Introduction to Ezekiel 38

In Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37, we see the nation of Israel restored back to the land of Israel. They were scattered to the nations twice in fulfillment of God’s covenant provisions in Deuteronomy 28. Once during the Babylonian captivity in Ezekiel’s day, the second time following the cutting off of the Messiah in A.D. 70. God, through the prophets, assured a day when Jews would be gathered to the land of Israel and be restored as a nation.

This restoration will be complete as the descendants will also be redeemed from their sin when they are restored. The redemption of Israel as God’s “chosen people” does not only involve Israel, but the whole world. The process of Israel’s redemption involves the nations of the earth who come against Israel, forcing Israel to turn to God alone. Through Israel turning to God, the nations come to know the “True” God of Israel in the latter days.

After Israel is restored to the land, they are pitted against the nations. Through this conflict, the nations come to know the NAME of the Lord God.

22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.

23 “And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.

Ezekiel 36:22-23

The name of the Lord is linked with His identity while the nations, the descendants of Adam and Eve, are part of fallen humanity. Just how do the nations come to know the God of Israel? God has revealed Himself through the prophets of Israel who foretold of the coming of the Messiah. Following the death of Jesus Christ, the Gospel was entrusted to the church, while Israel was scattered to the nations. In the latter days, God again uses Israel as His instrument for revealing Himself to the nations.

Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 reveal some of the important details of this conflict before the return of the Messiah as well as Israel’s transition to obedience to God. Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48 deals with the Millennium when the nation of Israel receives the promised blessings and are blessed above all nations.

The timing of Ezekiel 38 & 39

The events of these two chapters, particularly the battle of Gog and Magog, have been a great topic of debate with those who study the End-Times. Some argue this is a battle which immediately precedes the coming of the Messiah. Orthodox Judaism places this battle right before the coming of the Messiah, followed by the descent of the third temple (Ezekiel 40). Others place this battle within the tribulation period, and still others before the tribulation. The internal evidence clearly tells us there is a seven-year period which follows the defeat of Gog and his allies:

9 "Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years.

Ezekiel 39:9

http://www.truthnet.org/Ezekiel
This seven year time frame corresponds with the period of the tribulation known as Daniel's 70th week. For seven-years, following the defeat of the armies of the nations of Gog, Israel will burn the weapons left behind. This would not be the case if the battle was immediately before the Second Coming; therefore, we can conclude this event takes place before the seven-year tribulation.

The dead are also buried for seven-months (Ezekiel 39:12) so this clearly happens before the resurrection.

---

**Gog and his allies**

Ezekiel 38
1 Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

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

3 "and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.

4 "I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.

5 "Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet;

6 "Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you. Ezekiel 38:1-6

The word of the Lord: The revelation which follows is directly from the Lord to Ezekiel, concerning Gog and Israel in the last days.

Son of man: The title given by the LORD to Ezekiel, a descendent of humanity. Ezekiel represents God against Israel's enemy, Gog, and the nations. The picture here is of someone turning to face the enemy. Ezekiel is to proclaim the message to Gog through the centuries and into the future, when the event occurs.

Gog: Gog is the leader or head of an alliance of nations. He is from the land of Magog; Ezekiel identifies him as the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. The exact meaning of these names will be discussed below, but Ezekiel identifies Gog as being of Magog. Gog is probably the political leader who organizes this alliance.

Land of Magog: The Jewish historian Josephus has identified the land of Magog as Scythia, the progenitors of Russia which is north of Israel. Also in the table of nations, Genesis chapter 10, Magog is identified as one of the sons of Japheth. Therefore, by the time of Ezekiel and in the future his offspring would be a major nation. Gog from Magog leads this alliance of nations against Israel.

Prince of Rosh: The identification of this title for Gog is not accepted by all. The Hebrew
word for chief is ר‘ש, which can be translated either as a name, Rosh, or as the adjective chief. Some translations will translate this as chief prince instead of Prince of Rosh based upon their views. Regardless, Gog is identified as a leader from the far-north who is head of the descendents of Meshech and Tubal in the land of Magog.

Meshech...Tubal: These nations, like Magog, are the descendents of Japheth; Gog is the leader of this alliance. In Ezekiel’s day these nations were listed as traders of people and brass vessels or utensils for the goods of Tyre.

