

Israel-Hamas War 2023 – What the Bible Says Part 2

Review

Last time, we tried to answer some common questions about the so-called “Gog-Magog” invasion foretold in Ezekiel 38-39. The main question on many people’s minds is whether the open warfare between Israel and Hamas that began in October 2023 will lead up to the invasion of Israel by Gog of Magog foretold in the prophecy. Rather than offering a yes or no answer to that question based on personal opinion or things others have said, we began to examine the text of the prophecy itself in some detail.

Looking at the list of names in the beginning of the prophecy, we determined **who** the invaders will be and **where** they will come from – Turkey. We found that two of the words capitalized in some English translations of the prophecy – **Gog** גֹּג *gôḡ* and **Rosh** רֹשׁ *rôš* are actually titles rather than proper names here in the context of Ezekiel 38-39. Thus, we were able to debunk the popular idea that this invasion will come from or be led by Russia. Furthermore, since God’s Word clearly indicates that the invasion will come from Turkey, it is unlikely that the 2023 Israel-Hamas war will bring on the foretold invasion unless and until Turkey takes a part in it, which she has not yet done.

We tried unsuccessfully to answer the question that is foremost in many people’s minds - **when** the invasion will come. Although the text of God’s Word makes it clear that the prophecy will be fulfilled in “**the latter days**,” we can’t determine precisely when. We reminded ourselves that the world has been living in the end times ever since Jesus ascended to His Father nearly 2,000 years ago, and that Jesus also told His disciples on that day that God’s will is for us not to know the hour He has ordained for future events. We saw that this is actually a God-given blessing that we seldom acknowledge.

Finally, we saw **why** God Himself will stir Gog of Magog to invade Israel – so “**the nations**” of the world will know and acknowledge Him.

Regarding Gog

Before we press on, I neglected to mention last time the other two contexts in which we find the word Gog. In 1 Chronicles 5:4 we find **Gog** גֹּג *gôḡ* listed as a son of Joel (not Joel the prophet). More interestingly, Revelation 20:8 mentions we find Gog in conjunction with the final defeat of Satan following the thousand-year reign of Christ. Of course, the word in Revelation is a Greek transliteration – Γόγ *gōg* – of the Hebrew. In my (always humble) opinion, the reference in Revelation isn’t the same specific prince of Magog we find in the Ezekiel 38-39 prophecy. Rather, it is a general reference to the leader of the vast hordes who will come against Christ and His followers during the final battle. Having said that though, it is also possible that the Magog invasion foretold in Ezekiel 38-39 and the final defeat of Satan in Revelation 20 are one and the same! We’ll discuss that possibility shortly.

WARNING – While researching this lesson, I ran across an interesting but frightening article containing a discussion about end-times prophecy – specifically the supposed “Nine Wars of the End Times” (purportedly) prophesied in the Bible. I include a link to that discussion here - <https://www.raptureforums.com/end-times/a-summary-of-the-nine-wars-of-the-end-times/>.

I **do not** recommend or endorse this article as a reliable source of eschatological information. Rather, I include it here as a **warning** – a typical example of the misinformation being put forth in ignorance and the willful disinformation put forth with malicious intent on the Internet and in the media as interpretations of Biblical prophecies.

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The article is frightening not because of the prophecies themselves, but because of the matter-of-fact way the interpretations are put forward. I am not familiar with either of the gentlemen who are quoted in this article – Nathan Jones and Tim Moore. For all I know, they are in the business of selling toilet paper or survival gear or dehydrated water or prayer hankies or who knows what kind of useless garbage that can be flogged at inflated prices to the ignorant and fearful, or perhaps they're simply hoping to gather in a little bit of money from the ignorant and fearful supporting their so-called "ministries."

I **am** frightened for those in abject ignorance of what **God's Word says**, who are trusting men like these to tell them what the prophecies mean rather than being like the Bereans – checking out the texts of the prophecies themselves to see if they agree with what these men (and people like **me**) are teaching as accepted fact. They are like lambs separated from the flock – easy prey for wolves in sheep's clothing.

But I digress...

