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The Ezekiel 38/Psalm 83 Prophecies: Russia, Iran and Muslim Nations in Biblical Prophecy

JOHN G. WELDON, PHD

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Introduction to Ezekiel 38-39

As I look back at the numerous biblical prophets in the Old Testament – Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, King David, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Jonah, Hosea, Elijah, and many others, I realize they encompass some of the most passionate and powerful men in human history. I stand in awe before what God accomplished through their brief and painful but exceedingly rich lives: not just in the nation of Israel, the most unique nation, but in the surrounding nations, the ancient world, throughout history, and even today. They are critical to our own lives and welfare. Sadly, few know it.¹ The prophets cemented redemptive history so we could see and know God and his ways and that they preserved the line of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. It is his sacrificial atonement that ultimately brings eternal joy to untold numbers of people throughout eternity.

The biblical prophets changed the world that was and the world that is and the world that will be. Through God's grace, they delivered millions of people, wrote and preserved the very words of God, performed miracles, confronted kings, warned of coming wrath, were persecuted and murdered, and yet they preserved the ancient people of Israel, forming a bulwark against inherent tendencies toward idolatry and spiritual adultery. Israel exists today in part because of the ancient prophets. They sacrificed their lives for God's chosen people and God's greater glory. The life of each prophet is worthy of the thousands of books written about him. Indeed, Hollywood could craft an Oscar-winning film on each of their lives.

Ezekiel was one such prophet. Unfortunately, we can only look at portions of a few chapters he wrote, not his full, remarkable life.

The amazing prophecies in Ezekiel 38 and 39, written 2,600 years ago, have received a lot of attention recently because of current events in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and Russia. (For an illustration, type in "Ezekiel 38" on a major online search engine.)

¹ E.g. Romans 15:4) (Good books are Hobart E. Freeman, *Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* and C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* and Willis Judson Beecher's century-old classic, *The Prophets and the Promise*. (Cornell University Library, 2009, part of the Stone lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary 1902-03).

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Think about that for a moment. Of what other religious book in existence do 2,600-year old *specific* prophecies command the attention of millions of people? There is none. And what we discuss here is only one of hundreds of examples written by the prophets; indeed almost 30% of what they wrote was prophetic! (Ezekiel alone has over 800 predictive verses.)² The remarkable prophecy below by one of the greatest of ancient Hebrew prophets – never before literally fulfilled in history – predicts that a great power to the far north of Israel and a coalition of nations – a massive horde of people, will attack Israel and be destroyed supernaturally by God on the mountains of Israel. God promises this day is coming.

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Perhaps it's coming soon. Why do I say this?

The historically miraculous rebirth of the Jewish state in 1948, after 2,000 years of nonexistence, and the conquering of East Jerusalem during the Six-Day War in 1967 and other factors seem to have set the stage for a time clock of sorts relative to the upcoming "last days" of Israel and the fulfillment of many remaining prophecies relevant to that period. And, indeed, today Russia, a great power to Israel's far north and the Muslim nations, particularly Iran, are growing increasingly intertwined and hostile toward Israel. Neither Russia nor the Arab, Central Asian and North African Muslim nations have any positive perspective toward this tiniest of nations. (As if their history weren't tragic enough – no nation on earth has come close to suffering what the Jewish people have.) A good deal more suffering is yet to come and yet one day "all Israel will be saved" and all the Jewish people, from the least to the greatest will know their Messiah (Romans 11:26; Isaiah 45:17).

To illustrate current events of possible relevance to Ezekiel 38, in mid-June 2011, the Russian president met with Iran's president Ahmadinejad and the leaders of other Central Asian Muslim nations as part of a Summit Meeting with NATO's rival, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. (Iran has "observer" status in the SCO but has requested full membership.) Mideast prophecy expert Joel Rosenberg said the following about this particular conference: "When one considers how closely Russia and Iran are currently growing to the western portion of the [Ezekiel 38] prophetic alliance – Sudan, Libya and Algeria, for example – it's not hard to envision these prophecies coming true in our lifetime, or even in the next few years. That said, I believe it is currently too soon to draw any conclusions. There are many intriguing trends and developments, but it remains far from clear that we're seeing Bible prophecy come to pass. That said, we

² See Dr. J. Barton Payne's *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*.

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cannot rule out the possibility. Events in the region are both unprecedented and riveting."³

Rosenberg's attitude is sound: we don't know with certainty if the current geopolitical alignment and military trends are beginning to lay the groundwork for fulfilling the prophecy of Ezekiel 38, but current events are certainly intriguing. Indeed, the historic "Arab Spring," still in upheaval (and possibly becoming an "Islamist winter"), Iran's eschatology of Armageddon and their nuclear and ballistic missile program, massive oil and gas finds in Israel, the Russian alignment with Muslim nations, Turkey's turning from the West toward Islamism and several other factors are at the very least interesting. Nevertheless, actual fulfillment could be years away or longer. Still, because of the importance the Bible attaches to prophecy in general, the prediction bears examination today.

Below we will extract portions of Ezekiel Chapters 38-39 (written ca. 580 BC) to illustrate the amazing prophecies in these two chapters. For example, in Ezekiel 38:1-9 and vs.14-23, we read about a great power to the far North of Israel, called Magog (which, in light of other prophetic data can only be Russia or some revived form of the old Soviet Union), and whose authoritarian ruler is named "Gog," which attacks Israel with many nations, including Iran, and in the process receives the wrath of God as a consequence, which destroys the great coalition (Ezekiel 38:18-39:6).

We will supply the prophecy itself with the ancient names of the geographical locations in bold type for easy identification relative to our subsequent discussion. But first, please note some highlights of this important passage written 2,600 years ago.

To begin, again, that it is clearly a prophecy, being described as occurring "in future years." Nothing like it in history has happened before, something also true of Psalm 83 that we discuss later.

Second, God himself is the one who puts "hooks in the jaws" of Gog and the many nations, to bring them down against Israel for judgment.

Third, a truly massive military force is involved from numerous nations, described as "a great horde," as a "cloud covering the land," and as one that is "advancing like a storm."

Fourth, that these nations will specifically invade a land whose description is significantly appropriate to modern Israel. They will "invade a land that has recovered from war

³ Joel C. Rosenberg, "Russian and Iranian Leaders Meet for Summit in Central Asia: Echoes of Ezekiel 38-39 Coalition," June 15, 2011, Bible Prophecy Blog; <http://www.bibleprophecyblog.com/2011/06/russian-and-iranian-leaders-meet-for.html>.

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[possibly a reference to the future war of Psalm 83], whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, *which had long been desolate,*" (emphasis added) and they will invade "the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations" (v. 12). This fits modern Israel that had indeed been desolate for 2,000 years until 1948.

On the other hand, the nation of Israel is said to "live in safety," as "a peaceful and unsuspecting people—all of them living without walls and without gates and bars" (v. 11), something *not* currently true of Israel, indicating a time of fulfillment future to our own, conditions which I personally believe could easily result from the war of Psalm 83, again, discussed later. As I read things, the war of Psalm 83 is closer to our time than the war of Ezekiel 38, although conceivably the latter could occur within several years of the former.

Fifth, that God's response to the massive attack on His special people Israel is swift and furious: it will include a nationwide earthquake in Israel so massive that all people will tremble, mountains will be overturned, cliffs will crumble and every wall fall to the ground (the invading armies will obviously be put into disarray and impaired); there will be both "plague and bloodshed," and poured down upon the invading armies will be "torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur." Yikes.

Finally, the purpose of the attack and God's response is, as with biblical prophecy generally is so that God's power, glory and majesty will be broadcast and, "*Then they will know that I am the LORD.*" "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen" (Romans 11:36).

Below we will cite this remarkable 2,600-year-old prophecy concerning the future massive war on the mountains of Israel. Again, we know these prophecies concern future events because they have not been fulfilled literally in the past and because they are clearly declared to be prophecies by God Himself: "It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the sovereign Lord. This is the day I have spoken of" (Ezekiel 39:7-8).

But prior to supplying the specific passage, we need to briefly point out that in Ezekiel 38:2 translations differ on the meaning of one word. For example, the New International Version (NIV) and other translations render the word "chief," but it is translated as "Rosh" in the more literal New American Standard Version (NASB) and other translations, apparently depending on whether the translators relied upon the Septuagint or the Latin Vulgate. Thus, note the difference:

NIV: "Gog, of the land of Magog, the *chief* prince of Meshech and Tubal"

NASB: "Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of *Rosh*, Meshech and Tubal"

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The word is either translated as a foreign nation ("Rosh," NASB⁴) or a descriptive adjective, i.e. "chief" prince, NIV). In other words, it could mean a specific place, or "head" or "chief." For various reasons I prefer the NASB rendering of Rosh as a foreign nation even though I prefer the NIV translation below for citing Ezekiel 38. In the passage below I have added the NASB translation appropriately.

