

EZEKIEL 38 AND 39

Part X

by Thomas Ice

Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops—many peoples with you.

—Ezekiel 38:6

There is one final entity listed as among those going down to attack Israel with Gog. Beth-togarmah is the last nation listed.

BETH-TOGARMAH

Beth-togarmah is the English transliteration of two words from the Hebrew text. Beth is the common Hebrew word for “house” or “place of” that is used over two thousand times in the Hebrew Bible.¹ Togarmah is a noun used four times in the Hebrew Bible.² Twice it is used in a genealogy in which Togarmah is said to be a son of Gomer (Gen. 10:3; 1 Chron. 1:6). The final two occurrences are in Ezekiel (27:14; 38:6). The prefix “Beth” occurs only in the two uses in Ezekiel, thus rendering the compound as “house of Togarmah.” Ezekiel 27:14 refers to their trade and says: “Those from Beth-togarmah gave horses and war horses and mules for your wares.” In fact, “Herodotus mentions [Togarmah] as famed for its horses and mules.”³

“Most Bible scholars and scholars of ancient history relate biblical Togarmah to the ancient Hittite city of Tegarma,” notes Mark Hitchcock, “an important city in eastern Cappadocia (modern Turkey).”⁴ Jon Mark Ruthven agrees: “elements of the ‘house of Togarmah’ may have been part of the great 2nd and 1st millennium BCE Japhetic movements far to the north, and assimilated into modern Russia and Turkey.”⁵ Hitchcock traces the migration of Togarmah as follows:

Togarmah was both the name of a district and a city in the border of Tubal in eastern Cappadocia. Togarmah was known variously in history as Tegarma, Tagarma, and Takarama. The ancient Assyrians referred to this city as Til-garimmu. One of the maps of the Cambridge Ancient History locates Til-garimmu on the northeast border of Tubal in the northeast part of modern Turkey. Gesenius, the Hebrew scholar, identified Togarmah as a northern nation abounding in horses and mules, located in ancient Armenia. The ancient area of Armenia is located in the modern nation of Turkey.⁶

“But while scholars have differed slightly on the exact location of ancient Togarmah,” concludes Hitchcock, “it is always associated with a city or district within the boundaries of the modern nation of Turkey.”⁷

It is interesting to note that none of the nations that will go down into Israel with Russia are Arab nations. However, all of the Russian allies are Islamic nations. Iran is not an Arab nation, but instead they are Persian.

THE REMOTE PARTS OF THE NORTH

In this passage Beth-togarmah is said to come from “the remote parts of the north.” This Hebrew phrase is composed of two words. The word for north means what it says, while the word for “remote parts” has the sense of the extreme, “far part,” or most distant part of whatever is being referred to in the context.⁸ When these two words are

combined in a phrase, it is used five times in the Hebrew Bible (Psa. 48:3; Isa. 14:13; Ezek. 38:6, 15; 39:2). The Isaiah use is found in one of the five “I wills” uttered by Satan in his revolt against God. “But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.” The Psalmist says of Jerusalem: “Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion in the far north, the city of the great King.” Mount Zion was on the Northern edge of ancient Jerusalem. The other three uses are found in Ezekiel 38 and 39. The other two references in Ezekiel 38 and 39 refer to Gog and say: “And you will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great assembly and a mighty army” (Ezek. 38:15). “And I shall turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel” (Ezek. 39:2). Therefore, Beth-togarmah is said to come from the remote parts of the north as will Gog who is Russia.

“Doesn’t this statement mean that Togarmah must come from the former Soviet Union since Russia is the farthest geographical point north of Israel,” asks Hitchcock? He says in his answer: “The answer to this question is no. Forcing a geographical location upon Togarmah that is totally inconsistent with the clear witness of ancient history would be grossly twisting the evidence. Moreover, modern Turkey fits the description given because it is clearly to the far north parts of the Promised Land.”⁹

WITH ALL ITS TROOPS

The last part of verse 6 says that Beth-togarmah will come from the north parts “with all its troops—many peoples with you.” The Hebrew word for “troops” is only used six times in the Hebrew Old Testament and all of them are found in Ezekiel (12:14; 17:21; 38:6, 9, 22; 39:4).¹⁰ All but two uses appear in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Some scholars say that this word is related to a “wing” or “parameter,”¹¹ but it clearly is a reference military troops in these contexts. Some suggest that it may connote the troops on the flank or wings of a military unit and would be a Hebrew idem for all of one’s forces. The point would be that if one brings his troops on the wing,¹² then those would include all the forces one could muster. The translation of troops (i.e., military) is the clear meaning of this word.

