

the rivers divide." The verb used here is one which occurs nowhere else in the Bible. The rabbis have generally explained it as "spoil," on the analogy of a somewhat similar Hebrew word. Another rather similar Hebrew word means "despise." Neither of these fits the context particularly well unless "rivers" is taken in a figurative sense, and the phrase describes Israel despoiled by Assyria. If "rivers" is taken in a literal sense, neither "spoil" nor "despise" fits at all well. Most interpreters prefer to take it as related to a similar Aramaic word, which means "to divide" or "cut through." In this case it would literally describe Ethiopia, which is intersected by the River Nile and its tributaries. Thus the obscurity of this rare verb leaves us in doubt of the meaning of the phrase. If we take "rivers" as a figurative description of Mesopotamia, and follow the King James Version in translating the word as "spoil," we may perhaps have a picture of Israel. If we take "rivers" literally and follow the American Standard Version and most commentators in translating the word as "divide," we have here a perfect picture of the Sudan, which is so dependent for its life on the Nile and its tributaries.

### **A Decisive Point**

In our examination of the words used in this verse we have thus far skipped over the word "terrible," which is translated exactly the same in both the King James Version and American Standard Version, and also by Delitzsch. The Hebrew word means "something that is feared, or that ought to be feared." There is no question about its meaning. It is used to describe the people to whom the ambassadors are directed to go. It gives us definite proof as to the meaning of the verse. At this time Judah is in grave danger from Syria and Israel. The relief she gets through the help of Assyria results in putting her in a most difficult position, with no buffer state between her and the mighty Assyrian empire.

Under these circumstances she is tempted to seek the help of the other great empire, that of Egypt. In such a context, it would surely be absurd to speak of Judah as "a people terrible from their beginning hitherto." On the other hand, the phrase exactly fits the great war-like nation to which the