

6. The destruction of Gog's armies (38:1–39:16)

Chapters 38 and 39 comprise a series of prophecies that have to do with events which are to overtake Israel at the time of the end. There are seven oracles, each of which is introduced with the phrase, "Thus saith the LORD". We shall consider each of these in turn. They are:

- i. Description of Gog's armies (38:1–7).
- ii. Gog invades Israel (38:8–13).
- iii. God's purpose with Gog (38:14–16).
- iv. The presence of the LORD in the earth (38:17–23).
- v. The burial of Gog's army (39:1–16).
- vi. The sacrificial feast (39:17–20).
- vii. Israel restored (39:21–29).

It is clear that chapter 38 does not follow on chronologically from the events of chapter 37. Chapter 37 ends with the Kingdom established, Israel and Judah united under one King and God's sanctuary established in their midst. The dead bones of Israel have been caused to stand upon their feet as an exceeding great army, and God's spirit is in them. To understand chapter 38, then, it is necessary to see it describing events that overtake Israel at some time prior to that happy state of things described at the end of chapter 37. As has been shown earlier¹, the Gogian invasion is responsible for the devastation of the modern State of Israel. It is this, coupled with Gogian anti-Semitic policies, which causes Israel to say, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts" (37:11). The 37th chapter is largely concerned with the restoration of Israel by Messiah in all the fullness of God's promises, subsequent to the Gogian invasion.

It is therefore fitting that the events that turn Israel into a valley of dry bones should be considered in some detail—and chapter 38 provides this. This 38th chapter has given commentators considerable difficulty and many² opt to treat it as a complicated allegory, details of which will not be given here. A point made by Feinberg, in connection with any attempt to interpret this chapter, is well worth quoting.—"It is either the grammatical, literal, historical...interpretation or we are adrift on an uncharted sea with

¹ Pages 367.

² e.g. A. R. Fausset, in Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 2, page 348.

every man the norm for himself. There is not a syllable at the beginning of this chapter to alert us to explain the passage in any other than the literal meaning.”¹ With this we heartily agree.

(i) Description of Gog's armies (v. 1–7)

It is important to note that, whoever these latter-day powers might be, they have a connection with powers in existence at the time of Ezekiel.

Most of the nations listed by the prophet in verses 2-6 have already been mentioned in previous chapters. Meshech and Tubal (27:13; 32:26), Persia (27:10), Ethiopia (29:10), Libya (30:5) and Togarmah (27:14), were recognized by Ezekiel as being in existence in his day. Thus, when the prophet was commanded to *set thy face against Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal* (v. 2), it may be safely assumed that he was being bidden to address his prophecies to a known contemporary power.

We shall see that this power—“Gog of the land of Magog, the Prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal” (v. 2, RV)—had reference, in the prophet's day, to the barbaric Scythian peoples in the dark northern extremity of the then-known world.

The Land of Magog

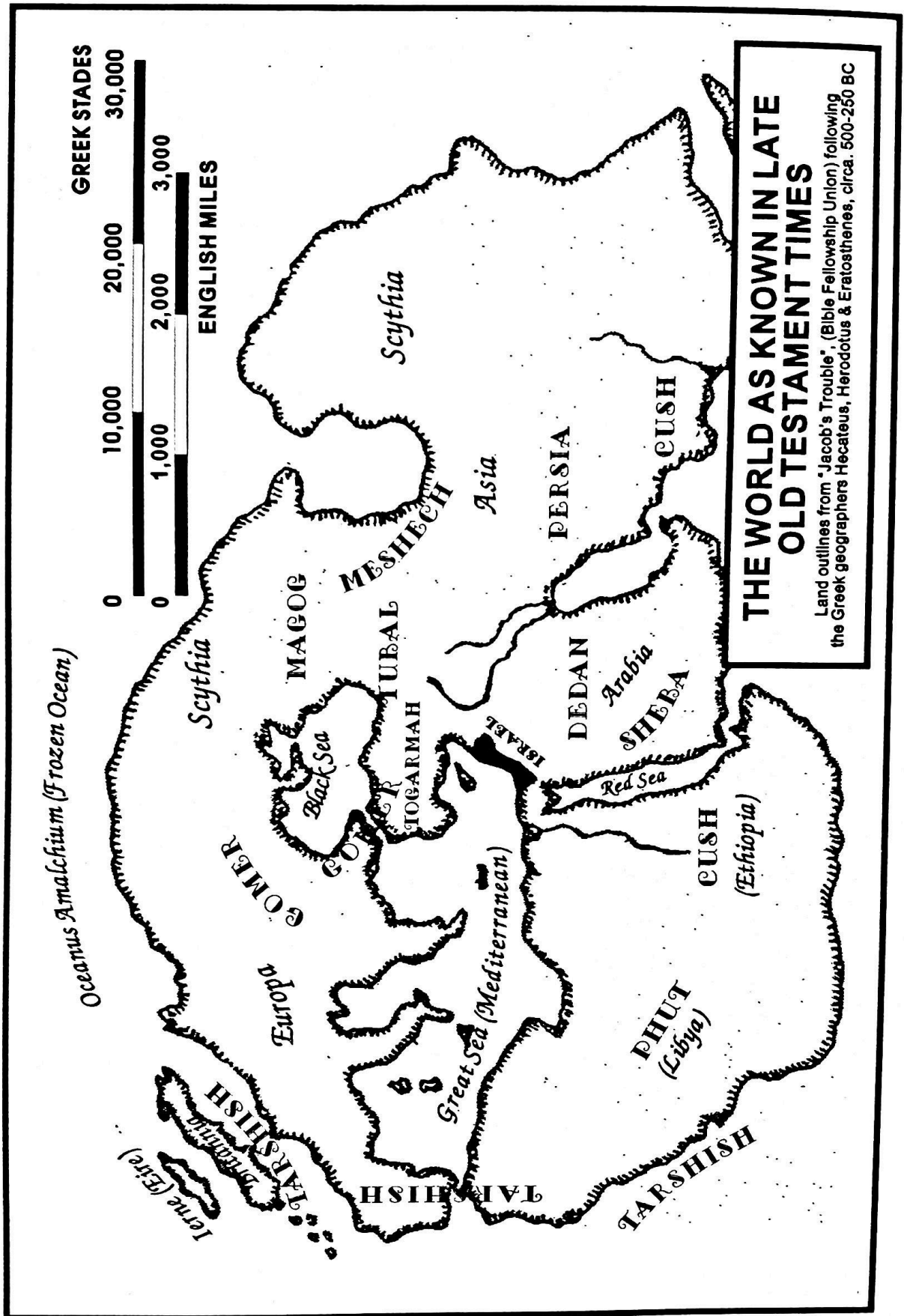
Magog was the son of Japheth (Genesis 10:2) and from him were descended those people known to history as the Scythians. Josephus wrote, “Magog founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who by the Greeks are called Scythians.”² Thus, Ezekiel was to set his face against the Scythians—the Hebrew actually reads “the land of **the** Magog.” One historian refers to them as an “Aryan people, who (in the time of Herodotus, c. 400 BC) were distributed over southern Russia.”³

1 And the word of the LORD came unto me saying,
2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him,
3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I [am] against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:
4 And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts [of armour, even] a great company [with] bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords:
5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet:
6 Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: [and] many people with thee.
7 Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them.

¹ C. F. Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*, page 219.

² *Antiquities*, 1:6.1.

³ H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, page 127.



6. The destruction of Gog's armies (38:1–39:16)

In 521 BC, when Darius wanted to invade the Scythians who threatened him on his north east frontier, he marched from his capital Susa through Armenia and Asia Minor, crossed the Bosphorus on a boated bridge, advanced along the coast of Thrace (modern Bulgaria) and crossed the Danube. He prepared to do battle against the Scythians and take their cities only to find that they had no cities.¹ This gives us an indication as to the location of these nomadic Scythian peoples at that time—they were to be found in what we today would call the Ukraine and southern Russia. Riasanovski, a respected modern Russian historian, states, “The Scyths ruled southern Russia from the 7th to the end of the 3rd century BC...At its greatest extent the Scythian state stretched south of the Danube in its western flank and across the Caucasus and into Asia Minor on its eastern.” Referring to Herodotus he notes, “From the northern shores of the Black Sea they held sway inland for a distance travelled in the course of twenty days’ journey.”²



Scythian invasion of the Middle East in the time of Josiah King of Judah

To the settled civilizations of the Fertile Crescent, the emergence of these wild Scythian hordes from beyond the mountain ranges in the far north must have been a frightening experience. From about the 8th century BC onwards, these northern peoples constituted “a storm always ready to burst with its discharge of horses and horsemen, of swords and shields, of bows and arrows, of staves and spears, and innumerable bands, horde succeeding horde, a convulsion which should send a universal shudder through all living

¹ *ibid.*, page 161.

² Nicholas V. Riasanovski, *A History Of Russia*, page 13.

creatures...”¹ “Their swiftness and savagery brought panic and despair to the settled civilizations south of the Caucasus; there was something inhuman about warriors who scalped their enemies and fashioned their victims’ skulls into drinking cups.”²

The Scythians dominated western Asia for some 28 years.³ Their attacks on the northern border of the Assyrian Empire helped to bring about its fall. Many of Ezekiel’s older contemporaries would actually have remembered these Scythians, in the reign of Josiah, sweeping south, looting and burning through Assyria where they harassed the army of the Medes who were engaged in a siege of Nineveh. Then, descending through Palestine (where they occupied *en route* the city of Bethshan which was renamed **Scythopolis**⁴) they pressed southwards to the border of Egypt. Here Psammetichus (Psamtik I) king of Egypt bought them off.⁵ Thus, Ezekiel’s proclamation of a future invasion by these wild North-men would have struck terror into the hearts of his listeners.