Please read this prophecy carefully:

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The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, set your face against **Gog**, of the land of **Magog**, the chief ["Rosh"], prince of **Meshech** and **Tubal** [again the NASB reads: "Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal"]; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief ["Rosh"] prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army ... and a great horde ... **Persia**, **Cush** and **Put** will be with them, ... also **Gomer** with all its troops, and **Beth-** [i.e., meaning 'House of'] **Togarmah** from the far north with all its troops -- the many nations with you. "'Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them. After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.... "Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In that day, when my people Israel are living in safety, will you not take notice of it? You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, ... a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. In days to come, O Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.... This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign LORD. In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every

⁴ The *NAS Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries* defines Rosh as "a foreign nation;" <http://strongnumbers.com/hebrew/7220b.htm>.

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man's sword will be against his brother. I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. *Then they will know that I am the LORD.*' (Ezekiel 38:1-9,14-23 emphasis added.)

In Ezekiel 39 we read of the destruction of these nations who viciously come against Israel. Even this truly massive coalition will not be able to destroy Israel because God will supernaturally preserve the nation, as he has always done, whether she has experienced grace or judgment. (For a worthwhile study, see H. Wayne House, Ed. *Israel the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God's Promises.*)

Indeed, according to the prophecy, it will take seven months merely to bury the bodies in order to "cleanse the land," and the entire nation of Israel will participate; the burial procedures will be so vast as to cause problems in travel, and the event so remarkable it will become a national memorial day for Israel (much, I suspect, like Israel's first major supernatural deliverance from Egypt, resulting in the Passover commemorative). Again, read carefully:

"...I will bring you from the far north and send you against the mountains of Israel....On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals. You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.... " 'I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel. It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of.... " 'On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east toward the Sea. It will block the way of travelers, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog.... " 'For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. All the people of the land will bury them, and the day I am glorified will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign LORD.... I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them. From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God.'" (Ezekiel 39: 2, 4, 5, 7-8, 11-13, 21-22)

In Ezekiel 38:12 it declares that at least one reason the Russian coalition (see below) attacks Israel is to capture treasures and carry off plunder (and "great spoil" in verse 13) -- i.e., whatever else the possible reason/s for the attack, there is clearly something of great

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value in Israel they want, whether it is oil and gas directly, or the gold silver and other riches and material items that accrue from them, or in addition, something else. It could be that major new deposits of silver and gold will be discovered in Israel, besides the massive gas and oil fields already revealed. Hardly anyone expected Israel to contain major gas and oil deposits (see below) so gold and silver is not out of the question.

Again, we see that in both passages cited, the purpose for these events is so that many nations (and especially Israel) will know that the Lord alone is God: "And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD." And, "I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them. From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God." In Ezekiel 39:7-8 we read, "Then the nations will know that I the Lord am the holy one in Israel. It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the sovereign Lord. This is the day I have spoken of." (We have left the specific military mechanics of the invasion for another study, but probably Ezekiel is describing warfare from his perspective 2,600 years ago; nevertheless, even modern nations could be forced to use cavalry and other unconventional weaponry in rough terrain as we saw in the early stages of the war in Afghanistan. We don't have sufficient information to be certain that the military means described in Ezekiel 38 aren't literal; in fact, something like a widespread pulse bomb attack would almost require it.)

The Identity of the Players in Ezekiel 38

After the initial 2010 international Gaza flotilla incident, the Rabbinical Council of Judea and Samaria actually issued a statement asserting that the aftermath seemed to place Israel at "the beginning of the Gog and Magog process where the world is against us, but which ends with the third and final redemption."⁵

In mid-2011, Dr. Pat Robertson pointed out that US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has warned that Iran is *now* able to launch an attack on Europe with "scores or hundreds of missiles." He says that to the best of his knowledge, the most likely identification for the Ezekiel 38 coalition, which I generally agree with, is as follows: Persia is obviously Iran, Put is Libya, Cush is Sudan, Gomer is Turkey, Rosh is Russia and Meshech and Tubal are both in the Russian Federation. Dr. Robertson asks whether or not Ezekiel 38 is beginning to approach the world scene. "I think it's shaping up before our eyes: Russia allies with Iran, Iran is allying with the enemies of Israel – Libya and Sudan in the Muslim camp, the

⁵ Gil Ronen, "Rabbis: Flotilla Clash Similar to Gog and Magog Prophecy," March 6, 2010 Arutz Sheva, Israel National News; <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/137869#.Ti2oDYLJZaU>.

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Muslim people in the region of the Caucaus – and now Turkey. It's all getting ready to happen."⁶

Below I will provide my interpretation on the modern identity or probable/possible identity of the ancient geographical locations listed in Ezekiel 38. (Incidentally, an excellent book on the proper, literal interpretation of biblical prophecy was written some time ago by Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* and I highly recommend it.)

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Some of these names are easy to identify, and some less so. Because of war, political and other factors, national boundaries are fluid historically; sometimes they overlapped, and therefore precision of identification is not always possible. In addition, prophecy is sometimes easy to interpret (as in Micah 5:2), sometimes hard (as in many passages in the book of Revelation), and sometimes impossible -- it should be remembered that God declares some prophecies are sealed until "the time of the end" (as in Daniel 12:9), or will simply remain hidden (as in Revelation 10:4). (For example, in the current case, the war of Ezekiel 38 may occur before or after the rapture (perhaps early in the tribulation) and some argue that Psalm 83 fits the historical context of the past while other argue it is future. Some see Daniel 11 fulfilled in the past (<http://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Daniel+11:30>) while others see parts of the chapter as future. Some believe Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38 are chronologically connected events, others see them as unconnected.)

Regardless, prophecy is generally easy to interpret post-fulfillment.

The major point that seems rather indisputable is the fact of a future Russian-Islamic confederation of nations that attack Israel. Again this interpretation is based on the key modern events such as the historically unparalleled reestablishment of the nation of Israel and its recapturing of Old Jerusalem which seem to begin a prophetic time clock and place us near the last days of Israel.

It is hardly outside the realm of possibility that Russia would assist her primarily *non-Arab* Islamic friends (per the prophecy), in an invasion of Israel to once and for all solve the Mideast crisis for the world, i.e. the "problem" of Israel. (Note that the *Arab* Muslim states, which seem absent from Ezekiel 38, *are* clearly involved in what I suspect is the future war of Psalm 83, discussed later.) Or, it is also possible that if additional huge oil and gas wealth were discovered in Israel (as has been already), circumstances could arise where Russia and her confederation would either be enticed or forced to attack Israel for the treasure. There are other possible scenarios.

⁶ Pat Robertson, "The Prophecy of Ezekiel 38;" <http://www.cbn.com/noindex/PCC/Ezekiel-Brochure.pdf>.

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Irrespective of the differences between the wars of Ezekiel 38 and Psalm 83 (neither of which is equivalent to Armageddon; in my opinion, all three have distinct features),⁷ OilInIsrael.net observed that if the Arabs (and potentially other Muslims) don't believe Israel has any right to the land of Palestine to begin with, it certainly doesn't have the right to its gas, oil, and other wealth: "It's easy to predict an Arab response to a massively successful hydrocarbon industry in Israel. If the Jewish State is viewed as a usurper now, the natural response would be that if the land (and the sea) doesn't belong to Israel, then neither does its natural resources. It's an issue today; when economic quantities of oil and gas come into play it becomes the issue."⁸

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In the Ezekiel 38 prophecy, at least nine nations and their leader are listed; all nine nations are also found in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10:2-7. It's also relevant to remember that, prior to the 20th century, Russia was *not* a great nation, there *was* no Islamic empire, such as exists today (and fits so well with the prophecy), and indeed, Israel had no *existence* at all. Yet today Russia exists, as does an Islamic empire and the nation of Israel is reborn. Ezekiel prophesied all this 2,600 years ago.

(Incidentally, the Valley of Dry Bones prophecy in Ezekiel 37 does appear to represent a return of the Jews to the land, after the conditions of the dispersal and 2000 years of living in a desperate situation; at least this is suggested in Ezekiel 37:11-12: "Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.")"

Historically, the Holocaust sealed the desperation of the Jewish people and was the impetus for returning to Israel to officially form the Jewish state that occurred just three years after the end of World War II. The "vast" or "exceedingly great army" spoken of in Ezekiel 37:10 may suggest the current Israeli army or a future more powerful one.⁹

Regardless, here are the apparent players in Ezekiel 38:

⁷ Dr. Lewis Moncrief "Ezekiel 38 and 39, Preparing for the Gog/Magog War," August 11, 2009; <http://ezekiel38and39.blogspot.com/> provides 7 differences between the Ezekiel 38 and Armageddon wars (although I disagree with his discussion on America.).