Let's return to our own study of the Ezekiel 38-39 prophecy.

The "What" and the "How"

Let's now examine what the Bible says about **what** will happen during the invasion and **how** God will glorify Himself among the nations and His people Israel through it.

18But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger. 19For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. 20The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. Ezekiel 38:18-20 (ESV)

When the Magog invaders attack Israel, God will intervene with supernatural power as only He can. Apparently, the wrath of God demonstrated through the earthquake foretold in these verses will be catastrophic not just for the invaders from Magog but for all the residents of Israel, and indeed the entire population of the Earth. Thus, God will make His glory apparent – vindicating His holiness to all the nations just as He said in Ezekiel 38:16. Speaking through Ezekiel to Gog of Magog in that verse, He says that He will be sanctified **וַיִּקְדָּשׁ** *qādaš* – i.e., hallowed or acknowledged as holy – among **all** the nations through His awesome, fearful response to the invasion of Israel from Magog.

21I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord GOD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. 22With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. 23So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD. Ezekiel 38:21-23 (ESV)

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God's fearsome response to Magog's invasion will apparently cause many of the invading soldiers to mutiny against their leaders and begin killing each other rather than the people of Israel. Small wonder, since God will rain down fire, hail, sulfur, and flooding rain upon them. God will show His power so clearly that no one in the world will continue to deny that He is Lord. How tragic that it will take such a terrible cataclysm to bring most people to belief in God's holiness and power.

1“And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord GOD [יהוה y'hōvâ אֲדֹנָי 'ādōnāy - Adonay Yahweh]: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince [רֹשׁ רֹשׁ'שׁ] of Meshech and Tubal. 2And I will turn you about and drive you forward, and bring you up from the uttermost parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. Ezekiel 39:1-2 (ESV)

When I was in the technical training business, one of my colleagues was fond of saying, “Three times for the common mind.” Here we see another call from God for Ezekiel to speak this prophecy to Gog of Magog. This call is almost identical to the call we read in Ezekiel 38. Notice once again that God Himself will instigate the invasion in the heart and mind of Gog of Magog despite his awareness of this prophecy that God is against him.

How typical of willful and rebellious humanity. Most of us continue to reject the Gospel despite our conviction by God's Spirit declaring its Truth to us. God does allow us the incredible freedom to choose to either believe in His Gospel unto eternal life or reject it unto eternal condemnation. Yet despite that God-given freedom, His will for us – our actions and direction – remains sovereign just as it will be for Gog of Magog. He will be unable to resist the drive of God to invade Israel despite knowing that his attack will fail catastrophically.

NOTE – The NKJV, NASB95, ASV, and some other English translations mistranslate – in my (always) humble opinion – the Hebrew word **רֹשׁ רֹשׁ'שׁ** – **rosh** here in this verse as a proper name which it is **not**, just as they mistranslated the same word in Ezekiel 38:2.

1“And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, [רֹשׁ רֹשׁ'שׁ] Meshech, and Tubal; Ezekiel 39:1 (NKJV)

This word is a descriptive noun meaning head, principle, chief, beginning, etc. – not a proper name. Interestingly, this mistake in the 1995 NASB has been corrected in the 2020 version. I find that quite encouraging because it indicates my thinking on the proper translation of this verse is correct. Bravo to the NASB translators who corrected it. I would like to congratulate them for agreeing with **me** 😊!

ASIDE – Throughout English printed texts of the Old Testament, we find the phrase “Lord GOD” with GOD in all uppercase or in a SMALLCAPS font. The Hebrew phrase thus translated is **יהוה y'hōvâ אֲדֹנָי 'ādōnāy - Adonay Yahweh**. The Name printed as GOD is the covenant name of God – **יהוה** (the so-called tetragrammaton). This Name was considered so sacred that the ancient Hebrews never uttered it aloud. Sadly, since ancient Hebrew texts contain only the consonants, the vowel sounds associated with His Name have been lost. Historically, English language translations have rendered God's Name as “Jehovah,” however the consonant sounds of the tetragrammaton might more accurately be rendered in English as YHWH. Thus, nowadays the tetragrammaton is often rendered as “Yahweh.” In printed English Old Testament texts, whenever the tetragrammaton is found by itself,

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it is printed as LORD in all uppercase or in a SMALLCAPS font. The Hebrew word יהוה 'ādōnāy is frequently included in the Hebrew Old Testament texts immediately before the tetragrammaton as a title of reverence which **could** be lawfully uttered among the ancient Hebrews. English translations render this title as Lord (capitalized). Thus, here in Ezekiel 39:1 we find the phrase “Lord GOD.”

