

## **God verses Gog!**

### **(Russia and the Islamic Nations in Bible Prophecy)**

(Ezekiel 38-39)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

The world has become a more dangerous place to live than ever before in its history because of the threat of Islamic militancy. Islam's more recent militant revival can be traced back to the Iranian revolution in 1979, led by Ayatollah Khomeini. After 1979, the Iranian revolution spread to other nations and gained the momentum in the 1980's. Since 1991, with the fall of the Soviet Union and communism, militant Islam has literally exploded on the world scene. The breakup of the former Soviet Union could be classified as the catalyst that sets the wheels of Ezekiel 38-39 in motion, which will be the greatest military threat to modern Israel's continued existence. One of the most dramatic events of the end times is an invasion of Israel by a vast horde of Islamic nations in the area of the Middle East. No invasion, even remotely similar to the one described here, has ever occurred in Israel's history. This is why John Walvoord concludes: "There has never been a war with Israel which fulfills the prophecies of Ezekiel 38-39."

### **Humpty Dumpty Had a Great Fall**

The Soviet Union had a great fall like the fabled Humpty Dumpty. When the Soviet Union came crashing down in December 1991, the people of Central Asia immediately embraced Islam, which was the religion they had been forced to renounce or secretly practice for 74 years. Since the former Soviet republics were free to exercise their own agenda and religion without fear of the Kremlin, they began to grow, and Islam spread like wildfire. In fact, today, Russia houses many Muslims and mosques as they cater to Islamic teachings. A wedding has occurred between Russia and Islam. Today Russia's population of 144 million contains 23 million ethnic Muslims. Russia is becoming a Muslim majority state. More than 7,000 mosques are on Russian soil. Russia continues to build ties with Syria, Libya, and Turkey, all of whom would like to see Israel destroyed.

On February 28, 2006, Paul Goble, an expert on minorities in the former Soviet Union, states: “Within most of our lifetimes the Russian Federation, assuming it stays within current borders, will be a Muslim country. That is it will have a Muslim majority and even before that the growing number of people of Muslim background in Russia will have a profound impact on Russian foreign policy.” This is very significant in light of what the Bible teaches in Ezekiel 38-39 regarding Russia’s alliance with Muslim nations during the end times.

Islam is presently the world’s second largest religion. Christianity is the largest. More than 65 nations in the world are Islamic. In the past 50 years, the Muslim population in Western Europe has grown from about 250,000 to nearly 20 million. The evidence also suggests that many of these Muslims are becoming more radical.

Statistics reveal that the Muslim population of Europe will double by the year 2020 and will double again by 2035. By this time the majority of young people in most European cities will be Muslims. Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries are currently donating multiple tens of millions of dollars to the furtherance of Islam in the United States. Islam is on the rise and will be a major factor in the end times according to Ezekiel 38 and 39.

Did you know that President Reagan was a big fan of the Biblical prophet Ezekiel? In fact, Ezekiel was Reagan’s favorite book of prophecy. He believed that the Russian bear, along with other Arab nations, would one day lead an invasion against Israel. He was right. Although the rise of militant Islam has surprised many around the world, God and Christians have not been caught off guard.

### **Scanning the Horizon**

Approximately 2,600 years ago, through the prophet of Ezekiel, God predicted events that are strikingly similar to what we see developing before our eyes today in the world. Ezekiel was able to scan the horizon and look forward through the corridors of time and see nations that were not yet born and alliances that were not yet formed. According to the Bible, Russia along with Islamic allies, will one day march upon the Middle East and the land of Palestine to destroy the nation of Israel (“my people of Israel” – Ezek. 38:14). Russian and

Islamic Fundamentalism is seen invading Israel during the end times. This is the prediction of Ezekiel's prophecy.

Ezekiel 38:9 reveals:

"Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee."

Ezekiel 38:18

"And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face."

The Islamic Jihad (religious militarism) of fanatical fighters, who base their teachings on Mohammed, and who "struggle or strive in the path of Allah" (the meaning of the word jihad), will one day move toward Israel wanting to destroy her and overtake her land. The meaning of the word Islam means "submission to the will of Allah" Members of Islam are called Muslims ("those who submit"). Radical Islamists are submitting to Allah's wishes to conquer enemies and defend their religious heritage. Muslims involved in jihad or holy way are seeking to emulate the behavior of Muhammad (Sura 33:21), since he often led Islamic troops into battle to make Islam dominant during his time. In fact, Mohammed's mission was to conquer the world for Allah. The goal of jihad, or holy way, is to establish and expand Islamic authority over the whole world.

### **Setting the Stage**

The events we are witnessing today of Russia developing a coalition of friends with Muslim nations and the ever increasing Arab hostility toward the Jewish people is setting the stage for the invasion of Ezekiel's prophecy to occur during the end times. Also, Israel is back in her homeland, Russia has become friends with the Islamic countries that surround Israel, and the Arab's are seeking to wipe Israel off the map, due to their intense hatred for Jews. All of these factors are setting the stage for this momentous event to occur.

### Ezekiel 38:8

“Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.”

The Lord told Gog (the leader of the coming invasion) to be ready with his allies (Ezek. 38:7). He would summon Gog to attack the Promised Land when the Israelites were back in it and dwelling safely (Ezek. 38:8). This Bible verse predicts that a remnant in Israel will be back in her homeland so end-time events can transpire in relationship to Israel. The regathering of Jews in Israel is necessary for key Biblical prophecies about the Tribulation Period to make sense. Israel is “the land that has been brought back from the sword.”

This Bible verse is a reminder that the land of Israel has experienced the sword of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman invasions. However, Israel would eventually return to the land in unbelief and the Bible assumes that Israel (“my people of Israel” – Ezek. 38:14) must eventually return to the land in some measure for Russia and the Arab nations to attack her during the end times (“thou shalt come into the land” and “gathered out of many people” and “brought forth out of the nations” and “they shall dwell safely all of them”). Ezekiel 38:12 also speaks of Israel being back in the land for this Russian/Islamic invasion to occur (“upon the people that are gathered out of the nations”). Israel would return to her homeland in part, even as she did in the previous Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

### **The Real Picture of Islam**

Frankly, the picture of Islam is not pretty. As much as some try to put a positive spin on Islam and its history and teachings, the hard truth really can't be hidden. Radical Islam is especially hostile toward Judaism and Christianity. Since there are about 1.3 billion Muslims in the world, even a small minority who are radical, can involve tens of millions of people who have the potential to cause a great deal of trouble in the world. The teaching of the Koran (Quran – literally “that

which is to be read”) calls for Islam to overtake their enemies and dominate their lands. In the Koran (Sura 2:216), we read, “Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you. In Sura 47:4 we read, “Therefore, when ye meet the unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; At length, when ye have subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them).” Sura 9:5 says, “But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and size them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war).”

The term Jihad is the traditional Muslim word for holy war against the unfaithful. Someday the final Jihad is going to take place when the Islamic nations invade the land of Israel to wipe the Jewish nation off the map (Ezek. 38-39). Muslims certainly have a religious motivation to participate in Jihad, for any Muslim who dies in service to Allah is guaranteed entrance into paradise (Hadith 9:459). According to Muslim tradition, the person who participates in holy battles and dies will be received into a type of heavenly harem to enjoy the company of many women.

Since the time of the crusades, when people who called themselves Christians conquered the Islamic Holy Land, Islam has raised its ugly sword against all those who identify themselves as Christian, such as America and anyone who opposes Islamic religion. The crusades were military expeditions undertaken by the Christians of Europe in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries which were designed to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims. Many Muslims died in these crusades and they never forget it! Therefore, Muslims have a specific “holy war” against anyone who is called or identified with Christianity.

Someday in the not too distant future the final Jihad will take place. The Russian bear with her Islamic collusion of nations will descend upon Israel and seek to destroy God’s beloved people. However, God will destroy the Islamic invaders and the final jihad will become a victory for God.

### **The Coming Russian and Islamic Invasion**

So what does the prophecy of Ezekiel 38-39 predict? It predicts a Russian and Islamic attack upon Israel during the end times. Many

details are given in this prophecy that match the world scenario taking shape today and this makes this prophecy one of the most exciting in the Bible to interpret. The stage is being set and the world prepared for this final Jihad to take place.

Before studying this passage of Scripture, we should listen to the words of the late Andrew Blackwood, who warned: "In dealing with the future God's interpreter should pray for a sense of balance lest he strive to make clear what God has not yet revealed."

As we approach this subject of the coming invasion of Russia and Islamic allies upon Israel, we don't want to make claims to something that God has not revealed. On the other hand, we want to be fair in our approach to this text of Scripture and bring its basic understanding out into the open. We want to exegete it fairly without coming to conclusions that God has not given to us.

## **I. The Designer of the invasion**

The writer of this end-time script is none other than God. In this great prophecy, we see the working of the sovereign God. God is the designer of this future invasion. We need to remember that God has already written the script of the end times. God is the author of the ages. Seven times in Ezekiel 38-39 we read the same word: "Thus saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 38:3, 10, 14, 17; 39:1, 17, 25). Several other times God reminds us in various ways that He is in control of these events (Ezek. 38:19; 39:6, 8). This indicates that God has orchestrated the events of this final Jihad against Israel and reminds us once again that God is sovereign over the world events. God is not only the author of the scripts but He is the director of these events.

Mark Hitchcock said:

"If Bible prophecy had a list of credits, it would read, 'Directed by God.'"