Gog of the Land of Magog

Gog was the leader of these descendants of Magog for that is the significance of the description, **Gog of the land of Magog** (v. 2, RV). Curry⁶ refers to Smith’s “*History of Assurbanipal*”⁷ *From the Cuneiform Inscriptions*” where side by side with Birighudri, a chief of Madai [Media] are found Sariti and Pariza, sons of *Ga-a-gi* a chief of the Saka [Scythians] whom Smith identifies with Gog. It was the grandson of Gaagi, Madyes, who led the invasion into Assyria and Palestine mentioned above. Thus, it

¹ A. P. Stanley, *History of the Jewish Church*, vol. 2, page 434.

² R. Flenley and W. N. Weech, *The Growth of Western Civilization*, page 61.

³ *Herodotus* 4.1; F. F. Bruce, *The History of Israel and the Nations*, page 75.

⁴ W. Keller, *The Bible As History*, page 269.

⁵ *Herodotus*, 1.103–105.

⁶ G. Curry, *Ezekiel* (Speaker’s Commentary, vol. 6), page 155. So, too, Zenaide A. Ragozin, *Assyria*, page 383—“...it was not one of the least surprises we owe to Assyriology to find that the “Gog, King of Magog,” of Ezekiel (chapters 38 and 39), was originally a real and historical person, no other in fact than the chief of the Scythians in Assurbanipal’s time, probably a warrior sufficiently renowned to have survived as a by-word of terror in the memory of later generations. This name of Gog occurs in one of Assurbanipal’s cylinders under the form GAGI...”.

⁷ The “great and noble Asnappar” of Ezra 4:10.

is reasonable to conclude that Gaagi [Gog] was the family name of the Scythian leaders of those days.

Rosh

This Gog of the land of Magog was also, according to the RV, “the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.”

There is great debate among translators and commentators with respect to the translation of the Hebrew *nisi rosh*. The AV renders it “*chief prince* of Meshech and Tubal”, translating *rosh* as the adjective “chief”. However, the RV, NASB, NEB, JB and Roth. all give *rosh* the sense of a proper noun and translate *nisi rosh* as “*prince of Rosh*”. It is of more than passing interest to note that the translators of the LXX, in about 250 BC, considered *Rosh* to be the name of a people or country.¹

It is objected by some that Rosh cannot be a proper name since there is no nation known to history as the Rosh and also the word Rosh is nowhere else used in the scriptures as the name of a people. These objections are hardly valid. Chilmad (Ezekiel 27:23), and Chub (Ezekiel 30:5) are also only found on one occasion and are peoples unknown to history. While it is granted that the Hebrew word *rosh* is found frequently in the Old Testament as an adjective meaning ‘head’ or ‘chief’, yet the use of the phrase here in Ezekiel demands that it be translated as a proper name. So argues Hitzig—“an epithet formed by the junction of these two words is nowhere else known in the Bible; and that the full title, if it were simply a compound title, should be so formally repeated three times (v. 2, 3 and 39:1) is rather improbable.”² It would appear then “that *Rosh* is here the name of a people or country like Meshech and Tubal.”³ Another writer states, “Rosh...ought to be rendered as a proper noun...‘the prince of Rosh.’ Rosh thus appears as a northern nation, along with Meshech and Tubal.”⁴

There are two routes that may be taken in an endeavour to identify the northern nation referred to. They arrive at the same conclusion and there is no doubt merit in both of them.

¹ See also extensive commentary on this by J. Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, page 424.

² Quoted by P. Fairbairn, *An Exposition of Ezekiel*, page 415.

³ J. Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, page 314.

⁴ J. McClintock & J. Strong (Eds.), *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, vol. 9, page 135.

- (1) Meshech and Tubal are mentioned in Genesis 10 as sons of Japheth and it is strange that Rosh nowhere appears in this genealogy. However, it may well be that Rosh is there under another name. The seventh son of Japheth was Tiras (Genesis 10:2). “From the conjunction of Tiras with Meshech and Tubal in Genesis 10:2, Von Hammer [the renowned orientalist, JA] conjectured the identity of Tiras with Rosh.”¹ Fairbairn, commenting on Rosh, says that “traces have been found of a northern people anciently bearing such a name [i.e. Rosh, JA]” and he then refers to the writings of Tsetzes who states that “the **Tauri** are expressly called Rôs.”²

Smith in his “Map of the Ancient World Physical and Ethnographical”³ shows the people of **Tiras** on the west of the Black Sea in Thrace, which accords with Josephus.⁴ In the Greek word for Thrace the connection with Tiras is more apparent. However, there are traces of Tiras beyond the mountains of northern Thrace. Herodotus has an interesting comment in this connection: “That part of Thrace which stretches to the sea, has Scythia immediately contiguous to it; where Thrace ends Scythia begins, through which the Ister [the Danube, JA] passes commencing at the south east and emptying itself into the Euxine [Black Sea, JA].” He proceeds then to speak of the mountainous country above this place, in the same direction, as far as what is called the Trachean Chersonese [which I take to be the Crimean peninsula, JA], as possessed by the people of **Taurus**.⁵

The Encyclopaedia Britannica refers to the Crimea as the Tauric Chersonese and confirms that the **Tauri** people lived there.⁶ Another map in Smith—a map of ancient Greece—shows the River **Tyras** flowing into the north west of the Black Sea.

¹ *ibid.*, vol. 9, page 135.

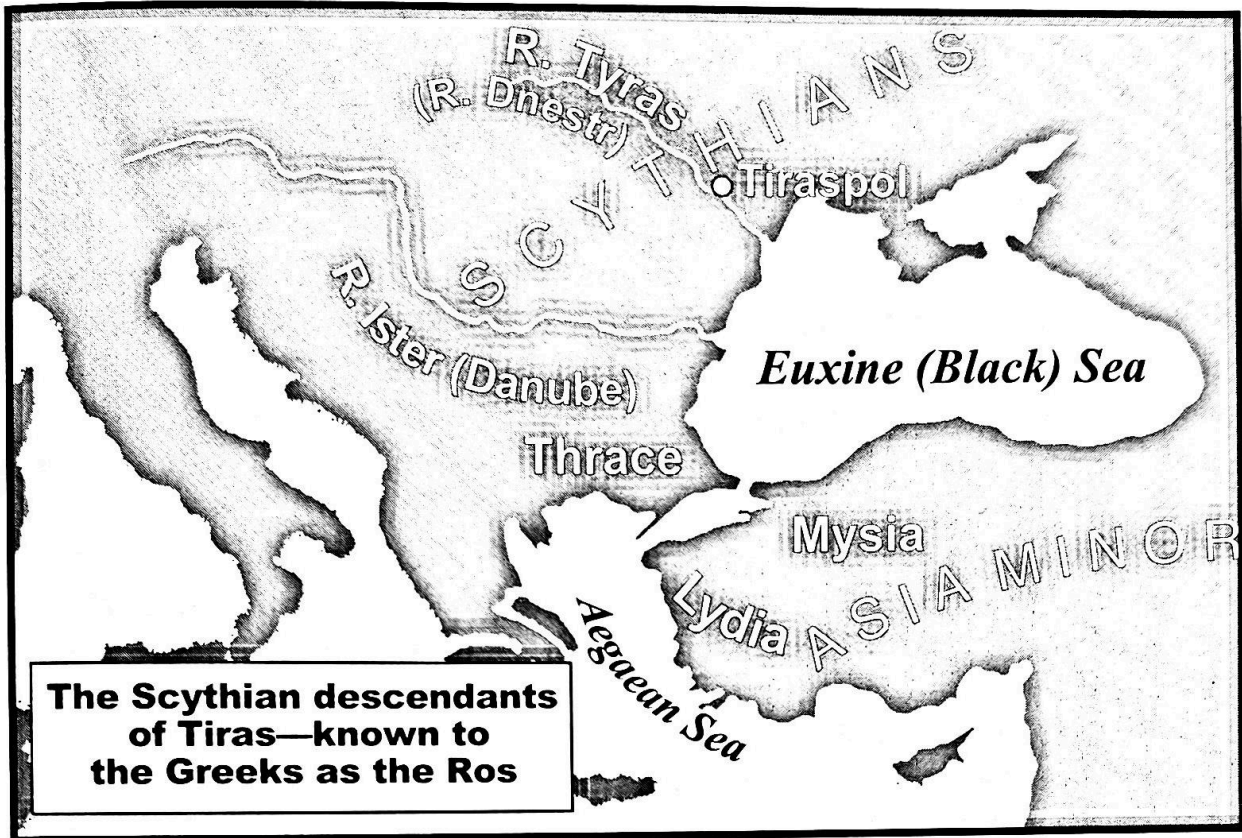
² Fairbairn, *op. cit.*, page 415.

³ In P. Smith, *A History of the Ancient World*, volume 1.

⁴ *Antiquities*, 1:6.1.

⁵ *Herodotus*, 4.99. In this connection it should be noted that while what we know today as the Taurus mountains are to be found running from west to east of Asia Minor the word Taurus was used of other mountains. Herodotus here appears to use it of the range of mountains in northern Thrace.

⁶ Ashmore, H. (Ed), *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 5, page 452.



This river is better known as the Dniester, which runs through Moldova south of the Ukraine. The capital of this state was, at one time, **Tiraspol**¹, which is situated on the river Tyras. Vernadsky states that “in the Byzantine chronicles the Russes [= Ros, JA] are often called *Tauro-scythae*. Leo Diaconus calls them simply *Tauri*.”² The Russian historian Gregov states, “Kiev Rus was for a long time known among the Greeks as Scythia or Tauro-Scythia, with a remark now and then that these Tauro-Scythians called themselves Rus.”³ From this it seems reasonable to conclude that the descendants of Tiras—the Rosh—at the time of Ezekiel’s prophecy were to be found in an extensive area to the north of the Black Sea.

- (2) Some commentators point out that there is a connection between the people known as the Rôš and the River Araxes (= the Aras) which today forms the southern boundary of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

¹ *ibid.*, vol. 15, page 658.

² G. Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia*, page 189.

³ B. Gregov, *Kiev Rus*.