13 “Javan, Tubal, and Meshech were your traders. They bartered human lives and vessels of bronze for your merchandise. Ezekiel 27:13

I will turn you: God is pulling this alliance toward Israel; God Himself is involved in this upcoming battle. Gog is pictured as an animal with hooks in its jaws being pulled into the conflict; God places the hooks in the jaws of Gog. Egypt is pictured as a crocodile with God also placing hooks in its jaws, pulling it out of the water while Ezekiel is told to set his face against Pharaoh, ruler of Egypt (Ezekiel 29).

All your army: At this point, the army coming in to attack Israel is an immense force which will require burial of the dead for seven months. Exactly what circumstances would ever lead to such a large force coming against Israel? In light of the current situation, this is entirely left to speculation. The invasion by this force could be a punitive action against Israel regarding its relations with the Arab states. In the past, Russia has threatened and then prepared to attack Israel in response to wars with its allies, Syria and Egypt.

The point here is that God will use these armies to reveal Himself to the nations in their conflict with Israel. The weapons described are terms that Ezekiel and his audience would be familiar with; horses, horsemen, bucklers and swordsmen. He also uses the term all sorts of armor, which would include modern weaponry.

Persia: Included in this alliance is the kingdom of Persia which, in Ezekiel’s day, was a lesser known power to the east of Babylon. Today, Persia is known as Iran and exists as one of the greatest threats to the nation of Israel. At no other time in history has there been an alliance where Persia and Russia were united against the land of Israel.

Today Russia is an ally of Iran; supplying the country with nuclear technology, helping it to build nuclear power plants and centrifuge systems. Iran has also contracted with Russia to buy sophisticated anti-missile and aircraft defense systems to protect it from Israel’s threats to destroy its nuclear ambitions.

Persia (Iran), along with these northern nations, will attack Israel in the latter days.

Ethiopia: The Hebrew name here is כוש Kuwsh or Cush the ancient name for Ethiopia, this would include the nations south of Egypt. Though Ethiopia is historically a Christian nation, Muslims have made great inroads into gaining power not only in Ethiopia, but also in Sudan. These nations are united in their hatred for Israel.

Libya: The Hebrew name is פוות Puwt, another ally of Russia and another Islamic nation with a history of being an enemy to the nation.
of Israel. Libya is an ancient nation founded by Phoenician traders as a colony. General Hannibal is one of this land’s most famous descendents.

**Gomer:** This is yet another descendent of Japheth, who is part of the alliance against Israel in the latter days. In Genesis Chapter 10, Japheth is listed as having seven sons; four of them are included in this list as nations who will come against the land of Israel. Gomer is understood by Jews to stand for Germany; the name Germany is thought to have come from the term Gomerland. In addition, Jews from Germany are known as Ashkenazi Jews, named after Ashkenaz, one of the sons of Gomer.

3 The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. Genesis 10:3

**Togarmah:** This is another son of Gomer who is noted for trading horses with the merchants of Tyre (Ezekiel 27:14). This country is identified with Armenia which was known for its horse breeding and trading with Persia and Babylon. Today Armenia is identified as an ally of both Russia and Persia. The Armenians are an Indo-European language group which has been traced as having migrated into the land of Armenia from east of Asia Minor in the 7th and 8th century B.C.

**From the far north:** North of Israel is Russia along with Togarmah (Armenia). Ezekiel 39:2 links Gog with being ‘far north of Israel’. Moscow, the capital of Russia is directly north of Jerusalem.

**many people...with you:** The list of nations is not comprehensive but includes other people groups in this alliance of nations coming against Israel. These nations could invade Israel on the basis of a UN mandate because of Israel’s policy toward its Arab neighbors. Potential reasons a United Nations attack on Israel could be justified might be as follows:

- Israel might attack a Palestinian State declared by the United Nations
- Israel might reject a UN mandated division of Jerusalem
- Israel might take control of the Dome of the Rock in an effort to begin construction of the third temple

**Gods message to Gog and its allies**

7 “Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them.
8 “After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely.
9 “You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you.”
10 “Thus says the Lord God: “On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan:
11 “You will say, ‘I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates’
12 to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.
13 “Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, ‘Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?’ “’ Ezekiel 38:7-13

Prepare yourself: Here God, through the centuries, challenges this alliance of nations led by Gog to be prepared for the coming conflict. In the end of days, it's God versus the nations; the kingdoms of the earth versus the kingdom of God. God tells Gog to be a guard to his alliance of nations. Through this attack on Israel, God will be glorified in the eyes of the nations.