God is in sovereign control over history (His-story) and He Himself decrees this invasion. As the director and producer and leader of world events, God is orchestrating, organizing, and overruling the events of the world in order to set the stage for a drama of the end times. That God is in charge is clearly seen. He is pictured as

dragging the invading nations out of the water, as a huge crocodile, and bringing them down into the land of Israel.

Ezekiel 38:4

“And I will turn thee back (turn thee around), and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.”

Putting hooks in his jaws pictures God’s control over the invasion which the ruler and countries would not be able to resist. The Lord would be the first cause of this military action, but doubtless there would be secondary causes as well, such as Satan’s influence and human decisions (2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1; Isa. 10:5–19; Hab. 1:5–11).

Ezekiel 39:2 again reveals God’s sovereign control:

“And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel.”

Ezekiel 38:16

“And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.”

Ezekiel 38:17

“Thus saith the Lord God; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?”

God is in control over the movements of world nations. We must never forget this.

Job 12:23 records:

“He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth (leads and guides) them again.”

Ron Rhodes correctly observes:

“The sobering reality is that many great nations have risen and fallen throughout human history. Each nation had no expectation of its impending demise. Indeed, people who lived within these nations believed they could never fall. But the harsh reality of documented history is that great nations do fall – hard.”

The Babylonians never thought Babylon would fall, but its demise came in less than a century. The Persians and Greeks never thought their world kingdoms would be destroyed; however, they fell within two and three centuries. The great Roman Empire never thought it would disintegrate but it eventually fell apart from within. Studies show that no civilization is immune from self destruction. The great nations and empires of the past never thought they would fall, such as the Babylonian Empire (lasted 86 years), Persian Empire (lasted 208 years), and Grecian Empire (lasted 268 years). The United States must remember this and act with submission and humility before God and the Bible. Ultimately, our future is dependent on God’s plan and unfolding purpose. We will get what we deserve. The same will be true of the Islamic troops and nations that invade Israel.

In short, God has decreed the invasion of Russia and the Islamic nations and will stop the invasion. God has His steady eye on the events of history and human affairs. Although these nations will plan this wicked action against Israel (Ezek. 38:10-11 – “shall things come into thy mind” and “I will go up”), God will be orchestrating it and leading it.

Although God allows man to act freely and independent in his choices (Acts 2:23), God still overrides the events that will transpire today and during the end times. God allows men, governments, leaders of countries, and people living within countries, to make their own decisions and choices, and then gives them what they deserve. God is taking the nations of the world to His intended goal. They are comparable to a fish in a bowl that is swimming around, making choices, and moving at will; however, God is ultimately moving the world nations according to His sovereign direction. He has written the script and will bring His purpose to pass for each nation including America!

Isaiah 46:10 declares:

“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

Isaiah 14:24 declares:

“The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.”

God is God and He has a plan that will not be undone! It does not matter what Americans think or our president thinks; it only matters what God thinks and has ordained.

Psalms 50:1

“The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.”

God is in control of the events of this world. God is still on the throne! The nations rise and fall according to His plan and purpose. Leaders, world governments, and nations rise and fall according to God’s sovereign choice and plan (Dan. 2:21). This will be seen in the end times with the destruction of Russia and the Islamic nations that come against Israel.

Psalms 121:4 declares:

“Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

America needs to remember that God is on Israel’s side and we should be on Israel’s side as well. When a nation turns on Israel, God eventually turns on that nation. The Bible repeatedly demonstrates this to us and God promises this from the very beginning of the Abrahamic Covenant.

God promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:3:

“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

America, remember this! President Obama, believe this! I believe America has been blessed by God for many years because of our partnership and backing of Israel. If we turn our backs on God’s

beloved people, we can't expect God to bless us and help us out of our present-day problems. If we stay with Israel, we still have a chance to stay on God's side! If we abandon Israel, we will sign our own death certificate, before we die as a nation, and come under God's judgment as a nation. Staying with Israel will in some measure keep us in God's favor. Abandoning Israel will mean losing God's favor and blessing.

## **II. The participants in the invasion**

Liberal interpreters conclude that this prophecy in Ezekiel 38-39 was inserted much later by a different author (a disciple of Ezekiel) and was told to only give discouraged Israel hope. Others, who reject the miraculous element of predictive prophecy, insist that this is nothing more than a recapitulation or summary of what already occurred in past. It's assumed that this is an invasion of the ancient Scythians who came far to the north of Israel. Others suggest this was an invasion of Babylon on the land of Israel or the invasion of Alexander the Great.

Of course, none of these scenarios fit the scene and can be descriptive of the nations represented in this alliance. In fact, nothing in the historical records resembles this invasion. No invasion on the magnitude of Ezekiel 38-39 has ever taken place in Israel's history. Furthermore, this unique alignment of nations has never occurred in the past. This is a clear prophecy that occurs in the "latter years" (Ezek. 38:8) and "latter days" (Ezek. 38:16) which we will later determine to be an expression that relates to Bible prophecy and the end times of Tribulation Period. The fulfillment of this prophecy will take place during the end times. It has not been fulfilled historically.

Here is the bottom line. Something is up in the Middle East and Russia appears to have her fingerprints all over things! The Bible foretells a time when Arab countries will unite in a coalition with Russia in order to invade Israel. Gog and his army are said to come from the "the north quarters" (Ezek. 38:6) and "the north parts" (Ezek 38:15; 39:2). Russia and her Arab allies will plan the attack and descend upon Israel from the north. Ezekiel was a Hebrew and therefore gave directions from the perspective of Palestine and Jerusalem. Whenever compass directions are given in the Bible, they

are understood to be directions that stem from the land of Israel, since Israel is viewed by Jews as the naval (central or focal point) of the earth (Ezek. 39:2), and since Jerusalem and Palestine will be the hub for all end-time events to occur.

John Walvoord, in his book, "The Nations in Prophecy," says that "if one takes any map of the world and draws a line north of the land of Israel he will inevitably come to the nation Russia. As soon as the line is drawn to the far north beyond Asia Minor and the Black Sea it is in Russia and continues to be in Russia for many hundreds of miles all the way to the Arctic Circle."

Walvoord later states that "one cannot escape Russia if he goes north of the Holy Land. On the basis of geography alone, it seems quite clear that the only nations which could possibly be referred to as coming from the far north would be the nation Russia."

Ezekiel 38:1-6

"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands (troops); the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands (troops): and many people with thee."

Although these names were contemporary to Ezekiel's day and common during his time of writing, they are no longer in use today. However, through historical and geographical studies, we can ascertain with a reasonable degree of certainty what their modern counterparts are. It's interesting that all these nations are found in the table of the nations in Genesis 10:2-7 which have stemmed from the repopulation of the earth, through Noah's sons, after the Genesis Flood. Notice the similarity of names in this list.

“The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. And the sons of Gomer; Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah. And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations. And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan. And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtechah: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan.”

The descendents of Noah eventually moved northward after the Genesis Flood and populated or became progenitors of what we know today as modern Russia and other Islamic nations. The land of Noah’s descendents was north of the Black and Caspian Seas. All of Noah’s descendants had land areas assigned to their names.

### **1. Gog (Ezek. 38:2)**

Ezekiel 38:2

“Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him.”

This prophecy is all about God verses Gog! God is taking on the leader of an invading force that comes into the land of Israel. Guess who wins! You will note that Ezekiel’s prophecy is “against Gog” and “against him” (vs. 2) and God Himself is against Gog (“I am against thee O Gog” – vs. 3). This is repeated in Ezekiel 39:1 – “I am against thee, O Gog.” I would not want to be in the shoes of this person! When God verses Gog in the end times, God wins! As we will see later in this study, God will destroy Gog and his armies in the mountains of Israel, as they seek to pounce upon Israel (Ezek. 38:18-22).

The term “Gog” (high or supreme one) points to the future leader of this coalition of nations that will come against Israel during the end times. He is the one who is in charge since he is directly addressed by God (Ezek. 38:14; 39:1). The name “Gog” appears eleven times in Ezekiel 38-39. This is probably not a specific name but a proper noun of a person. It is more like a king-like title and role, such as pharaoh,

Caesar, czar, or president. Apparently this man will be a czar-like military leader who will be in charge of the attack against Israel.

Gog is not the Antichrist as some have suggested. Identifying God as the Antichrist creates prophetic chaos of the Scriptures. Actually, the invasion from the north will be an attack against the Antichrist and his power in the Middle East. An attack against Israel will mean an attack against the Antichrist who has just given a covenant of peace to the Jews in Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation Period (Dan. 9:27).

The name Gog is apparently pointing to the future leader of Russia. It's a prophecy "against him" (Ezek. 38:2) specifically and the nation he leads. In this battle God is going to take on Gog.

## **2. Magog (Ezek. 38:2)**

The "land of Magog" (the ancient land North of Israel) is the actual territory of this future czar-like leader. The name "Magog" probably constitutes the geographical area in the southern portion of the former Soviet Union. Most history scholars generally refer to this area near the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. It was the land of the Scythians. The Jewish historian, Josephus, who lived during the first century, said, "Magog founded the Magogians, thus named after him, but who by the Greeks are called Scythians."

Tom Constable concludes:

"The land of Magog probably refers to the former domain of the Scythians, who lived in the mountains around the Black and Caspian seas" (modern southern Russia).