Bochart and Frahn, the ancient historians, found traces of the name Rôš in Ar-ras, the Arabic name for the River Araxes and the people which inhabited its shores.¹ Plumptre and Whitlow note that “Byzantine and Arabian writers of the tenth century AD were acquainted with a people called the Rôš² who were Scythian mountaineers dwelling north of the Taurus on the shores of the Black Sea and on the banks of the Volga.”³ Interestingly, “the Volga River is [itself] called Rhos by an anonymous Greek author of a geographic treatise compiled in the fifth century AD.”⁴

From the evidence presented it would appear that in Ezekiel's day the Rosh-Scythae were a nomadic people who had settled in an extensive area northwards from the northern shores of the Black Sea. P. Schwartzkopff reaches this conclusion, albeit by a different route, in his *Nations In Prophecy*. He states, “Rosh refers to the territory which approximates to the modern Ukraine rather than Russia as we know it today...according to most, if not all, historians the territory now known as the Ukraine was once known as ‘Ros’ by the Greeks and ‘Rus’ by the Europeans and Arabs.”⁵ It is not surprising to find an eminent Russian historian stating: “As an introduction to Russian history proper, we must turn to the northern shores of the Black Sea and to the steppe beyond”⁶—territory that we would refer to as the Ukraine and southern Russia.

Commenting on the word “Rosh”, Gesenius states that it refers “undoubtedly to the Russians, who are mentioned by the Byzantine writers of the 10th century under the name of the Rôš.”⁷ Stanley, in his *History of the Jewish Church*, says concerning Ezekiel 38, “Here, first in any historic

¹ P. Fairbairn, *Exposition of Ezekiel*, page 415.

² The words Rôš, Rhos, Rus used by various historians all refer to the same people.

³ E. H. Plumptre and T. Whitlow, *Ezekiel* (Pulpit Commentary, vol. 12), page 284. Although this was centuries after the time of Ezekiel one historian correctly observes; “Although Arabic writers refer primarily to the 9th century, the widespread and well established relations of the Rus with the East at that time suggest an acquaintance of long standing” (Nicholas V. Riasanovski, *A History of Russia*, page 26).

⁴ George Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, page 96. See also footnote 3, page 395.

⁵ P. Schwartzkopff, *The Christadelphian*, vol. 129, page 255.

⁶ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, page 11.

⁷ GES, page 754.

record, is the only indication which the Bible contains of any modern European nation. The mighty people of Russia through this wild [Scythian] invasion has won a place in the sacred books.”¹

Meshech and Tubal

As already noted, like Tiras (?Rosh), *Meshech* and *Tubal* were sons of Japheth (Gen. 10:2). They are mentioned in Ezekiel 27:13 and 32:26, where they are presented as a warlike people engaged in the export of slaves and copper to the Phoenicians. Herodotus referred to Meshech and Tubal in the time of Darius and Xerxes as the Moschi and Tibarenoi.² Bochart speaks of them as a barbarous people of Asia inhabiting what were known as the Moschian Mountains between the Black and Caspian Seas.³ In Old Testament times, they were a part of that Scythian host that brought about the fall of the Assyrian Empire. They appear frequently in the Assyrian inscriptions as the Mushkai and Tabali and are known to have moved southwards and settled temporarily in Asia near the north western side of Assyria.⁴ With the fall of Assyria and the rise of Babylon and Persia, the Mushkai were subdued and there can be little doubt that large numbers of them were pushed northwards beyond the Caucasus where they resumed a nomadic existence, wandering over the northern steppe-lands, mingling with the other Scythians. “There they became known as the Muskovs, and gave their name to the Russian nation and its ancient capital.”⁵ A similar fate no doubt overtook the Tibareni. Josephus⁶ identifies Tubal with the Iberians, a people which, with the Moschi, then inhabited a tract of country between the Caspian and the Black Seas which approximates to modern Georgia. Thus, in the time of Ezekiel, Meshech and Tubal would roughly correspond to modern Georgia, Armenia and perhaps parts of Turkey.

At this point the question needs to be considered as to whether or not there is, in these Bible names, a reference to the modern names of Russia (Rosh), Moscow (Meshech) and Tobolski (Tubal). It is certainly an over-

¹ A. P. Stanley, *History of the Jewish Church*, Vol. 2, page 434.

² For example *Herodotus*, 3.94; 7.78.

³ J. McClintock and J. Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, vol. 6, page 126.

⁴ *ibid.*, vol. 6, page 127; vol. 10, page 571; F. F. Bruce, *History of Israel and the Nations*, page 68; J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel*, page 194; G. Curry, *Ezekiel*, page 118.

⁵ J. McClintock and J. Strong, *op. cit.*, vol. 6, page 127.

⁶ *Antiquities*, 1:6.1.

simplification to say, for example, that the city of Tobolski in Siberia derived its name from Tubal the son of Japheth, for the city of Tobolski was not founded until AD 1587. However, it seems quite reasonable to argue that the name of Tubal was carried by his descendants when they migrated into the region we now call Siberia, and that it was their name that, at some stage, became attached to a river (R. Thobol) from whence the name of the city of Tobolski was ultimately derived. We have earlier seen this to be the case with the descendants of Tiras who gave their name to the river Tyras and then eventually the town situated on the river became known as Tiraspol. A similar line of reasoning is advanced by McClintock and Strong with respect to Moscow, the name being derived indirectly from the Mushkai, the descendants of Meshech. Meshketia in Eastern Georgia also appears to have been similarly derived from the name of the descendants of Meshech.

The suggestion that “Russia” is derived from the word “Rosh” is not in favour with most modern western historians and commentators. They maintain that the word “Russia (in Russian, *Rossiya*) is derived through the Slavonic *Ros* (a name first given to Scandinavian settlers on the Dnieper in the 9th century AD), from an earlier form, *Ruotsi*, a Finnish name for the Swedes.”¹ However, the dogmatism exhibited by the moderns is unwarranted. Riasanovski reviews the evidence for a Scandinavian origin of the word *Russia*. He makes the point that “The role of the Normans [the Scandinavian north-men, JA] in the establishment of the Kievan state [the early Russian state, JA] itself remains highly controversial. The question of the Kievan state is closely connected with a group, tribe, or people known as the Rus, and it is also from Rus that we derive the later name Russians.” He concludes, “The deduction of *Rus* from the Finnish word for Swedes, *Ruotsi*, developed by Thomsen and upheld by Stender-Petersen and others, seems linguistically acceptable, but has been criticized as extremely complicated and unlikely on historical grounds.”² Vernadski pointedly

¹ Frederick A. Tatford, *Dead Bones Live*, page 221.

² Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, page 25. George Vernadski's view is that “around AD 750 the Swedes penetrated into Southern Russia, where they mixed with the Rus and even assumed their name” (*A History of Russia*, page 30). The same point is made by Tikhonirov in *The Origin of the names Rus and the Russian Land*—“The Varangians and the Novgrodites who settled in [Kiev] were known as Rus because they began to live in Kiev” (Quoted by B. Gregov in *Kiev Rus*, page 602).

asks: "If the name Rus were derived from the alleged Finnish word *Ruotsi*, how are we to explain the fact that the name Rus (in the form Ros) was known to the Byzantines long before the coming of the Varanians [the Scandinavians, JA] to Novgorod?" He proceeds to state, "The name Rus, or Ros, in South Russia...existed there from at least the fourth century."¹

Another Russian historian points out a number of toponymical names derived from the root *ros* that existed long before the arrival of the Scandinavians. "The Volga was called the Ros, and...there was a city called Rosia at the mouth of the Don. There are a number of southern rivers reflecting the name Ros: the Oskol-Ros; the Ros, a tributary of the Dnieper and the Narev; The Roska in Volyn and many others...There is no doubt that the name of the people Rus was in use in the south and south-east of this country in the ninth century without any participation of the Varangians...it was in use long before the ninth century."² Thus the derivation of the name *Russia* from the *Rôs* or *Rus* (and therefore *Rosh*) who lived in the area north of the Black Sea in Ezekiel's day, has the support of respected authorities in Russian history and is therefore not as far fetched as some would have us believe³.

At this point it must be emphasized that the identification of Gog of the land of Magog with modern Russia does not rest simply on the similarity of the word "Rosh" to "Russia". We identify the power with Russia because she is the modern power which, with her confederate Independent States, occupies today the territories of the ancient Scythians—the Magog known to Ezekiel.

¹ G. Vernadski, *Ancient Russia*, page 278.

² B. Gregov, *Kiev Rus*, page 599.

³ This support by Russian historians for identifying the Ros with southern Russia is referred to in the *Penguin Historical Atlas of Russia* by John Channon and Robert Hudson—'Soviet historians argue...that there was no Scandinavian influence on early Russian language, literature, religion or law. Furthermore, the Greek "Rhos" was familiar in southern Rus prior to the Varangians (the Vikings, JA), "Rus" in fact referring to the area around Kiev—where there is also a river named "Ros"...' (page 15).

For an excellent and detailed examination of the Scandinavian theory from a historical and archaeological standpoint see D. M. Elliott, *The Origin of Russia*, The Testimony, vol. 63, page 175.

Persia, Ethiopia and Libya

There has never been any real doubt as to the identity of these nations.

Persia is not mentioned in the list of nations in Genesis 10, but throughout scripture it is frequently associated with the Medes, who were descended from Madai, son of Japheth (Gen. 10:2). Together they founded the Medo-Persian Empire. Persia was beginning to come to prominence in the time of Ezekiel and the Scythian invasion of Assyria to which we have referred (page 388) resulted in a weakening of Median influence in the post-Assyrian Middle Eastern milieu. From then on the Persians were moving towards a dominant rôle in Middle East affairs—a position which was finally achieved at the end of Israel's 70 years captivity when Cyrus became the ruler of Medo-Persia. At the time Ezekiel gave this prophecy the Medes and Persians occupied territory that corresponds to modern Iran, but would also have included parts of Southern Turkestan and Afghanistan.