3Then I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. 4You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. 5You shall fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 39:3-5 (ESV)

We see here that God will miraculously intervene to thwart Magog’s invasion that God Himself instigated. Some have proposed that God will use the nuclear weapons of the nations in the Middle East or those of the global nuclear nations to bring a rain of fire down upon the armies of Gog of Magog. But if that were the case, any dead bodies left over would be toxic – unsafe to eat or even bury. We know from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah that God is perfectly capable of raining down utter destruction by fire from heaven without using human weaponry!

6I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely [בטח] in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD. Ezekiel 39:6 (ESV)

It is unclear to whom God refers here in Ezekiel 39:6 as dwelling “**securely in the coastlands.**” The Hebrew word בטח **betah** can also mean “boldly” or “confidently.” Certainly, the government of Gaza and the Gazan people have been bold, confident, and brash in their confrontation of the vastly superior forces of Israel over the last two decades since Israel evacuated its military forces and settlers from Gaza – especially with their recent brazen attacks within the borders of Israel. But one could scarcely say that the Gazans dwell securely. They are entirely dependent upon outside aid for their very day-to-day survival. Knowing this, Israeli forces implemented an economic blockade of Gaza on the first day of the October 2023 Israel-Hamas war.

Of course, the coastlands this verse speaks of may not be Gaza at all. We can’t precisely determine from the text where they might be – the Israeli coast from Gaza to Lebanon, the coast of Sinai, or even the seacoast of Lebanon which has enjoyed relative calm since the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990. Who knows? The only certainty we have is that these people will also suffer the wrath of God by fire along with Gog of Magog’s armies in the mountains and fields of Israel. So, we can safely assume that these coastlands won’t be those where God’s people Israel dwell. Even if they are, we can safely assume that the fire God speaks of here in Ezekiel 39:6 will not harm God’s people Israel.

ASIDE – Predictably, the world’s media and many “progressive and liberal” members of governments in the USA and around the world (e.g., the so-called “squad” of the US House of Representatives) immediately condemned the Israeli blockade of Palestine as inhumane. But the deprivation that Gaza is suffering and has suffered since Hamas took over Gaza’s so-called “government” is entirely of Hamas’

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own making. The Hamas government cynically abuses its own citizens as pawns for propaganda purposes with utter disregard for the people's suffering. In fact, they purposely aggravate the people's suffering as a means of manipulating worldwide public opinion – something they have done quite successfully over the years as evidenced by ongoing worldwide pro-Palestinian commentaries and protests. Ironically (but predictably), vocal and frequently violent homosexual and transsexual agitators have joined the pro-Palestinian “cause” even though homosexuals and transsexuals would certainly be summarily executed right alongside Jews simply for being homosexual or transsexual if Hamas controlled these protestors' own homelands!

The State of Israel is repeatedly condemned as perpetrators of genocide for their refusal to abandon the Promised Land. Yet the “Palestinian” people are lauded as inhumanely oppressed victims of Israel despite their continual, unprovoked, cowardly terrorist attacks and unspeakable atrocities committed against the Israeli civilian population throughout the history of the State of Israel. The historical record since 1948 confirms an unwavering unwillingness of the various Palestinian government authorities, the Palestinian citizenry, and the governments of neighboring nations like Iran, Syria, and Jordan to share the land between the “Palestinian” people and the Jewish Israelis. The so-called “two-state solution” to the Israel-Palestine problem was set forth under the original 1947 UN resolution for partition of the Treaty of Versailles British Mandate of Palestine that created the State of Israel in the first place. But the “Palestinians” continue to utterly reject it – choosing to play the “oppressed, innocent victim card” in the game of public opinion, and call for the absolute obliteration of the State of Israel instead.

