not Asshur—who "went forth to Assyria and built Nineveh, and Rehoboth the city, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah, which is a great city" (Gen. 10:11-12, LITV). Which tells us that the expansion of Nimrod's kingdom would have expectedly involved a displacement and overthrow of those descendants of Shem who may have earlier settled in what historically became known as the provincial area of Asshur, later called Assyria.

Thus, we have a brief, and yet succinct, account of the expansion of Nimrod's kingdom in the region of Sumer.

Giving us then something to consider regarding the beginning of Assyrian development in Mesopotamia.

For according to Scripture, the provincial area that became

known as Assyria, which is a name that is customarily given to those who inhabited the area associated with Asshur, was overtaken by Nimrod and by those who supported Nimrod in his conquests further north and west in Mesopotamia. Something that brings into question the ethnicity and familial characteristics of those who came to be called Assyrians of the later Neo-Assyrian Empire, which is a situation that would certainly have bearing on some historical interpretations regarding the migrations of the Assyrians into Western Europe. (The biblical account does not allow us to attribute racial characteristics to the sons of Noah.)

Something that must be considered by those who assume they can determine the national identity of the modern-day descendants of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

Meaning then that those who conclude by some spurious historical records that they can directly associate the descendants of the former Neo-Assyrian Empire with those peoples whose citizenship is now associated with the modern-day nation-state of Germany are obligated to consider what occurred in Shinar in the time of Nimrod.

Or, we could say, those who claim that the German peoples today are the strict descendants of the Neo-Assyrians are challenged to prove this by the careful tracking of their migrations into Europe from Mesopotamia, and any evidence that is provided must take into account that the ancient region of Asshur was overthrown by a son of Cush who likely drove out some of the descendants of Asshur.

So, why would all this become important to the study of a psalm written by King David's composer of music, Asaph?

First, there are those who interpret Asaph's psalm—Psalm 83—in such a way as to conclude that it is not a prayer for deliverance, and second, there are those who assume that Asaph was writing a prophecy that would pertain to the modern-day

descendants of the provincial Assyrians who are expected to some day attack the modern nation-state of Israel, and third, they would claim that these modern-day descendants of the provincial Assyrians are to be associated with the prophetic “king of the north” as noted in Daniel’s prophecy, and fourth, they assume that the modern-day descendants of the provincial Assyrians are the [peoples of Germany](#) today.

This is, of course, a far-fetched, and historically and biblically unfounded interpretation of this particular psalm of Asaph.

Now, Asaph wrote a psalm to express his concern about the confederate nature of those kingdoms that geopolitically and geographically bounded the Commonwealth of Israel. And, this psalm was written in the form of a prayer—a prayer for deliverance—and the reason Asaph asked for this deliverance was to bring these confederate peoples to a place where they: “may seek thy name, O Lord,” and so that: “men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth” (Ps. 83:16-18). (Author’s emphasis throughout.)

Such is the context given to us by Asaph.

Thus, in this context Asaph expressed the need for deliverance from the continuing geopolitical issues and problems that confronted all the tribes of Israel, particularly during the reign of King David. Problems that of course were also faced by nearly all the kings of Israel and Judah until the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonian Empire. (We do not find in Scripture or in any secular record that ancient Israel was forced to face such a wide coalition of forces all at once in the Middle East or in Mesopotamia.)

Bringing us then to review this psalm of Asaph.

For Asaph wrote: “Against Thy people they take crafty counsel, And consult against Thy hidden ones. They have said, ‘Come, And we cut them off from being a nation, And the name

of Israel is not remembered any more.' For they consulted in heart together, Against Thee a covenant they make, Tents of Edom, and Ishmaelites, Moab, and the Hagarenes, Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, Philistia with inhabitants of Tyre, Asshur also is joined with them, They have been an arm to sons of Lot. Selah" (Ps. 83:3-8, YLT).

So, in this psalm we see that Asaph was writing about those who were conspiring against the peoples of Israel.

However, an analysis of this psalm gives us many reasons to consider that Asaph was not giving us a prophecy for the future.

First, we must consider that Asaph was writing a prayer for deliverance, while also considering that Asaph never mentions that he received a prophetic message from God.

Second, the Philistines and the Amalekites noted in Asaph's psalm no longer exist as identifiable peoples, or as independent political entities, or as modern nation-states today. The same could also be said of Edom and its peoples who were long ago scattered within the Arab world.

Also, we can add that the Palestinians are not descendants of the Philistines. It is an erroneous claim put forward within Palestinian political circles and by those who wish to portray the Palestinians in a negative light politically and historically for the purpose of undermining Western support for the Palestinians.

Third, there is no possible way to associate this psalm with the prophecy of the kings of the north and south that was given to the prophet Daniel.

Fourth, we have no means to historically or biblically associate this "Assur" with the modern-day peoples of Germany.

(In this psalm of Asaph we see that "Assur" is not stated as attacking the peoples of Israel.)

Fifth, we cannot identify the Hagarenes with any known peoples today, and therefore we must reasonably suspect that they were absorbed into the Arab world.

Sixth, by comparing the psalm of Asaph with the prophecy of the kings of the north and south we see that Asaph is speaking about a political confederacy that is conspiring against the Commonwealth of Israel, but the prophecy of the kings of the north and south addresses a long-standing conflict between these kings, which means that Daniel's prophecy would not represent a single confederacy against Israel—composed of two coalitions that are north and south of Jerusalem.

Seventh, it is not likely that any significant number of the descendants of Ishmael would be found within the Arab world today, and also we would have much difficulty in identifying the descendants of Gebal and also Tyre in this region of the Middle East.

Lastly, we are left to consider Asshur and the children of Lot—Assyrians, Moabites and Ammonites—and to realize that we cannot ethnically identify the descendants of the provincial Assyrians with the modern-day German peoples, simply because we cannot make a confirmable historical link between the tribal migrations of Asshur out of Mesopotamia and associate these wanderings with the tribal migrations of those who now make up the peoples of modern-day Germany.

Also, the industrious and politically astute Jordanians are in some respects as the Palestinians because they are geopolitically identified with a place and a region, and as an Arab people with a long and noble history in this part of the world we must realize that only by the narrowest interpretation could they be associated with a lineage related to the children of Abraham's nephew, Lot.

Leaving us to conclude that Asaph was indeed writing a prayer for deliverance that related to the geopolitical arena in

which ancient Israel strived to exist, particularly in the
time of King David.  (andrewburdettewrites.com)