The Scythian tribes, known for this savage and destructive warfare, spanned a wide geographical area from central Asia to the southern territory of modern Russia. Prophecy expert Mark Hitchcock gets even more specific and suggests that what used to be Magog (the homeland of the ancient Scythians) in ancient times is today occupied by the former southern Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and possibly even the northern part of modern Afghanistan. It's interesting that Muslims dominant these nations and provide more than enough religious motivation to move against Israel. Modern Magog is filled with Muslims that are

ready to obliterate Israel and take their country off the face of the map.

Don't confuse this "Gog" and "Magog" of Ezekiel 38 with the "Gog" and "Magog" mentioned in the Book of Revelation. They are two different "Gogs" and "Magogs." One is a specific reference while the other is a general reference.

Revelation 20:8

"And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."

Some believe that Revelation 20:8, the battle that occurs after the Millennial Kingdom, is describing the same battle recorded in Ezekiel 38 and 39. They conclude by this reference that the rebellion of Gog and Magog, which is mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39, takes place after the Millennium. However, the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel 38-39 are not the same Gog and Magog of Revelation 20:8. They are two different events occurring at two different points of time.

Significant differences in these two events would lead us to believe that they are not the same event. First, Ezekiel 39:4 and 17 describe the invaders perishing on the mountains of Israel, but according to Revelation 20:9 the rebels at the end of the Millennium will be destroyed on the "breadth of the earth" or on a "broad plain." Second, the events of Ezekiel 38–39 occur chronologically before the description of the millennial temple and 1,000 years given in Ezekiel 40–48, while the battle depicted in Revelation 20:7–10 takes place after the Millennium.

Third, these enemies come from the four corners of the earth (Rev. 20:8) but in Ezekiel 38 they come from the north (Ezek. 38:6). Fourth, in Ezekiel 39 we see the people burying the dead for a period of seven months (Ezek. 39:12) and burning their weapons for seven years (Ezek. 39:9). However, in Revelation 20 the earth is done away with soon after the invasion (Rev. 21:1) which does not allow any time or place to bury the dead or burn weapons!

Since these armies come from all over the earth (“which are from the four quarters of the earth”), the reference to “Gog and Magog” in Revelation 20:8 is probably used as a symbolic title and general way to describe the enemies of God who are against Jerusalem and the King. This description of Gog and Magog is used as an illustration of Israel’s enemies in the end times. In Revelation 20:8 it’s best to see the terms “Gog” and “Magog” as a general descriptive reference and symbolic title used to portray the leaders and nations of the earth as they come against Jerusalem and the King (Jesus Christ) after the Millennium (approximately 1007 years after Ezekiel’s battle). In other words, the term is used in this passage to describe the sinful rebels from all the nations of the earth who will gather together for the final war in human history.

The Septuagint (LXX) used “Gog” to render names such as Agag (Num. 24:7) and Og (Deut. 3:1), possibly showing that it was used as a general title for an enemy of God’s people.

Ezekiel 38:2

“Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him.”

### **3. Rosh (Ezek. 38:2)**

The expression “chief” (Hebrew = rosh - head) in Ezekiel 38:2, 3 and 39:1 has been given much debate. Some conclude that this word “chief” which is “rosh” in the Hebrew language can be a descriptive adjective and in this case explains the leader or head of the future invasion which would correspond to the word “prince” (exalted one, leader, king). The leader will be the “chief” (rosh) or head “prince” (leader) of the coalition of nations that comes against Israel. However, others suggest that this word “rosh” can also be translated and understood as a proper pronoun indicating a place. Therefore, the word “rosh” could also be translated as a specific place where this prince resides and would be better understood as the “prince of rosh” (the leader of Rosh – a specific country).

Some suggest that it refers to Russia and base this on etymological similarities, but the name Russia only came into existence in the late eleventh century A.D. So, those who equate this with the

geographical area of Russia, must have more evidence than similarity of sound. Many scholars insist that the Hebrew grammar can only support the word *rosh* as a noun which is descriptive of a place. The great Hebrew scholars C. F. Keil and Wilhelm Gesenius both state clearly that *rosh* in Ezekiel 38:2-3 and 39:1 is the name of a geographical location. The Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament, translates *rosh* as a proper noun, which was translated only three centuries after Ezekiel was written.

It's interesting that an ancient group of people known as the Sarmatians were known as the Ras, RASHU, and Rus and they inhabited the land of Rasapu. These people inhabited the area that today we know as southern Russia. At the time Ezekiel wrote his prophecy in the sixth century B.C., there were various groups of Rosh people who were known to exist in the areas north of the Black Sea.

Russians are mentioned by the Byzantine writers of the tenth century and they were called by the name Ros (Ros peoples), dwelling to the north of Greece in the area that is today Russia. In short, the name "rosh" was also known as a place and therefore could correctly be understood as referring to Russia. Critics argue that one cannot conclude that "rosh" means Russia based on similar sound. This is definitely true. However, the Hebrew language itself and history prove that this name was understood as a place. On this basis some suggest that the expression "chief prince" can more accurately be understood as "prince of rosh" and refer to a specific place where the prince dwells which according to historical records is the same area that encompasses modern-day Russia. So "rosh" may be an ancient name for Russia. The view of Rosh as Russia became popular after World War II when Russia and the Soviet Union emerged as a world power opposed to Israel and the West.

Whether the phrase should be understood as an adjective describing the leader of the coming invasion, or a noun describing Russia, really makes no difference, since the land of Magog is clearly understood as the same geographical region of what is modern Russia. Gog (the leader) and Magog (the land) are a clear reference to the Russian bear.

Russia has risen to a place of world dominance. Many people thought that when the Soviet Union was dissolved that the bear went into permanent hibernation. But the Russia of today is much more dangerous than ever before. Her economy is in shambles. She is a hungry bear and a humiliated bear. She needs the riches of the Middle East and the strategic location of this position. The Russian bear will track to the land of Israel in a coming future day to plunder her riches and take control of the Middle East. Tracking the bear during the end times leads us to believe that the Russians are coming! They will invade the land of Israel with a coalition of many Muslim nations.

#### **4. Meshech and Tubal (Ezek. 38:3)**

These two men were the fifth and sixth sons of Japheth, the son of Noah (Gen. 10:2), which appears in the table of nations. It's believed by some that the similarity of sound of Moscow to Meshech and Tobolsk to Tubal must mean that these two Russian cities are being referred to in this prophecy. The Scofield Bible made this connection; however, we must be careful to base our etymological conclusions on sound alone. "The reference to Meshech and Tubal (Moscow and Tobolsk) is a clear mark of identification." However, most historians refer these two names to geographical areas instead of two cities in Russia.

These two names are often mentioned together in Scripture and refers to the geographical territory to the south of the Black and Caspian seas, which today is modern Turkey and perhaps parts of southern Russia as we know it today. It seems that these two names comprise a part of what we know as western Turkey. Other names in this list will also be linked to part of modern-day Turkey.

Mark Hitchcock concludes:

"Meshech and Tubal are identified in ancient history with Mushki and Tabal of the Assyrians, and the Moshci and Tibareni of Greeks who inhabited territory that is in the modern nation of Turkey."

Tom Constable says:

"Meshech and Tubal occur together in Scripture (27:13; 32:26; Gen. 10:2; 1 Chron. 1:5) and apparently refer to regions of Anatolia

(modern western Turkey), the areas that became known as Phrygia and Cappadocia.”

Edwin Yamauchi comments:

“Since the late nineteenth century Assyrian texts ... locate Mushku (Mesheck) and Tabal (Tubal) in central and eastern Antolia respectively.”

Modern scholarship and the Bible dictionaries seems to have established, with a fairly high degree of certainty, that Mesheck and Tubal refer to a certain portion of the geographical area that is now occupied by modern Turkey. So this is a general reference to what we know as Turkey today.

Remember that Ezekiel is referring to ancient lands in his day which were closely joined together, such as Magog, Mesheck, and Tubal. Someday a leader will emerge and merge these ancient lands together to do battle with Israel. Of course, Islam is the largest religion of Turkey. More than 99 percent of the population is registered as Muslim. Turkey is certainly a friend to Islam and stands as a supporting nation to an Islamic invasion of Israel. But there are other nations mentioned in this Islamic coalition with Russia during the end times.

## **5. Persia (Ezek. 38:5)**

Persia lay to Israel's northeast. It was the center of the ancient Persian Empire. This is probably the easiest nation to identify in this list of evil conspirators against Israel. In March, 1935, the ancient land of Persia became the nation of Iran. Later, in 1979, Iran officially changed its name to the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a result of the Islamic Revolution. Today its population is 70 million and it has become a hotbed for militant Islam and blatant anti-Semitic hatred.

It's interesting that between 1989 and 1993, Iran spent ten billion to purchase weapons from Russia and also began to buy Russian nuclear and ballistic-missile technology. Why has Russia been selling nuclear technology to Iran? It's very clear today that Russia continues to supply Iran with military aid and we see the alliance of Ezekiel 38 beginning to form before our very eyes.

Iran is a key supporter of Hizbullah, the Party of God, which terrorizes Israel on a regularly basis. The Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, while speaking to a group of Islamic students on October 26, 2005, stated that “Israel must be wiped off the map.” Iran hates the Jews and wants to see this nation destroyed.