7“And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. 8Behold, it is coming and it will be brought about, declares the Lord GOD. That is the day of which I have spoken. Ezekiel 39:7-8 (ESV)

Imagine if God spares Israel in the very midst of the fiery wrath that He will send on the coastlands in much the same way that He spared the first-born of the Israelites in Egypt on the night of the first Passover – when He sent the death plague that finally convinced Pharaoh to let the Israelites go (Exodus 12). Such miraculous mercy upon His chosen people would indeed bring the Nations to acknowledge Him, and so would Israel.

There is a beautiful symmetry in God's purposes for the invasion of Israel by Gog of Magog. It is reminiscent of Paul's treatise concerning Israel in his letter to the Romans. We looked at that last time, but it is worthy of revisiting.

25Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

***“The Deliverer will come from Zion,
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;***
***27“and this will be my covenant with them
when I take away their sins.”***

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²⁸As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. ²⁹For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. ³²For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. Romans 11:25-32

(ESV)

ASIDE – When we looked at Romans 11:25-32 last time, we used it as a refutation of the so-called “Replacement Theology” doctrine. Before the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land in the 20th century, Replacement Theology asserted that God is finished with Israel – that the Church has taken Israel’s place as God’s chosen people. Shamefully, even great Christian theologians like Martin Luther have condemned the Jewish people as “Christ killers” over the centuries despite Jesus’ clear declaration that **no one** took His life from Him, but that He laid it down willingly for the sheep (John 10:11-18).

But we must not allow ourselves to be confused about the nature of God’s judgment and mercy upon His people Israel. When Paul writes that “***all Israel will be saved***” in Romans 11:26, he isn’t saying that all Jews will be saved simply because they were born Hebrews – with a silver “get out of Hell free” card in their mouths. Quite the contrary. The Word of God makes it clear that **many** of Israel have died will die in their sins right alongside unbelieving Gentiles – condemned to eternal torment apart from God in the lake of fire in the final judgment at God’s Great White Throne (Revelation 20). I can’t judge anyone’s heart, but I find it hard to imagine that Ahab and Jezebel will be “given a pass” at the Great White Throne just because they were born Jews.

Israelites are saved (or not) under the same single criterion by which Gentiles are – whether our names are written in the Book of Life. Some (not all) Jews have their names in the Book not because they were born of Israel but because they believe in their hearts the resurrection of Jesus and confess with their mouths Jesus’ lordship. Paul confirmed this in his letter to the Galatians who had fallen victim to the false teaching that to receive eternal life they had to adhere to the Law of Moses in addition to their profession of faith in the Gospel.

²³Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise. Galatians 3:23-29 (ESV)

This leaves only the question of the so-called “Old Testament saints” of Israel. How are they saved? A quick look at Hebrews 11 – the Great Hall of Faith – shows us that many Hebrews who died before Jesus came in the flesh will be raised up in the last day just as Christians are – even some unsavory characters like Samson (and **me**). At the end of Hebrews 11, Paul makes a very interesting point.

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***39**And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, **40**since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. Hebrews 11:39-40 (ESV)*

This hearkens back to what Paul wrote in Romans 11 – “...*a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved...*” It also fits in perfectly with what God says in Ezekiel 39:7 about how He will use the supernatural defeat of Magog to make His Holy Name known once again among His chosen people Israel. Thus, through the Gentiles all (the remnant of) Israel will be saved.

But since we certainly agree that the only way we can be saved out of death and condemnation is by belief in the resurrection of Jesus and profession of His lordship, how then are the Old Testament saints like Abraham whom Paul listed in Hebrews 11 saved – since they had long since died before Jesus was born? Jesus Himself taught us that Abraham for one *must* be saved somehow – in His parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and in His blunt statement to the Jews who were bragging about being children of Abraham.