Ethiopia (the word is *Cush* in the Hebrew) and *Libya* (the word is *Phut* in the Hebrew) were both descended from Ham (Gen. 10:6). The Cushites migrated in two streams, one going into East Africa, occupying the territories of modern Sudan and Ethiopia, the other stream going towards India. In the Bible when Cush is mentioned it is usually the African section of the descendants of Cush to which reference is being made. Josephus¹ places it south of Egypt beyond Syene and this accords with Ezekiel 29:10, AVmg. It corresponds more or less to modern Sudan and Ethiopia. In view of the anti-Semitic rôle here allotted to this people in the prophecy the recent exodus from Ethiopia of the Falasha Jews is of interest.

The descendants of Phut eventually moved into North Africa, west of Egypt, into the territory of modern Libya but probably covering a much wider area of the African continent especially in the north.

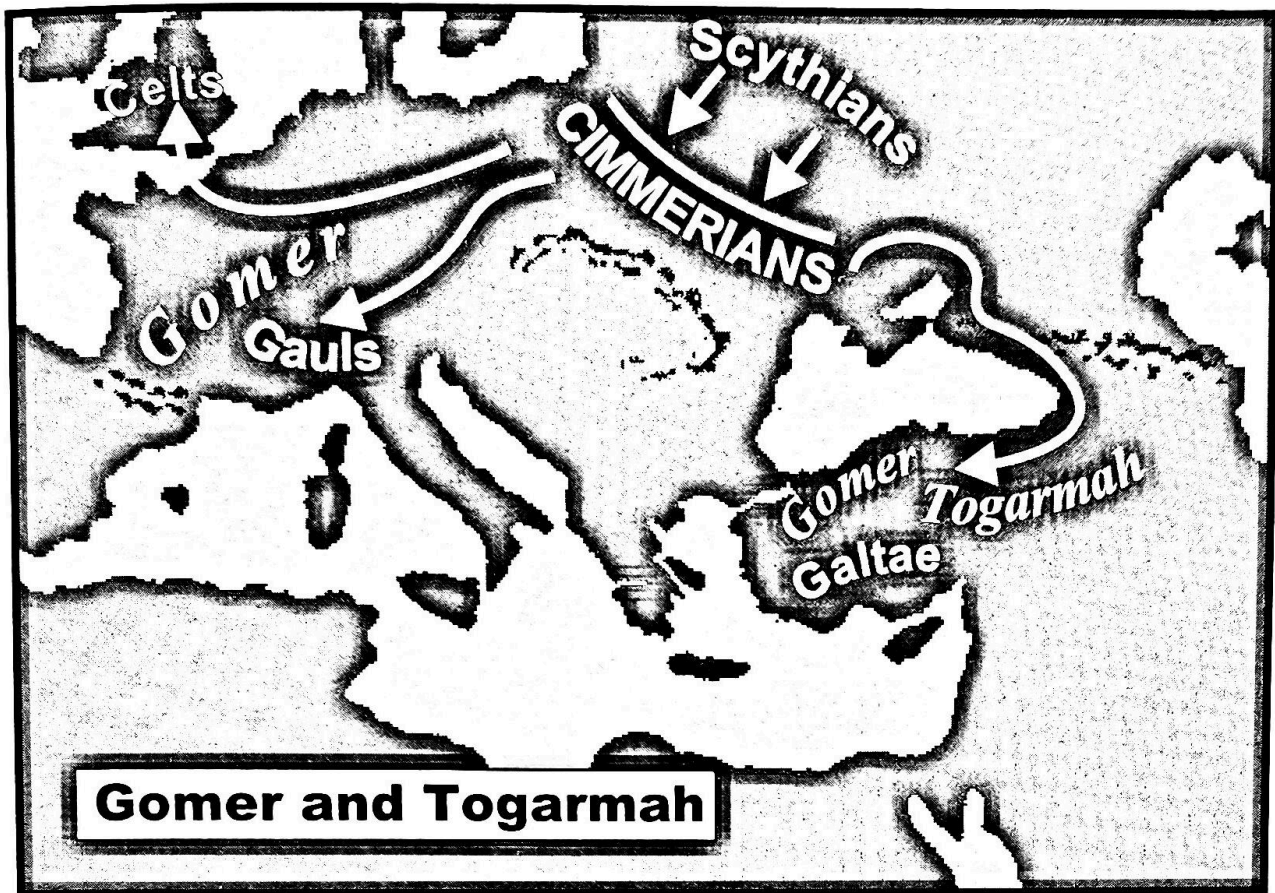
Thus in the time of Ezekiel, Ethiopia and Libya would relate to countries to the south and west of Egypt.

Gomer and Togarmah

Gomer was a son of Japheth; *Togarmah* was Gomer's son (Gen. 10:2, 3). The descendants of Gomer are mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions as the Gimarraï who were known to the Greeks as the Cimmerii.

¹ Wars, 4:10.5.

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These Cimmerians are mentioned a number of times by Herodotus¹ from whom we learn that they originated north of the Black Sea. Smith writes that “the Cimmerians were a people who came unquestionably from the region now called the Ukraine, north of the Black Sea, between the Danube and the Sea of Azov.”² Gesenius states that the Cimmerians inhabited the Tauric Chersonese [the Crimea, JA] and the region near the Don and the Danube.³ “They ruled southern Russia from roughly 1000 BC to 700 BC”⁴ until they were driven out by the Scythians.

Josephus informs us that “Gomer founded those whom the Greeks now call Galatians, [Gauls] but were then called Gomerites.”⁵ Small bodies of Cimmerians had entered Asia Minor from earliest times (with their Thracian allies) from the west by way of the Hellespont and the Bosphorus.

¹ e.g. *Herodotus* 1.4; 4.12; 5.103.

² P. Smith, *A History Of The Ancient World*, vol. 1, page 254.

³ *GES*, page 175.

⁴ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, page 13.

⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 1:6.1.

It was not until the 7th century BC that, under pressure from the Scythian tribes from the north, a vast horde of Cimmerians marched round the shores of the Black Sea along the foot of the Caucasus and poured into Asia Minor from the east. Their conquest of Asia Minor was relatively short lived so that by the time of Ezekiel, they had been largely expelled from Asia Minor by Alyettes, King of Lydia. However, memories of their savagery remained. Their name was engraved in Asia Minor, part of which became known as Galatia (Acts 16:6; 18:23).

The Scythian pressure from the north, which pushed the Cimmerians southwards into Asia Minor, also pushed them westwards into Europe.¹ These westward migrating Cimmerians are known in history as the Cimbri, the Celts and the Gauls.² Commenting on the Cimmerians, one writer states, "There can be little doubt that both the name and the people are to be recognized in the Cimbri of the north of Europe, described by the classical writers sometimes as German, sometimes as a Celtic race."³ These Celts or Gauls "passed north of the Alps into the fertile country which took from them the name of Gaul...after seizing the best lands some of them crossed the Channel and settled in Britain and parts of Ireland. Others marched over the Pyrenees and occupied most of northern Spain."⁴

Thus, at the time Ezekiel delivered his prophecy these descendants of Gomer were wandering over a great part of what we know today as Western Europe.

Associated with Gomer in Ezekiel 38:6 is *the house of Togarmah*. The word "house" is the Hebrew *bayit*, one of the meanings of which is "family, clan or tribe"⁵ which is clearly the meaning here.

The connection between the descendants of Togarmah and Armenia is well established. The Armenians associate the name Togarmah with their early history and claim that the founder of their nation was Hiak, son of

¹ Ashmore, H. (Ed.) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 5, page 773.

² Interestingly, R. Young, *Analytical Concordance*, page 380, states, "Roman writers call the inhabitants of Galatia *Galli*, just as the Greek writers call the people of ancient France *Galatia*".

³ J. McClintock and J. Strong, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, page 920.

⁴ R. Flenley and W. N. Weech, *The Growth of Western Civilization*, page 47.

⁵ J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, page 113.

6. The destruction of Gog's armies (38:1–39:16)

Thorgom.¹ However, Josephus states that, “from Togarmah were descended those who the Greeks called Phrygians.”² The connection between the Armenian and Phrygian peoples is universally accepted but, following some remarks of Herodotus, it is commonly thought that the Armenians were Phrygian colonists. However, it seems more likely that Phrygia was colonized from Armenia. Speaking of the Phrygian people, McClintock and Strong state, “There can be little doubt that they were once the dominant race in the peninsula, and that they spread westwards from the confines of Armenia to the shores of the Aegean.”³ This also was the opinion of Fausset—“The Phrygians, the race that overspread Asia Minor, probably migrated from Armenia.”⁴ Thus, in early times Phrygia comprehended the greater part of the peninsula of Asia Minor. However, by the time of Ezekiel, the descendants of Togarmah, by now under Median domination, were to be found in what we refer to today as central and eastern Turkey and Armenia. According to McClintock and Strong, “the Jews say that by Togarmah, or the house of Togarmah, we are to understand the Turks.”⁵

Ezekiel says that the house of Togarmah was *of the north quarters*, or as the RV has it, “from the uttermost parts of the north” and the NASB, “the remote parts of the north”. From the standpoint of Israel in Ezekiel’s day, Asia Minor was the “uttermost part of the north” of the then known world. Beyond it was the dark unknown world of the Magogites.

In summary, then, this confederacy of nations which is to come against Israel will at least include (in modern terms) the following:

Gog of the land of Magog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal	Russia and her confederates.
Persia, Ethiopia, Libya	Iran, Sudan and Ethiopia, Libya and almost certainly other north African nations. (The eastern migration of Cush means that it is possible that nations from the Indian subcontinent may be involved.)

¹ GES, page 856; J. McClintock and J. Strong, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, page 406; vol. 10, page 451.

² *Antiquities*, 1:6.1.

³ *op. cit.*, vol. 10, page 451.

⁴ A. R. Fausset, *Critical and Expository Bible Cyclopaedia*, page 695.

⁵ *op. cit.*, vol. 10, page 451.

Gomer	A number of Western European nations especially Spain, France, Italy and Germany. Eastern European nations which have thrown off (? temporarily) the Russian yoke also belong to Gomer's "bands".
Togarmah	Turkey is modern Togarmah.