## **6. Ethiopia (Ezek. 38:5)**

Ethiopia was southwest of the land of Israel. Ethiopia is more correctly translated “Cush” (koosh) according to the Hebrew language. It is not the same as modern Ethiopia. Instead, it occupied the area later known as Nubia. Both secular and Bible historians agree that the ancient kingdom of Cush in Ezekiel’s day was the land just south of Egypt on the Nile River. Today the nation that occupies this land is Sudan. One would be hard-pressed to find a country that has more hatred for the Jews than this country. In 1989 Sudan was converted into an Islamic military dictatorship. Sudan supported Iraq during the Gulf War and gave refuge to Osama bin Laden from 1991 to 1996. It became a rallying place for every hard-line Islamic movement imaginable. Some have called Sudan the “terrorism new Mecca.”

It’s interesting that 2,600 years ago Ezekiel 38 puts Persia (now Iran) and Ethiopia (Sudan) right next to each other and today they are lining up to be end-time allies in the war against the Jewish people. Iran supplies Sudan with military supplies, oil, and military retraining, while Sudan gives Iran docking rights at Port Sudan on the Red Sea shipping routes.

## **7. Libya (Ezek. 38:5)**

This word is better translated “Put” (poot) in the Hebrew language and refers to the ancient land just west of Egypt. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament from 165 BC, translated Put as Libya. Today it is called Libya and is a North African ally that is west of Egypt which joins up with the end-time northern military coalition against Israel. Muammar Qaddafi took control of this land in 1969 and made this country a seedbed for international terror.

This land is certainly an Islamic nation that is ready to retaliate against Israel.

### **8. Gomer (Ezek. 38:6)**

There is a difference of opinion regarding Gomer, another country that will take part in the end-time confederation that comes against Israel. Some suggest this name refers to Germany since Gomer sounds similar to Germany and based upon a rabbinic view and Jewish Talmud. However, more scholars identify Gomer as central Turkey. The ancient historian Josephus said Gomer founded those whom the Greeks called the Galatians. The Galatians of New Testament times lived in the region of central Turkey. Also, Bible dictionaries conclude that the ancient Cimmerians of classical history lived in this area which today we know as central Turkey.

### **9. Togarmah (Ezek. 38:6)**

This was probably the location of eastern Turkey. Going back to Ezekiel's day, we discover that there was a city in Cappadocia (modern Turkey) known as Tegara. This fits Ezekiel's identification exactly because Turkey is far north of Israel ("north quarters"). God is clearly telling us that Turkey will have part in this coming Islamic invasion.

It's interesting that four of the ancient locations Ezekiel gives are found today in the nation of Turkey. – Meshech and Tubal (western Turkey), Gomer (central Turkey), Togarmah (eastern Turkey). These ancient land areas were once part of what we now call Turkey and they will have an active role in the end-time invasion of Israel. Today, Turkey is not as hard core Muslim, as some of the other nations in Ezekiel's list, but they are an Islamic nation. Never forget that Turkey supports Islam. One day they will join the coalition against Israel. We don't know all the details of what will happen that will ignite Turkey and cause them to join Russia's coalition. However, through the twists and turns of the end times, Turkey will eventually join in the war against Israel.

### **10. Many People (Ezek. 38:6)**

The expression “many people with thee” seems to be an addition to the other names mentioned here. It’s a general description of other Arab supporting nations such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. It’s easy to discern that this will be an Arab/Islamic invasion upon Israel headed up by the leader of Russia. This is going to be a Russian-Islamic confederacy. Islam has spread its tentacles throughout these nations and “many people” will join in this collation that is pro-Arab or pro-Islam.

It’s interesting that “Iraq” is not mentioned in this list of Islamic nations which comes against Israel in the end times. Perhaps there is good reason for not listing Iraq as one of the invading nations. The key answer lies in the fact that the Antichrist will be an ally with Iraq and use Babylon in Iraq as his capital or headquarters for end-time religion and commerce (Revelation 17-18). This diplomatic relationship will no doubt be fully developed by the time Russia and the Islamic nations plan to invade Palestine and contest the peace treaty which the Antichrist has just made with the Jewish nation (Dan. 9:27). Therefore, Iraq will not be included among the Muslim nations that invade Israel in the end times.

If one counts “rosh” as Russia then there are ten different names mentioned in this list (Gog, Magog, Rosh, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer, Togarmah). Mark Hitchcock has called these names “God’s Top-Ten Most Wanted List.”

The Bible is very clear. At some point during the future Tribulation Period, Russia and her Islamic allies will descend upon the nation of Israel as a storm cloud that covers the land of Israel.

Ezekiel 38:9

“Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee.”

Mark Hitchcock said that “when Iran and her allies decide to invade Israel, there will be no stopping them ... it will look like the biggest mismatch in history.” This is a true analysis of the situation that will transpire in the end times.

Ezekiel 38:16 declares:

“And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.”

The “land” refers to Palestine (Ezek. 38:19 – “the land of Israel”). The Russian and Islamic coalition of nations will begin their descent upon the little nation of Israel (“my people of Israel” – Ezek. 38:14) with the intent to destroy it and wipe them off from the face of the map. But God says very clearly that He is against Gog and the Islamic coalition or the final Jihad that comes against Israel in the end times (“I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal” – Ezek. 38:3). God is against Gog and his invading army and will demonstrate this by destroying them in the mountains of Israel.

### **III. The timing of the invasion.**

There are various views regarding the timing of this Russian/Islamic invasion. When will it occur? Various answers have been given.

#### **a. It takes place prior to the Rapture.**

Some suggest it happens before the Rapture but this takes away from the doctrine of the imminent (any moment) return of Christ for His Church (Phil. 3:20; 1 Cor. 16:22). Tim LaHaye teaches this view along with Joel Rosenberg. Joel Rosenberg suggests that “no major prophetic event *has* to happen before the Rapture, that doesn’t mean no such event *will* happen first.”

Let’s interact with this view. First, if this event was really ordained to take place before the Rapture, then Jesus Christ could have never returned prior to this particular Russian/Islamic invasion. This destroys the immanency of Christ’s return (Phil. 3:20-21). Second, this reasoning ignores the prophetic word of Daniel 9:24-27, which says that no prophetic events will occur unto the final seven weeks, connected with Israel’s 490-year cycle, resumes during the Tribulation Period. Third, the prophecy states it takes place during the “latter years (Ezek. 38:8, 16) that is a phrase dealing with the future Tribulation Period, which occurs after the Rapture (1 Thess. 1:9-10;

Rev. 3:10). Fourth, Israel will not have any true sense of security and rest as this prophecy suggests (Ezek. 38:8, 11) until the Antichrist signs his covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27). Furthermore, the Antichrist will not come on the world scene until after the Rapture (2 Thess. 2:6-8). This will be the time when Israel will be given security.

**b. It takes place after the Rapture but before the Tribulation Period.**

Others have seen this battle occurring after the Rapture (post-Rapture) and before the Tribulation Period (pretribulational) in an interim time period. This event is said to be a *pretribulational invasion but not a pre-Rapture invasion*. There is a period of time that will elapse between the Rapture and the signing of the covenant by the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27). Proponents of this view (Arnold Fruchtenbaum) make the point that this would give the needed time of seven years to burn the weapons of the Islamic invaders (Ezek. 39:9). For this reason Fruchtenbaum concludes that there will be at least three and one half years between the Rapture and Tribulation Period so Israel can bury the dead for seven years, before the abomination of desolation occurs (Matt. 24:15). However, there is no Biblical evidence for this view, nor can anyone access how long the interim time is between the Rapture and commencement of the Tribulation Period. Also, Bible prophecy is always viewed as being fulfilled in the context of the seven-year Tribulation Period (Dan. 9:27; 11:40; Matt. 24:3-26).

**c. It takes place during the first half or middle of the Tribulation Period.**

Others (John Walvoord, Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, Herman Hoyt, Mark Hitchcock) suggest it occurs sometime during the first half of the Tribulation Period or at the middle of the Tribulation Period. The point is made that Israel will be at peace by the Antichrist's covenant (Dan. 9:27). Also, with the Russian and Islamic threat gone, the Antichrist will use the resulting power vacuum in the world to allow for his quick ascendancy to world power and dictatorship (Rev. 13). However, this view hardly explains how Israel could burn weapons for seven years (Ezek. 39:9), since this would take us into the time of the Millennial Kingdom, a period of time when the Jews

and Jerusalem will no longer be bothered by previous world calamities (Isa. 66:17-18). The Millennium is a time of newness, freshness, and restoration (“regeneration” - Matt. 19:28).

Professor Harold Hoehner also observes that cleansing the land at the midpoint of the Tribulation Period, referring to the time when Israel is burying the dead (Ezek. 39:12), while at the same time the abomination of desolation is occurring (Matt. 24:15) and Israel is fleeing into the wilderness (Matt. 24:16-20) is highly improbable. In other words, these events are not compatible.

**d. It takes place at the end of the Tribulation Period.**

Others suggest that the battle occurs at the end of the Tribulation Period and is part of the Battle of Armageddon. This view fails to see the obvious differences between Armageddon and Ezekiel’s battle. Armageddon involves all the nations of the world (Zech. 12:3; 14:2; Rev. 16:14), not just the immediate nations that surround Israel (Ezek. 38:1-6). Armageddon also involves military soldiers that actually penetrate Jerusalem and overtake the city (Zech. 14:1-2), while Ezekiel’s battle involves the armies being destroyed in the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 38:19-23). At Armageddon Jesus Christ returns to destroy the troops (Rev. 19:15) and the troops array themselves against Christ, while in Ezekiel’s vision the troops are destroyed by God in the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 38:21). At Armageddon the Jews will not be living in rest and security (Ezek. 38:21) since the Antichrist will be persecuting Israel (Matt. 24:15-20) and since all the armies of the earth will be converging upon Israel (Zech. 14:1-2). At Armageddon the Beast is the head of the invasion (Rev. 19:19) whereas Gog is the head of the invasion in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek. 38:7). There are major differences between these two battles.