⁸ Administrator, "Arab Murmuring over Israeli Gas Already Begun," March 18, 2010, Oil in Israel; <http://www.oilinisrael.net/oil-in-israel-news/oil-in-israel-christian-world-news/murmuring-begun>.

⁹ As for reasons it is specifically an army rather than a general great host or multitude see Bill Salus, "Is Ezekiel's Army about the Face-Off with the Arabs,?" May 22, 2011, Bible Prophecy Blog; <http://www.bibleprophecyblog.com/2011/05/is-ezekiels-army-about-to-face-off-with.html>.

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- **Gog** (an unidentified leader of the invasion, of the land of Magog, "the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.")
- **Magog** (Russia and/or Central Asian Muslim nations: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan; Russians of Scythian origin just north of the Black Sea and Caucasus Mountains) (See: Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: the Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, which discusses these five Central Asian countries (until 1991, part of the Soviet Union), and illustrates why radical Islam will remain a major problem in central Asia and how China, Russia and the US are involved in a power rivalry in the region; Rashid is a Central Asian chief correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and earned worldwide acclaim for his book, *Taliban*.)
- **Rosh** (NASB, etc.) — (Russia; possibly Central Eastern Russia including what is now Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan less likely Mushki of central and western Asia Minor)
- **Meshech and Tubal** (cities on the southern coast of the Black Sea, referring to modern Turkey, just south of Russia, a nation which recently supported Israel but is now increasingly Islamist, cooperating with Russia (Russia has become its central supplier of gas), and is increasingly hostile to Israel. (The respective identifications of these locations as Russia's capital, Moscow, and as Tobolsk, the historic capital of Siberia, and by far the wealthiest federal subject or territory of Russia, may also be possible, according to some.) As noted above, Dr. Robertson believes that Meshech and Tubal are located somewhere in the Russian Federation, which would be north of Turkey.
- **Persia** (Iran and, perhaps ironically, its ancient territory included both Shiite Iraq and also Afghanistan.)
- **Put** (Libya, [a few authorities include with her, Algeria, Morocco and Tunis]; Somaliland or Somalia, which borders Ethiopia.) As Dr. Mark Hitchcock observes "Libya would certainly jump at the chance to join forces with the Sudan, Iran, Turkey, and the former Muslim republics of the Soviet Union to crush the Jewish state."¹⁰
- **Gomer** (Eastern Europe or portions thereof, North Central Asia minor (Turkey), possibly the Ukraine; the identification as Germany is probably incorrect.) Again, Turkey is turning increasingly Islamist and definitely part of the Ezekiel 38 coalition.

¹⁰ In *After The Empire: Bible Prophecy in Light of the Fall of the Soviet Union* (1994, 85-86), cited in part nine of Dr. Thomas Ice's "Ezekiel 38 & 39" series at <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles>.

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- **Togarmah** (Southeastern Europe, or Turkey or the South East portion of Turkey near the Syrian border; also possibly Ukraine: separated by the Black Sea, both Turkey and Ukraine have a long chronology of geographic, cultural and historic contact.)
- **Cush** (The Islamic Republic of Sudan, one of the most militant Islamic nations on earth; and possibly Ethiopia.)
- **The many nations with you** — additional nations not cited who are allied with the Russian confederation.

Further confirmation

Most prophecy experts confirm this general picture of Russia and a coalition of Muslim nations. Consider a few examples that we cite below and later.

Author, international conference speaker, journalist, and radio host Dr. Jimmy DeYoung is an expert on biblical prophecy, Israel, and the Middle East, having lived in Jerusalem since 1991 and having interviewed every Israeli prime minister since 1993 as well as many cabinet members and other Israeli political, military, and religious leaders. In a 17-day trip to Israel celebrating its 60th anniversary, he and Dr. John Ankerberg observed that, "Without exception, each expert we met provided remarks that fit the puzzle of often mysterious passages of biblical prophecy."¹¹ DeYoung correctly pointed out that in the last days, "It is the Islamic world that is going to come together and align themselves to try to destroy the Jewish state. There will be one exception in that group. Modern-day Russia is mentioned in Ezekiel 38."¹² But in fact, due to demographics and other factors, some authorities see Russia as becoming increasingly Islamized. Dr. DeYoung points out that very soon the majority of both the populace and the military will be Muslim. Then we have the multiple Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union (Central Asia). So it's quite possible that when the war of Ezekiel 38 comes about it will, in essence, be a fundamentally Muslim assault against Israel, which would hardly be surprising.

According to Dr. DeYoung, in ancient biblical times, Gomer, Togarmah, Tubal and Meshech all referred to Turkey because Turkey was divided into four parts called by those specific names. Until the mid-1930s there were three nations that we know today that went by that name of Persia — Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Cush in Ezekiel 38:5 constituted Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan and Put is modern-day Libya. In Daniel 11, at least partly an end times prophecy (vs. 40-45), the King of the North is known as Syria today and the King of the South is known as Egypt. In Psalm 83 the Ishmaelites are Saudi

¹¹ John Ankerberg, Jimmy DeYoung with Dillon Burroughs, *Israel under Fire*, 2009, 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 60.

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Arabia, Tyre is modern-day Lebanon. According to DeYoung, this is the coalition of nations that will combine against Israel in the last days; he combines the prophecies in Ezekiel 38 and Psalm 83, which I interpret as separate incidents.¹³

In sum, Dr. DeYoung sees the players in Ezekiel 38 as follows: Gog is the leader, Magog is part of modern-day Russia; Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Togarmah refer to parts of modern-day Turkey (the four parts Turkey was divided into in biblical times); Put (in some translations) is modern-day Libya and possibly additional areas west of Libya; Ethiopia/Cush is Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan; Persia obviously is Iran, although ancient Persia included Afghanistan and Pakistan as well.¹⁴ To be sure, "the nations mentioned in Bible prophecy are in many cases already aligned against Israel, preparing for future battles."¹⁵

Interestingly, retired US Lieut. Gen. Jerry Boykin was a former undersecretary for defense whose specialty was counterterrorism. He sees Russia's Vladimir Putin as "the next czar in Russia;" he points out that many experts see him as the most powerful ruler in Russia in the last century.¹⁶

Turkey, of course, is already problematically a member of NATO; some members of the European Union however, will not permit Turkey to join the EU, pushing it further into the Islamist orbit.

As noted, Dr. DeYoung apparently interprets Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38 as involving the same event and that this war will happen at the mid-tribulation point.¹⁷ (Again, I tend to view them as separate incidents but am not yet certain where Daniel 11:40-45 fits in.)

As a second example, Dr. Chuck Missler is a scientist and computer and Bible expert who has done a great deal of study on the Ezekiel 38 prophecy. His conclusions are worth

¹³ For a more thorough study see the 21-part series on Ezekiel 38-39 by Dr. Thomas Ice at: <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles>; Bill Salus, "Psalm 83 or Ezekiel 38 – Which Is the Next Middle East News Headline?" April 21, 2009, Bible Prophecy Blog; <http://www.bibleprophecyblog.com/2009/08/psalm-83-or-ezekiel-38-which-is-next.html>; Bill Salus, "The Ezekiel 35-39 Mideast War Prophecies," January 20, 2011; <http://www.prophecydepot.net/2011/the-ezekiel-35-39-mideast-war-prophecies/>; Cf. Joseph, "Will Israeli Oil & Gas Discoveries Become the Hooks in the Jaw of Ezekiel 38?"; <http://intimatemomentswiththefather.com/blog/post/2010/04/17/Will-Israeli-Oil-Gas-Discoveries-Become-The-Hooks-In-The-Jaw-Of-Ezekiel-38.aspx>.

¹⁴ *Israel under Fire*, 60-61, 75-76.

¹⁵ *Israel under Fire*, 63.

¹⁶ *Israel under Fire*, 80.

¹⁷ John Ankerberg, Jimmy DeYoung, *Israel under Fire*, CD.

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noting as additional general confirmation. Mary Miller of Missler's "The Koinonia Institute" summarizes:

- * Magog is the Southern Steppes of Russia (former Soviet-Bloc countries);
- * Meshech and Tubal are Turkey;
- * Persia is Iran;
- * Ethiopia is Southern Egypt, Sudan, Somalia;
- * Libya is Libya (but it may also include Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia);
- * Gomer is North-Central Turkey;
- * Togarmah is Eastern Turkey.¹⁸

As noted above, ancient Persia today constitutes modern Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Cush today constitutes the Islamic Republic of Sudan and possibly Ethiopia. Libya remains Libya.

Looking deeper

We will now proceed with a more in-depth discussion of this prophecy.

