

EZEKIEL 38 AND 39

Part IX

by Thomas Ice

Persia, Ethiopia, and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops — many peoples with you.

—Ezekiel 38:5–6

Verses five and six complete the allies that will attack Israel with their leader Gog. The identity of the first ally appears to be very clear since its ancient name is widely known down through history, even in our own day. Persia refers to the Persian people who make up a majority of the modern country of Iran. There is consensus among futurists that historic Persia clearly refers to modern Iran. “The name Persia, which was written all over the pages of ancient history, was changed to Iran in foreign usage in March 1935,”¹ notes Mark Hitchcock.

IRAN AND RUSSIA

Anyone following the news headlines the last few years certainly are aware of the warm relationship between Russia and Iran. Russia has been a supplier of many of the elements Iran wants in order to develop a nuclear bomb. It is clear that Iran aspires to control the entire Middle East so that they can spread their view of Islam in order to reunite the Muslim world under a single authority, an Iranian rule. We have all heard that their President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has said on multiple occasions that he aspires to wipe Israel off of the map. For the last fifteen years, every Israeli administration has repeatedly said that Iran is Israel’s greatest threat. Today many wonder if Israel will be moved to act preemptively, perhaps with the help of the United States, to take out Iran’s nuclear capability before it is fully realized. We will certainly know the answer before President George W. Bush leaves office in January 2009, since it is unlikely that a new President would be involved in such an adventure.

Iran very likely could be the key ally in the Russian led invasion of Israel in the last days. Perhaps Iran will take advantage of the new bellicose posture of Russian President Valdimir Putin is reinstalling toward the West, especially the United States. No matter how these future events unfold there is no doubt that Russian and Iran are developing the type of relationship that could easily lead to just such an invasion of Israel as the prophet Ezekiel has foretold.²

ETHIOPIA

The New American Standard translation which I use translates the Hebrew word *Cush* as Ethiopia. Many English translations have transliterated it from the Hebrew into the English word “Cush.” *Cush* occurs 29 times in the Hebrew Bible.³ Genesis 2:13 refers to an antediluvian land named Cush. Three times in the table of nations it refers to Cush who is a descendant of Ham. Most of the other uses occur in Isaiah and Ezekiel (13 times) and refer to the same region mentioned in Ezekiel 28:5. One Hebrew lexicon says that Cush refers to “the lands of the Nile in southern Egypt, meaning Nubia and Northern Sudan, the country bordering the southern Red Sea.”⁴ Another tells us that Cush “refers to the region immediately south and east of Egypt, including modern Nubia, the Sudan, and the Ethiopia of classical writers.”⁵ Thus, the Bible clearly locates Cush just south of Egypt in what is the modern nation of Sudan.

Today Sudan is one of the most militant Islamic nations in the world. Hitchcock notes, "that the modern nation of Sudan is one of only three Muslim nation in the world with a militant Islamic government."⁶ I was surprised to also learn that "Sudan is the largest nation in territory on the African continent and has a population of 26 million." It is interesting to realize that Iran and Sudan have become the closest of allies during the last twenty years. They have entered into trade agreements, military alliances, and Iran also operates terrorist training bases in Sudan.⁷ Sudan also is the place that protected Osama bin Laden from 1991 to 1996 until he went to Afghanistan.⁸ Based upon current alignment of nations that we see today it is not at all surprising to think that Sudan will be a Southern ally that descends upon the land of Israel in the last days with Russia, Iran and others.

PUT

Put is another transliteration from the Hebrew and occurs only seven times in the Old Testament.⁹ Twice it is used in a genealogy that says that Put is a descendant of Ham (Gen. 10:6; 1 Chron. 1:8). The other five times it is used in the Prophets to refer to Put as a nation, usually in a military context as we have in Ezekiel 38. A Hebrew lexicon says, "probably not the same as Put but Libya."¹⁰ "From the ancient *Babylon Chronicle* it appears that Putu was the 'distant' land to the west of Egypt, which would be modern day Libya."¹¹ "In the invasion," notes Randall Price, "these countries will be joined by other nations (38:5) that represent the other three directions of the compass: Persia (modern Iran) from the east, Cush (northern Sudan) from the south, and Put (modern Libya) from the west."¹²

