

through a broken off corner, but could not proceed further due to ice. The structure had supposedly been gradually carried down from the mountain top by the glacier, and ought therefore subsequently to have gradually emerged more and more. Yet nothing is obviously visible there today. The sultan of Turkey was alleged to have been planning

measures to preserve the structure, and an enterprising American businessman was planning to buy it, dismantle it, transport it to America and put it on display.

It is difficult to account for such stories as this. If it was true then what has happened since? Has the permanently frozen area of the Mount extended

itself since then, so absorbing the great boat?

The three men could hardly have been deluded by some other structure, nor are they the sort of people to have made the story up. Perhaps the *Levant Herald* published an entirely fictitious story without checking that it was true.

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Egypt thirty years on

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THIRTY YEARS ago this month an event happened in Egypt which, in the words of *The Christadelphian* written at the time, caused a “political sensation” in the Middle East.¹ The then president of Egypt, Anwar el-Sadat, expelled thousands of Soviet advisers from Egyptian soil. This event had important long-term effects for the region, and, thirty years on, it can be seen to be an important milestone in the development of God’s purpose in the Middle East. In this article we will consider Egypt in Bible prophecy and reflect on the importance of that milestone in the outworking of events in the last days.

Base nation

In Isaiah 19 the conquering of Egypt by a “cruel lord” is described:

“The burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD [Yahweh] rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it . . . And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD [Yahweh] of hosts” (vv. 1,4).

This prophecy had a primary fulfilment in the invasions of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. This is spoken of by Jeremiah:

“Thus saith the LORD [Yahweh] of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace” (43:10-12).

Ezekiel, in a series of seven prophecies (chapters 29–32), also speaks about the punishment of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. In one of these prophecies he speaks about the status of Egypt after the invasion and captivity has finished:

“and I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it

1. “Sadat’s gamble”, *The Christadelphian*, Sept. 1972, pp. 416-17.

exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations" (29:14,15).

History testifies to the truth of this prophecy. Egypt has never been able to recapture the greatness of its ancient past. The baseness of Egypt has been compounded over the centuries by other powers using Egypt as a centre for their operations. One example of this was the way in which the Ptolemies established themselves in Egypt following the death of Alexander the Great. The progress of the Ptolemaic Empire is prophesied in detail in Daniel 11.

In Daniel 11 "the king of the south" is, for the most part, the Ptolemaic Empire, and its centre is shown to be Egypt (v. 8). The king of the south, however, will also exist at the time of the end (v. 40). This power cannot be Egypt itself for Egypt will always be a "base" nation.

The foreign power having a dominant influence to the south of Israel at the time of the end is Tarshish (Ezek. 38:13). We would therefore expect Tarshish to have a strong influence within Egypt at the time of the end. As the main Tarshish power, Britain has indeed had strong influence in Egypt in the past. In 1882 Egypt effectively became part of the British Empire. This was part of the "ransom" given by God to Britain for the future role it was initially to play in furthering the return of the Jews to Palestine (Isa. 43:3). Although Egypt was granted independence in 1922, the British influence remained strong until Nasser became president in 1952. Under Nasser, Egypt came under the influence of another foreign power, the Soviet Union.

The king of the north

In the latter part of Isaiah 19 there are aspects of the prophecy that clearly relate to the time of the end. These are characterised by the phrase, "In that day", which occurs several times in this chapter. For example, the last of these depicts Egypt as sharing in the blessings of the Kingdom: "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land" (v. 24). The introduction of the phrase, "In that day", however, in the middle of the chapter (v. 16) seems to imply that what has gone before in the passage also relates in some way to that day. The early part of Isaiah 19 appears to have a fulfilment in the latter days as well.

The invasion by Babylon of Egypt is a foreshadowing of the invasion to take place by Gog,

the king of the north, as spoken of in Daniel 11: "He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps" (vv. 42,43).

When the king of the north invades Egypt and fulfils these verses then the prophecy in Isaiah 19:4 will have its ultimate fulfilment: "And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD [Yahweh] of hosts". During the days of the Ptolemaic Empire the role of the king of the north was fulfilled by the Seleucid Empire based in Syria. In the latter days its role will be fulfilled by Russia—the Gog of Ezekiel 38 and the dragon of Revelation 16.

In Ezekiel 38 Egypt is not mentioned as one of the allies of Gog. This is particularly noteworthy given that Egypt's neighbours, Libya and Ethiopia, are both listed (v. 5). Yet this is what we would expect from Daniel 11. Egypt is not an ally of Russia at the time of the end, it is an enemy who warrants invasion.

Soviets out

The Soviets had begun to supply Egypt with weapons in earnest after the Suez and Sinai conflict in 1956. By the time the Six-Day War was fought in 1967, nearly all the weapons of Egypt were Soviet weapons. In addition to hardware there were thousands of Soviet military experts and advisors. When Sadat became president in 1971 the influence of Russia in Egypt had become immense.

The reasons why Sadat expelled the Russians are complex. In his autobiography he gave several reasons.² For example, he claimed that one reason was to fool other countries into thinking that he had no intention of carrying out an offensive war, a strategy which certainly worked, given the element of surprise at the beginning of the Yom Kippur War in 1973. However, another reason he gave is of particular interest in the light of Bible prophecy. We have already noted that the British power of Tarshish, together with its young lions such as America, will have the mantle of king of the south at the time of the end, and Russia will be the king of the north.

