

EZEKIEL 38 AND 39
Part XVIII
by Thomas Ice

“And the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground. And I shall call for a sword against him on all My mountains,” declares the Lord GOD. “Every man’s sword will be against his brother. And with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him; and I shall rain on him, and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone. And I shall magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD.”

—Ezekiel 38:20–23

As a result of the earthquake within the land of Israel in verse 19, verse 20 reflects the corresponding realization of the Lord’s greatness throughout heaven and earth. In all three spheres—land, sea and air—creatures within God’s creation will reverence the Lord’s display of His power on behalf of His elect nation Israel.

SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL

The normal order of things within the sea, land and heavens will be greatly disturbed by the tremendous display within Israel by the Lord. The text characterizes human reaction to God’s display in Israel when it says, “all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence.” “The order will be, first, earthquake, then anarchy, pestilence and natural disasters,” notes Charles Feinberg. “God’s violent shaking of the earth will affect every area of nature, both animate and inanimate.”¹ Gog attacks Israel armed to the hilt but God merely shakes the earth a little and they are totally wiped out. It is clear from this passage that Israel and their excellent, modern military (including nuclear weapons) have nothing to do with the destruction of Gog and his allies.

The last three phrases in verse 20 describe in more detail the “earthquake in the land of Israel.” As a result of that quake, “the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground.” Earlier Gog’s invasion is noted as taking place on “the mountains of Israel” (verse 8). A passage way or path is needed for an army to make it past the mountains of Israel in order to gain entrance into the heartland. In the modern state of Israel’s wars, this has been a stumbling stone for the Syrians and other Arab armies in their attacks on Israel. They have had great difficulty getting through those mountains. However, in this invasion, it is God, not the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) that will completely destroy the enemy, as the Lord’s earthquake will literally pull the rug out from under the invaders. This will no doubt destroy a great portion of the invaders.

FRIENDLY FIRE

In modern warfare when someone accidentally kills someone on your own side it is called "friendly fire." I recently read that on the modern battlefield of today, because of the great firepower of modern armies, that about 20% of deaths are due to friendly fire. Verse 21 clearly says that the only killing to be done by Gog's invaders of Israel will be that of massacring their fellow troops. "'And I shall call for a sword against him on all My mountains,' declares the Lord GOD. 'Every man's sword will be against his brother.'" Apparently in the confusion generated by the Lord's earthquake and great shaking of the mountains of Israel, Gog's armies will experience a whole lot of friendly fire as the Lord confuses them and they turn upon one another.

Imagine the great embarrassment and humiliation that Gog's constituents back home experience when they learn that the IDF did not even engage this great army, they did not have to since many of them killed each other. Upon further examination Gog's allies will learn that it was really the God of Israel that they went up against. They did not have a chance! But that is not the only means the Lord will use to defeat the invaders.

GOD BUGS GOG

This year (2008) the father of so-called "Jesus Rock" or "Contemporary Christian Music," Larry Norman died. I used to listen to him in the early 1970s and one of my favorite songs that he did was one simply called "Moses." The song is about Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. There is a verse in that song that goes as follows:

Moses knew that God was taking to him,
so he set off to Egypt with a vigor and vim,
and Moses bugged the Pharaoh—he bugged him,
and he bugged him,
till he got his people free.
He used real bugs!²

Just as God used real bugs to bug the Pharaoh at the Exodus, once again, He will use real bugs and pestilence to bug Gog and his armies, but this time to keep His people free from invasion. In addition to the earthquake and friendly fire, the Lord will use other means of defeating Israel enemy as indicated in verse 22. "And with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him; and I shall rain on him, and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone."

The Hebrew noun for "pestilence" is used of a plague, like the bubonic plague which can be caused by something like an insect sting.³ However, in this case, it is not bugs causing the sickness but it is God who bugs them. Used in conjunction with pestilence is the Hebrew noun for "blood," which in this context refers to "blood shed violently,"⁴ as the judgment of God. The main verb governing all of the actions of verse 22 is the Hebrew word for "judgment." Thus, all of the pestilence, torrential rain, hailstones, fire, and brimstone are said to be the judgment of God upon Gog and his company of invaders. The first half of the verse tells us that the Lord will enter into judgment with the invaders by using the means of pestilence that will cause the bloodshed or death of Gog's army. The second half of the verse appears to be the different types of pestilence that will cause death to the enemies of God and Israel. As in the Exodus, the Lord miraculously sends down the torrential rain, hailstones, fire,

and brimstone upon the invaders as they attack Israel. Likely the hailstones will target specific individuals of the enemy as in Revelation 16:21. Also, not just brimstone, but fire also will fall from heaven and target individuals. Fire and brimstone was said to be the only items used to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24), but here we have fire mixed with torrential rain. This will be an amazing combination of pestilence that causes the death of Israel invaders. I wonder if there will be a vote in the United Nations or a similar body to condemn God because of this event?

GOD'S GLORY

Gog will arrogantly attack Israel with visions of his own glory. However, it will be God who will obtain great notoriety from the event. Verse 23 says, "And I shall magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD."

There will be three specific things accomplished by the Lord as a result of His defeat of this company of armies attacking His land Israel. The three lessons are taught by the use of three Hebrew verbs. First, God shall "magnify" Himself through these events, as express by the hithpael or reflexive-intensive use of *gadel*. The root word *gadel* means, "to become great." In the hithpael stem it has the sense of "to make oneself great" or "to prove to be great."⁵ This is exactly what the Lord God of Israel will do when He will defeat, all by Himself, this vast army descending upon Israel. He will add this proof to a long list of other items from the past (for example, creation, the flood, the exodus, etc.) in which He has proven Himself great in time-space history.

Second, *qadosh*, another hithpael stem verb is used. The root word *qadosh* is believed to mean, "to cut" and thus carries the basic meaning of "to set apart" for special use. The term "holy" is associated with *qadosh* and conveys the idea of setting apart something from common use in order to use it on special occasions. The hithpael stem as used in this passage would mean, "to show or demonstrate One as holy."⁶ In the context of this passage it is saying that the Lord God has demonstrated to the world that He is Holy, separated from everyone else in a special way, and that He is the unique and only God since no one else can do what He just did to Israel's enemies.

Third, *yadah* is a widely used Hebrew verb that means "to know" or "to come to know," usually through experience or interaction with someone or something. In this instance, *yadah* occurs in the niph'al stem, which is the simple passive or reflexive sense.⁷ Therefore, in this context it conveys the sense that God wants the world to come to know or realize that He is the Lord God of Israel as a result of these events. Maranatha!

(To Be Continued . . .)

ENDNOTES

¹ Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), pp. 225–26.

² Larry Norman, "Moses," *Upon This Rock* (New York: Capitol Records, 1969).

³ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, electronic version (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2000).

⁴ Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew Lexicon*, electronic version.

⁵ Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew Lexicon*, electronic version.

⁶ Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew Lexicon*, electronic version.

⁷ Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew Lexicon*, electronic version.