Just like Iran and Sudan, Libya is a radical Islamic nation headed by strong man Colonel Mu' ammar al-Gadhafi. Like Iran, Gadhafi has tried to develop nuclear weapons in the past, but claims to have given up all attempts to produce them. "Ever since the rise of Colonel Mu' ammar al-Gadhafi to power in 1969," notes Hitchcock. "The nation of Libya has been a constant source of trouble and terrorism for both the West and Israel. Libya would certainly jump at the chance to join forces with the Sudan, Iran, Turkey, and the former Muslim republics of the Soviet Union to crush the Jewish state."¹³

DRESSED TO KILL

Verse five ends with the statement: "all of them with shield and helmet." We saw in verse four that the Hebrew word for "shield" (*sinna*) refers to a "large shield covering the whole body."¹⁴ In verse four it said, "a great company with buckler and shield," however, in verse five it says, "with shield and helmet." The Hebrew word for helmet is (*koba'*) and refers to a "helmet," usually made of bronze.¹⁵ All six uses¹⁶ of this word in the Hebrew Old Testament refer to a metal helmet worn by a soldier for military conflict. Thus, this passage emphasizes the fact that "all" of the invaders are well outfitted in military attire for their invasion into the land of Israel. Price says that this passage paints a picture where, "Israel will be defenseless and 'surrounded' on all sides by its enemies."¹⁷

GOMER

The transliterated name Gomer occurs five times in the Hebrew Old Testament,¹⁸ not counting those that refer to the wayward wife of Hosea. Every use except the one in Ezekiel occurs in a genealogy (Gen. 10:2, 3; 1 Chron. 1:5, 6). Gomer is said to be a son of Japheth in the table of nations (Gen. 10:2; 1 Chron. 1:5). The issue is where do the

modern day descendants of Gomer now reside? “His descendants are usually identified as the Cimmerians who moved onto the stage of history from the area north of the Black Sea in the eighth century B.C.”¹⁹ Jon Ruthven has a map in which he places Gomer and his descendants as having settled in the area north of the Black and Caspian Seas.²⁰ However, the descendants of Gomer were pushed out of that area and into “the area of Cappadocia, which today is in central and north-central Turkey. Josephus identified the people of Galatia with Gomer. He says that the people the Greeks called the Galatians were the Gomerites.”²¹ Today these “Gomerites” live in the west-central part of Turkey. Therefore, the descendants of Gomer along with some other peoples we have yet to consider indicate that modern Turkey will be part of those who invade the land of Israel.

The passage says, “Gomer with all its troops.” It is already clear from prior statements in this prophecy that many nations will be coming down on Israel and the descendants of Gomer will be with them. Maranatha!

(To Be Continued . . .)

ENDNOTES

¹ Mark Hitchcock, *After The Empire: Bible Prophecy in Light of the Fall of the Soviet Union* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1994), p. 72.

² For a couple of more recent books that focus on the current events of the Gog and Magog invasion see Mark Hitchcock, *Iran The Coming Crisis: Radical Islam, Oil, And The Nuclear Threat* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006), and Joel C. Rosenberg, *Epicenter: Why The Current Rumbblings in The Middle East Will Change Your Future* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006).

³ Based upon a search conducted by the computer program *Accordance*, version 7.3.

⁴ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, electronic version (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2000).

⁵ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), vol. 1, p. 435.

⁶ Hitchcock, *After The Empire*, p. 79. At least that was the case in 1994.

⁷ Hitchcock, *After The Empire*, pp. 79–83.

⁸ Hitchcock, *Iran The Coming Crisis*, p. 185.

⁹ Based upon a search conducted by the computer program *Accordance*, version 7.3.

¹⁰ Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew Lexicon*, electronic version.

¹¹ Hitchcock, *Iran The Coming Crisis*, p. 185.

¹² Randall Price, “Ezekiel,” in Tim LaHaye & Ed Hindson, editors, *The Popular Bible Prophecy Commentary: Understanding the Meaning of Every Prophetic Passage* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2006), p. 191.

¹³ Hitchcock, *After The Empire*, pp. 85–86.

¹⁴ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford, 1907), electronic edition.

¹⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew Lexicon*, electronic edition.

¹⁶ Based upon a search conducted by the computer program *Accordance*, version 7.3.

¹⁷ Price, “Ezekiel,” p. 191.

¹⁸ Based upon a search conducted by the computer program *Accordance*, version 7.3.

¹⁹ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, vol. 1, p. 168.

²⁰ Jon Mark Ruthven, *The Prophecy That Is Shaping History: New Research on Ezekiel’s Vision of the End* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2003), p. 81.

²¹ Hitchcock, *After The Empire*, p. 62.