

Gog and Magog

(2) Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, (3) and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. - Ezekiel 38:2-3

This Lesson Outline was prepared by John M. Wharton March 17, 2004

Sources -

All bible text, unless otherwise indicated, is the Darby Translation. ASV indicates the American Standard Version, with KJV indicating the King James Version. Quotations are often included from various classic Christian commentaries such as John Gill's Expositor, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Robertson's New Testament Word Pictures, and others. Greek and Hebrew word definitions are often included from the Strong's Concordance and sometimes from other sources as indicated. Unless otherwise indicated all of these sources, both the bible text's, commentaries, and Strong's definition's are taken from the e-Sword Bible Program or sometimes from THE WORD from Online Bible.

Part 1 of Ezekiel Chapter 38

Introduction -

In this chapter 38 of Ezekiel we will see a description of a great invasion of the land of Israel by countries well to the north of them. These invaders aren't alone but have a confederacy of several nations that are in league with them in this venture. But Ezekiel saw that they would not succeed but rather would be inflicted horribly by God Himself. We will also consider when this invasion might occur in the general periods of Dispensation described in the Bible.

The lesson text is Ezekiel 38:1 through 13 -

Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him,

The two chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel are sometimes called the Russian Chapters because of the popular interpretation of Rosh as an early form of the modern name Russia and the places Magog, Meshech and Tubal as areas there. Many modern popular prophecy writers as well as some more classic commentators have both used this identification or mentioned it as possible. Why would the prophet Ezekiel mention Russia in a Bible prophecy and in any respect what is it that Gog does in the prophecy? In this study we'll look at these chapters to see if we can get some insight on these points.

Eze 38:1 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

Eze 38:2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him,

Eze 38:2 Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, - RSV

Eze 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, - KJV

"Rosh" - from Darby and ASV or "chief prince" - from KJV - H7218 ראש ro'sh roshe From an unused root apparently meaning to shake; the head (as most easily shaken), whether literally or figuratively (in many applications, of place, time, rank, etc.): - band, beginning, captain, chapter, chief (-est place, man, things), company, end, X every [man], excellent, first, forefront, ([be-]) head, height, (on) high (-est part, [priest]), X lead, X poor, principal, ruler, sum, top.

Comments -

As you can see from the comparison of verse 2 above the Darby Bible and American Standard Version (RSV), and the King James Version want to translate the Hebrew word "roshe" two different ways. The classic King James Version (also known as the Authorized Version) translates roshe as a title indicating that Gog is the "chief prince" meaning that he rules with a position of high authority ruling over the areas of Magog, Meshech and Tubal. The Darby Bible and ASV take roshe as meaning another place name along with Magog, Meshech and Tubal. This word roshe also occurs in the

next verse (verse 3 of this chapter) as well as in the next chapter 39 in verse 1 and in both of those places the three versions translate the word the as in verse 2. Perhaps both of these ideas may be correct to a degree. It may that there are several layers of meaning represented here in the word “roshe”. But what might those different layers of meaning be? Well, one idea may simply be that Gog is indeed in a position of high authority over these areas of Magog, Meshech and Tubal, and so the translation chief prince is accurate. Beyond that, perhaps another more hidden meaning might be a simple play on words with the word *roshe* sounding similar to another area in Gog's domain. But why then would God hide some of the understanding under a double meaning? Would God allow the prophecies to be harder to understand? If we want to see other examples of that in our Bible we have the case of Christ who spoke to the crowds often with parables using hidden meanings. He taught them with parables so much that his own disciples asked Him why He did it when they could see that the crowds didn't understand instead of just talking clearly and making the meanings easy for them to grasp - *Mat 13:10 And the disciples came up and said to him, Why speakest thou to them in parables?* Sometimes, it seems, God wants to wrap depth of meaning in a passage, thought or word. One result of that might be that only those who study prayerfully and intently and persistently would receive understanding of the riddles and deeper layers of meanings in God's word. That includes teachers and ministers! Another possibility might be that God doesn't want the entire depth of meaning to become too clear to far ahead of the appointed time in His plan. An example of that would be when the angel told Daniel in Chapter 12 verse 9 - *And he said, Go thy way, Daniel; for these words are closed and sealed till the time of the end.* If God closes it for a time the meaning won't be clear. There may be some gifted students who are given insight by God but the majority won't grasp it before the proper time.

Eze 38:3 and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.

Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament from the e-Sword Program -

...This points to a time when their former foes, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistines, and Syrians, and the old imperial powers, Egypt, Asshur, Babel, Javan, will all have passed away from the stage of history, **and the people of God will stand in the centre of the historical life of the world, and will have spread so widely over the earth, that its foes will only be found on the borders of the civilised world** (compare [Rev 20:8](#)).

Comments –

...Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal... The point made in the Keil and Delitzsch Commentary although along a different line brings to my mind the realization again that the area of operation of these various forces is at the time of this prophecy expanded out into the world much further than the small area in the Middle East called the Kingdom of Israel. Gog and his hoards are described in verses 6 and 15 as being from *the uttermost north* which must place it beyond the well known areas of the time. Other nations involved in following verses are also well outside the area of Israel although the Israelites may have known of them.

Eze 38:4 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 thoroughly equipped, a great assemblage with targets and shields, all of them handling swords:

And I will turn thee back - H7725 שׁוּב *shu'b shoob* A primitive root; **to turn back** (hence, away) transitively or intransitively, **literally or figuratively (not necessarily with the idea of return to the starting point); generally to retreat**; often adverbially *again*: - ([break, build, circumcise, dig, do anything, do evil, feed, lay down, lie down, lodge, make, rejoice, send, take, weep]) X again, (cause to) answer (+ again), X in any case (wise), X at all, averse, bring (again, back, home again), call [to mind], carry again (back), cease, X certainly, come again (back) X consider, + continually, convert, deliver (again), + deny, draw back, fetch home again, X fro, get [oneself] (back) again, X give (again), go again (back, home), [go] out, hinder, let, [see] more, X needs, be past, X pay, pervert, pull in again, put (again, up again), recall, recompense, recover, refresh, relieve, render (again), X repent, requite, rescue, restore, retrieve, (cause to, make to) return, reverse, reward, + say nay, send back, set again, slide back, still, X surely, take back (off), (cause to, make to) turn (again, self again, away, back, back again, backward, from, off), withdraw.

Comments –

And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth... The hordes of Gog are gathered by Jehovah from their place in the far north, as we are told in verse 6 below, and caused to come *back* into the Land of Israel to invade it. Is it possible from this word that they are drawn back into the Middle East again, having been there before. Strong's definition says that the idea need not be a return to the starting point so this cannot be certain. I simply find it intriguing that all of the basic definitions given by Strong's such as *turn back* or *retreat* or even *again* at first impulse would give the idea that this might be a return to a thing or place previously visited. But other sources on the meaning of the Hebrew words don't indicate anything of this thought so it may very well be wrong. The idea would fit well with what we are told about Gog in verse 17 below ***Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Art thou not he of whom I have spoken in old time through my servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days, for many years, that I would bring thee against them?*** which is amazing to say of a ruler never mentioned before in any Bible prophecies that can be found, unless perhaps he or his people are known by other names. Apparently from the prophecy they were known to the prophets of old and preached against over a long period of time. That makes it sound as if they were known from the early days of Israel's history. Who is Gog? Who are these peoples of Magog, Rosh, Meshech and Tubal? Did they perhaps resist Israel or fight against them at some time in the past so as to incur this long lasting judgment from Jehovah. In any respect, we will see in verses 18 through 23 that Gog's forces suffer a terrible defeat in

the land of Israel, inflicted on them by God.

Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah from the uttermost north, and all his bands; --many peoples with thee.

Gog of the land of Magog will not be alone but will have other allies from the far north quarters of the world as well as several countries in the Middle East who are in league with him.

Eze 38:5 Persia, Cush, and Phut with them, all of them with shield and helmet;

Eze 38:6 Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah from the uttermost north, and all his bands; --many peoples with thee.

Comments on verses 5 through 6 -

With these places we are on firmer ground as we know that Persia is modern Iran and Phut has been long understood by scholars to be modern Libya (which interestingly the Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary indicates aided the efforts of Antiochus in his invasion of the area and who we have seen in Chapter 11 of Daniel's prophecies was a fore runner of the Beast of the Revelation). But that does not mean that the invasion described here is by the Anti-Christ which it is not. Cush is a little more difficult to place as there was the name Cush in various forms used for places in the area of Mesopotamia and to the northeast of there and the name still lingers in the area today with, as an example, the Hindu Kush Mountains on the Afghanistan and Pakistan border toward the very north point of India and in other places in that part of the world. Much more probable for this prophecies meaning, some see this name as referring to the Sudan on the east side of Africa. Some point out that it might refer to the south of Arabia around modern Yemen as that area did have interchange with the east coast of Africa in ancient times. I think that the area of Sudan is much more likely since Ezekiel is seeing forces from outside of the immediate Middle East which are invading with an alliance from the far north swinging down into Israel while supporting forces push up from the south as Ptolemaic Egypt did in it's ancient struggles with the Seleucid Kingdom to the north. We saw an early version of this struggle in Daniel's prophecies in chapters 8, 10 and 11.