The first item listed in Ezekiel 38 is "Gog of the land of Magog," and the land is described as being to the "far north" of Israel. If you would, take the time to look at him at a map. The only option for such a nation-galvanizing power existing to the "far north" of Israel today is Russia, and it's not likely going anywhere soon. (Note that Togarmah (whether in southeastern Europe or Turkey is also said to be to the "far north;" geographically Turkey is parallel with southern Russia, and southeastern Europe is north of Turkey.)

Assuming we are approaching Israel's last days, because of its military power, strategic interests, and siding with Iran and Muslim nations against Israel, Russia seems to be the only nation that can possibly fulfill the particulars of the prophecy in Ezekiel 38-39, such as leading a confederacy of nations (e.g., Islamic, North African) against Israel. Many and perhaps most authorities agree such as Dr. Thomas McCall and Zola Levitt (*The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel*), Dr. John Walvoord (*Armageddon*), and Dr. Thomas Ice in his series at the Pre-Trib Rapture Center (<http://www.pre-trib.org/>).

¹⁸ His in-depth commentary on Ezekiel is available at http://store.khouse.org/store/catalog/DLC26.html?mv_pc=KHAR-829; session number 19 is chapters 38-39. See also, Nathan Jones, "The Gog-Magog Battle series, Rapture Forums; <http://raptureforums.com/EndTimesEvents/thegogmagogwar1.cfm>

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Noted biblical scholar Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum is the author of several excellent texts, including *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, *Messianic Christology* and *The Footsteps of the Messiah*. He argues somewhat differently, but not out of harmony with the general picture.¹⁹

In addition, there seems more than sufficient historical evidence to identify the land of Magog as being that of Russia. Ancient authorities such as Josephus and Herodotus and several modern experts identify Magog as being associated with the ancient peoples known as the Scythians, peoples from the area of Russia. "One of the earliest references to Magog was by Hesiod, 'the father of Greek didactic poetry' who identified Magog with the Scythians and southern Russia in the 7th century BC. Hesiod was a contemporary of Ezekiel. In the 5th century BC Herodotus of Harlicarnassus, known as the 'Father of History' wrote extensively about the Scythians, and how they terrorized the southern steppes of Russia from the 10th century BC to the 3rd Century BC."²⁰

Mohammed himself apparently referred to the Great Wall of China as the "Great Wall of Magog," so named because it was built to keep out the Russians. Ancient writers referred to the Great Wall of China as the "ramparts of Gog and the Magog." Again, the wall was built to keep the "Magogians" out.

Wilhelm Gesenius, one of the greatest scholars of the Hebrew language in history, has apparently never been refuted in the evidence he supplied that Rosh is Russia. Further, "Historical, ethnological, and archaeological evidence all favor the conclusion that the Rosh people of Ezekiel 38-39 were the ancestors of the Rus/Ros people of Europe and Asia. ... the Rosh people of the area north of the Black Sea formed the people known today as the Russians."²¹

¹⁹ Writing prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union: "The identification of Magog, Rosh, Meshech and Tubal is to be determined from the fact that these tribes of the ancient world occupied the areas of modern-day Russia. Magog, Rosh, Meshech and Tubal were between the Black and Caspian seas which today is southern Russia. The tribes of Meshech and Tubal later gave names to cities that today bear the names of Moscow, the capital, and Tobolsk, the major city in the Urals in Siberia. Rosh was in what is now northern Russia. The name Rosh is the basis for the modern name Russia. These names, then, cover the modern territories of northern and southern Russia in Europe and Siberia to the east and Asia. The modern nation of the Soviet Union encompasses all these areas in Ezekiel." (Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, 1982 p. 70).

²⁰ Darrell G. Young, "Iran in Bible Prophecy: The Prince of Persia," October, 2004;
<http://focusonjerusalem.com/iraninbibleprophecy.html>

²¹ For more documentation see e.g.: Dr. Mark Hitchcock, "The Battle of Gog and Magog," Pre-Trib Research Center; <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/battle-of-gog-and-magog>.

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Even Further Confirmation

In *Epicenter: 2.0* Mideast prophecy expert Joel C. Rosenberg also offers a persuasive discussion documenting from many sources involving linguistic, textual and historical evidence that we are "with a high degree of confidence"²² dealing with Russia and the former Soviet Union. Thus, "there is no doubt that the ancient prophet was referring to the nation we now know as Russia"²³ and, "There is widespread agreement among leading Bible scholars and prophecy experts that Magog and Rosh do in fact, refer to Russia and the lands and people of the former Soviet Union, and that Gog is the dictator at their helm."²⁴ Interestingly, Rosenberg points out that President Ronald Reagan was a devout Christian whose favorite book of prophecy was Ezekiel, and that the late president naturally asked, "What other powerful nation is to the north of Israel [besides Russia]? None."²⁵

Looking at the nations listed in Ezekiel 38, some concluded a potentially startling fact that in the last days, Egypt would apparently not be a member of this particular coalition of nations that comes against Israel. Given its wars against Israel, it was impossible to imagine that Egypt would *not* be willing to wage war against Israel. But in 1979, after fighting multiple wars against Israel, Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel that has held to this day. On the other hand, as we have seen, simply because a nation isn't mentioned in the list, doesn't necessarily mean it will not be taking part – as we saw Ezekiel 38 refers to "other [unidentified] nations"; nor can anyone conclude that Egypt has at any time been a true friend of Israel or that it could not turn on her at any point. Even as I write, Egypt seems to be in the process of siding with the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood that has already threatened war against Israel. Plus, Egypt does seem to be in the list of nations in the Psalm 83 war against Israel. (See below.)

We must also mention a few caveats that indicate some additional changes are necessary before this attack on Israel occurs. As noted, in Ezekiel 38 Israel is dwelling "without walls" and in safety whereas it currently has a 400-plus mile long wall 25 feet high to keep out terrorists (quite successfully I might add), and of course it is continually shelled with thousands of missiles by the Iranian terrorist proxies Hezbollah and Hamas. As to why the Syrians, Saudi Arabians, Jordanians, Lebanese and Palestinians are not mentioned, a discussion of this will have to wait for Psalm 83 that discusses Israel's surrounding neighbors in a different context and with a different agenda than in Ezekiel 38.

²² Joel C. Rosenberg, *Epicenter 2.0*, p. 87.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 82ff.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 286-287.

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Clearly however, it can be argued that the stage does seem to be setting up for the war of Ezekiel 38. The Bible clearly predicts that at some future point in history a massive military invasion of Israel will occur from the North (with a significant coalition of other nations from the East and South), in which God will miraculously destroy the invading armies. Notice again that the specific description given of Israel in Ezekiel aligns closely, but not perfectly, with her current condition: "a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety."

Anyone who examines what the Bible says in Ezekiel 38 and looks at the current world conditions can't help but be intrigued or even impressed. According to leading biblical prophecy expert Dr. Mark Hitchcock, a former attorney, current pastor, and author of over 20 books on the end times, as well as an adjunct faculty member of Dallas Theological Seminary, the Ezekiel prophecy is almost certainly in the process of being fulfilled today:

"Ezekiel 38-39 predicts an invasion of the land of Israel in the last days by a vast confederation of nations from north of the Black and Caspian Seas, extending down to modern Iran in the east, as far as modern Libya to the west, and down to Sudan in the south. Therefore, Russia will have at least five key allies: Turkey, Iran, Libya, Sudan, and the nations of Central Asia." And, "Events in our world today strikingly foreshadow the prophecy of the battle of Gog and Magog in Ezek. 38-39. All of the necessary antecedents for the fulfillment of this prophecy are in place or are moving in that direction. The Jewish people have been regathered to their land in unbelief, the Middle East peace process is front and center in international diplomacy, and the invaders in Ezek. 38 are identifiable nations who have both the desire and the potential to fulfill the Gog prophecy."²⁶

In a similar fashion, according to biblical prophecy expert Dr. Thomas Ice:

"The Battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is a prophecy about an attack upon the land of Israel led by Russian with a number of nations joining them, (Ezek.38:1-6). Russia will have five key allies: Turkey, Iran, Libya, Sudan and the nations of Central Asia. Amazingly, all of these nations are Muslim nations and Iran, Libya and Sudan are three of Israel's most ardent opponents. It is not

²⁶ Dr. Mark Hitchcock, "The Battle of Gog and Magog," Pre-Trip Research Center; <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/battle-of-gog-and-magog>.