***56**Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” John 8:56 (ESV)*

But *how* has God brought about the salvation of (some of) those who died before Jesus was born? This is just a special case of what I like to call the “*Pygmy Problem*.” We must believe in Jesus’ Gospel and profess His lordship to have our names written in His Book of Life. How then does God deal with those who died before Jesus’ advent in the flesh, or with people in remote places who die without ever hearing His Gospel, or babies and children who die too young to hear and understand the Gospel, or those with physical or mental disabilities that prevent them from learning the Truth of the Gospel? The short (and honest) answer is “I don’t know!”

But I *do* know this. Our God is wholly just, fair, merciful, loving, and righteous. God’s sense of right and wrong *must* align with our own because it is God who has imbued our consciences within us in His very own image. So, if we consider something unfair, then God must do the same. Furthermore, since we know His nature of perfect love and justice, we *must* assume that He has made *some* fair, just, and righteous way of dealing with these cases which we in our finite understanding can’t fathom.

We don’t have time here to thoroughly explore this topic. Paul devoted all of Romans 9 to it. Hopefully, this brief look has cleared up some of the confusion surrounding the salvation of Israel. We can certainly go into it more fully some other time if needed. In the meantime, let’s press on with our study of Ezekiel 38-39.

Israel has been in rebellion against God and His sovereignty since Moses descended from Mount Sinai with the tablets of the law and found the people worshipping the golden calf (Exodus 32). In the modern state of Israel, many Jews identify as “culturally” Jewish by birth but deny various aspects of Judeo-Christian belief. Only about 2/3 of Israeli Jews believe that Israel is God’s chosen people, while about 1/5 of them deny God’s existence altogether. Yet even in their rebellion, God remembers His promise to Abraham that all the world will be blessed by his offspring – Jesus of Nazareth. Sadly, most of God’s chosen people Israel missed the boat of Jesus’ Gospel in the day of their visitation. Yet God continues to unfold His plan of salvation for them and the rest of mankind through His Son who came forth in the flesh through the people of Israel.

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God has used this rebellion of the Hebrews to draw the Gentiles to faith, as Paul says in Romans 11:25-32. In Ezekiel 38:16, God said through Ezekiel's prophecy that He will use His miraculous rescue of Israel from Gog of Magog's armies to draw the nations to Himself. Now here in Ezekiel 39:7 God says He will also use the defeat of Magog to bring an end to Israel's rebellion. Here also in Ezekiel 39:8 God declares the coming of His Day foretold by the prophet Joel in which He will reunite **all** mankind with Himself.

²⁷You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

²⁸“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

²⁹Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

³⁰“And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

***³²And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.** Joel 2:27-32 (ESV)*

***⁹“Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them, shields and bucklers, bow and arrows, clubs and spears; and they will make fires of them for seven years, ¹⁰so that they will not need to take wood out of the field or cut down any out of the forests, for they will make their fires of the weapons. They will seize the spoil of those who despoiled them, and plunder those who plundered them, declares the Lord GOD.** Ezekiel 39:9-10 (ESV)*

It seems apparent from Ezekiel 39:9-10 that the weapons Magog brings to bear for the invasion of Israel will be conventional rather than nuclear, biological, or chemical. Nor will the fiery wrath that God sends down onto Magog and the coastlands have lasting toxic effects, since Israel will be able to gather spoil from the invaders.

NOTE – Obviously, today's wars are not fought with literal shields, bucklers, bows, arrows, clubs, or spears. So, the weapons listed in the words of the prophecy – which was written 2,500 years ago when such were the common weapons of war – are very likely symbolic. But if the words should be taken literally, then that begs an important question. Will events between today and the day of the Magog invasion cause the armies of the world to revert to using ancient weapons? Someone (not Albert Einstein) once said he didn't know what weapons might be used to fight WWII, but WWIV will most certainly be fought with spears and rocks!