**e. It takes place between the Tribulation Period and Millennium.**

There are a few that suggest this battle recorded in Ezekiel 38-39 occurs between the Tribulation Period and the Millennium. In other words, it occurs after the Tribulation Period has ended and before the Millennial Kingdom begins. They claim that Israel will be living at peace and in security at this time (Ezek. 38:8). However, the time

allotment between the ending of the Tribulation Period and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom is 75 days (Dan. 12:12) and this is not a long enough interlude to fulfill the needed time for burying the dead and burning of the weapons for seven years (Ezek. 39:9-12). Also, Christ is going to judge the nations when He returns (Rev. 19:15). This will stop any invasion and threat from world nations.

**f. It takes place at the beginning of the Millennium.**

Others (Arno Gaebelin) suggest the battle occurs at the beginning of the Millennium since again Israel will be at peace and rest during this time. However, Isaiah 2:4 excludes the possibility of war during the Millennium. Weapons will be destroyed (Isa. 9:4-5); therefore, no weapons could be used for this invasion. A war at this time would be impossible since Christ will have already judged the unbelievers within the nations (Matt. 25:31-46) and since only the saved will enter the Millennium (Matt. 13:43). It is also difficult that the land of Palestine will be defiled for seven months (Ezek. 39:12) during the inaugural period of Christ's Millennial Kingdom. This practice does not reflect the transformation scene of the earth during the Millennial Kingdom (Isa. 35:6; 66:17). Lastly, Satan will be bound during this time (Rev. 20:1-3) and cannot stir up the nations against Israel during the Millennial Kingdom.

**g. It takes place at the end of the Millennium.**

Other suggest is occurs at the end of the Millennium and base it on Revelation 20:7-10, where Gog and Magog are mentioned in relationship to attacking Jerusalem. However, a careful analysis tells us that Ezekiel's chronology of the invasion (Ezek. 38-39) occurs before the Millennium (Ezek. 40-48). By contrast, the invasion described in Revelation 20:7-10 occurs at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7). Also, seventh months burying the dead and burning weapons for seven years (Ezek. 39:8-12) would be impossible since in Revelation 20:9 fire comes down from heaven and destroys the invaders and since the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15) and eternal state (Rev. 21) immediately begins following the Millennium. Also, Ezekiel's battle involves nations that surround Israel (Ezek. 38:1-6) while the battle described after the Millennium involves armies from all over the earth (Rev. 20:8). The invasion mentioned in

Revelation 20:9 is on a broad plain. By contrast, the invasion mentioned in Ezekiel takes place on the mountains (Ezek. 39:2). In Revelation 20:8 the terms “Gog and Magog” are being used as a metaphor of God’s enemies.

Let me give you the key indicators to when this invasion will occur so we can determine the best view regarding the actual timing of this invasion.

There are three indications when this battle will occur.

### **1. The prophetic element**

The phrase “latter days” (Ezek. 38:16) and “latter years” (Ezek. 38:8) is the entire period of time when prophecy is once again being fulfilled in relationship to Israel. It’s a prophetic phrase that refers to the Tribulation Period and extends into the Millennial Kingdom. We come to this conclusion for the simple reason that this phrase is used in the Old Testament in reference to Israel’s final time of distress in connection with the Tribulation Period and to Israel’s final restoration to the Millennial Kingdom (Isa. 2:2; Jer. 23:20; 30:24; Hosea 3:5; Micah 4:1; Acts 2:17-21). This is why we can’t look for this battle to take place before the Rapture. It is a battle designed to occur during the end times or period of time that Jesus spoke about as an intense period of tribulation (Matt. 24:3-26).

This is a time period that is different than our present day. If we want to be consistent with the use of this prophetic phrase, we must apply it to a different time period and not the time in which we live today. We are living in the “last days” related to the Church (2 Tim. 3:1-8) but not the “latter days” related to Israel’s prophetic destiny on earth during the Tribulation Period. The distinction between these last days and latter days is very important. Ezekiel is telling us that this battle will occur in the final phase of Israel’s history in preparation for the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. This would be the Tribulation Period. The battle will not take place in our time but in another time (“the latter times”) which is a time related to God’s unique dealings with Israel in judgment and kingdom blessing. This time indicator places the battle during the Tribulation Period when the “latter days” related to Jewish prophecy will begin to unfold. We are

not living in the day of prophetic fulfillment but the day which is preparing and paving the way for prophecy to be fulfilled.

We must remember that Bible prophecy was written to be fulfilled after the Rapture in the events associated with the Tribulation Period, Millennium, and eternal state. Jesus used the term “end” (end times) in relationship to the signs of the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:3, 6, 13, 14), which is a time when God will turn back to Israel and judge planet earth. It’s the seven-year period of time that precedes His Second Coming to earth. God’s prophetic clock does not start until after the Rapture and when the Antichrist signs the covenant with the Jews (Dan. 9:27).

Only when the Tribulation Period begins do we enter the period of time called the “end times” when prophecy is going to once again be fulfilled. Prophecies repeatedly speak about their fulfillment in a period of time known as “the day of the Lord” (Isa. 13:6, 9, 13; 27:1; 1 Thess. 5:2) or in a unique period of time following the Rapture that leads into the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:3). This is definitely another time period that has nothing to do with the period of time in which we are living today.

Many speculate about prophecies being fulfilled in our present day. However, when prophetic students do this they become guilty of “newspaper exegesis” (trying to see direct fulfillment of Bible prophecies in our day). Actually, prophecies are predicted to be fulfilled after the Rapture, when we will not be here, as Paul clearly outlines in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

## **2. The time element**

Ezekiel does envision the Jews cleansing the land for seven months as they bury the dead (Ezek. 39:12). But more importantly Israel will burn the weapons of these soldiers for seven years.

Ezekiel 39:9

“And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years.”

The burning of weapons for seven years is an important time marker and indicator, which suggests that Ezekiel was referring to the same time period Daniel was referencing, when he wrote about the final seven years that would occur in connection with Israel's 490-year cycle.

Daniel 9:27 records how the Antichrist "shall confirm the covenant with many for one week" which refers to a period of seven (seven years). The number seven is significant for it is the number of years that pertain to the future Tribulation Period which are equally divided into three and one half years in another text of Scripture (Dan. 12:7; Rev. 12:6, 14). The burning of weapons for seven years in Ezekiel's prophecy is an important prophetic time element that indicates this invasion will take place during the Tribulation Period. But we can be even more specific. If the seven years is a reference to the Tribulation Period in prophetic texts, and the Jews will use the weaponry to make fire for seven years, then out of necessity the invasion must occur at the very beginning of the Tribulation Period. This seems to be the case. Here is a possible scenario. News will apparently be out about a peace treaty to be made with the Jews (Dan. 9:27). This will outrage the Muslim nations. On the day the treaty is to be officially signed, the Russia/Islamic militants will be waiting in the wings to descend upon Israel, out of hatred for her and to gain a strategic military spot in the Middle East.

### **3. The security element**

Ezekiel also records how Israel will be living in security and rest during the time this invasion occurs. Ezekiel 38:8 says "they shall dwell safely all of them." Ezekiel 38:14 repeats this same finding ("when my people of Israel dwelleth safely"). In other words, the Jewish people will be living in safety and security in the land of Palestine during the time this invasion occurs.

Ezekiel 38:11

"And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates."

This speaks of Israel existing in a time of safety, security, and serenity (peace). Some would suggest that Israel's present position in the world today is one of security and safety due to their military build-up. In other words, Ezekiel is picturing Israel's confidence and security with the other nations of the world today, and this is the fulfillment of what Ezekiel says regarding Israel's security. However, this seems to be misleading and not what Ezekiel is envisioning in this prophecy. In order to fit this scene into what is transpiring today, some have tried to make Israel's security and safety applicable to Israel's situation today among the nations. However, realistically, we know Israel is not secure and safe today. They are constantly under the threat of war. In fact, missiles could fly overhead in the land of Palestine at any moment. The nation is constantly open to the threat of suicide bombers and terrorism.

Israel is constantly on alert due to radical Islam and Israelis are dying because of war and constant conflict with the Arabs. Iran is threatening to make and use a nuclear bomb. Israel certainly is not secure and safe at the present time. It is a stretch to say they are "dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates." At any time, Israel's Islamic enemies could retaliate upon them and bring great harm and destruction to them. The prediction of Israel's safety in Ezekiel certainly is not the Jewish situation that exists today. However, this will be the situation when the Antichrist makes a covenant of peace for the Jewish people, as Daniel predicts (Dan. 9:27). This time of Jewish safety and confidence predicted by Ezekiel suggests that the Antichrist has just made a peace pact that will guarantee Israel's safety and this will result in Israel's confidence and a time of jubilation and celebration, as predicted in Ezekiel's prophecy.