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surprising that Iran is one of the nations that are included in the list of those attacking Israel in the last days."²⁷

Back to the Future

Many Israelis today are hoping for a potential Russian/US alliance that will protect them from Iran, but this would comprise the same fatal mistake ancient Israel made in trusting their protection to alliances with surrounding pagan nations rather than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who called them as a people for His own pleasure and possession. He is the only one who can protect them, no one else. For Israel to place her whole trust in America,²⁸ Russia, or anyone else apart from God, will only result in frustration, betrayal or worse:

"It is no secret that Russia has played a role of enabler to Iran, which has risen to the top of the list of rogue states that threaten to bring great destabilization to the current world order.... As one American diplomat put it, this business is a 'giant hook in Russia's jaw.'" What? -- The American diplomat said, "This business is a 'giant hook in Russia's jaw.'" That's right, the diplomat used a phrase right out of Bible prophecy to describe Russia's current role with Iran."²⁹

Indeed, there are many reasons why "Russia should help out her Muslim friends by leading them in an overwhelming invasion of Israel in order to solve the Middle East Conflict in favor of the Islamic nations."³⁰ ³⁰ And as we have seen, Iran has its own reasons for involvement, e.g.: "Historically and traditionally, Iran believes that Iraq belongs to them as well as many other countries in the Middle East (including Israel). They desire the glory of the former Persian Empire (one of the largest empires of history in terms of geography) to be restored."³¹

Iranian eschatology suggests that as soon as Iran has nuclear weapons, at the opportune moment, she is likely to attack Israel, Europe and America. Israel will be forced to attack

²⁷ "Russia, Iran and War with Israel"; <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/russia-iran-and-war-with-israel>.

²⁸ America's absence in prophecy, given current conditions, might indicate that America has become a fourth rate (or worse) nation through financial collapse, an energy crisis, Civil War or some type of terror attack including a nuclear/EMP attack, biological, cyber, etc.

²⁹ Dr. Thomas Ice, "Russia, Iran and War with Israel," <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/russia-iran-and-war-with-israel>, citing Mortimer B. Zuckerman, "Moscow's Mad Gamble," *U. S. News & World Report*, Internet Edition (Jan. 30, 2006), p. 1.

³⁰ Ibid, <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/russia-iran-and-war-with-israel>

³¹ "The Bible and Historical Facts about Iran," <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/bible-and-historical-facts-about-iran>.

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Iran before it goes nuclear. It is also likely that the Israeli attack upon Iran could lead to a much broader Mideast war (conceivably a Mideast war could also occur before Iran can secure nuclear weapons and before an Israeli attack to destroy them). Regardless, at some point a major Middle East war will break out, and a number of military and political commentators have suggested 2011 as being likely. It may also be wise to remember that God has protected Israel and given the nation victory in every Arab-Israeli war to this point.

However, this coming war just might be that war in which the Arab nations are defeated decisively, more than ever before, so much so that Israel's geographical borders expand greatly, up to 10 times their present size (the borders God originally gave to Israel in Genesis 15:18-19), creating an Israeli mini-superpower state – and then, for the first time, Israel would live securely in peace, apparently laying the foundation for the Gog and Magog war of Ezekiel 38-39 that occurs sometime after. Genesis 15:18, Psalm 83, parts of Isaiah 17/Obadiah 1, and Ezekiel 37 may all be applicable. Sooner or later, it appears that the Muslim nations of Psalm 83, Obadiah 1 and Isaiah 17 are destined for divine judgment.

Further as prophecy expert Dr. Mark Hitchcock points out, there is also another scenario: "If Israel were to hit Iran, and widespread violence were to erupt in the region, it's easy to see how the peace treaty of Daniel 9:27 could be the only viable solution. Also, any Israeli attack on Iran would intensify the already venomous hatred that the mullah regime in Iran harbors against Israel and fuel the desire for revenge. One could easily envision Iran, with the help of Russia, staging the kind of retaliatory attack against Israel that is predicted in Ezekiel 38."³²

A Nuclear Exchange?

In a lecture at the 2008 International Prophecy Conference by prophecy expert Dr. Chuck Missler,³³ he had some interesting things to say about the Ezekiel 38 prophecy. According to Ezekiel 37, the four prerequisites for the events of Ezekiel 38 to take place are: 1) the nation of Israel has to be reestablished as a sovereign state, which has occurred; 2) the nation must be militarily secure, which Israel is in one sense but not another, 3) the nation must be in apparent peace, which isn't yet true today, and 4) the nation has restored

³² Mark Hitchcock, Archive for Category Iran, Ezekiel 38-39; *Wall Street Journal* "Warning: Israel Will Attack Iran," August 31, 2009; <http://marklhitchcock.com/category/iran-ezekiel-38-39/>.

³³ International Prophecy Conference "Chuck Missler," 2008, God.tv. The 2009 and 2010 conferences, based on Internet reports, provided interesting details on biblical prophecy and the end times.

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material fortunes, which is significantly true (however she may yet become exceedingly wealthy).

Missler pointed out that Ezekiel 38:7 says that Magog or Russia will be "a guard" to these coalition nations; and indeed, today Russia is the very nation selling arms to the nations listed in Ezekiel 38. In addition, in Ezekiel 38:13 he observes that "Sheba and Dedan" are Yemen and Saudi Arabia and yet it is declared that they are spectators of the attack, not participants.

Dr. Missler further discusses the possibility that a nuclear attack might be involved. There are some interesting hints about this idea in the passage. He mentions that the average nuclear warhead is about four megatons; but if a couple of 25-megaton warheads were exploded, it could actually alter the orbit of the Earth. Consider the following facts:

First, altering the earth's orbit would certainly result in the description given in Ezekiel 38:20 which says that the judgment of God will be so great that "all the men who are on the face of the Earth will shake my presence" as a result of what God does to the invading army.

Second in Ezekiel 38:22, it says that great hailstones and fire and brimstone will fall upon Magog, and in Ezekiel 39:6 it reiterates that God will send a fire on Magog: "I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD." What kind of fire and brimstone could consume such massive armies?

Third, the leftover weapons seem to supply a great deal of energy for the nation of Israel for seven years.

Fourth, it also implies that professionals will be hired to clear the battlefield of dead soldiers, but they have to wait for seven months and then clear for seven months.

Fifth, the dead are buried east of the Dead Sea, i.e. downwind.

Sixth, it further says that if a traveler finds something a professional misses, they are not to touch it but to mark the location and let the professionals deal with it.

Seventh, the dead are buried for seven months "in order to cleanse the land."

Eighth, it also refers to those who are "left on the surface of the ground" as if the others have perhaps been incinerated (Ezekiel 39:12). For example:

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"They will set apart men who will constantly pass through the land, burying those who were passing through [i.e. the attacking armies], even those left on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. As those who pass through the land pass through and anyone sees a man's bone, then he will set a marker by it until the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog." (Ezekiel 39:14-15 NASB)

A nuclear exchange? Possibly. Only time will tell, but the information cited by Dr. Missler is intriguing. It is also relevant that Russia has the large majority of the world's nuclear weapons and also co-ordinates the world's largest and most aggressive biological weapons program; bio-weapons may also explain part of what Ezekiel says about "plague and bloodshed." If Russia sought to use novel biological weapons against Israel, God could make certain that it backfires.

Psalm 83

A number of commentaries have pointed out that collectively, the specific nations listed in this Psalm as seeking to destroy Israel have never yet jointly existed in history, which indicates this may have a dual fulfillment, both ancient and future. Regardless, no one can logically deny that an Arab/Muslim conspiracy to destroy Israel has existed ever since the nation was first born in 1948; in a genuine sense, Israel has never known true peace since its founding. According to Bill Koenig, *"The Revised New Bible Commentary"* (Eerdmans, 1970) points out that: 'No such widespread alliance of adjacent states, as is described in verses 6-8 (of Psalm 83) is mentioned in the Old Testament.'" The *NIV Study Bible* footnote on Psalm 83 comments, "Neither Kings nor Chronicles tells of a confederacy as extensive as that described here. Perhaps only some of the nations mentioned here were actually attacking, while the rest of Israel's historic enemies were more passively supporting the campaign."

In Psalm 83 we find a list of 10 nations described that gather together to destroy Israel. Placed into their modern counterparts, these are primarily the nations that currently surround Israel. "With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish. 'Come,' they say, 'let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.' With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you..." (Psalm 83:3-5) This sounds like a fairly modern depiction of things, despite being written 3,000 years ago.

This prophecy apparently has a partial past fulfillment, and possibly a current partial fulfillment in the half dozen wars of Israel where the Arab/Muslim nations have attempted to destroy Israel. Regardless, a good argument can be made that it also refers to a future attempt. In his book *Israelstine*, Bill Salus makes a convincing case. The "tents

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of Edom” are apparently the Palestinian peoples that the Arab nations are using as a ploy not only against Israel but to gain sympathy from the international community. The “Hagrites” are descendents of Hagar, so Egypt is apparently mentioned in Psalm 83. According to Salus, the Arab confederacy includes Hezbollah and Hamas, the Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians, Jordanians, Saudi Arabians, Iraqis, and Egyptians.