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11“On that day I will give to Gog a place for burial in Israel, the Valley of the Travelers [עֲבָרִי ‘āḇar], east of the sea. It will block the travelers, for there Gog and all his multitude will be buried. It will be called the Valley of Hamon-gog. [הַמֹּנֹהַג hāmônâ - multitude of Gog] 12For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. 13All the people of the land will bury them, and it will bring them renown on the day that I show my glory, declares the Lord GOD. 14They will set apart men to travel through the land regularly and bury those travelers [עֲבָרִי ‘āḇar] remaining on the face of the land, so as to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make their search. 15And when these travel through the land and anyone sees a human bone, then he shall set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon-gog. 16(Hamonah [הַמֹּנֹהַג hāmônâ - multitudes] is also the name of the city.) Thus shall they cleanse the land. Ezekiel 39:11-16 (ESV)

There are several theories about exactly where the “**Valley of the Travelers**” might be. All that we can tell directly from the text of the prophecy is that it lies somewhere “**east of the sea**” – presumably the Dead Sea or Salt Sea. This is quite intriguing since God says explicitly here in Ezekiel 39:11 that Gog’s multitude will be buried **in** Israel. But the land east of the Dead Sea currently belongs to Jordan, not Israel. This would seem to indicate that some political upheaval will occur in the Middle East prior to the Magog invasion that will redraw the present borders. Perhaps this will be the first part of the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham in which He said He would give Abraham’s descendants all the land between the Nile and the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18).

The Hebrew word עֲבָרִי **‘āḇar** translated as travelers can also mean those who pass by or traverse somewhere. Recall that when the Israelites tried to pass through the land of Edom (descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau) on their way from Sinai to Jericho, the Edomites refused them passage (Numbers 20:14-21), so the Israelites went through the lands of Moab and Amon instead. These lands lie along the east and northeast shores of the Dead Sea. So, the reference to the “Valley of the Travelers” here in Ezekiel 39 may mean the area through which the Israelites passed on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. Interestingly, Sodom and Gomorrah were also somewhere in this area.

Notice that all the people of Israel will be involved in burying the multitude of Gog of Magog’s armies, and that even after 7 months some remaining dismembered body parts will still need to be marked, gathered, and buried. It is also intriguing that the word עֲבָרִי **‘āḇar** is used again in Ezekiel 39:14 to refer to both the searchers who will mark the body parts and the bodies of Gog’s multitude. The word עֲבָרִי **‘āḇar** means not only those who physically pass through somewhere, but also symbolically those who pass from life into death.

17“As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field: ‘Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. 18You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs, and of he-goats, of bulls, all of them fat beasts of Bashan. 19And you shall

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eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. ²⁰And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors,’ declares the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 39:17-20 (ESV)

This little passage is as mysterious as it is gruesome. David L. Cooper’s famous so-called “Golden Rule of Hermeneutics” (Biblical exposition) says that Bible expositors should always err on the side of a literal interpretation – **“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense...”**

But it doesn’t seem to make common sense to interpret Ezekiel 39:17-20 literally. If we did so, some challenging questions would immediately arise. Are the birds and beasts of Ezekiel 39:17 immortal? Were they somehow able to understand Ezekiel’s words and pass them down through their generations from Ezekiel’s day until the days of the Magog invasion and its aftermath? Will the birds and beasts of those days be able to read and understand Ezekiel’s prophecy from thousands of years before?

Of course not. God is symbolically (and quite graphically) making the point that the carnage in the aftermath of the Magog invasion will be so widespread and horrendous that the carrion eaters who are present afterward will be completely sated by feasting on the bodies. Notice that the carcasses of the fallen will apparently not be toxic to them. This would seem to rule out use of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons in God’s defeat of the invading hoard.

ASIDE – Pop quiz. Where is Bashan? What is it called today?

²¹“And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. ²²The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward. ²³And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. ²⁴I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them. Ezekiel 39:21-24 (ESV)

In the technical training business, we like to say, “Tell ‘em what you’re gonna tell ‘em. Tell ‘em. Tell ‘em what you told ‘em.” Here in these verses, we see God’s reiteration of His purposes for instigating the invasion of Magog. Recall that in Ezekiel 38:16 God told the prophet that He will bring about this invasion in the latter days so that His holiness will be vindicated through it.

