



Psalm 83 – Future or Fulfilled?

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War in the Middle East invariably sparks speculation and questions regarding the prophesied invasion of Israel by the Gog-Magog coalition in Ezekiel 38. However, there is another prophesied war in the Middle East, found in Psalm 83, that is generally overlooked. It precedes the Ezekiel 38 invasion and explains why the countries that surround Israel, such as Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and present-day Jordan, Iraq, and the Gaza Strip are not mentioned as a part of the Ezekiel 38 coalition.

Psalm 83 begins, in the first four verses, with the desire of Israel's enemies:

¹Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. ²For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. ³They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. ⁴They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

Verses 5-8 go on to identify those who plot to destroy Israel:

⁵For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: ⁶The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; ⁷Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; ⁸Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

The rest of the Psalm, verses 9-18, goes on to share Israel's prayer for deliverance from their enemies:

⁹Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: ¹⁰Which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth. ¹¹Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: ¹²Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession. ¹³O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. ¹⁴As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; ¹⁵So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. ¹⁶Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. ¹⁷Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: ¹⁸That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

Essentially, Psalm 83 identifies several nations that conspire together to utterly destroy Israel and the Jew's prayer to Jehovah God for deliverance and victory over their enemies, with God getting the glory in the end. So, then, the question becomes, has Psalm 83 already occurred or is it yet future? However, to answer that question, we must first identify who the enemies of Israel identified in Psalm 83:5-8 are in terms of today's geopolitical landscape.

The first mentioned is Edom in verse 6. Edom, also known as Idumea or Esau, stretched from the Dead Sea in the north to the Red Sea's Gulf of Aqaba in the south. Although Edom was conquered by King David in 2 Samuel 8:14 and the Edomites were put into servitude, the geographical area that made up Edom remains divided today between Israel on the west and Jordan on the east. Eventually, though, the people who were descendants of Jacob's brother Esau disappeared as a distinct people group.

Next in verse 6 are the Ishmaelites, the descendants of Abraham's first-born son, Ishmael. They appear to have spread from the area of present-day Jordan eastward and then circling south and west across the northern Arabian Peninsula to the Sinai Peninsula. In fact, Genesis 21:21 says, "And he

[Ishmael] dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.” The wilderness of Paran is the Sinai Peninsula, which is today a part of Egypt.

Moab is mentioned next in verse 6. Moab, along with Ammon in verse 7, make up the children of Lot referred to in verse 8. They were the descendants of Lot’s two sons, which he bore to his two daughters after fleeing the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19:30-38). They lived in parts of what is today Jordan.

Lastly in verse 6 are the Hagarenes, who appear to take their name from Ishmael’s mother, Hagar. The Hagarenes are sometimes considered synonymous with the Ishmaelites. However, many believe that the Hagarenes more properly refer to the Egyptians, as Hagar was an Egyptian. As pointed out in Genesis 21:21, “And he [Ishmael] dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.” As an Egyptian, she sought to link her son with her people in Egypt by providing him with an Egyptian wife. Consequently, the Hagarenes may refer to Hagar’s family in Egypt and their descendants.

In verse 7 we find Gebal and Tyre, both cities of Phoenicia. Today we find Tyre in the south of Lebanon and Gebal, now known as Byblos, in the north of Lebanon.

Next in verse 7 is Ammon. As mentioned previously, Ammon, along with Moab, occupied part of present-day Jordan.

Amalek is also in verse 7. The Amalekites occupied a region between Edom and Egypt, putting them largely in the Sinai Peninsula, which today is in Egypt.

The Philistines of verse 7 are one of the easiest to describe. They were an ancient Hametic people that occupied a strip along the Mediterranean Sea between Israel and Egypt. In other words, today’s Gaza strip. Ironically, though I’m sure God had a hand in it, the present-day inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, who are predominately Arab, call themselves Palestinians, which is simply a variation of Philistine.

Moving to verse 8 we find Assur, which is also easy to describe. Assur, a variant of Assyria, is essentially the same as Syria today.

The last people group mentioned in verse 8 is the children of Lot, which, as noted above, is a reference to Moab and Ammon. As such it refers to Jordan today. It is mentioned here in verse 8 with the notation that “they”, as in the afore mentioned people groups, “have holpen the children of Lot” in this conspiracy to destroy Israel.

Essentially, then, the enemies of Israel in Psalm 83 conspire to totally destroy Israel by encircling Israel and launching a coordinated attack from the north, east, south, and west. This would mean, in terms of today’s geopolitical map, an attack from Lebanon and Syria from the north, Jordan and Iraq from the east, Jordan and Egypt from the south, and the Gaza Strip from the west.