This then, is the confederacy of nations to be led by Gog of the land of Magog. He is now challenged by the Almighty—"Be thou prepared, yea, prepare thyself, thou, and all thy companies" (v. 7, RV). In the words of Joel, "...Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near..." (Joel 3:9). No matter how diligent the preparation, no matter how careful the battle plans are thought through, the outcome is foreknown and assured. Gog and his forces will fall on the mountains of Israel.

Like the Assyrian of old, Gog's work is divinely appointed. "I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey..." (Isa. 10:6, cf. Ezek. 38:13). The Assyrian came against Judah in the days of Hezekiah. The cities of Judah were devastated. Hezekiah and a remnant were shut up in Jerusalem and had to endure the taunts of Rabshakeh. But God heard the prayers of his servant and addressed the might of Sennacherib—"Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest" (Isa. 37:29). For Gog there will be no going back "by the way by which thou camest". Yahweh says to Gog, "I will turn thee back, and put hooks¹ into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth...thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel" (Ezek. 38:4; 39:4).

It is interesting to note that all the nations referred to except Rosh and Persia are specifically mentioned in Genesis 10. Rosh, since it is so closely allied to Meshech and Tubal, would appear to belong to the Scythian people. Since Persia is connected elsewhere in scripture with the Medes, the nation is almost certainly descended from the family of Japheth, as were the Medes through Madai. This would mean that all the nations referred to are of Japhetic or Hamitic origin. There is not one Semitic nation among them.

¹ Like the hooks in the jaws of a crocodile being pulled to land for destruction. See 29:4.

COMPOSITION OF GOG'S ARMY

JAPHETH

Rosh

Meshech

Tubal

Gomer

Togarmah

Persia

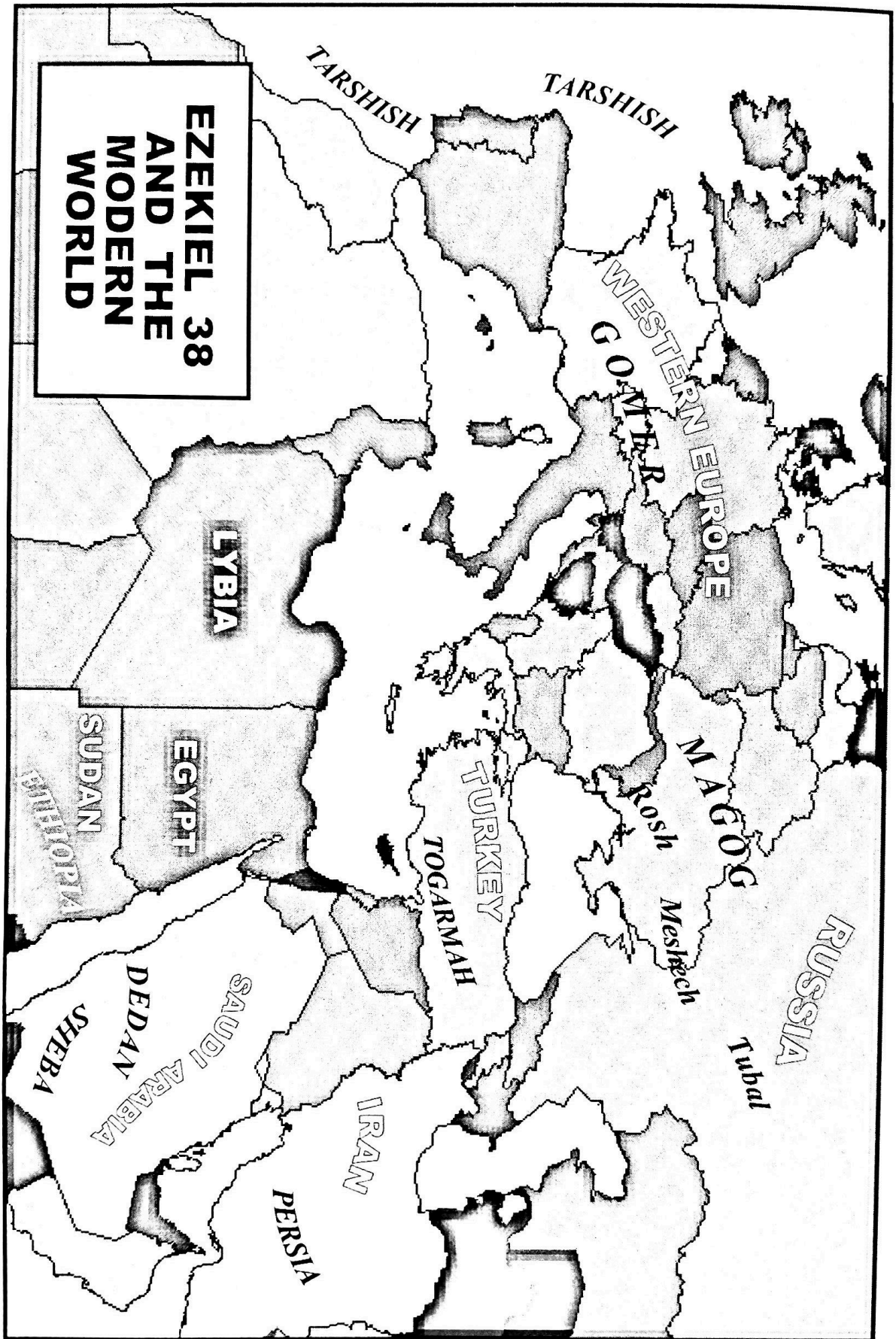
HAM

Ethiopia

Libya

SHEM

This tends to confirm the suggestion made in our consideration of chapters 25–28 and 35–36 that the neighbouring Arab Semitic peoples have already entered into a period of peaceful co-existence with Israel before the Gogian invasion. As a result of this that Israel occupies the position described in Ezekiel 28:26, “They shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence”, which is precisely the picture presented in this 38th chapter at the time when Gog invades Israel—*they shall dwell safely all of them* (v. 8); *a land of unwalled villages...that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates* (v. 11).



6. The destruction of Gog's armies (38:1–39:16)

This prophecy has not been fulfilled in any way at any time in history.¹ After the return from Babylon there is no record of any such invasion and, indeed, at no time in history other than our own days could such an invasion have taken place. We alone are privileged to see Israel partially restored and Russia the greatest power in Eurasia. In spite of the dismantling of the USSR and the apparent “humanizing” of Russia she is still covertly pursuing a policy of world domination. There is sympathy with Russia, for various reasons², in most of the areas referred to by the prophet. We shall watch in wonder as these nations are drawn closer together.

(ii) Gog invades Israel (38:8–13)

The description of Israel at this time given in verse 8 should be carefully noted:

1. *The land that is brought back from the sword*, that is a land whose people have recovered from the ravages of war. This suggests a time of peace.
2. *Gathered out of many people* was not true of the return from the Babylonian captivity and indicates that we are correct in applying *the latter years* (v. 8) to modern times and Israel's “gathering” to that which has happened in recent history.

¹ The idea set out by E. Whittaker (*The Gogian Invasion, The Testimony*, vol. 42, p. 50) that Ezekiel 38:1–7 actually refers to the invasion during the days of Josiah and that the words “I will turn thee back...” (v. 4) is speaking of the removal of the Scythian armies from Israel in Ezekiel's day is unlikely. There is nothing in any historical record to suggest that the Scythians “were still occupying parts of Palestine and the nations around” at the time when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Israel and carried Ezekiel captive. Neither is there any suggestion that Ethiopia and Libya were confederate with the Scythians at that time even if Persia had been subdued by the Scythians in 640 BC.

² Including

- ethnic connections and a sharing of Islam between the southern CIS states and Iran (Persia), together with rabid anti-Semitism;
- a sharing of the ideology of dictatorship, Russian military hardware and ardent anti-Semitism between Russia, Libya, and Ethiopia;
- anti-Semitism harboured in Catholicism shared between Gomer and Russia, and an intense dislike of Israel's effective control over religious sites.

3. *They shall dwell safely*, coupled with the further description of Israel at the time of Gog's invasion in verses 11–12, as already noted above suggests a time of peace and security which modern Israel has not yet experienced. We anticipate, as we have before maintained, that Israel will enter a period of prosperity and dominance in the Middle East prior to the Gogian invasion.

The above paragraph, given in an address in the late 1960s, was first published in 1978¹. It is encouraging to note that since then Israel, negotiating from the position of strength attained by her past military victories over the Arabs, has signed peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, has entered into a peace accord with her arch foes the Palestinians and has commenced negotiations with Syria (which will clearly include Lebanon). On the basis of scriptures previously examined (pages 275–278, 332–342), and the picture of a settled and prosperous community presented here in Ezekiel 38, much is yet to be achieved, by either further conquest or negotiation.

At this point further comment must be made on the fact that at this time Israel is said to *dwell safely* (v. 8, 11). This is taken by some² to imply that Israel has at this time entered into the blessings of the Kingdom, and that Messiah is already reigning in Zion at the time of the Gogian invasion.³ It

8 After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land [that is] brought back from the sword, [and is] gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.

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

10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, [that] at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought

11 And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwall'd villages: I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,

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

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

¹ *The Bible Student*, vol. 9, page 149.

² For example, D. Fifield, "What Shall befall Israel in the Latter Days", in *The New Bible Student*, vol. 3, page 91.

³ This reasoning leads to the erroneous conclusion that Zechariah 14, Joel 3, Daniel 11, etc. refer to events other than the Gogian invasions. See comments on page 406.

is acknowledged that the idea of Israel dwelling “safely” (Heb. *betach*) is used of the blessed state of Israel in the Kingdom in such scriptures as Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16; and Ezekiel 34:25, 27, 28. However, it is the context in which the word is found that determines whether or not the Kingdom is being referred to, not the use of the word *betach* itself. In each of the following uses of the word we would never see implied an enjoyment of Kingdom blessings!—

- The Ethiopians are said to dwell in a “careless” (Heb. *betach*, ‘safely, without care’) way in Ezekiel 30:9.
- Hazor is described as dwelling “without care (*betach*)...which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone” (Jer. 49:31). This is very reminiscent of the words used of Israel in Ezekiel 38:11.
- The Chaldeans are said to dwell “carelessly” (securely, RVmg; Heb. *betach*) in Isaiah 47:8.