After many days: When this conflict does take place, it is after many days which implies it is in the distant future. This was not an event during Ezekiel's day but after "many days"; the Hebrew word here is תּוֹך ה עַל, which means many or great. Fortunately, this verse includes several qualifiers to clarify this
timeframe.

In the latter years: This is the only place in the Bible that these two Hebrew words are used; these words link the gathering of the nation of Israel on the mountains of Israel as an event in the Last Days, or Latter Years. The Hebrew word עַרְיָיתָה, achariyth, means last, end or hindermost. Ezekiel links this End-Year event as following a period of “many days”. Within verse 38:8, Ezekiel lists six qualifiers which can only apply to the current nation of Israel, as opposed to the historic return of Jews to the land of Israel in the days of Cyrus the Great in 539 B.C.

1. Brought back from the sword: The sword of the Romans came against the land in A.D.70 and 132, when the Romans cast the Jews from the land, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. The land has been restored from the sword of Rome.

2. Gathered from many people: Though the Jews were scattered in Ezekiel’s day, their dispersion was mainly to Babylon and Egypt. The Jews currently living in Israel are gathered from all over the world; from every habitable continent, including North & South America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

3. On the mountains of Israel: The location of the Jews is on the mountains in the ancient land of Israel not in a new location.

4. Which had long been desolate: The land the Jews are gathered on has a “continual” or “perpetual” history of being “wasted” or desolate. Again, the land settled after the Babylonian destruction in 586 B.C., lay in waste for less than 50-years when Cyrus allowed the Jews to return. Contrast this to the current nation of Israel which came into existence in 1948. Prior to the Jews returning to Israel this time, the land was desolate for more than 1800-years.

5. They were brought out of the nations: Not only did the Jews come from many people groups, but they came from many nations of the earth.

6. Now all of them dwell safely: Israel, for the most part, lives safely in un-walled villages. The nation is not being invaded continually because it has been victorious over the surrounding nations which have attacked it.

You will ascend: God continues His discourse to Gog through Ezekiel by describing the assault on Israel by the alliance of nations. The assault is pictured as a gathering storm as the nations attack a seemingly helpless Israel.

thoughts will arise in your mind: God describes the process of how this invasion is brought about. Gog conceives of a plan to advance on the land of Israel. Gog’s intent is to do evil to the land of Israel; therefore an evil plan is hatched by the nations against Israel.

a land of un-walled villages: This is an amazing description of the future; at this time walled cities and villages were common since without walls a city was a target of plunder. However, since cannons were invented, walls have become useless and are no longer built. Cities without walls were almost one thousand years in Ezekiel’s future yet he describes a nation living without walls in the last days that is also back in the land of Israel.

a peaceful people: The demeanor of Israel is of a nation which has continuously sought peace with its neighbors only to be met with five different wars since the nation was founded in 1948. Again, Ezekiel is giving us a qualifier which can only be fulfilled in our day. Israel is described as a wealthy nation which has acquired many goods.

Sheba, Dedan: The lands of Arabia are linked with Sheba and Dedan, specifically the land of Yemen. The land south of the Arabian Peninsula is identified with the queen of Sheba who visited Solomon. Archeological evidence places her kingdom in an area identified as being part of current day Yemen.

Tarshish: This is identified as one of the sons of Javan, who is known as the father of the Greek nation. Some have linked this nation to Spain. Jonah fled to Tarshish, a distant land from Israel, probably along the coast where Spain is located.

Young lions: These are the nations which, along with Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish, play the role of spectators. They question but do not challenge Gog. “Young lion” is the descriptive term for a “new nation”; a young lion cub, a descendent of the lion (stronger) nations. Could this describe the role the US and Europe will play? Are they passive observers of these nations which invade Israel? At this point in time will Russia and its allies have UN justification because Israel has violated world opinion? Notice the
questions they ask Gog, the leader of the alliance, have a material rather than a moral focus:

- Have you come to take plunder?
- Have you gathered your army to take booty?
- To carry away silver and gold?
- To take away livestock and goods?
- To take great plunder?"