Now, those who believe that Psalm 83 has already been fulfilled fall into several groups. One group believes that it was fulfilled centuries ago during the Old Testament era as Israel defeated most of these nations in various wars. Another group believes that it was fulfilled in 1948, and still others that it was fulfilled in the culmination of Israel’s wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973. But has it?

Claiming that Psalm 83 has already been fulfilled presents several problems. For instance, the claim that it was fulfilled in ancient times is often based on 2 Chronicles 20:1-30. However, the passage in 2 Chronicles only deals with Ammon and Moab. Some would counter that the other nations mentioned were defeated by Israel at other times so, when taken in total, Psalm 83 has been fulfilled. Nevertheless, Psalm 83 strongly indicates that all of the nations mentioned will come against Israel simultaneously, united in their desire “that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance” and that they will all be destroyed at the same time.

Consequently, since the fulfillment of Psalm 83 cannot be found in the Old Testament, some believe that it has been fulfilled in more recent times. In 1948 Israel declared its independence. Almost immediately the Arab countries of Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen surrounding Israel attacked, attempting to destroy the nascent state before it could get established.

Essentially saying, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance."

Now, while the 1948 war, and/or the 1967 and 1973 wars, may seem good candidates for fulfilling Psalm 83, they fail to fully account for the destruction of Israel's enemies as detailed in Psalm 83. Remember, verses 9-12 say:

⁹Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: ¹⁰Which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth. ¹¹Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: ¹²Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

This passage refers to the defeat of the Canaanite King Jabin and his general, Sisera, by Deborah and Barak in Judges chapters 4 and 5 as well as the defeat of the Midianites by Gideon in Judges 7 and 8. Though there were other battles between Israel and both the Canaanites and the Midianites, in both of these cases Israel's enemies were soundly defeated and it was some time before they were able to regain either the strength or the will to come after Israel again. Though this may seem to be fulfilled in Israel's wars, Psalm 83:13-15 indicates otherwise:

¹³O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. ¹⁴As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; ¹⁵So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

This passage indicates that Israel's enemies will be reduced to stubble, like a field that has been completely reaped, and reduced to ash as if subjected to a fire storm. This connotes a level of destruction beyond what Israel has previously inflicted upon her enemies. It also suggests that Israel may unleash a devastating nuclear attack upon her enemies.

Before discounting that suggestion, consider the prophesied destruction of Damascus and Syria in Isaiah 17 where Damascus is reduced to rubble overnight in verses 1 and 14:

¹The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap. ...²And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not.

In Isaiah 17 and Ezekiel Egypt is also prophesied to be destroyed as well. In fact, Ezekiel 29:10-12 says that the destruction will be so devastating that Egypt will actually be abandoned for 40 years:

¹⁰Behold, therefore I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. ¹¹No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. ¹²And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries.

Babylon, located in present day Iraq, is also prophesied to be destroyed in Isaiah 13 in a fashion strongly suggesting a nuclear attack in verses 19-20:

¹⁹And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁰It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

Israel going nuclear against its enemies is not beyond the realm of possibility. They possess a sizable nuclear arsenal which they have indicated they would use should they believe that they are about to be overwhelmed and destroyed by their enemies, especially if subjected to chemical, biological, and nuclear attacks. Nuclear retaliation by Israel would help explain Isaiah 19:16-17:

¹⁶In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it. ¹⁷And the land of Judah

shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts, which he hath determined against it.

It would also help to explain the close of Psalm 83, in verses 16-19:

¹⁶Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. ¹⁷Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: ¹⁸That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

Clearly, none of the wars that Israel has been involved in have resulted in her enemies recognizing that Jehovah is “the most high over all the earth.” In fact, as recent events have shown, the enemies of Israel still launch their attacks with cries of “Allahu Ackbar!” This is an Islamic phrase meaning that Allah, the false god of the Quran, is greatest of the gods. This alone indicates that Psalm 83 war is yet future.

Of course, that brings up another question: Is the current war that started with the October 7 attack on Israel the Psalm 83 war? If it is, time is short, and the Rapture is likely right around the corner. Time will tell but, as of this writing, not all the Psalm 83 combatants are involved. However, that could change at any time, especially if Egypt and Jordan should scrap their peace deals with Israel. In the meantime, God’s people need to wake up, redeem the time, and reach as many with the gospel as we can while we still can.

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