Guided by the context, in each of these references the use of the word *betach* implies nothing more than a time of perceived but unwarranted security. In each case the “dwelling safely” was short-lived and interrupted by a time of intense trouble. So it will be with Israel prior to the Gogian invasion. The Gogian invasion will be the punishment for “all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, **when they dwelt safely in their land** and none made them afraid” (Ezek. 39:26). Like the Ethiopians, the inhabitants of Hazor, and the Chaldeans; Israel dwelling safely in the time of Ezekiel 38:8, 11 implies no more than the nation is enjoying a period of peace and is unaware of the impending invasion that is about to overwhelm them from the north. ↓ out

This time of peace, however, will be shattered by Gog and his armies coming *like a storm*—like a mighty hurricane—into the land of Israel (v. 9).

Some indication has been given on page 276–278 of the prosperity that is likely to accrue as a result of the peace accord between Israel and the surrounding Arab nations. It will be the prosperity of the nation of Israel, the desirability of the conquest of that strategically-important land, and an ingrained anti-Semitism that will cause Gog to *think an evil thought* (v. 9) and go to war against the State of Israel.

It is worth commenting at this point on the statement that Gog will *ascend* (v. 9) or *go up* (v. 11) [the Hebrew word is the same in both places] against Israel. It has been argued from these statements that in order to “go up” to Israel, Gog must be in the south, for one would only use the phrase

“go up” if one were travelling north. Thus it is said that the invasion of Israel by the Northern power (called the King of the North¹ in Daniel 11) takes place after he has invaded Egypt (Dan. 11:42). However, the phrase “go up” does not indicate movement in a northerly direction. When Cyrus gave the Jews permission to return from Babylon to Jerusalem, he said, “Who is there...let him **go up** to Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:3). Similarly the nations in the Kingdom, regardless of their geographical location, will be required to “**go up** from year to year to worship the King” (Zech. 14:16). Thus, there is no reason why the invasion of Israel by the King of the North should not take place as he descends through the land towards Egypt—just as the Scythian hordes in the time of Josiah occupied Bethshan on their way to Egypt. Certainly this is the order of events that a plain reading of Daniel 11 conveys:

“And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. **He shall enter also into the glorious land**, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: **and the land of Egypt shall not escape**. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of

¹ The writer is of the opinion that the King of the North in Daniel 11 is the same as the Gogian power in Ezekiel 38. This conclusion is scripturally and historically sound as a careful examination of Daniel 8 and Daniel 11 will show. The little horn of the Grecian goat in ch. 8 is the same as the King of the North in ch. 11. This little horn power was representative of Rome as she emerged as a power in the East, on the northern or Seleucid division of Alexander's empire. She fulfilled all the work divinely assigned to her in Daniel 8:9–12, crucifying the Prince of Israel's host and then, in AD 70, taking away the daily sacrifice and destroying the sanctuary. With the division of the Roman Empire it was the Eastern Empire, with its Greek connections, that assumed the mantle of the little horn. With the fall of the Eastern Empire in 1453 the Turks continued the desolating work but the drying up of that power in 1917 has left the position vacant awaiting the true heir to the little horn throne—Greek connected Russia (by virtue of the removal of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate from Constantinople to Moscow—See *Rome and Jerusalem*, page 45). Before long Russia will fulfil the role providentially determined. As King of the North—“the Libyans and the Ethiopians [being] at his steps” (Dan. 11:43) as we have seen in Ezekiel 38—he will unwittingly find himself in conflict “with the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand” (Dan. 8:25), or as in 11:45, “He shall come to his end, and none shall help him.”

6. The destruction of Gog's armies (38:1–39:16)

silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps" (Dan. 11:40–43).

There is here added detail not found in Ezekiel. The powerful invading army is presented just the same but in addition we are informed that "many ships" will be involved in the invasion. This confirms the fact that Turkey will be a part of the Gogian confederacy because for Russia to use many ships against a Middle Eastern power would necessitate the free passage of those ships through the Bosphorus.¹

The intention of the invader is clear—*To take a prey...to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil*² (v. 13). Gog will therefore seek to occupy the land of Israel and in this he will be successful. This is made plain from other parallel prophecies such as Zechariah 14:1–2 and especially Daniel 11:45 where we are informed that the northern invader "shall plant the tabernacle of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain."

At this point in Ezekiel's prophecy another group of nations are introduced into the picture—*Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil?* (v. 13)³. It is now necessary to try to identify these nations.

¹ In a sense Russia was the main victor in the 1967 war between Israel and the Arabs. For her ships then sailed unchallenged through the Bosphorus into the Mediterranean and have done so ever since. Thus Russia obtained, without firing a shot, what she has always longed for—free passage into the Mediterranean waters. The alliance of Togarmah with Gog shows that at the time of the Gogian invasion this facility will still be available to the Northern invader.

² In connection with the "great spoil" see notes on page 279. There is here an indication that the invasion described by Ezekiel is the same as that referred to by Zechariah where we are told that "thy **spoil** shall be divided in the midst of thee" (14:1).

³ Most commentators see in these words of Sheba, Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish an expression of their eagerness to participate in the spoils of war. That such an expression should come from the adjacent nations of Edom, Moab and Ammon would have been understandable, but to see it come from nations so far removed from Israel makes this unlikely. Rather the question is, in the first instance one of surprise—"What? All this vast army to carry off booty from so peaceful a people!" (Wm. Kay, *Ezekiel*, ad loc.). But the reference to "young lions" being associated with Tarshish suggests, by comparison with Jeremiah

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Sheba and Dedan

Scripture mentions a *Sheba* and *Dedan* who were descended from Ham through Cush (Gen. 10:7) and also a Sheba and Dedan descended from Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:3). It is impossible to be sure which Sheba and Dedan are referred to in the various Old Testament passages which speak of nations carrying these names.¹ Since both the Hamitic Sheba and Dedan, and the Abrahamic (Semitic) Sheba and Dedan appear to have settled in the Arabian peninsula, it is of no great importance.² Sheba and Dedan point to the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula.

This leads us to consider a remarkable “sign of the times”. Saudi Arabia is an emerging, potentially powerful, very rich nation. During the heyday of the Soviet Union when the USSR had bases and/or influence in Libya, the Sudan and Iran (and at one time even in Egypt), in Saudi Arabia there was not even an illegal communist party operating within her borders. The situation in Russia has changed and her expansionist aims have been put on hold; but we can expect to see Russian interest and influence rekindled in the nations surrounding Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, as we shall presently show, we shall expect to see Saudi Arabia's ties with the UK and USA becoming stronger.

Tarshish

Tarshish was descended from Japheth through Javan (Gen. 10:4). He gave his name to the people who, in Old Testament times, settled the Western end of the known Mediterranean world. An Assyrian inscription from the time of Esar-haddon (7th century BC) states that in consequence of his victories over Tyre and Egypt all the kings of the islands from Cyprus “as far as *Tarsisi*” paid him tribute, which, since Cyprus is in the eastern Mediterranean, suggests that Tarsisi (Tarshish) was to be looked for in the

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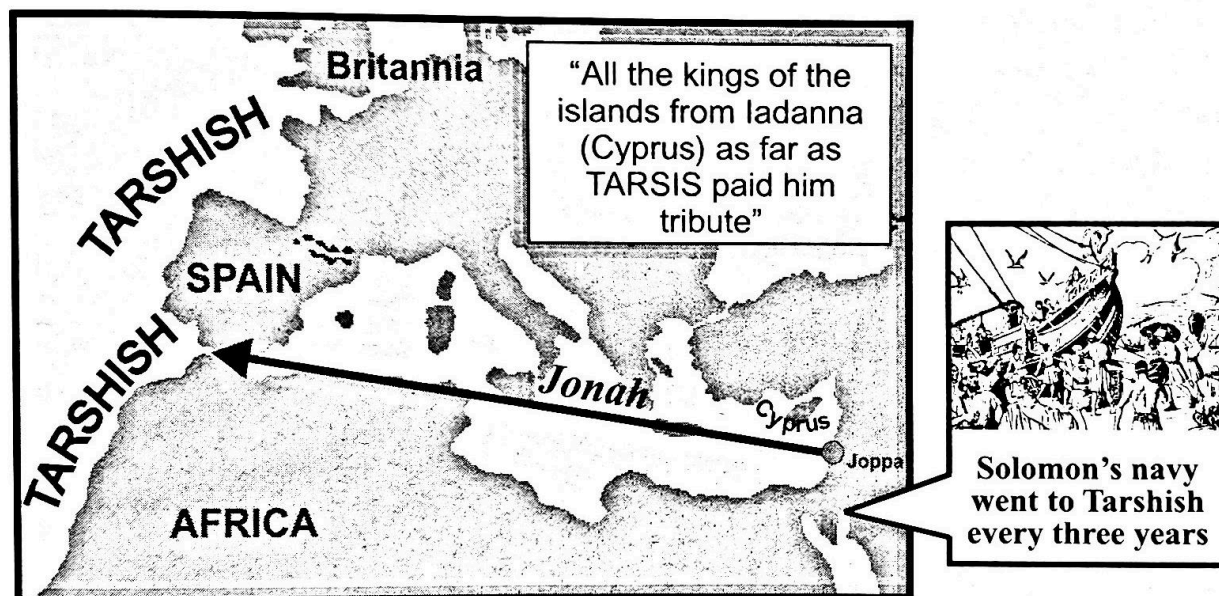
2:15, that here is a company organized as an attacking army, asking by what right these invaders attack the Jewish State. “As much as to say, Thou shalt not spoil Israel and subdue their country, if we can help it” (John Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, page 433).