There is significant agreement among analysts who accept this as a future prophecy and some disagreement as to the specific identities involved, but it seems generally agreed that the nations cited are Israel's surrounding and hostile Muslim Arab neighbors.

For example, consider a variety of commentators:

1. Koenig argues as follows:

"The first seven groups named in Psalm 83 were all located east of Israel. They were tribes whose moving boundaries often overlapped. The first two, Edom and the Ishmaelites, are synonymous today with the entire Arab-Muslim world. This is because both people groups are thought to have migrated further south into the Arabian Peninsula -- the seat of Islam. Moreover, Ishmael is a significant figure in Islamic theology. So in modern terms, these names could be referring to Saudi Arabia, which backed front-line Arab forces in 1948 and 1967, and/or to the entire Arab-Muslim world that stretches from Morocco to Oman. In summary, the nations where the ten ancient people groups and tribes mentioned in Psalm 83 live today, are Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the Palestinian territories within Israel."³⁴

2. According to Bill Salus, author of *Israelstine* the Psalm 83 co-conspirators are:

- “Tents of Edom (Palestinians and S. Jordanians)
- Ishmaelites (Saudis - Ishmael father of the Arabs)
- Moab (Palestinians and Central Jordanians)
- Hagrites (Hagarenes - Egyptians)
- Gebal (Hezbollah & N. Lebanese)
- Ammon (Palestinians and N. Jordanians)
- Amalek (Arabs of the Sinai area)

³⁴ Bill Koenig, "Psalm 83: The Coming War?" August 15, 2001; <http://www.watch.org/showart.php3?id=15234&rtm=/index.html&showsobj=1&mcat=26>; in part adapted from David Dolan's "Israel's Next War" commentary on Psalm 83; <http://focusonjerusalem.com/revisitingpsalms83.html>.

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- Philistia (Hamas of the Gaza Strip)
 - Tyre (Hezbollah and S. Lebanese)
 - Assyria (Syria and N. Iraqis)"³⁵
3. According to former Palestinian terrorist Walid Shoebat, the nations in Psalm 83 are Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.
4. According to Bill Randles the nations are Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, the Gaza Strip, Palestinians, and Iraq. Thus:
- "Edom— which extends from Jordan to Saudi Arabia
 - Gebal— According to the Unger's bible dictionary, this is in Lebanon,
 - Philistia— Gaza, today the center for Hamas
 - Ishmaelites and Hagarites— Arabs in general.
 - Assyria— These are Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. At its height it included Egypt and Iran as well. Assyria, the great empire, covered the areas now known as Iraq, parts of Syria, and Turkey.
 - Amalek— Jordan, southwest of the Dead Sea.
 - "These are the players of the next great war."³⁶
5. Dr. F. Kenton Beshore, author of *The Millennium, The Apocalypse and Armageddon* argues as follows:
- "Psalm 137 is a prayer for God to judge Edom, and Psalm 83 is a prayer for God to judge the enemies of Israel -- Edom (Southern Jordanians), the Ishmaelites (Saudi Arabians), Moab (Central Jordanians), Hagarites (Egyptians), Gebal (Northern Lebanese), Ammon (Northern Jordanians), Amalek (Arabs south of Israel), Philistines (Palestinians of Gaza), inhabitants of Tyre (Southern Lebanese) and Assyria (Syria)."
 - He believes that this particular coalition of Arab and Islamic states and peoples are going to attack Israel at the same time as the Gog prophecy.³⁷

³⁵ <http://www.rapturealert.com/2010/052710psalm83.asp>.

³⁶ Pastor Bill Randles, "Psalm 83 -- The Soon Coming Fate of Israel's near Neighbors -- Part One," February 24, 2010; <http://moriel.org/MorielArchive/index.php/author/bill-randles/psalm-83-the-soon-coming-fate-of-israels-near-neighbors-part-1>.

³⁷ Dr. F. Kenton Beshore, "Psalm 83—An Imprecatory Prayer for God's Victory Over Israel's Enemies:" <http://www.raptureready.com/soap/psalm83-1.html>.

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It is worth noting that Psalm 83 declares that the peoples of these nations are also *God's* enemies who form an alliance against Him as well, by seeking to destroy His people and His land, Israel. (Psalm 83: 2, 5, 13). Significantly, they are all Muslim nations/peoples and Islam's specific and intense anti-Judeo-Christian theology is to the point.

I believe that Psalm 83 seems to precede the Ezekiel 38 invasion. Dr. Chuck Missler is one of many who believe that in Psalm 83 there is a great victory for Israel that sets the stage for the Ezekiel 38 coalition to take the spoils of Israel. If the Israelis thoroughly rout their Muslim enemies that surround them and increase their geographical size some ten-fold, Israel would certainly have a good deal of additional spoils waiting to be taken.

According to Missler in Jeremiah 49:2, 8, 19 the war starts between the Psalm 83 Confederacy and Israel, but Israel decisively defeats the Confederacy. (See: Obadiah 1:9, 18; Ezekiel 25:13-14; Jeremiah 49:10, 20, 21, 23-26; Isaiah 11:12-14; Isaiah 17:1; Isaiah 19:16-17). After Israel wins this tremendous battle, they become an exceedingly great army (Ezekiel 37:10; Jeremiah 49:21); they take prisoners of war (Jeremiah 48:46-47; Jeremiah 49:3, 6, 11; Zephaniah 2:10-11), and the whole geographical region is reshaped (Isaiah 17:1; Jeremiah 49:2, 10, Zephaniah Ch. 2). This is when Damascus is apparently nuked in Isaiah 17:1 and Israel expands its borders back to the original borders of the Abrahamic covenant given in Genesis 15 (cf. Obadiah 1:1, 9; Jeremiah 49:2; Isaiah 19:18-19). This is also when Israel comes to dwell securely in the land and because of its size, power and wealth, the attack of Ezekiel 38 happens.

According to Dr. Missler, "We have been plunged into a period of time about which the Bible says more than it does about any other time in history."³⁸

Vast Oil and Gas Deposits as 'The Hook'?

In Ezekiel 38 God says he will place a "hook" in the mouth of the leader of Magog and draw him and his coalition down to Israel. While such a "hook" could involve any number of things, as noted above, one obvious possibility would be vast oil and gas deposits in Israel.

The first explorers for oil in Israel were Christians who based their exploration upon biblical passages. Today, there are a number of companies searching for oil and gas and massive finds have been made.

But let's back up a bit. We remember that the Bible teaches that Damascus will be destroyed in a day (Isaiah 17:1-3). Israel's destruction of Damascus through a likely

³⁸ International Prophecy Conference "Chuck Missler," 2008, God.tv.

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nuclear and/or pulse attack apparently precedes the war of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38, because Israel is said to be dwelling in general peace and safety.

Israel's destruction of Damascus would, one assumes, at least temporarily end the hostility of Israel's Arab neighbors, out of sheer fear if nothing else. Further, should Israel bring to market vast oil and gas deposits, Israel could become a literal mini-superpower in the world, and through war, possibly expand her borders significantly. Again, this is the thesis of the book by Bill Salus called *Isralestine*. The idea is that the war of Psalm 83 involves the defeat of Israel's Muslim Arab neighbors that vastly expands Israel's borders, making her a mini-superpower. Israel then lives in general peace and security until the war in Ezekiel 38. With God destroying the armies that come against Israel, Israel's borders may expand yet more prior to the Antichrist's armies being assembled against Israel at the war of Armageddon.

Regardless, the Bible seems to do more than just hint that in the latter days oil will be discovered in Israel. Zion Oil and Gas founder John M. Brown has written a book on the subject, *The Oil of Israel: Prophecy Being Fulfilled*. Brown founded Zion Oil and Gas using only the Bible to discover oil and gas in Israel when almost everyone else thought this was crazy or impossible. It took him 15 years merely to secure a license and after 29 years there was still no oil. But today even the Israeli government is involved and major oil reserves are proven.³⁹

Genesis 49:2, 25 refers to "blessings of the deep that lies beneath." Deuteronomy 33:24 prophesies that the tribe of Asher will dip "his foot in oil." The Asher oil company is named after this particular Scripture. Deuteronomy 32:13 refers to "oil from the flinty rock." (Cf. Deuteronomy 33:13-17). Genesis 14:10 says the Valley of Siddam "was full of bitumen pits," which is equal to oil and tar. (See also: Genesis 49:1, Deuteronomy 33:13, 19, Isaiah 45:3 Ezekiel 38:8-13.)