Gog invades Israel in the latter days

14 "Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, Thus says the Lord God: "On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it?"
15 "Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army.
16 "You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes."
17 "Thus says the Lord God: "Are you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them?"
18 "And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord God, "that My fury will show in My face.
19 "For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: 'Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel,
20 'so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.'
21 "I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains," says the Lord God. "Every man's sword will be against his brother.
22 "And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.
23 "Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord."

Ezekiel 38:14-23

Say to Gog: God again commands Ezekiel to reiterate God’s words to Gog, the leader of the alliance of nations. God is challenging Gog, declaring His thoughts, demonstrating His nature and power to the world. In our secular world it is popular to deny the existence of God and mock those who believe the Bible is the Word of God. Through Gog, God will be glorified in the eyes of the nations.

On that day: Israel is secure in the land when Gog will move against her. How could this day come about? What could possibly happen that Gog would feel confident enough to invade Israel? Why would the US, an Israeli ally, just stand by or not even be mentioned in this scenario?

The reasons an Invasion might take place

At this point, the US may turn against Israel. A new administration might side with the Muslim powers; urging Israel to submit to UN resolutions. Israel, on the other hand, could reject UN resolutions and choose its own course which would cause the UN to allow these nations to invade Israel based on international justice. Currently, there are three major issues regarding Israel and the nations that could make this invasion a reality:

A. The borders of Israel: According to the world, Israel claims occupied Arab land, namely the West Bank and Gaza. The world has made it a goal to create an Arab Palestinian State as part of the peace process. Just where would these borders be located? The term Pre-1967 borders is often mentioned which refers to Israel’s borders before it won the 1967 war with its Arab neighbors.

The UN and the nations might require Israel to surrender these lands with the threat of war if they do not submit to UN resolutions.

http://www.truthnet.org/Ezekiel
B. The status of Jerusalem:

A major part of the 1967 victory was the conquest of East Jerusalem which included the Temple Mount, the location of the third temple. This location is also claimed by the Arab world as the third most holy place for Islam. The Arabs claim East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state, the UN might very well agree with the Arab nations, along with the United States. Israel might reject this claim, giving further justification for invasion.

A key point to remember is that Israel requires control of the Temple Mount to build the third temple. The nations do not want a third temple built because it would require the destruction of the Dome of the Rock; this would pit Israel against the nations. This is exactly what Ezekiel tells us will happen in the last-days, Israel versus the nations.

C. The status of the Arab refugees (the right of return):

When the Jews returned to the land of Israel they took possession of the land. When they were declared a nation in 1948, they were attacked by the Arabs. The Arabs forces actually removed Arab families who were in the line of fire, promising them they could return after the Jews were defeated. Unfortunately for these families, the Jews were not defeated and Arabs were displaced to Lebanon, Jordan and Gaza, instead of returning to current day Israel. Arab nations claim these Arabs have the right to return to Israel and become citizens.

With millions of Arabs returning to Israel and taking possession of lands now occupied by Israelis, the very existence of Israel would be in jeopardy. Therefore, Israel has refused to even consider this as an option in the peace talks. Israel claims when the Jews fled from Arab lands, no one was willing to compensate them; therefore the Arabs who fled have no claim to Israel. Furthermore, Israel claims that the population of Jordan is primarily Palestinian and therefore, Jordan should be the Palestinian nation. Israel’s position on this places it in conflict with the Arab nations.

D. The timing of the rapture:

Another major factor which might preclude the US and Europe from being involved in end times is the rapture (I Thes. 4:13-18). The rapture could occur before the battle of Gog. Such an event would shake the US causing its very existence and stability to come into question.

During such a time, Israel would appear vulnerable without its allies in the west.

E. Nuclear Terror:

A terrorist act in the US could easily destroy America’s ability to respond to conflict in the Middle East, again allowing Israel to seem vulnerable without its allies in the West.