¹ There is another Sheba who is not associated with a corresponding Dedan. This is Sheba the son of Semitic Joktan (Gen. 10:26). The Joktanites founded a kingdom in S. Arabia which for centuries was known as the Kingdom of Sheba. The other Shebas appear to have mingled with these Joktanites and it is very difficult to separate them.

² J. McClintock and J. Strong, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, page 725; vol. 9, page 626.

6. The destruction of Gog's armies (38:1–39:16)

west. Jonah boarded a ship at Joppa, now known as Jaffa in Israel, to go to Tarshish as he fled from Nineveh. This, too, suggests a place in the western Mediterranean (Jonah 1:1–3). The Phoenicians traded with Tarshish (Ezek. 27:25) which, Tyre being on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, again suggests that Tarshish is in the western part of the Mediterranean world. This conclusion is endorsed by most commentators and historians—“Most...are agreed that...the allusion is to Tartessus in Spain.”¹ Tartessus appears to have been the name of a city and a region in what we know as Spain. “The Tarshish of the Hebrews, and the Tartessus of the Greeks, may be taken to include all they knew of Spain, and perhaps the western regions within and without the Straits [of Gibraltar].”²



But while the name Tarshish was connected to this region of Spain it seems that it embraced far more. The quotation above applies it to areas *without* the Straits. The Phoenicians who regularly went to trade with Tarshish in silver, iron, tin and lead (Ezek. 27:12) certainly passed through the Straits. “There can be little doubt that they worked the tin and lead mines in Cornwall and the Scilly Islands...Besides the British Isles, the Phoenician navigators traded to others in the Atlantic, called the

¹ J. McClintock and J. Strong, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, page 219.

² P. Smith, *A History of the Ancient World*, vol. 2, page 356.

Oestrymnides, which are probably the Azores...the north west coast of Africa was occupied at several points.”¹

There is in 1 Kings 9:26; 10:22; 2 Chronicles 8:17; 9:21 an interesting reference to Tarshish where we learn that Solomon and Hiram king of Tyre had a navy at Ezion-Geber in the Gulf of Aqaba. These ships went to Tarshish and returned with gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. This gave rise to the concept of an eastern as well as a western Tarshish. The political circumstances of the time led our early brethren to identify this with India, which was part of the British Empire². However, it has been argued that “ships of Tarshish” simply means ‘ships built for long sea voyages’ and that the ships did not go to Tarshish (the limits of the known western world), but to Ophir in S. Arabia (1 Kings 9:28). The words in 2 Chronicles 9:21 translated “the king’s ships went to Tarshish”—it is argued—are probably better translated as, “the king had Tarshish ships.”³ So the NIV gives, “the king had a fleet of trading ships manned by Hiram’s men...”

However, even if we accept (as the author is inclined to do) that the AV of 2 Chronicles 9:21 is correct and the ships “went to Tarshish”, it is by no means definite that an eastern Tarshish is intended⁴. Since Tarshish was normally reached via the Western Mediterranean, this may suggest that Solomon’s navy went to Tarshish either by canal from the Red Sea to the

¹ *ibid.*, page 357.

² e.g. John Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, page 434; *Exposition of Daniel*, page 97.

³ See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, page 338.

⁴ The argument that the Tarshish of 2 Chronicles 9:21 must be India since peacocks do not come from Africa but from India is an argument based on three questionable premises:

- (a) That the Hebrew word *tukkiyim* does refer to the bird we know as the peacock. Opinions on this are divided. Some believe it to refer to a crested parrot, others to the guinea fowl (see F. C. Cook, *Speakers Commentary*, vol. 2, page 546). Koehler and Baumgartner see it as referring to the baboon (*Theological Wordbook to the Old Testament*, vol 2, page 969).
- (b) That there were no peacocks in Africa. However, “the belief of the naturalists was shattered in 1936 when the Congo peacock was discovered in the Belgian Congo” (F. Drimmer ed., *The Animal Kingdom*, vol. 2, page 988).
- (c) That the peacock could not have been obtained from an intermediate trading post. Coastal trading by stages was quite common.

Mediterranean¹, or they went around the African continent, reaching the north-west African coast. In the time of Pharaoh Necho, Phoenician sailors, at his bidding, circumnavigated the African continent.² Human nature being what it is it is highly unlikely that having accomplished this and seen the richness of the African lands they could have resisted the temptation to extend their interests along those shores.^{3 4}

In the time of Ezekiel, then, Tarshish was the extreme western world as known to those trading nations and included all the territories we have mentioned—Southwest Spain, Northwest Africa and trading islands beyond the Straits (see map page 409).

¹ There is some suggestion that a canal existed in the time of Seti I [in the latter half of the second millennium BC] running from the northern tip of the Red Sea into the Nile delta, but its "existence at Solomon's time is not yet established beyond doubt" (Emil G. Kraeling, *Bible Atlas*, page 222). P. Smith maintains that "It is now proved, by inscriptions beside the banks, that he [Rameses JA] was the originator of the canal to unite the Mediterranean and the Red Sea" (*History of the Ancient World*, vol. 1, page 121). Further, T. Benson (*The Testimony*, vol. 64, page 373) refers to *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation* by John Coleman (1866) in which he sets out in considerable detail arguments in favour of the canal constructed by Rameses II being still in use during Solomon's reign, dredged by Pharaoh Necho and still in use "long after the Christian era". The width of the canal was "in every part...sufficiently wide and deep to admit the navigation side by side of two of the largest vessels in antiquity."

² *Herodotus*, 4:42.

³ Ray Walker, *The Christadelphian*, vol. 101, page 321, sets out convincing historical reasons why the Phoenicians may well have been pushed into approaching Tarshish by circumnavigating Africa.

⁴ There is another explanation of the words in Chronicles which states that Solomon's ships "went to Tarshish". It could be that the navy at Ezion-geber in the Red Sea which went to Ophir (1 Kings 9:26–28) is a different navy to that which went to Tarshish (1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chron. 9:21). The reasons for saying this are that (1) both Kings and Chronicles mention two separate navies; (2) the name "ships of Tarshish" is only applied to the one fleet and not to the other; (3) in Chronicles it is said that the fleet of Tarshish went to Tarshish; (4) the special connection of this fleet with the abundance of silver which was not imported from Ophir; (5) the fact that the commodities imported by the two fleets have only one article in common: gold. If two navies are intended, then the Ezion-geber fleet in the Red Sea went to Ophir and the fleet that went to Tarshish would have been located in the Mediterranean (F. C. Cook, ed., *Speakers Commentary*, vol. 2, page 545).

There has been much discussion over the years as to the identity of the Tarshish of Ezekiel 38.¹ Since Britain and the USA are the major powers that have emerged in the “latter years” in the territory of the ancient Tarshish—that is, the extreme west of the known world—it seems to be quite reasonable to suggest that Britain and perhaps the USA are referred to by the prophet.

The involvement of the UK and the USA with the development of Saudi Arabia serves to reinforce this viewpoint. The way in which they had the willing co-operation of Saudi Arabia in the Gulf War further serves to underline the closeness of the modern Tarshish powers with latter-day Sheba and Dedan. These events may well herald the development of that alliance to be revealed at the appropriate time—the *Sheba, Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish* who will say, *art thou come to take a spoil?* The events also offer an indication of the nature of their response to the Gogian threat—the placing in the Arabian peninsula of USA and UK military forces.

All the young Lions ²

Young lions have been mentioned earlier in Ezekiel (ch. 19:1–9) where they represented Israel's leaders. It is tempting to see the young lions in ch. 38 as referring to co-operation between the Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish powers on the one hand and certain leaders of Israel (the young lions) on the other—a co-operation which was indeed in evidence in the Gulf War when Israel's leaders, at the request of the USA, agreed not to retaliate against Iraq's Scud missiles. But the Hebrew will not allow of this interpretation. The sense of the Hebrew is that the *young lions* belong to Tarshish. So the versions translate—“the merchants of Tarshish with all her strong lions” (NIV mg); “the traders of Tarshish with all her young lions” (Roth.); “the merchants of Tarshish with all its young lions” (NASB mg); “the traders of Tarshish and all its young lions” (JER).

¹ See for example series of articles in *The Christadelphian*—A. Winter Moore, “Britain and Israel”, vol. 100, page 257 etc.; Albert T. Abbotts, “Surely the Isles Shall Wait For Me”, vol. 101, page 7 etc. Also, “Tarshish, Ancient and Modern” by H. Taylor in *The Testimony*, vol. 61, page 84.

² The NIV, NASB and RSV all render “young lions” as “villages”. In this they follow the LXX and repoint the Massoretic text *kephirim* = “young lions” and read *kepharim* = “villages”. Most commentators favour the translation, “young lions”.

It would seem reasonable that the young lions refer to those countries which, with Sheba and Dedan, form an alliance with the Tarshish power. At the present time the member nations of the British Commonwealth appear to be those most likely to be so designated. Some consider the USA to be one of the young lions rather than it being included in Tarshish¹.

This whole scenario would suggest that in the events depicted in Ezekiel 38, at the time of the end the sympathies of Britain will be with her Commonwealth allies and with the USA, not with Europe. This writer is inclined to the view that Britain may well leave, or be forced to leave, the EU, which, at the time of writing, appears, under German influence, to be heading towards a political United States of Europe.²

(iii) God's purpose with Gog (v. 14–16)

Gog's invasion of Israel is to take place at a time *when my people of Israel dwelleth safely* (v. 14). The word translated "safely" (Heb. *betach*) is from a root that means "to feel secure; to be unconcerned"³.

Although there are occasions when the feeling of security is so unwarranted as to amount to carelessness (e.g. Ezek. 30:9), yet the way in which the word is usually used is to convey the idea of a fully justified feeling of security. So in the reign of Solomon, "Judah and Israel dwelt safely every man under his vine and under his fig tree..."

14 Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know [it]?

15 And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army:

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

¹ For example, Donald Pearce, *Milestones 1995*, page 44.