After many days shalt thou be visited; at the end of years thou shalt come into the land brought back from the sword and gathered out of many peoples, upon the mountains of Israel which have been a perpetual waste: but it is brought forth out from the peoples, and they shall all of them be dwelling in safety.

When will this take place? Is it something that happened in the Old Testament times? Or is it still to happen? The prophecy says it will take place at the end of years and in a time when Israel in significant numbers has returned back to the land of Israel. That has started to happen in our times with the return of many Jewish people to the land of Israel after the vast majority of the chosen people of God have been seperated from the promised land for over two thousand years.

Eze 38:7 Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself thou, and all thine assemblage that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them.

Eze 38:8 After many days shalt thou be visited; at the end of years thou shalt come into the land brought back from the sword *and* gathered out of many peoples, upon the mountains of Israel which have been a perpetual waste: but it is brought forth out from the peoples, and they shall all of them be dwelling in safety.

out of many H7227 רב rab rab By contraction from H7231; **abundant** (in quantity, size, age, number, rank, quality): - (in) abound (-undance, -ant, -antly), captain, elder, enough, exceedingly, full, great (-ly, man, one), increase, long (enough, [time]), (do, have) many (-ifold, things, a time), ([ship-]) master, mighty, more, (too, very) much, multiply (-tude), officer, often [-times], plenteous, populous, prince, process [of time], suffice (-ient).

peoples H4480 מִן מִנֵּי מִנֵּי min minnây minnêy min, min-nee', min-nay' For H4482; **properly a part of**; hence (prepositionally), **from or out of in many senses**: - above, after, among, at, because of, by (reason of), from (among), in, X neither, X nor, (out) of, over, since, X then, through, X whether, with.

out from the peoples H4480 מִן מִנֵּי מִנֵּי min minnây minnêy min, min-nee', min-nay' For H4482; **properly a part of**; hence (prepositionally), **from or out of in many senses**: - above, after, among, at, because of, by (reason of), from (among), in, X neither, X nor, (out) of, over, since, X then, through, X whether, with.

Comments -

at the end of years The prophecy pictures this in latter times of the prophetic view when God will begin to bring His plans to completion and to return the people of Israel back to the land of Israel which they have been kept from for a

very long time. If I understand correctly, Bullinger in the Companion Bible notes seems to see verses 8, 14 and 16 as well as Ezek. 39:9, 25 and 26 speaking of a time when all of Israel (which would be not only the people of Judah as we have seen begin in our times) would begin the return and restoration to the land.

thou shalt come into the land brought back from the sword and gathered out of many peoples The people of Israel have been scattered among the Gentiles for a long time in the prophecy which is very true if the situation now. Most of them and their ancestors for about 2600-2700 years have been kept from the land of Israel. But now they are returning. *upon the mountains of Israel which have been a perpetual waste* The mountains of Israel symbolizing the entire land have laid waste without the children of Israel to farm it and settle in it for two millenia or more. But they are finally able to return in some significant numbers.

Eze 38:9 And thou shalt ascend, thou shalt come like a storm, **thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land**, thou, and all thy bands, and many peoples with thee.

Comments -

...thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land.. The forces of Gog and his confederacy are huge in number. The prophet saw them as like a cloud covering the land.

Eze 38:10 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: **It shall even come to pass in that day that things shall come into thy mind**, and thou shalt think an evil thought;

Comments -

..things shall come into thy mind... We were just told in verse 4 that God Himself is the one who would turn Gog back around and as if with hooks in his jaws and bring him to the land of Israel *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 thoroughly equipped, a great assemblage with targets and shields, all of them handling swords.* So the idea to come and invade Israel is actually given to Gog by God Himself.

Eze 38:11 and thou shalt say, **I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will come to them that are in quiet, that dwell in safety**, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,

Comments -

...I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will come to them that are in quiet, that dwell in safety... Here we have another hint of when this might take place and whether or not the prophecy has been fulfilled yet. Notice that the prophet describes Israel as a land of villages without defense walls erected around them as they did in ancient times. Our cities and towns today are built like that. But the important thought is that the people of Israel are at peace and not fearing war, or attack or terrorism *“..to them that are in quiet, that dwell in safety..”*. We have a tremendous advantage over previous generations of believers in that we have seen the beginning of this return to the land of Israel. As I understand it, as recently as the early 1900's many Bible Believers still had a hard time imagining that the People of God would ever literally return to the land of Israel. They had been seperated from it for so long! But the retrun has begun and we have seen it in our times. But since the return began shortly after the end of World War II when have the people of Israel dwelt in peace and safety for any significant period of time? Unfortunately they have known little peace since the beginning of the modern nation of Israel. They have seldom felt that they could really let their guard down for any length of time because they are literally surrounded by enemies who have vowed to drive them into the sea. The situation seems to be getting worse with suicide bombers killing innocent Israeli citizens on a regular basis. Often we see in the news at least an incident a week for weeks in a row and there is no indication that the turmoil will stop. But there is a short time of peace prophesied for Israel just before the return of the Messiah. The Revelation of John says that the beast will enter into a peace accord of some type with Israel but renege on the treaty half way into the specified time frame and invade the land. Gog is not this beast. But perhaps his invasion will catch the attention of the beastly ruler after he has invaded Israel and committed the acts of sacrilege prophesied by Daniel (see *Daniel 11:29-40*).

Eze 38:12 to seize a spoil, and to take a prey; **to turn thy hand against the waste places that are now inhabited**, and against a people gathered out of the nations, **which have gotten cattle and goods**, that dwell in the middle of the land.

Comments -

...to turn thy hand against the waste places that are now inhabited....which have gotten cattle and goods... Here is another indication that the people of Israel have returned to the land of Israel in significant numbers and have been very successful in establishing a thriving economy with cattle and other desirable goods.

Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to seize a spoil?...

The invasion from the north will not be met with universal approval. The nations of the northwestern quarter of the world will express disapproval of the action and perhaps mount a defense...

Eze 38:13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to seize a spoil? hast thou gathered thine assemblage to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take cattle and goods, to seize a great spoil?

Comments -

Other nations that we have heard of in history respond to this attack, probably I suspect for financial reasons. Sheba and Dedan anciently were areas in the Saudi Arabian Peninsula, Dedan being toward the north of the peninsula and Sheba was at the southwestern edge. Tarshish by this time was in the far west of the Mediterranean Sea on the south coast of ancient Iberia (modern Spain) and perhaps further along up the west coast of Europe if it referred not to just a place but to an area as I have understood from some writers. So we see the thought again that the scope of area involved here and the peoples are far beyond just the Middle East itself. The far north (Russia, Central and Eastern Europe) is invading Israel and these areas, Saudi Arabia perhaps, Yemen and the Western and Northwestern European nations (which are presently represented by the NATO alliance) are disturbed at the event and perhaps will begin to mobilize militarily to move in defense of their oil interests in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia officially is concerned at this time, however loosely, to maintain good relations with the west which buys its oil and helps to protect them from the danger of. Russia in the far north has always coveted the warm water ports in the Mediterranean for their navy as well as the oil wealth and strategic location of the area. Israel, in most everyones view politically, is an instability which the Islamic countries will never truly accept, because they want for Ishmael the right to rule the land, but Israel is powerful militarily, far beyond her size, and has the open military and political support of the United States and Britain. Interestingly, we have here again those western maritime naval powers (much as the old Tarshish of the Phoenicians) which are concerned with the state of affairs in the Middle East, the continuing flow of oil, commerce and goods, and here in our times at least they are also concerned with the health and continued existence of the State of Israel. Some of the other northwestern European nations share those same concerns. This verse indicates that they will react with concern at the invasion of Gog (the Russians) who intends to take Israel and acquire the control of those goods and surely the oil also.

Summary -

In Ezekiel Chapter 38 we saw an incredibly large invasion of the land of Israel at a time when they are at peace which has not really been the case since they started coming back to the Promised Land. The invasion is lead by Gog the ruler of Magog, Rosh (possibly), Meshech and Tubal. Most of these names are areas known to have been in northern Turkey during Bible times. Some see the references as to areas further north on the other side of the Black Sea in the step lands of southern Russia if not even further north. If these are any element of the same people known by those names in Ezekiel's time then they must have migrated north out of the area at some point in the past. Many peoples did move across that area in those ancient times. God Himself put the idea to invade into Gog's mind and compelled him to do it. The invasion, however, will fail because God will enter into the fight for Israel and will destroy the invading hordes as we will see in future parts of this study.