

A HIGHWAY FROM EGYPT TO ASSYRIA

“In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land” Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel mine inheritance.” – Isaiah 19:23-25

The animosities among these three nations were legendary. They were constantly invading each other. Conquest was ever on their minds. With this background of constant warfare, it is surprising to find a prophecy of a peaceful link joining these three countries.

Highways represent a means of peaceful communication between countries. They were the trade routes for the commercial concourse that joined the peoples of a specific geographic area. However, we need not limit our thinking on this prophecy to a literal highway, for prophetic books abound in the use of symbolic language. With this in mind, let us examine the symbols used in this prophecy.

EGYPT was considered to be the most cultured and civilized of the nations of the time. Their art and architecture, their schools of learning, were all ahead of those of their neighboring nations. Egypt, therefore, becomes an apt symbol of the more cultured nations of earth. In Revelation 11:8, it is further identified as a particular symbol of Christendom which claims the Bible, the “torch of civilization,” as its foundation.

ASSYRIA, in contrast, was noted for being a barbarian and savage people. Elisha’s testimony of this nation’s cruelty under the reign of Ben-Hadad is documented in 2 Kings 8:12. They are spoken of in Isaiah 10:5 as the “rod” of God’s anger, and “the staff in their hand” is called God’s “indignation.” Thus they represent the less favored and downtrodden nations of earth. These are also referred to in Scripture as “The Lord’s Great Army.” (See Joel 2:25)

ISRAEL, as distinct from other Biblical symbols, often pictures itself. There are two basic reasons for this peculiarity. First, since Bible prophecies are concerned with this nation, their object is to show their destiny at some future period of time. Second, unlike the other nations around them, Israel had a God-given future well down the stream of time.

A HIGHWAY, as we have already seen, represented a communication like, an establishment of friendly relations, between nations.

“IN THAT DAY”

It is also interesting to note that this prophecy is to take place “In that day.” This is an expression that is used five times in the latter half of this chapter. (See verses 16, 18, 19, 23, and 24.) In these verses “that day” is described as a time when people are “returning to the Lord, and He shall be entreated of them and heal them.” (Verse 22)

This seems to be a good description of God’s kingdom when His Son, as the “Prince of Peace,” shall reign in righteousness. Then the diverse classes of the “haves” and the “have-nots,” whose resentments and distrusts have fueled the fires of discontent, will be drawn together into one family of God.

AN APT PROPHECY OF TODAY

This renewed communication between estranged peoples is peculiarly appropriate to the events of the last few years in Eastern Europe. The crumbling of the “Berlin Wall” and the opening of borders of the Eastern Bloc nations suddenly fanned the flames of the almost dead hope of “peace in our time.”

However, promising as such hopes are, the Bible warns that they are over optimistic. The Apostle Paul predicts a time “when they shall say, Peace and safety,” but add the warning, “then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

This is in accord with verse 22 of the prophecy under consideration, where this highway is spoken of only after “the Lord shall smite Egypt: He shall smite and heal it.” The result of this smiting is that men would begin to turn to the Lord; a condition not in evidence at the present time.

THE “VIA MARIS”

It is interesting to note that in ancient times there was a very literal road running between Egypt and Assyria. It was called the “Via Maris,” or “Way of the Sea.” Following the Mediterranean coastline from Egypt to a point near the present city of Tel Aviv, it then turned eastward through the Jezreel valley, following the Jordan river to the “Bridge of Jacob’s Daughters” where it crossed into the trans-Jordan area, continued across Syria and on to Assyria(today’s Iraq).

What makes this highway of special note is that Israel was literally “in the midst of the land.” In fact, the key mountain pass of the entire route was in Israel, near the garrison city of Megiddo. The strategic position of this pass and its narrowness is alluded to in the apocryphal book of Judith, chapter 4, verses 6 and 7 where we learn that by this pass “Judea could be entered” and the “the way is narrow, with room for two men at the most.”

THE HIGHWAYS OF ISAIAH

In the days of the prophet Isaiah, hatreds and rivalries between nations were as strong as at any time in history. Yet, the theme of a highway is one of the dominating subjects in his prophecy. Consider the following examples:

*“And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with His mighty wind shall He shake His hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry-shod. And there shall be an **highway** for the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.” – Isaiah 11:15, 16*

*“And an **highway** shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” – Isaiah 35:8-10*

*“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a **highway** for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” -- Isaiah 40:3-5*

*“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up a **highway**; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy People, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.” – Isaiah 52:10-12*

ARMAGEDDON

Because of its strategic nature, the Megiddo fortress became the most famous battleground of ancient Israel.

For this reason and others, the garrison of Megiddo and its associated mountain passes became the symbol for the last great conflict between good and evil. We read of this in Revelation 16:14, 16:

“For they are the spirits of devils working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty...And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”

This word “Armageddon” means Mountain of Megiddo, and is attributed by most scholars as a reference to the Megiddo we are discussing.

Thus, as in Isaiah, the opening of this highway is connected with a great battle – “the smiting of Egypt” and “the Battle of Armageddon.”

MEGIDDO BATTLES

- **Gideon vs. Midian** (*Judges 7:19-23*)
Typifying our Lord and his Church releasing mankind from the bondage of sin and death.
- **King Saul vs. the Philistines** (*1 Samuel 31:1-6*)
Opening the way for the reign of King David, who typified Messiah.
- **Jehu vs. the House of Ahab and Jezebel** (*2 Kings 9:30-37*)
Typifying the collapse of antitypical Babylon (Revelation 2:20)
- **King Josiah vs. Pharaoh-Necho** (*2 Chronicles 35:22-25*)
Josiah is killed trying to prevent Necho from joining the battle where the Babylonians cross the Euphrates. (Revelation 16:12)

ISRAEL A BLESSING

Noting this strategic position, Isaiah 19:24 states that Israel will be “a blessing in the midst of the land.” This well accords with Isaiah 62:10 where Israel is the nation to whom the message is directed:

“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people: cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.”

It will be the lot of Israel, acting as an intermediary power in the establishing of God's kingdom on earth., to apply the lessons gleaned from their checkered experiences of prosperity and adversity to the world of mankind.

“To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile” (Romans 2:10) is always the principle of God's operation. Thus God, in his plan, has provided first for the conversion of Israel and the establishment of his government on earth through them, with their resurrected prophets in the leadership.

Then will come to pass the prediction of Isaiah 2:3:

“And many people shall god and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

The predictions of the Bible seem clear. While we may rejoice in man's increased ability to get along and the crumbling of the barriers between nations, this will not lead to the promised kingdom of peace. At best, it is a false sense of security, a lull before the predicted whirlwinds of Armageddon.

True peace comes from breaking down an even stronger wall than that which divides the nations of the East from those of the West. True peace comes from breaking the stony hearts of men and replacing them with hearts of flesh. This work is graphically prophesied in Ezekiel 36:26:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

Then, for a thousand years, man will walk on a new road, the “highway of holiness.” (Isaiah 35:8) As they learn to live at peace with their God, they will learn to live at peace with one another.

THE BEAUTIFUL LAND AT THE END OF THE HIGHWAY

*“Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.
Revelation 21:4”*