There seems to be little doubt that massive oil and gas production in Israel would significantly alter the balance of power in the Middle East. Israel could offer stable oil supplies to the European Union, America, and other nations. It could force the EU and America to take a more proactive role in the protection of Israel against terrorist attack for self-interest, if no other reason. Israel as a mini-superpower could also explain why the Antichrist would make a pact with Israel guaranteeing its security because of the oil and gas treasure (Daniel 9:27). Russia's massive loss of income would perhaps cause her to become furious at Israel, sufficiently so to cause Russia to join a Muslim coalition against Israel as predicted in Ezekiel 38. For example, the EU is Russia's most important

³⁹ "History," Zion Oil Company; <http://www.zionoil.com/company-history>; Cf., *Breaking the Treasure Code: The Hunt for Israel's Oil*.

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trading partner and in harmony with Russian goals, the EU is dependent upon Russian gas; the EU gets most of its oil from Arab Muslim nations and most of its gas from Russia, whom it does not trust. As a result, it would probably prefer securing its energy supplies from a more stable and friendly Israel. This isn't something that Russia would appreciate and it could become one of the reasons that Russia would be drawn down into Israel in an attempt to secure her energy supplies.

Specific Gas and Oil Finds

In 2009, the Noble Energy Company found one major natural gas deposit (88,000,000 m³) off the coast of Haifa. This find alone was said to be capable of producing a revolution in the Israeli economy.⁴⁰

The US Geological Survey has estimated that the Levant Basin off the coast of Israel has a mean average of 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil and 122 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. But there is a potential recoverable gas and oil of almost 2-3 times that (3.76 billion barrels of recoverable oil and 227 trillion cubic feet of natural gas). The Levant Basin lies both onshore and offshore and stretches from southern Israel to northern Lebanon, including the large part of Israel, plus coastal Lebanon and Syria, however the oil and gas deposits are found only in Israeli territory. The basin includes the exploration areas of Noble Energy offshore and Zion Oil & Gas onshore.⁴¹

OilInIsrael.net has an article for February 18, 2010, "Israel Oil and Gas Exploration Boom Continues." In February 2010, Bontan announced two more major gas fields off the Israeli coast with up to 6,000,000,000,000 ft. of natural gas.⁴²

Not surprisingly, Russia is now considering work in the Mira and Sarah offshore gas fields in Israel.⁴³

⁴⁰ Martin Barillis, "Massive Natural Gas Deposits Found off Israel," January 19, 2009; <http://www.speroforum.com/a/17732/Massive-natural-gas-deposits-found-off-Israel>.

⁴¹ US Geological Survey, "Assessment of Undiscovered Oil and Gas Resources of the Levant Basin Province, Eastern Mediterranean," March 2010; <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2010/3014/pdf/FS10-3014.pdf> (For comparison, the US currently imports about 4 billion barrels of oil per year mostly from basically unstable or dangerous nations (http://www.eia.doe.gov/ask/crudeoil_faqs.asp) -- even though it has more than sufficient domestic energy supplies to meet its energy needs for centuries; liberal politics, environmental radicalism and political correctness have simply dictated that they not be used, regardless of the national cost.

⁴² "Bontan Announces Two More Huge Israeli Gas Fields"; <http://www.oilinisrael.net/oil-in-israel-news/oil-in-israel-christian-world-news/bontan-discovery>

⁴³ "Russia's Gazprom considering Israeli gas?" *Oil in Israel*, April 15, 2010; <http://www.oilinisrael.net/top-stories/gazprom-considering-israeli-gas>.

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In January 2011 it was announced that Israel had found another 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas off Haifa, worth almost \$100 billion, and it was said to “spark a frenzy” by the *Wall Street Journal*.

Six months later according to CBN News of June 29, 2011, the biggest "offshore gas reserve in the world and the biggest find in a decade" were discovered off Israel's coast by Delek Energy and Noble Gas.

Perhaps most significantly, according to Harold Vinegar, the chief scientist with Israel Energy Initiatives it is now believed that Israel has oil shale deposits potentially as large as the oil reserves of Saudi Arabia, conservatively estimated at 250 billion barrels of oil, perhaps the second or third largest deposit on Earth.

On July 22, 2011, an announcement was made concerning a deeper layer of natural gas at the Tamar field off the coast of Haifa according to Delek Drilling and Avner Oil Exploration; its economic value has yet to be determined.⁴⁴

An article By Dore Gold in *The Jerusalem Post* this year spoke about Israel could "revolutionize the global energy sector," and this is something that could definitely be on Israel's horizon.⁴⁵

A few more discoveries like those above and it becomes easier to understand how a Russian coalition with Muslim nations could seek to attack Israel for spoil and plunder per Ezekiel 38.

The above could just be the start of additional massive oil and gas discoveries for Israel; it wouldn't be surprising.

Iran in the Bible and Biblical prophecy

Iran is clearly the most significant danger faced by modern Israel (as well as America and the world) and some experts see Iran's nuclearization as imminent. In *Israel under Fire* Drs. Jimmy DeYoung and John Ankerberg discuss their two-week research trip to Israel to celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2008. They interviewed leading politicians, military

⁴⁴ "Amount of natural gas and economic implications of discovery at Mediterranean seaside yet to be determined," oil in Israel, July 22, 2011; <http://www.oilinisrael.net/oil-in-israel-news/oil-in-israel-christian-world-news/new-layer-of-gas-discovered-at-tamar>.

⁴⁵ Dore Gold, "How Israel Could Revolutionize the Global Energy Sector," *The Jerusalem Post* March 11, 2011; <http://www.jpost.com/Features/FrontLines/Article.aspx?id=211676>.

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experts and religious leaders: "All through our 21 interviews, we were consistently and firmly told that Iran is a major threat against Israel."⁴⁶

We have already seen that as part of a confederacy of nations, Iran will take part in the upcoming battle of Gog and Magog in order to destroy Israel. There is no doubt that the current Iranian regime would certainly love such an endeavor to once and for all annihilate Israel. It fits perfectly with their preferred eschatology.

Nevertheless, what is not widely known is the significance of Iran in the Bible.⁴⁷

Iran historically (Elam, Persia) has had a lengthy and noteworthy role in world affairs, and it is also important in the Bible (Esther, Daniel), and in Bible prophecy. Historically, the geographical region of Iran has played a major role in Mideast affairs through the Elamites, the Assyrian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, and the Medo-Persian Empire.

Many are familiar with the impressive Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great. The Persian Empire was one of the greatest empires of the ancient world, dominating the Ancient Near East from 539-331 BC. It defeated and replaced the great Babylonian Empire of Kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. But less well known is its biblical significance. The book of Daniel records the fall of the Babylonian Empire to the Persian Empire, which set the stage for the return of the Jews back to Israel from their 70-year captivity, and the rebuilding of the Temple destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar. It was Cyrus the Persian who issued the decree for rebuilding the Temple that we read about in Ezra under Zerubbabel's leadership. Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah all led groups of people back to Israel from around 538-433 BC.

Thus, when we read the Old Testament books of Esther, Ezra, and Daniel, we are often reading about how God used the Persian Empire (e.g., Iran) to both judge and even bless His people Israel:

"When Cyrus the Great (reigned 550-529BC) established the Persian Empire, he made Shushan its capital. Darius the Great (ruled about 521-486 BC) also built his magnificent royal palace in Sushan. This palace, later occupied by Artaxerxes II (404-359BC), figured prominently in the biblical story of Esther. It was also in the city of Shushan that the prophet Daniel had his vision of the ram and the goat (Daniel 8:2) and where Nehemiah lived in exile. According to a tradition of the

⁴⁶ John Ankerberg, Jimmy DeYoung with Dillon Burroughs, *Israel under Fire*, 53.

⁴⁷ Much of the information below is taken from Darrell G. Young, "Iran in Bible Prophecy: The Prince of Persia," October 2004; <http://focusonjerusalem.com/iraninbibleprophecy.html>.

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Shiite Muslims, the present-day village of Shush (ancient Shushan) is the site of the tomb of the Old Testament prophet Daniel."⁴⁸

The Persian King Cyrus II is one of the most celebrated kings of human history. He is the one who founded the great Persian Empire, which, as the book of Esther records (under King Darius) extended from India to Ethiopia, an Empire 3,000 miles long and on average 1000 miles wide. Again, it was King Cyrus who, under divine leading, permitted the Jews to return to Israel after the Babylonian captivity and to rebuild their Temple, as recorded in Ezra. The Kings own decree is recorded:

"In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you -- may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.'" (Ezra 1:1-4; cf. 2 Chronicles 33:22-23).