² It has been interesting to see comments from the USA as they look on helplessly at their natural ally, Britain, becoming embroiled in a potentially disastrous union with Europe. One interesting development is the move to woo Britain away from Europe by offering her a place in NAFTA (North American Free Trade Association). Headlines such as **Forget Europe and join us, Gingrich tells Britain** have appeared in the serious British press. One British commentator contributing to the debate wrote perceptively, "We may dislike aspects of American culture, but it is part of our lives, as French, German, Italian or Spanish isn't...we think and feel American." (Daily Telegraph, June 1st, 1998).

³ *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, page 88. See notes on Israel dwelling safely on page 404–405.



(1 Kings 4:25). This appears to be the sense here in Ezekiel 38:14 and the means whereby this position of safety is achieved has already been considered at chapter 35 and 28:24–26.

In the prosecution of his campaign against Israel, Gog comes *out of the north parts* (v. 15). The importance of this statement cannot be over-emphasized. Moscow is due north of Jerusalem. Thus the identification of Gog with the power of Russia is geographically substantiated.

Those who object to the identification of Gog with Russia must supply an alternative power north of Israel able to do the work that the prophet assigns to Gog. The great message of these verses is that the future movements of Russia and her allies are the result of the Divine hand at work with them—an illustration of the fundamental

teaching of scripture that “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men” (Dan. 4:17).

Circumstances surrounding the movements of the nations are supervised by the angels who, working in the context of man’s free will, ensure the progress of the Divine purpose.¹

¹ An excellent example is to be seen in the activities of the angels working to get Cyrus to issue his decree in Daniel 10:13.

It is difficult for us to enter into the wonder of this.¹ Russian foreign policy will be developed by the powers in Russia and the decision to invade the Middle East will be made by the Russian leaders of their own volition in response to circumstances that appear to call for such action. But when that decision is made, it will be made at exactly the right time, and in the way mapped out beforehand in the prophets.

Thus God says, *I will bring thee against my land* (v. 16). It is indeed God's land. Though He has allowed it to be "trodden down of the Gentiles" for centuries this will be the time when, says God, "I will remember the land" (Lev. 26:42). The result of the Gogian invasion will be that the nations will *know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes* (v. 16). Thus history will again repeat itself. Of Pharaoh it was said, "For this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power" (Exod. 9:16). So it will be with Gog.

¹ *The Ways of Providence*, by Robert Roberts (available from CMPA) and *Stormy Wind Fulfilling His Word* by Tony Benson (available from CSSS) are recommended for further reading on this subject.

(iv) The presence of the LORD in the earth (v. 17–23)

The first verse of this section is interesting. *[Art] thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets?* Ezekiel was not the only prophet to speak of the attitude of Gog towards God's people and the subsequent humiliation of the invader.

The first nation to fight against Israel during her journey from Egypt to the Land of Promise was Amalek. Of this encounter Balaam was compelled to write, "Amalek was the first of the nations [to fight against Israel, JA]; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever" (Num. 24:20). It is clear that there is far more in this expression of God's intentions than the annihilation of the Amalekites. To celebrate the victory of Israel over the Amalekites an altar was to be erected. It was to be named Yahweh Nissi—'Yahweh my ensign'—and the reason why it was so called is explained:

"Because the hand of Amalek is against the throne of the LORD, therefore the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exod. 17:15, 16, AVmg).

The implication in this is that the war with Amalek would proceed apace when Yahweh revealed Himself as Israel's ensign. This He did when He sent His son, who lived a life of obedience, and was finally "lifted up" onto "the pole" (the Hebrew word is *nes* = the ensign) "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" (Num. 21:8, 9; John 3:14). Thus he destroyed in himself the *diabolos* principle which energized the Amalekite nation and which motivates and guides those who prosecute that anti-Semitic, anti-throne-of-Yahweh war which Amalek began. Being successful in this fundamental battle against sin, Jesus became the One appointed to fight against the Amalek principle politically manifested. He is the "ensign" to which his future assistants in that conflict rally; the root of

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

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

19 For in my jealousy [and] in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;

20 So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that [are] upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.

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

22 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that [are] with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.

23 Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I [am] the LORD.

Jesse, which stands for an ensign of the peoples, unto whom the faithful of the Gentiles now seek (Isa. 11:10, RV; Rom. 15:12).

The Gogian confederacy on the mountains of Israel is the latter-day manifestation of Amalek. It is in his destruction that the words of Balaam will be at last fulfilled—“His latter end shall be that he perish for ever.” It is no coincidence that Balaam also spoke of the time when “the shout of a king will be among them [Israel]” (Num. 23:21), and of this time “his [Israel’s] king shall be higher than Agag (LXX “Gog”)¹ and his kingdom shall be exalted” (Num. 24:7).

Thus in the earliest of the prophets (*in old time*, v. 17) God spoke of the humiliation of Gog, the latter-day champion of the Amalekite cause. This great theme subsequently formed the basis of many a prophetic message. This should lead us to view with extreme caution those explanations of Ezekiel 38 that relate it to a different time to the great future theophanies referred to in scriptures such as Joel 3 and Habakkuk 3 that were given before Ezekiel’s, and to those such as Zechariah 14 given after Ezekiel’s. All of these are expansions of those early predictions of Moses and Balaam.

When Gog touches Israel, he touches “the apple [that is, the pupil] of [God’s] eye” (Zech. 2:8). There is in consequence a vigorous reaction! *My fury*, says God, *shall come up in my face* (v. 18) and there will be in consequence *a great shaking in the land of Israel* (v. 19). This shaking takes place as a result of God’s *presence* being revealed in the land (v. 20).

In Old Testament times the presence of God was revealed through that angel concerning whom God declared, “My name is in him” (Exod. 23:21). He was called “the angel of [God’s] presence” (Isa. 63:9). At this future manifestation of divine power the name-bearer will be the Lord Jesus

¹ Agag was the king of the Amalekites in the time of Saul (1 Sam. 15:8). This was also the name of the Amalekite king in the time of Balaam hundreds of years before. Thus it appears that Agag may have been the name of the kings of Amalek in the same way that Pharaoh was the name of the kings of Egypt. We have seen that this was the case with Gog—it was the family name of the Scythian kings. For some reason the translators of the LXX and Samaritan Pentateuch saw fit to give “Gog” rather than “Agag” as in the MT of Num. 24:7. (One suggestion is that these early translators were using a Hebrew text that differs from the Massoretic text—Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, page 422). This may well be the first mention of Gog in scripture and if this be so, “Art thou he of whom of whom I have spoken in old time...” has a special reference to Numbers 24.

Christ. He will come in the name of Yahweh in fulfilment of His promise to Israel—“Ye shall see not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:39). Thus all the latter day prophecies of the Old Testament that speak of the LORD (Yahweh) manifesting Himself in power on behalf of Israel—including Zechariah 14:3; Isaiah 66:15; and Joel 3:16—are actually foretelling the coming of the Lord Jesus into the political arena.

This *shaking in the land of Israel* (v. 9) will indeed be political, but the pictures in the prophets indicate that Yahweh will use the powers of nature—earthquake, pestilence, rain, and hail, etc.—to bring about the greatest political upheaval of all time.

The parallels here with Habakkuk 3, Joel 3, and Zechariah 14 are striking. There can be no doubt that they all refer to the same event.

EZEKIEL 38	HABAKKUK 3	JOEL 3	ZECHARIAH 14
There shall be a great shaking in the land (v. 19)	He stood and shook the earth (v. 6, RVmg)	The heavens and the earth shall shake (v. 16)	The mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof (v. 4)
At my presence (v. 20)	God came from Teman (v. 3) Thou didst ride upon... thy chariots of salvation (v. 8)	Yahweh shall roar out of Zion (v. 16) Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down (v. 11)	Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight... And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives (v. 4)

The presence of Yahweh (from Ezekiel), the chariots of salvation (Habakkuk), Yahweh's mighty ones (Joel) and Yahweh's feet¹ (Zechariah) all denote the emergence—into the world of politics—of Christ and his saints, whose work will be to “execute upon them [Gog and his armies] the judgements written” (Psa. 149:9). It should be noted most carefully that

¹ That Yahweh's feet refers to the saints may be deduced from a comparison with Isaiah 52:7 which proclaims, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of **him** that bringeth good tidings...”. The apostle applies this to the preaching of the gospel and renders it, “how beautiful are the feet of **them** that preach the gospel...” (Rom. 10:15). That we are justified in applying this interpretation to the Zechariah passage is seen from the words that follow in Isaiah 52:7—“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him...**that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!**” Any remaining doubt is dispelled by Zechariah who proceeds to say that “the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee” (14:5).

6. The destruction of Gog's armies (38:1–39:16)

these prophetic chapters are not speaking of the return of Jesus back to the earth, but of his active emergence with the saints into the world of politics. Jesus will have returned long before to judge the household and organize the saints for the great work before them.

Faced with such omnipotence, where the powers of nature are harnessed by the One unto whom all power has been given, Gog's armies will fall to pieces. Like the Midianites in the time of Gideon (Judges 7:22), panic will seize the armies of Gog so that *every man's sword shall be against his brother* (v. 21, cf. Zech. 14:13; Hab. 3:14, RV). The world-wide implications of the manipulation of the powers of nature that will be used to destroy Gog's armies will be discussed at chapter 39. At this point we mention the fact that *steep places* (or, "towers" AVmg) *shall fall and every wall shall fall to the ground* (v. 20). This may well be part of the cleansing process whereby all the churches and other "holy" places will be removed from the Land.¹

The eyes of the nations will thus be directed to the great victory achieved on behalf of the remnant of Israel by Yahweh their King. With great interest, amazement and, in some quarters, apprehension and antagonism, the nations will watch as the King of Israel begins to "rule...in the midst of [his] enemies" (Psa. 110:2). With his brethren, he commences the long awaited task of raising Zion from the dust (Psa. 102:15, 16).

¹ See comments at 39:17–20.