So when will this Russian/Islamic invasion take place? If we look at all the indicators, the invasion will occur at the very beginning of the Tribulation Period or seven years. Perhaps the best scenario is that while the news of the peace treaty is out (Dan. 9:27), and even before it's signed, prior to the beginning of the Tribulation Period, the northern army begins to gather together. They begin to set the stage for the invasion prior to the signing of the peace covenant. Once the treaty is signed, and the Tribulation Period officially begins, Russia and the troops are seen immediately protesting, as they converge

upon Israel, throughout the mountainous terrain. But they will be destroyed by God in the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 38:18-23; 39:1-4) and all seeming threats of war will be banished. The world will believe that it has entered a time of peace and utopia under the Antichrist as the first seal suggests (Rev. 6:1-2).

In short, this destruction of this invading army would take place immediately after the signing of the covenant (Daniel 9:27), during the very beginning of the Tribulation Period, and this would allow for the burning of the weapons to take place (Ezek. 39:9) for a period of seven years (the length of the Tribulation Period), prior to the beginning of the Millennium.

Some suggest that this view deals a deathblow to the idea that Ezekiel presents regarding the burning of weapons for seven years, since Israel will be fleeing from the Antichrist during the second half of the Tribulation Period (Matt. 25:15-21). However, as long as a minority of Jews continues to burn the remaining weapons of the invaders, throughout the second half of the Tribulation Period, when Israel is fleeing into the wilderness (Rev. 12:6), the prophecy can be fulfilled. Apparently the fleeing Jews will use some of the weaponry to keep them warm and provide fuel for heating food.

It's best to see this battle occurring at the offset or very beginning of the seven years in protest to the signing of the covenant. I think the best scenario is that both the signing of the covenant and invasion of Israel become sign markers or clear indications that demonstrate the earth has entered the "end times" of the Tribulation Period. These two events will occur very close together. The one (signing of the covenant) will trigger the other (the invasion of Russia and Islamic nations). The signing of the covenant with the Jews (Dan. 9:27), along with the destruction of the armies in northern Israel (Ezek. 38:19-23-39:1-6), sets the stage for seal one (peace and safety) to begin at the offset of the Tribulation Period (Rev. 6:1-2; 1 Thess. 5:3). The rider on the white horse (Antichrist) gallops on to the world scene promising peace and no more threats of war in the Middle East.

An invasion and destruction of Islamic soldiers at the beginning of the Tribulation Period also provides the backdrop for the rise of a one world church without the threat of radical Islam (Rev. 17:1-5), the

reconstruction of the Tribulation temple (Rev. 11:1-2), and the future formation and consolidation of the ten-nation confederacy under the Antichrist (Dan. 2:41-44; 7:24; Rev. 17:12-13, 17), which eventually paves the way for the world dictatorship and worship of the Antichrist (Rev. 13:3-18). All of these events will transpire since the threat of Islamic invaders are out of the picture.

In summary, since the Russian/Islamic invasion takes place at the very beginning of the seven-year Tribulation Period, the Antichrist will use this defeat as a way to promote peace in the Middle East. With the threat of Islamic invaders gone, a peace process will begin to take shape in the Middle East. First, the European and Middle East nations will begin seeking a way to confederate together for political, military, and commercial reasons, so they can combat any future invasions of Palestine and the Middle East. This is a confederation that will take place because of pressure from surrounding nations to gain access to the Middle East and control its oil and wealth. These ten nations will eventually, by the middle of the Tribulation Period, form the nucleus of the end-time kingdom of the Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13, 17).

Second, with the defeat of the Northern army, the Antichrist may make the bold announcement that the world is now ready for a time of peace. With the radical Islamic element out of the way and a united confederacy growing in the Middle East, the world can now enter the time of peace or utopia that it has longed for throughout the centuries. Many will think the earth has entered the “Age of Aquarius” (1 Thess. 5:3).

#### **IV. The reason for the invasion.**

Ezekiel makes it clear in his prophecy that these invaders are coming down to destroy the Jewish nation and take a spoil of the land of Israel.

Ezekiel 38:12

“To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.”

### **a. To persecute Israel**

We must first of all realize the intense hatred in the hearts of those who are invading Israel. This vast army wants to destroy the Jewish people, out of hatred for them (“turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations”). Muslims are unified in their desire to see Israel wiped off the map and they will come “against my people of Israel” (Ezek. 38:16) to kill and destroy them. A Satanically inspired hatred toward Jews will bring these Muslim nations down into the land of Israel. Since 1948, the Muslim nations of the world have been in a constant state of war with Israel. Muslims are against the Jewish people and want to see them dead. When opportunity rises, the Muslim coalition will seek to destroy and annihilate the Jewish people living in the land of Israel. Islam and the Muslim people are not a friend of Israel and Zionism.

### **b. To plunder Israel**

The Russian and Islamic invaders also want to descend upon Israel and the Middle East to seize the wealth of Israel. The words “spoil” and “prey” speak of plundering the nation of its wealth which would result in great gain for the invading hordes. Ezekiel makes note that the Israelis “have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land” (Ezek. 38:12).

The spoils of war might take on a number of enticing forms. To begin with, there are many wealthy Jews who live in Israel. There are more than 6,600 millionaires with total assets exceeding \$24 billion. Then too, the mineral resources of the Dead Sea (billions of tons of sodium, chorine, sulfur, potassium, calcium, magnesium, bromine) are worth virtually trillions of dollars. Gas and oil reserves have recently been discovered in Israel. It’s estimated that there are huge areas of natural gas and oil sitting in the land of Israel.

An Israeli oil company has recently made the largest oil find in the history of the country. One news agency in Israel reports: “Israel may have struck gold – black gold, that is. A deposit close to a billion barrels may have been discovered at a site east of Kfar Sab,

according to the fuel exploration company Givot Olan. The company announced ... that latest estimates of the Meged-4 oil well have exceeded original predictions, and that it contains an extremely valuable deposit of oil...The value of the oil at today's prices is approximately \$46 billion." The gas and oil beneath Israel's soil are surely an enticement to Russia and her Muslim allies. Those who control the land of Israel can know that they will have an economic boost.

### **c. To position themselves in Israel**

In addition, we know that the descent of Russia and the Islamic nations into Israel would provide them with greater control over the Middle East economically, militarily, and politically. The Middle East is the navel of the earth. If you control it, you inevitably control the politics of the world. Also, the invasion will be done to challenge the growing power and authority of the Antichrist who is rising as a world leader.

## **V. The protest to the invasion**

Ezekiel 38:13

"Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?"

When this coalition of Muslim nations plans to attack Israel there will be some nations who protest this invasion. This seems to be a rather lame diplomatic protest since it does not stop the invading hordes from coming down to destroy Israel and take her wealth. The specific nations who protest Gog's invasion of Israel are "Sheba and Dedan." These two names are mentioned together in the table of nations which stem from Noah's sons (Gen. 10:7) and are Keturah's sons which was the second wife of Abraham (Gen. 25:3). These two areas are not difficult to identify. They are ancient names for the land we know today as Saudi Arabia. Most historical experts agree with this conclusion.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum states:

“Sheba and Dedan are countries in northern Arabia, which shows that at least some of the Arab states will not favor the Russian presence in the Middle East.”

One might wonder why an Arab nation would protest against the Arabs invading Israel. No doubt there are economic reasons and political alliances that fuel this protest. What is the one Middle Eastern nation that constantly sides with the West against the radical Islamic element in that region of the world? The obvious answer is Saudi Arabia which is the ancient land areas of Sheba and Dedan. Today Saudi Arabia has good relations with the United States and may protest because of the United States interest in Israel and her state. The U.S. and NATO used bases in Saudi Arabia to launch strikes against Iraq and to monitor the entire Persian Gulf region. Perhaps this alliance with the West will continue on into the Tribulation Period and this is why we see Saudi Arabia protesting against the Russian/Islamic invasion of Israel. This nation's tie with the West and desire to please the West (United States) will trigger her protest against this invasion. Whatever the reason, Saudi Arabia will try and diplomatically protest this invasion.

The other nation is mentioned as “the merchants of Tarshish.” The majority of historians and weight of evidence suggests that Tarshish is the ancient Tartessus in the present-day nation of Spain. This view is supported by both Brown-Driver-Briggs and the Hebrew scholar Gesenius. Tarshish was a wealthy, flourishing colony of the Phoenicians located in modern Spain, which exported silver, iron, tin and lead (Jer. 10:9, Ezek. 27:12, 25). It was a leading seaport in its day. We read often in the Old Testament of "ships of Tarshish" which were large, oceangoing vessels (Ezk. 27:25) that carried all sorts of precious cargo, especially metals such as silver and gold (I Kings 10:22; 22:48; II Chr. 9:21; Isa 60:9; Jer. 10:9; Ezk. 38:13) as well as iron, tin, and lead (Ezk. 27:12).

Tarshish was the farthest west region of the known world, which today is known as the area of Spain (Ps. 72:10; Jonah 1:1-3). Spain is in modern Europe, more specifically, in Western Europe.

Today Spain is a member of the European Union which is a forerunner of the Roman Empire (ten kings) that will unite together for economics and power during the end times (Dan. 7:24), eventually yielding their allegiance to the Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13, 17). Therefore, this nation will protest its invasion upon Israel and the leadership of the Antichrist. Others suggest that Tarshish would include England but the evidence to support this is lacking. However, both Spain and England, which are in modern Europe, will evidently not be aligned against Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation Period. These countries, among others, will side with the Antichrist and his developing union of nations in Europe. Therefore, Spain will not be connected with the Islamic invasion, but will protest it.