In a similar fashion, the Persian King Darius I ordered that the temple at Jerusalem be rebuilt after the work on it had been stopped for 14 years (Ezra 4:24; 6:1)

God's Prospering of His People

God had prospered the amazing prophet Daniel under King Nebuchadnezzar of the neo-Babylonian Empire, as well as under subsequent rulers in such a manner that Daniel had the second or third position of leadership, e.g. "Then the king [Nebuchadnezzar] placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon." (Daniel 2:48); "Then at [King] Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two." (Daniel 5:29-30) "Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king [Darius] planned to set him over

⁴⁸ Darrell G. Young, "Iran in Bible Prophecy: The Prince of Persia," October 2004; <http://focusonjerusalem.com/iraninbibleprophecy.html>.

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the whole kingdom.... So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian." (Daniel 6:3, 28)

The revelation of Daniel 10 and the amazing prophecies of Daniel 11 were given to the prophet in the third year of King Cyrus: "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision." (Daniel 10:1). In terms of the sheer size and detail, the prophecies in Daniel 11 are among the most amazing in all of Scripture.

At the end of the book of Esther, we see that Mordecai (blessed like Joseph under the Egyptian Pharaoh and Daniel under Nebuchadnezzar), -- who helped Esther save the Jews from the genocidal plot of Haman, was promoted to second in command over the Persian Empire: "Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes [also known as Ahasuerus] ..." (Esther 10:3)

Indeed, if God had not prospered Joseph under the Egyptian Pharaoh, making him second-in-command over all Egypt; if he had not prospered Mordecai and Esther in the Persian Empire, preventing the genocidal destruction of the Jews, and if he had not placed Daniel second or third in power in the neo-Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires, the world would be a far, far darker place today. Why? Because the Jews would have ceased to exist as a national identity, and there would have been no Messiah, Jesus Christ, nor would the Scriptures have been preserved. A world without Jesus Christ and a world without the Bible would today be a truly horrible place, as documented in the books on these subjects by Dr. James Kennedy.

"Another Persian king, Artaxerxes Longimanus I (464-424 BC), illustrates one of the ironies of history. This minor Persian king was of major importance because of his connection with the Hebrew people. Apparently two of the three returns of the Jewish people from captivity in Babylon occurred during his reign. The second return was apparently under Ezra. This was made possible because of the generosity of Artaxerxes. The third return occurred in 445 BC and is recorded in Nehemiah, and this date is notorious in the landmarks of Bible prophecy, especially as it relates to the first coming of Jesus. (Daniel 9:24-27) The specific purpose of this return to Jerusalem allowed by Artaxerxes was to rebuild the city walls, and it also laid the foundation for the circumstances surrounding the geopolitical events in Jesus lifetime."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Ibid.

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In the seventh century A.D., long after the decline of the Persian Empire, the region known today as Iran was one of the first countries to be occupied by the early militaristic Arabic/Islamic Empire. Nevertheless, Persia retained a distinct cultural identity by maintaining its own language and adopting a Shi'a interpretation of Islam rather than a Sunni one. That's why Iran is unique today; although it exists in the midst of the Sunni Arab-Muslim empire in the Middle East, its populace is 93% Shiite Muslim, the only nation like this on earth. (The closest are Bahrain and Iraq at 60%, which also explains extensive Iranian meddling in these nations.)

In sum, ancient Iran has played a significant role in the history of the Jewish people.

Modern Iran, Prophecy, and Geopolitics

Switching to the modern era, the radical Islamist Iranian Revolution of 1979 changed matters drastically and put in motion a number of factors that are relevant to biblical end times prophecy. (In 1935, under the Shah, Persia officially changed its name to Iran.) As a result of the Muslim revolution, in less than 25 years, Iran transformed itself from a close ally and good friend of America, to an arch nemesis bent on the destruction of America, Israel, and the West in general. In the process it became the premier terrorist state in the world, and a nuclear client state of Russia. With close ties to the totalitarian regimes of Russia, China, Syria, Venezuela, and a number of murderous terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas and Al Qaeda, to name just three, Iran's future was cemented.

Once Again

In many ways, it was the Iranian Revolution of 1979 that provided the geo-political platform for Iran's inclusion into the Gog prophecy of Ezekiel 38-39. But prior to the 1979 revolution and subsequent events, how difficult would it have been to see the Persia of Ezekiel 38 fulfilling the role declared there 2,600 years ago? How could a nation (one so friendly to America), ever join forces with Russia, in a radical Muslim confederation to invade and destroy Israel? It made no sense until the Islamic revolution and the vast alteration of the Iranian nation under her terrorist Islamic rulers.

The above discussion of Ezekiel 38 and related issues is just one of hundreds of biblical examples of how impossible it would have been for Ezekiel to predict some 26 centuries ago that particular list of nations which clearly seem to fit modern geopolitics and will align itself against Israel during Israel's end times. Only divine inspiration and God's sovereignty can adequately explain it.

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Regardless, looking at modern Iran from the perspective of the current American political landscape, probably the greatest political and diplomatic blunder in modern American history occurred under president Jimmy Carter, who did nothing to prevent the 1979 takeover of Iran by radical Islamists, including taking hostage American embassy personnel for 444 days. Perhaps more than any other single factor, the Iranian revolution has stoked the fires of radical Islam in the modern world, something the entire world is paying for, and the price will only continue to rise.

The Russian debacle in Afghanistan permitted the rise to power of the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. The Iran-Iraq war cemented the Iranian mullah's power over Iran and played an important role in producing the modern Iranian terrorist state. As long as those who promote terrorism rule in Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and other nations, as long as there are seemingly endless individual terrorist organizations, and as long as there are terrorist supporters throughout the Mideast and in many other nations in the world, there will be no peace on earth.

By economic necessity and pride, Russia is increasingly drawn into the Middle East conflict, almost against its will, reminiscent of Ezekiel's description of God placing "hooks in the Jaws" of Russia to draw her into war. Russia also has very serious problems with Muslim extremists, who undoubtedly have ties to Iran, and probably Al Qaeda, and as we have noted elsewhere, some observers feel that Russia itself may be at risk for Islamization. Iran is Russia's major client partner in the Middle East, and its ties to the Persian nation will undoubtedly play a significant role in Russia's final involvement in the battle of Ezekiel 38-39. In sum, it could certainly be true that:

"Ezekiel's roster of nations for the Gog-Magog war continues to align perfectly for the first time in history. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; ... Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee." The other nations on Ezekiel's Roster are all either Russian client states or old Soviet client states, with the exception of Turkey, which is rapidly being pushed back into the Islamic world by the European Union."⁵⁰

But of course, this isn't the end of the story at all. After the wars of Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38 there is the rise of the Antichrist, a one-world government (to which the world is rapidly heading) and the great tribulation period mentioned in Daniel 12:1, described by Jesus in Matthew 24:21-22 and in the book of Revelation chapters 6-19. As Jesus said, "For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now —

⁵⁰ Darrell G. Young, "Iran in Bible Prophecy: The Prince of Persia," October, 2004; <http://focusonjerusalem.com/iraninbibleprophecy.html>; much of this section was adapted from this article.

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and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened." Anyone who wishes to see what happens when the world becomes so evil that it worships the devil himself as God, a world that God judges with his full wrath, need only read these chapters from the book of Revelation.

After this, Christ returns to set up his thousand-year Millennial kingdom from which He rules from Jerusalem and the Earth is turned into an almost Eden-like paradise according to many Scriptures (in large part due to the binding of the devil), though not yet fully perfected. At the end of the thousand-year millennium, Satan "must" be released for a short time and there is a final rebellion against God and his people.

Immediately after this, the entire heavens and the earth are dissolved in a fiery implosion and an eternal new heavens and a new earth are created, along with the New Jerusalem, a cubed sphere almost the size of the moon coming down from heaven, which is the eternal home of the saints, along with an a God of infinite glory to marvel over and wonder in forever. As pastor Paul Washer observed, "We can spend an eternity of eternities tracking Him down and we will never get our arms around even the foothill of His mountain."

There will be an eternal increase of joy, knowledge, love, and everything that is good, with the ability to explore an infinite universe and to know and adore an infinitely perfect God forever – one whose love is literally unlimited and endless, whose perfections are infinite.

However this is only true for the redeemed in Christ; the unredeemed will by their own choice suffer separation from God and experience God's wrath in Hell (Matthew 25:46) – something they will at that time recognize and accept as fair and as perfect justice. Indeed, every person in Hell will of certainty recognize two things: 1) they freely chose to be there and 2) they truly deserve to be there. Nevertheless, the word of the Lord stands sure, that he is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance: "The Lord ... is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), in order that they might receive forgiveness of sins and inherit eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

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"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25-26)⁵¹

⁵¹ Weldon, J. (2012). *The Ezekiel 38/Psalm 83 Prophecies: Russia, Iran and Muslim Nations in Biblical Prophecy*. ATRI Publishing.