2. Sadat, A. (1978), *In Search of Identity—an autobiography*, Glasgow, Collins.

From a prophetic perspective therefore the Russian influence was an anomaly. The following extract from Sadat's autobiography shows the extent to which this anomaly had developed:

"A further reason for the expulsion of the Soviet experts was that the Soviet Union had begun to feel that it enjoyed a privileged position in Egypt—so much so that the Soviet ambassador had assumed a position comparable to that of the British High Commissioner in the days of British occupation of Egypt".³

This is a remarkable analysis in the light of Bible prophecy. According to Sadat, Russia had gained the same position in Egypt as Britain had previously. Yet this is the exact opposite of what is required from Russia in its role as king of the north. No doubt the multiple factors which led to Sadat expelling the Soviets were under providential control. This quotation shows just how close Sadat's thinking (at least in retrospect when writing about the event) had unwittingly become to the requirements of Bible prophecy.

Not all Soviets were expelled from Egypt in 1972, and the Soviet influence lingered on. It would be wrong to overstate the finality of the expulsion, dramatic though it was. The following quotation from a military historian, Dr John Westwood, helps to keep the events in perspective:

"In the end, not all the Soviet advisers left, military academy instructors and weapon-training instructors being retained, and the Red Navy continued to enjoy the use of Egyptian bases. The Russians continued to supply spare parts for Soviet-built equipment. As its effort in Egypt declined, the USSR transferred its interest to Syria, where the army and air force began to benefit from an infusion of Soviet hardware and experience".⁴

In addition to showing that the expulsions were not all-embracing, these words also provide us with information about another trend which was developing. Not only were the Soviets reducing their influence in Egypt, they were also *increasing* their influence in Syria, the location of the Seleucid seat of the king of the north.

Present-day Egypt

As Russian influence faded, America and Britain sought to fill the vacuum. The United States now gives around \$1.3 billion annually to Egypt. It has provided Egypt with a variety of military hardware, such as F-4 jet aircraft, F-16 jet fight-

ers, tanks, armoured personnel carriers, Apache helicopters, anti-aircraft missile batteries and aerial surveillance aircraft. Annually, Egypt hosts Operation Bright Star, a multilateral exercise with America. It is the largest military exercise in the world. Units from the US Sixth Fleet regularly visit Egyptian ports.⁵

British influence is also strong, particularly in the economic field. The British Petroleum Company is recognised as one of the leading companies involved in oil prospecting in Egypt. It has recently agreed to form a joint venture with Egypt with a capital of \$500 million.⁶ The Egyptian-British Chamber of Commerce states: "British business has a good reputation in Egypt, and Britain is now the biggest foreign investor, with investments worth about \$4.5 billion".⁷

Militarily and economically we see that in the past thirty years Tarshish and the young lions have gained a foothold in Egypt. This is in line with Bible prophecy, and the expulsion of the Soviets in 1972 was a precursor to this. However, there has been another recent development in Egypt which also involves a lion of Tarshish and which relates directly to the prophecy in Daniel 11.

In October of last year the Egyptian Minister of Industry and Technological Development announced the discovery of large quantities of gold in a hill called Sukari in the Egyptian eastern desert. The gold is to be mined by Centamin Egypt, an Australian company led by an Egyptian geologist. The Egyptian *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* reported that the amounts of gold present are so great that it is thought Sukari will become one of the largest gold mines in the world.⁸ The finds also include other precious metals, such as silver. The minister was reported as saying that "this will place Egypt on the map of the world's leading gold-producing countries".⁹

In Daniel 11 it is said of the king of the north that "he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things

3. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

4. Westwood, J. N. (1984), *The History of the Middle East Wars*, London, Bison Books, p. 129.

5. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5309pf.htm>

6. <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/020412/2002041231.html>

7. <http://www.theebcc.com/about/aboutus.shtml>

8. <http://www.ahram.org.eg/weekly/2001/559/ec2.htm>

9. <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/011031/2001103134.html>

of Egypt" (v. 43). Although many of its ancient artefacts are distributed in museums around the world, Egypt still has many ancient "precious things" which one can imagine an invading force plundering.

However, until now it has been difficult to see why gold and silver should be particularly highlighted as a part of the plunder of Egypt. The discovery of the large gold field mentioned above could change all that. At present Egypt, and the company from Australia (a young lion of Tarshish), have power over this gold. Yet, at the last, the king of the south will be usurped from Egypt and the king of the north will enter as an invading force and take control of the gold mines of Egypt.

Conclusion

The invasion by Russia will not be the end for Egypt. Having been smitten, it will then be healed: "And the LORD [Yahweh] shall smite Egypt: He shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the LORD [Yahweh], and He shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them" (Isa. 19:22). Egypt will be delivered by a "saviour" (v. 20), the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints. Egypt will be brought into the new covenant and counted as God's people (v. 25). They will be

blessed in Christ, fulfilling the promise to Abraham, "and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18).

On 20 November 1977 Sadat addressed the Israeli Knesset. This was a bold move, which surpassed in its significance even the expulsion of the Soviet advisers five years previously. It eventually cost him his life at the hand of Muslim extremists in 1981, but its ramifications for Israeli-Egyptian relationships are still being felt today.

In his autobiography Sadat called the chapter in which he wrote about his visit to Israel "The Road to Peace". True peace will only come in the Middle East when the Kingdom of God is established. This peace will be no better exemplified than by the building of a literal road of peace which will run "out of Egypt to Assyria" (Isa. 19:23).

Then the divisions between the king of the north and the king of the south will be a thing of the past. Instead of being used as a one-way track for the expulsion of enemies, the road will be for the two-way traffic of peoples bound together in Christ: "and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians" (v. 23).