The final phrase in verse six is clear that the sum total of the house of Togarmah will include many peoples with him. This phrase is found two other times in the Hebrew Bible, both of them in Ezekiel 38 (verses 9 and 15). Verse 9 refers to the entire coalition that will attack Israel, while verse 15 the many peoples refers to the coalition members that are led by Gog. The use of “many peoples with you” in verses 9 and 15 differ slightly from verse 6 since their constructions are prefaced with the use of the “and” conjunction. The use of the phrase in verse 6 does not have a conjunction, which means that the phrase “many peoples with you” is in apposition to the preceding phrase “with all its troops.” Thus, the text is saying that the “many peoples with you” is descriptive of the troops that Beth-togarmah will bring with them in their attack on Israel.

TALKING TURKEY

Having now completed a study of the list of nations that will join the Russian led attack against Israel, we see that four of those names refer to descendants that make up the modern nation of Turkey. Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth-togarmah all strongly point to modern Turkey as a member of the diabolical coalition. But, does Turkey’s involvement seem possible given the alignment of the nations today?

Currently Turkey is not alienated with Russia and Iran since it technically became a secular state with a Muslim heritage after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. Turkey has long been a member of NATO and has desired to identify with Europe rather than Asia, most likely for economic reasons. Turkey is a nation in which a small part of it is in Europe while most of it is in Asia. Turkey has applied for membership in the European Union, however, since membership in the EU would mean that anyone within the Union are able to move freely to any other part of it. The rest of the EU is concerned that if they admit Turkey then it will be a conduit through which Muslims would be able to flood into the rest of Europe. Even though they are still going through the motions of application, it is certain that the EU will eventually reject Turkey's admittance. Once they are rejected, Turkey will seek alignment with Russia and their Islamic brethren.

The last few years has seen an Islamic majority emerge in Turkey's Parliament and an Islamic Prime Minister is now in place. The breakup of the former Soviet Union included the independence of five Islamic republics: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. Hitchcock notes that "Turkey has clearly been drawn to these former Soviet republics for economic reasons, Turkey also shares strong linguistic and ethnic ties with these nations. All of these nations speak Turkic languages with the exception of Tajikistan, where the language is similar to Iranian Farsi."¹³ Turkey sees itself as the economic developer of the vast natural resources like gold, silver, uranium, oil, coal, and natural gas that are found in these five new states. Once Turkey is spurned by Europe, she will have motive enough to enter into league with Russia and their Islamic brethren which will set the stage for the fulfillment of this prophecy. Maranatha!

(To Be Continued . . .)

ENDNOTES

¹ 2,047 times according to a search conducted by the computer program *Accordance*, version 7.3.

² Based upon a search conducted by the computer program *Accordance*, version 7.3.

³ S. Fisch, *Ezekiel: Hebrew Text & English translation with an Introduction and Commentary* (London: The Soncino Press, 1950), p. 182.

⁴ Mark Hitchcock, *After The Empire: Bible Prophecy in Light of the Fall of the Soviet Union* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1994), p. 63.

⁵ Jon Mark Ruthven, *The Prophecy That Is Shaping History: New Research on Ezekiel's Vision of the End* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2003), p. 102.

⁶ Hitchcock, *After The Empire*, pp. 63-64.

⁷ Hitchcock, *After The Empire*, p. 64.

⁸ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, electronic version (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2000).

⁹ Hitchcock, *After The Empire*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁰ Based upon a search conducted by the computer program *Accordance*, version 7.3.

¹¹ Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew Lexicon*.

¹² C. F. Keil, *Ezekiel, Daniel, Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 161.

¹³ Hitchcock, *After The Empire*, p. 66.