Recall furthermore that all mankind has been in rebellion against God and idolatrous worship of the creation rather than the Creator since Adam and Eve first ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. Throughout history since then, God has made various covenants – with Abraham and His chosen people Israel, and finally the new covenant in the blood of Jesus through which He offers eternal life for all who believe in Jesus’ resurrection and proclaim His lordship over our lives. But throughout history, mankind has failed to uphold our part of these covenants. Thus, the new covenant is “one-sided.” Jesus paid with His own life to fulfill the entire new covenant. All that’s left for us is to accept His payment on our behalf.

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The first commandment calls upon us to worship no other Gods – not golden calves, not graven images, nor any other aspect of God’s creation, but only God the Creator Himself. In our world today, practically everyone – including almost all the population of the State of Israel – is worshipping something other than God. Ironically, this even includes the modern Pharisees – the Ultra-orthodox Jews of modern Israel – who worship the Law rather than the Law Giver.

Over the years, God has allowed and instigated various chastisements of Israel to call them temporarily out of their idolatry and back into fellowship with Him – their captivity in Egypt, their 40-year wilderness wandering, their oppressions by the various “-ites” of the Promised Land in the time of the Judges, their Babylonian captivity, their expulsion from the Land by the Romans, the “pogroms” in the lands to which they were exiled, and culminating (for now) in the Nazi Holocaust. We see here in Ezekiel 38-39 that God will use His miraculous defeat of the Magog invasion to bring final and eternal end to mankind’s rebellion – both Jew and Gentile.

Thus, it may very well be that the invasion of Magog foretold in Ezekiel 38-39 will not be an intermediate event at all, but rather the final defeat of Satan we read about in Revelation 20. In trying to gain an understanding of Biblical prophecy, we must always remember that the narratives in God’s Word – particularly the Old Testament – are rarely chronological. Instead, God’s Word focuses on the major themes of history and the future, rather than reporting or foretelling a strict sequence of events. Most importantly, we must always remember that the great theme of the Bible from beginning to end is Jesus’ Gospel. As Martin Luther famously said, “**All** scripture pertains to Christ.”

²⁵“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name. ²⁶They shall forget their shame and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid, ²⁷when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies’ lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations. ²⁸Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. ²⁹And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.” Ezekiel 39:25-29 (ESV)

God’s declaration of His coming restoration of Israel here stands on its own without need of further commentary or exposition. In the words of one of my college math professors whose name I can’t recall, “***It is intuitively obvious to the most casual observer.***”

Summary

Hopefully, we have answered some of the questions on people’s minds regarding the Ezekiel 38-39 prophecy and its relationship with today’s Israel-Hamas War:

Who/Where – It is clear from the names in the prophecy that the invaders will come from Turkey accompanied (or at least supported) by Iran, Ethiopia, and Libya, but notably **not** by Egypt. However, we must not forget that God Himself will ordain and instigate the invasion when it comes. We also

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know that other nations will profit from the war – probably by selling weapons and other military support to the invaders.

How/What/Why – We know that God Himself will instigate the Magog invasion and then supernaturally defeat the Magog invaders by sending fire down upon them. By His supernatural intervention the nations of the world will come to believe and acknowledge the sovereignty of the God of Israel. Furthermore, God will use the invasion and His thwarting of it to bring His chosen people Israel out of rebellion and restore them fully and finally to Himself dwelling in the promised land.

When – However, we can't make any precise determination about when the Magog invasion will take place. We do know a few things about the general time the invasion will come:

1. We know that it will be in “*the latter years*,” but as we have seen that could be any time – starting today.
2. We know that before the invasion, God's people Israel must be restored to the land of promise just as they have been throughout the 20th century.
3. We know that no further Biblical prophecies need to be fulfilled before the invasion – therefore, it could come at any time.
4. We know that God has purposely concealed the precise day and hour the He will fulfill this prophecy as a blessing to protect us from stress and worry.

Instead of fear, the imminent prospect of this invasion that most certainly will one day come should bring a renewed “godly unction” for us to share the Good News of Jesus' Gospel with all we meet who don't yet know Him as their Lord and Savior.