However, there will be others connected with Spain who protests this invasion in the end times and they are termed as “all the young lions.” Who are these young lions? There is much speculation about these lions. The term “lions” can point to literal, young, wild animals but these lions are actually referring to other groups of peoples that inhabit other dwelling places which are connected with Spain’s protest. This is why an alternate reading of “villages” is applied to this group of people. This reference to lions could be referring to the energetic business merchants (peoples) of Tarshish (Spain and Europe) who will want to keep trade with Israel alive for economical reasons. A Russian invasion from the North will be an obvious threat to them economically. One could readily understand why these people would protest this invasion.

Others suggest that these “young lions” are energetic rulers who are in charge of other countries, which are aligned with Spain, and who have trade relations with this specific country. In this case, these energetic lions or rulers are aligned with Spain in its protest against the Russian/Islamic invasion. Some suggest that those protesting would include other Western nations such as England, Canada, and the United States.

Others take this relationship a step further. Since Tarshish or Spain was known as the western nation and today is modern Europe, specifically Western Europe, some students of prophecy suggest that the “young lions” may refer to European descendents or colonies that emerged from the area of Europe, which would include the United

States and Canada, and are today living elsewhere. Thus, they claim that it's very possible this reference to the "young lions" (villages or peoples connected with Spain) implies that all of Europe and those Western nations that have emerged from Europe, and who are in agreement with Europe, will object to this invasion, but refuse to intervene to protect Israel, from this massive attack.

Some conclude that Saudi Arabia (Sheba and Dedan), Europe (Tarshish) and North America and the United States (young lions that stem from Europe) are a reference to the western powers in the end times who stand in opposition to this invasion. It is said that the "young lions" are evidently referring to a group of peoples who have a connection with Spain or modern Europe and who know that such an attack on Israel will disrupt their relationships, trade, and world commerce.

We do know that other nations in Europe will stand in opposition to this invasion for various political and ally reasons and this may be what the writer is referencing in connection with the "young lions." The people who protest against the Russian/Islamic invasion, for obvious economic reasons, are those who are living in the same geographic region. However, some other writers are very confident that these other nations, not only include European nations, which align with the Antichrist, but all the other western nations, which also side with the Antichrist's western power. Therefore, "the young lions" that are connected to Tarshish are explained as the western nations which have emerged from Europe.

Timothy Ice espouses this view:

"First, merchants of Tarshish refer to the Phoenician maritime and trading community located in Spain during the general time of King Solomon, 3,000 years ago. Second, the merchants of Tarshish, during the last 500 years, developed into the modern mercantile nations of Western Europe like Spain, Holland, and Britain. Third, the phrase "with all its villages" or the variant rendering "with all its young lions," would be a reference to its trans-Atlantic colonies, which would include America. Thus, it is reasoned, because America is the most dominant of these Western nations, this must be a reference to America."

David Allen Lewis agrees:

“So the young lions of Tarshish would definitely refer to the North American colonies as well as the European colonies, and hence bring the U.S. into this prophecy as one of the nations that will strongly protest the Russian invasion of Israel in the last days.”

I personally find this view incompatible with this specific text of Scripture. It's trying to find a needle in a haystack. It's assuming way too much without any Scriptural warrant. We must be careful not to be dogmatic when Scripture does not paint a clear picture of certain nations during the end times. It must be remembered that all the other nations mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 are ancient land areas that are linked to the geographical region of the Middle East and its immediate surrounding areas. Therefore, the “merchants of Tarshish” (probably Spain) and the “young lions” are best understood as groups of peoples or nations in the same area of Europe (England, Switzerland, Austria, Netherlands, France, Italy, etc.). This is the likely fulfillment of the prophecy. Of course, only time will reveal who all the “young lions” will be that protest this invasion.

The Scripture seems to be teaching that the ancient land of Tarshish (Spain) and other peoples (“young lions”), which are somehow connected, or in agreement with Spain, will stand in opposition to the Russian/Islamic invasion. There will be a protest to this invasion but it will not stop the invasion from taking place.

## **VI. The losers in the invasion**

Ezekiel 38:18-39:1-7 records that the losers in this invasion will be the Russian bear and all the Islamic nations which come against Israel during the end times. This has been called the fall of Islam or the last jihad. This war will not last long. In fact, this is actually a “one-day” war. The demise of Russia and the Islamic invaders will take place rather quickly and set the stage for the Antichrist to form his alliance with the ten kings by the middle of the Tribulation Period (Rev. 17:12-13, 17) and emerge as a world leader and dictator.

Psalm 121:4 says:

“Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

We can see by God's intervention on Israel's behalf that God will not be sleeping when these invaders come down from the north to attack Israel. God will not allow them to touch His people at this time.

God is going to destroy Gog!! The Russian leader of this end-time confederacy of nations is going to invade Israel but God will be against Gog and his confederacy of nations.

Ezekiel 38:3

"Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal."

Ezekiel 39:1

"Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal."

When God is against a nation, they don't stand a chance! This Russian and Islamic army is going to be supernaturally destroyed by God. When God gets mad – look out!! Gog and his armies will be supernaturally destroyed on the mountains of Israel. They will lose the battle in the mountains. The Bible speaks about the troops descending upon Israel from the "north" (Ezek. 38:6, 15; 39:2) and from the "mountains" (Ezek. 38:20).

Ezekiel 38:21

"And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother."

Ezekiel 39:2

"And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel."

There are several mountain ranges that are scattered across the northern part of the country of Israel. These include the Golan, Carmel, and the Galilee mountain ranges. These are some of the main mountainous ranges that the enemy will use, as a cover, when moving into the land of Israel. Other mountains that might be included would be the Judean Mountains and Gilboa Mountains and Mount

Tabor. It can be seen that the mountains of Israel extend from Jenin in the North to a half way point between Hebron and Beersheba in the South.

God will use four supernatural means to destroy the Russian bear and Islamic invaders.

## **1. Cataclysmic earthquake**

Ezekiel 38:19-20

“For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.”

An earthquake will be phase one of God’s execution program (“there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel”). The Tribulation Period will be a time when many earthquakes occur (Matt. 24:7). However, this particular devastating earthquake will be used by God to conquer and confuse the invaders. The collapse of the mountains, as a result of the earthquake, will kill many troops, disrupt transportation, and throw this multifaceted group of soldiers into utter chaos.

The earthquake will obviously be designed to impact the mountains and not destroy the city of Jerusalem and other surrounding territories. The explanation of the “earth” has reference to Israel (Rev. 13:11) and more specifically to the mountainous regions of the land. The quake will be so intense that all the creatures living in this area will feel its effect (“So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth ... shall shake in my presence” - Ezek. 38:20). God is clearly orchestrating this earthquake! All the soldiers walking within the mountainous terrain of Israel (“and all the men that are upon the face of the earth”), along with the wild life, will experience the effects of this quake.

## **2. Confusion among the troops**

Ezekiel 38:21

“And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother.”

As a result of the aftermath of this powerful earthquake, there will be confusion among the many different troops, and the armies will begin to turn against one another. This will be the largest case of death by friendly fire in human history. Gog's allied forces will end up turning on each other and fighting one another in a state of confusion and panic caused by the earthquake (Judg. 7:22; 1 Sam. 14:20; Hag. 2:22; Zech. 14:13). The earthquake will disorient the different bands of troops.

Perhaps these troops will believe they are under attack from God Himself and must fend for themselves in order to stay alive, and this will cause them to begin fighting and killing one another. Any person that can't be identified will be killed. The old motto, “Shoot first and ask questions later” will be adopted. In fact, everyone will be speaking different languages (Russian, Arabic and Turkish) and all communications will be broken down. This will add to the chaos. The different troops, representative of many different countries, will in a state of confusion begin to protect themselves from further death and defeat. In a wild frenzy they will turn on each other for self preservation. Apparently the sword that God would call for to defeat Gog would be that of his own allies rather than that of Israel. The troops will have come into Israel to claim their land, but the only land they will claim are their burial plots (Ezek. 39:12).

## **3. Contamination by disease**

Ezekiel 38:22 goes on to say that “I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood.” In other words, God will through some means (insects, rats, birds, etc.) quickly inflict the soldiers with disease and cause bloodshed and death among the soldiers. Gog and his troops will experience a horrible, lethal plague that will add to the misery and devastation of what they have already experienced. We can't be sure what this plague or disease will be; however, it will claim the lives of great masses of soldiers. Disease and death will run

through the great masses of soldiers and they will find themselves collapsing and mysteriously dying.

#### **4. Convulsions of the heavens**

Ezekiel 38:22 also states: “and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.

The disturbance of the heavens will also be witnessed and experienced by these invading soldiers. The heavenly phenomenon of torrential rains, hailstones, fire, and burning sulfur from heaven will be a sure sign of God’s judgment.

Genesis 19:24

“Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.”

When the Russian and Islamic troops see fire and brimstone falling out of heaven, they will know that God is judging them for the invasion of His people! But it will be too late to turn back! God will have the last say and utterly destroy these soldiers by these four supernatural means.

The devastation will be thorough and bring the deaths of untold millions of Russian and Islamic militants.

Ezekiel 39:3-5

“And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.”

The carrion birds will have a feast as they eat the dead carcasses of these soldiers.

Ezekiel 39:2 reads:

“And I will turn thee back (turn thee around), and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel.”

This many mean, that as a result of the supernatural judgments, only one sixth of all the soldiers (millions of them) will remain alive. However, it can also be understood that all but one sixth of Gog's forces will come down to destroy Israel. God will move these forces to descend upon Israel and only one sixth of their military power will remain in their homeland. However, those remaining troops in the homeland will not be exempt from God's judgment.