Then you will come: God summarizes the invasion points made earlier; Gog will come from the far north with many troops.

the far north: The far north is clearly Russia, coupling this with Gog being located in the land of Magog and having the name Prince of Rosh, we can justify this view. Even Russia’s continued opposition to Israel fits this scenario.

Against My people: This battle is really a war against God. God will defend His people against the nations. Through Israel the other nations come to know the God of Israel. God has promised that His relationship with Israel is an eternal relationship; He will fulfill His promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

35 Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name):
36 "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the Lord, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever."

Jeremiah 31:35-36

It will be in the latter days: Again, God reiterates this event will take place literally in the “Last Days”. Earlier in Ezekiel 38:8 the term “Last Years” was used, here the term “Last Days” is used. Identifying this in multiple locations and in various ways shows that the “Last Days” is being stressed. God wants us to know this is an END TIME event.

I will bring you: God is involved in this struggle; God Himself is bringing these nations to this climactic event. God will put Himself in opposition to the nations. In other words, it does not matter what the world thinks, God is the one who controls the nations. The nations who come against Israel will have to deal with God Himself.

so that the nations may know Me: What is the purpose of this conflict? So that the nations might know who God is. We live in a “relativistic” world where all opinions about God and morality are seen as equally valid. God rejects the pluralistic, relativist view. God’s Word declares there is One Truth, He is the focus of this Truth

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me

John 14:6
16 So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes. **Isaiah 65:16**

**Hallowed in …Gog:** Through this conflict, God is elevated above the false "gods" and rebellious thoughts of the nations. What happens in Israel will cause the whole world to have to deal with the God of Israel. This is in direct opposition to what the nations currently think. This is another reason the United States and Europe may be excluded from this conflict; if the US were involved then the US would get the credit rather than God. This event will be super-natural in nature.

**Are you he:** In this amazing comment, God reports how the events in the last days will be perceived. When these events happen, people will look back at God’s prophets and will read about the events written down before they occurred. People will understand God alone is behind these events and He will get the glory.

**Former days:** Through the prophets of the past, people in the future will look back at the "former days" - the days of Ezekiel. They will question the source of this revelation and in the end God will get the glory and credit for what takes place.

**Propheesed for years:** This event will be seen as the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy against the land of Israel.

**My fury:** God is angry at the nations and will judge the world. The nations will team up against Israel which will unleash God’s judgment against these invading armies.

**a great earthquake:** God literally shakes the earth starting in the land of Israel. These invading armies are defeated by God, not by the power of Israel’s army.

**in the land of Israel:** Though the whole world knows about this earthquake, the quake is centered in the land of Israel. The shocks will shake not only Israel but the whole world as well.

**Shake at My presence:** The whole world takes notice of the presence of God as it sees what happens to the armies of Gog. The God of Israel will get credit for this battle in the eyes of the nations. They will turn to the Bible and see what Ezekiel foretold was coming.

**Sword against Gog:** Not only is Gog’s alliance defeated by the great earthquake in the land, but the alliance itself unravels as fights and confusion cause the armies to battle each other.

**Judgment:** God will judge these nations with earthquakes, wars from within and a host of other supernatural events.

**pestilence:** Plagues and pestilence are noted here showing that sometimes God uses disease as part of His judgment. This clearly takes place in the Old and New Testaments.

**bloodshed:** The armies will destroy each other, along with Israel’s army involved in the conflict.

**flooding rain:** Torrential rains will fall on the armies as God’s judgment against Gog begins.

**great hailstones:** This could be missiles, super-natural objects or meteorites raining on these armies.

**fire:** Volcanic judgments or super-natural judgments falling on Gog’s allies.

**I will be known:** In the end, the whole purpose is not the glory of Israel, but the knowledge of God. God will be known in the eyes of the nations. God will identify Himself to the world through these events. These events will launch the period known as the Tribulation, Daniel’s 70th week and the Time of Jacob’s trouble.

Throughout the earth, people will be confronted with the God of the Bible. The people of the earth will be forced to make a choice between the God of the Bible and the rule of man. In the end, many will come to know the Lord as the book of Revelation declares:

---

http://www.truthnet.org/Ezekiel
9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,
10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"
13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"
14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:9-10,13-14