Ezekiel 39:6 adds:

“And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord.”

Since the Russian bear will spawn the invasion God will send death and destruction upon this land. Apparently, God will bring devastation on Gog's homeland, Magog (modern-day Russia), and the remote homelands of Gog's allies who live in the “isles” or coastlands. This expression (Ezek. 26:15, 18; 27:3, 6–7, 15, 35) implies the farthest reaches of the known world in Ezekiel's day, which would include all those remote nations who come against Israel in the end-times. God will punish and plague the Muslim lands that are aligned with Russia and rain fire from heaven upon their lands. This will cause great death, devastation, and destruction of crops and buildings. The Muslim nations and all those who have come against Israel will suffer the direct supernatural judgment of God. These supernatural judgments from God will result in the deaths of millions of Muslim soldiers, who are fighting in the name of Allah. Sadly, they will die for a dead god and a lost cause and wind up in hell!

Someday, at the start of the Tribulation Period, Russia and the Islamic nations are going to challenge the Antichrist's power at the beginning of the Tribulation Period but God is going to destroy them in the mountains of Israel. When “Gog shall come against the land of Israel” (vs. 18), God will destroy them in the mountains of Israel (vv. 19-23). When God verses Gog – God wins!

## **VII. The aftermath of the invasion**

The Bible predicts that following this invasion and devastation by God that Israel will be burning weapons for seven years and burying the dead for seven months to indicate the complete judgment of God upon these evildoers.

### **a. The burning of weapons**

Ezekiel 39:8-10

“Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken. And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God.”

The number “seven years” is a number that God often uses in the prophetic Scriptures that refer to completeness (Rev. 1:4, 12, 16; 4:5; 5:1; 8:2; 10:3; 12:3; 15:6; 17:9-10) and here indicates God’s complete work of judgment upon these wicked nations. But the number is also a prophetic designation and indication of the length of the Tribulation Period (Dan. 9:27). The Bible says that Israel will use the remaining war implements as fuel and burn them for a period of seven years. The Jews, even those who are fleeing from the Antichrist (Matt. 24:15-20), will use these war implements, as a means of shelter and fuel to keep themselves alive.

Much speculation has arisen from the fact that these are ancient weapons and horses (Ezek. 38:4, 15; 39:9) which are contemporary with Ezekiel’s day. Are they describing modern warfare or a return to ancient warfare? Some suggest that the mention of more conventional warfare means that these people will be living in a period of time when modern weapons are no longer being used and the nations of the world have been subject to disarmament. I find this view rather hard to accept.

Others suggest that for years various military powers have been working on inventions that would totally disable any mechanical

weapon, such as a tank, plane, etc. If this is perfected, it would necessitate using horses and non-mechanical weapons in warfare again. Again, this view seems rather far-fetched.

Finally, others expositors regard these ancient weapons as simply typical or figurative of modern warfare. This seems to be the best explanation. As in much apocalyptic prophecy (the Book of Revelation), the Lord revealed to His prophets what would take place in pictures that were familiar to them. This language does not negate the use of modern implements of warfare in the fulfillment. Here the meaning seems to be that there would be so much combustible material utilized in the invasion that the Israelites would burn it for seven years.

Mark Hitchcock summarizes well when concluding that “biblical prophets could easily be speaking of warfare in the distant future using descriptions of weaponry and tactics that would be familiar to them and their original audience.” He concludes by saying that “Ezekiel, inspired by the Holy Spirit, spoke in a language that the people of that day could understand. If he had spoken of planes, missile, tanks, and rifles, this text would have been nonsensical to everyone until the twentieth century.” Scholar Charles Feinberg asks, “How else could an ancient writer have described warfare? He knew nothing of planes and guns?”

## **b. The burying of bodies**

Ezekiel 39:12-16

“And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land.”

From the perspective of Jews, the dead must be buried because exposed corpses are a source of ritual contamination to the land (Numb. 19:11-22; Deut. 21:1-9). The land must therefore be completely cleansed and purged of all defilement (“that they may cleanse the land” – Ezek. 39:12 and “Thus shall they cleanse the land” – Ezek. 39:16). Neither the enemies nor their belongings (their weapons) can be left to pollute the land. So the bodies will be buried in a massive grave, which will take seven months, and the weapons will be burned for a period of seven years.

The “seven months” (Ezek. 39:12) of grave digging will take place during the first half of the Tribulation Period, before Israel is persecuted by the Antichrist. This massive project will involve the entire nation of Israel. The number of the slain invaders and casualties will be so staggering and vast that a deep valley will be used as a grave for the bodies and call it “the valley of Hamon-gog” (Ezek. 39:11, 15). In fact, Ezekiel says that “after seven months shall they search” (Ezek. 39:14) and this may speak of a second “mop up operation” where Israelis’ will search the land with more precision any make sure no bones and bodies were missed in the original cleanup process. Imagine the stench that will cause people to “stop the noses” (Ezek. 39:11) as they pass by this valley of death. This will be a horrific scene and experience for the people of Israel.

### **c. The birds and feasting**

Ezekiel 39:17-20

“And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God.”

God will summons the great carrion or flesh-eating birds to hover over these dead bodies and begin feasting upon them (Ezek. 39:4). This feasting of the birds on dead bodies and the drinking of their blood is said be “my sacrifice” (God’s sacrifice) which He has given to these scavenger birds (“that I do sacrifice for you”). This is a gruesome scene and yet the entire scene will bring glory to God.

### **VIII. The purpose of the invasion**

The purpose of this invasion and the death of untold millions of soldiers in the mountains of Israel will be designed to bring glory to the God of Israel.

Ezekiel 39:7

“So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.”

#### **a. God’s glory will be seen by Israel.**

The nation of Israel will realize that God has interceded for them (“I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel” – Ezek. 38:7 and “So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward” – Ezek. 39:22). In fact, it’s probably during this same time when the 144,000 Jews are saved, and many Jewish brethren, who will become committed witnesses for Christ during the Tribulation Period (Rev. 7:1-8; 12:17; 14:1-5).

#### **b. God’s glory will be seen by the heathen.**

The unsaved nations of the earth (“heathen”) will also come to realize that God is a holy and true God of righteous judgment and that He is the absolute sovereign Lord of the universe (Ezek. 39:7). The people of earth will realize that God is on Israel’s side and that this destruction was a direct work of judgment orchestrated by the one, true God of Heaven. God’s judgment of Gog will glorify Him greatly in the eyes of the rest of the world.

One can only imagine the news coverage of this event and what will be said about these supernatural events which have triggered the

deaths of millions of soldiers. The world will have to acknowledge that there is one true God and His name will not be Allah!

Ezekiel 39:21-24

“And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward.”

“And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them.”

The unsaved people of the nations of the world will realize and understand that it was not out of weakness, that God permitted the Israelites to go into previous exile and die, but because He was punishing them for their sins. That is why the Jews suffered at the hands of their enemies previously and why the Lord did not respond to their cries for deliverance. However, this miraculous event will cause the world to see that God is not finished with His people of Israel. The heathen world will understand that God has intervened for this tiny little nation and that those who come against Israel will experience the wrath of Almighty God.

Ezekiel 39:13

“Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God.”

The burial of millions of bodies will serve as a “renown” (memorial) of God’s love and faithfulness to Israel and God will get all the glory for this incredible feat of destruction. The purpose for the deaths of millions soldiers on the mountains of Israel will result in God’s glory. God will get the glory and be seen by Israel and the heathen nations of the world that He is the great, true, holy, and faithful God. Allah will be seen as an imposter god and the true God of the Bible will be seen as the only true God.

## **IX. The prospect after the invasion**

The glorious prospect that will eventually follow this invasion is Israel's blessing in the earthly theocracy of Millennial Kingdom. Times of terror will turn into times of blessing.

Ezekiel 39:25-29

“Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.”

Ezekiel returns to his theme which he began to speak about and envision in Ezekiel 37. It's the theme of Israel's salvation, as a nation (Ezek. 37:14; Rom. 11:26), and final worldwide regathering into the Land of Palestine (Ezek. 37:21; Matt. 24:31) for the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-6). This is the promise of the covenants which were given to Israel by God (2 Sam. 7:16; Luke 1:33).

Ezekiel prophesies of the time when all of Israel returns to the land (“I have gathered them unto their own land” – Ezek. 39:28) in belief and salvation for the Millennial Kingdom. This is the time Israel will be saved as an entire nation and when God will pour out the Holy Spirit upon Israel (Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28-29).

How close are we to the coming Russian and Islamic invasion of Israel? We can't be sure but the situation in the Middle East looks strikingly similar to the way it will be during the Tribulation Period, the time when this invasion occurs. In other words, the stage is being set for this dramatic end time event to occur. There is a definite coalition of Islamic nations threatening Israel's peace and existence today.

Israel is losing all of her allies and she is in the crossroads. Added to this, the Rapture could occur at any moment (1 Cor. 16:22; Phil. 3:20), which paves the way for this invasion to occur. All these indicators and the promise of Christ's imminent return suggest that the invasion is not far away.

One writer described it in this way: "We could be very close! The house lights appear to be dimming. The curtain could go up at any moment. The Rapture could occur today!"

"Signs of the times are everywhere,  
There's a brand new feeling in the air.  
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,  
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh."