

Chapter 12 Israel

Introduction. The Bible prophesies of coming “travails” for Israel in the Tribulation period of the Last Days. One of those conflicts is led by a “Gog,” the commander of an alliance of nations from the “remote north” as well as from nations of the Middle East, Asia Minor, and Africa. In the end, Gog and his armies are defeated, but only after Jerusalem is “trampled” for 42 months. In Gog’s eventual destruction, the nations of the world are made aware that there is none other God than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and, Israel is made aware that Jesus of Nazareth whom they rejected 2000 years ago was, and is, their Promised One, the Messiah, and Savior of the world!

This chapter will interpret the prophecy of Ezekiel 38 - 39 as well as related prophecies of the Last Days, many of which focus on Israel. Specifically, who is “Gog,” and who are the nations included in his military alliance? How is God revealed in Gog’s destruction? How does Israel come to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah and Lord? This chapter will seek to provide an answer to these questions. It will also propose a “Pre-Tribulation” conquest by a nation of the Middle East that will bring most of the nations of the Middle East under the dominion of this conquering nation and its “king.” This Pre-Tribulation conquest will begin with the conquest of Saudi Arabia as interpreted in our prior chapter. The combination of the Saudis destruction plus three other nations, puts the nations of the world, including Israel, in such desperate chaos that they will enter into a 7 year “Treaty” with this conquering nation. Because of the length of this particular topic, this chapter is broken into four parts. Part 1 will introduce and identify “Gog.” Part 2 will identify the nations that make up Gog’s Alliance. Part 3 will discuss a “Pre-Tribulation” conquest present in Last Day’s Bible prophecies. Part 4 will identify and support the conclusion that Iran (and Shi`ah Islam) is the aggressor nation in the Middle East in the Last Days.

A Word About Interpretation Method. Before we begin Ezekiel 38/39, we need mention a slight adaptation to our method of interpreting prophecy. In our prior chapters, we have interpreted passages in Daniel and Revelation by identifying and interpreting the “beasts” and symbols as metaphors, first, but with a literal meaning behind the metaphor. The message of Ezekiel 38/39 is certainly prophetic. Its message tells of conflicts in the future days, the “latter years” (Ezekiel 38:8), for the people of Israel. Yet, the message that the prophet delivers is not filled with beasts and cryptic language that we found in Daniel and Revelation. We might say it is without “apocalyptic symbolism.” The nations included in the message were all historical nations that existed in the time of Ezekiel’s message and are included in the prophecy without the use of “beasts” or “heads” or “horns.” That being the case, if we go to the scripture first looking for metaphor rather than literal meaning, we will misinterpret the prophecy. We will interpret this passage (and all other passages in Ezekiel 38/39) literally because the text gives us no reason to do otherwise. This prophecy is *without metaphor in its language*; so we must not add metaphor that is not there.

Part 1 - Introduction and Who is “Gog”?

The opening verses of Ezekiel 38 will begin our interpretation of the most difficult days in the history of humanity:

Ezekiel 38:1 "And the word of the Lord came to me saying, 2 "Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3 and say, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal."

Who is Gog? The name "Gog" first appears in 1 Chronicles 5:4:

1 Chronicles 5:4 "The sons of Joel were Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son, 5 Micah his son, Reaiah his son, Baal his son, 6 Beerah his son, whom Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria carried away into exile; he was leader of the Reubenites."

The text tells us that Gog was one of the "sons of Joel." Joel was a descendant of Reuben. Reuben was the first born son of Jacob, patriarch of the Jewish nation, and father of the twelve sons who made up the twelve tribes of Israel. The significance of the first born son was that the largest portion of the family's inheritance was left to the first born son. Reuben forfeited his first born share by virtue of a sexual sin committed against his father when he slept with his father's concubine (Gen 35:22, 49:3-4). Consequently, it was not through Reuben's heirs that Jesus was born, but through the line of Judah, fourth son of Jacob. No other information about "Gog" is given to us, either historically or biblically; and, no connection is ever made between Gog of 1 Chronicles and Gog of Ezekiel 38/39. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that any significance should be placed on the use of the name "Gog" in 1 Chronicles 5 and "Gog" of Ezekiel 38 and 39. The two texts are referring to two different individuals who just happen to have the same name. If this were not the case, the text would give us information to compare the two and make a conclusion based on common factors.

Gog is a specific individual. In Ezekiel, "Gog" does not refer to a nation but a specific individual. Notice the many references in Ezekiel that use a personal pronoun or similar word or phrase when referring to "Gog" :

Ezekiel 38:2 "Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, . . . , and prophesy against him 3 and say, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, 4 "I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, . . . 7 "Be prepared, and prepare yourself, you and all your companies that are assembled about you, . . . 10 'Thus says the Lord God, "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan, 11 and you will say, 'I will go up . . . I will go against those who are at rest, . . . , to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, . . . 15 "You will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, . . . ; (Emphasis added)

There are other references in Ezekiel 38 and 39 that similarly describe "Gog" as an individual (he dies, for one). All are sufficient to conclude that the text is referring to a specific individual, not a nation, and, as we will see, certainly not a spiritual being.

Is Gog the "Antichrist?" A popular view regarding Gog of Ezekiel 38 is that he is actually the Antichrist, an individual possessing supernatural abilities prophesied by the Bible to appear in the Last Days. The Antichrist/false prophet is prophesied to deceive and dominate the world and to lead the world in a forced conversion to a false religion (Daniel 7:24-25, Revelation 13:7,

11). If Gog were the Antichrist, then he would be the “false prophet” that we have previously identified as Islam’s coming al-Mahdi. This interpreter does not interpret Gog as Antichrist for the following primary reasons.

1. The Antichrist (as “false prophet”) will be able to perform the supernatural. Gog will not. The text of Ezekiel 38 and 39 makes no mention of Gog being able to perform the supernatural (the Antichrist/false prophet will be able to do so. Revelation 13:11, 2 Thessalonians 2:9). In addition, the text makes no mention of Gog “exalting himself as God,” another antichrist characteristic (2 Thessalonians 2:4-5; Revelation 13, 17, Daniel 7:25). Ezekiel 38 and 39 characterize Gog as the commander of a military (Ezekiel 38:7).

2. The Antichrist will force the world to worship the “1st beast,” the false god of a false religion. Gog leads no one to worship a deity, false or otherwise. We have discussed the role of the Antichrist/false prophet as that of “pointing” the world to the “first beast” (Revelation 13:12). The Antichrist/false prophet, the 2nd beast of Revelation 13, forces submission to the 1st beast, who we have interpreted to be Allah. Allah will be worshiped by the world; and he will use his followers to dominate and overcome the world (Revelation 13:7-8; Daniel 7:23). Satan will experience worship, indirectly, through the world’s worship of Allah (Revelation 13:2, 4). Ezekiel 38 and 39 are absent of any mention of Gog forcing the worship of a deity, false or otherwise. As will be discussed more fully below, Gog’s focus is not religious in nature, but on material gain, i.e., to capture “spoil” (Ezekiel 38:10-12).

Gog does not fulfill this aspect of antichrist prophecy. He does not force the world to worship a deity.

3. Gog fails as Antichrist by what he does not do. The “antichrist” is defined in 1 John 2:18, 22-23, 4:2-3. The antichrist “identifiers” previously noted were:

- The Antichrist (and the “spirit of antichrist”) will deny Jesus as the crucified, risen “Messiah” (1 John 2:22), and savior of the world;
- The Antichrist (and the “spirit of antichrist”) will deny Jesus as Divine, that is, the literal, only begotten, Son of God conceived by the “seed” of God (1 John 2:22-23);
- The Antichrist (and the “spirit of antichrist”) will deny Jesus’ humanity (1 John 4:2-3).

Ezekiel 38/39 (as well as Revelation 20:7-8) is absent of any mention of Gog committing any of these “Christ-denials.” Therefore, Gog cannot be “identified” as the Antichrist because he does not deny Christ. This fact alone is sufficient to rule out Gog as the Antichrist.

4. Gog’s leadership of the military Alliance is absent of any mention of a religious motivation for the attack against Israel. As stated, Gog’s “evil purpose” (Ezekiel 38:10) is about securing financial gain (Ezekiel 38:12-13). He does not attack Israel to gain the “holy land” (Ezekiel 5:5, 38:12-13). He has no interest in the Temple Mount or its sanctuaries. Gog’s battle is not launched against Israel because of who Israel is in relation to God, nor because of the spiritual significance that Jerusalem holds to Christians, Jews, or Muslims. Gog does not attempt to reclaim the Temple Mount or its sanctuaries because of its faith significance. Gog’s battle is absent of any spiritual motivation. This is very significant. If Gog were the Antichrist/false prophet, his activities would be specifically directed against the saints, the holy people (Jews), or against the beloved city because of *who they are in relationship to God*; and

against the beloved city because of what it means to the followers of the world's three greatest religions.

This factor also helps us in a related question. *Gog is not Muslim*. We conclude this because the "land" of Israel is not the motivation for Gog's assault (this doesn't mean those in his Alliance are not motivated by the land. The text is absent of their motivation, but not absent for Gog's motivation). Israel became a "state" in 1948 and the land returned to Israel, according to U.N. mandate. If Gog were a Muslim, the land would be a key motivator for him. Islam considers lands acquired in conquest to be permanently their possession even if at a later date, Islam becomes the conqueror. The territory is called "dar al-Islam" once it comes under the sovereignty of Islam:

"An essential part of the doctrine of jihad is the division of the world into the "territory of Islam" ("dar al-Islam") and the "territory of war" ("dar al-harb"). . . The decisive factor for ascertaining whether a region belongs to the dar al-Islam is Muslim sovereignty and the application of the shariah. If these do not exist in a region occupied by unbelievers, it is to be considered dar al-harb." 1

The significance of the land being "dar al-harb" is that it is subject to jihad and, to Muslims, "destined to come under Islamic jurisdiction, either by war (harb) or by the conversions of their inhabitants."² Ezekiel 38 or 39 is absent of any mention of a religious motivation for Gog's war against Israel or Israel's land. If Gog were the Antichrist/false prophet, a religious motivation would be present.

5. Gog dies and is buried. The Antichrist does not. Ezekiel 38:11 states that Gog dies along with his army. He is buried in the land of Israel along with his troops. Gog cannot be the Antichrist/false prophet, the dragon, or the first beast. These were three members of the "trinity of evil" discussed in earlier chapters. None of these three die. They are thrown alive into the Lake of Fire (Rev 19:20, 20:10). The three members of this group do not die because they are spiritual beings, not human beings. The Antichrist/false prophet may "indwell" a human being, but he is not a human being (hard to tell what he is. He's been "alive" for 1200 years). We have identified the "1st beast" as Allah; the 2nd beast as Islam's coming al-Mahdi who submits to the 1st beast; and Satan as the demonic prince of the world to which both submit. If there were a fourth demonic being, he would be judged in the same manner as the trinity of evil is judged. There is none.

Conclusion. Gog is a specific human being. He cannot be the Antichrist because he fails to meet the Biblical definition of Antichrist on multiple accounts.

Are "Gog" and "Magog" of Revelation 20:8 (Satan is "released from his 1000 year prison term" in this passage), the same as "Gog" and "Magog" of Ezekiel 38/39? The third and final time that "Gog" appears in scripture is in Revelation 20:8. The text provides:

Revelation 20:7 "And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured

them.”

At the conclusion of this 1000 year bondage, satan is *released for one final judgment*. Once again, he gathers the nations together for battle. The text fails to give us the reason satan has been able to deceive the nations, notwithstanding the 1000 year Reign of Christ and His Church (Rev 20:4-6). But these nations are not the same nations as Gog’s Alliance of Ezekiel 38 even though the words “Gog and Magog” appear again. Here is why we can conclude they are different.

1. ***The initiator of the two conflicts is different.*** Revelation 20:7 states that *it is satan* that initiates a deception over “Gog and Magog” to gather them for war against the “saints and the beloved city.” Conversely, Ezekiel 38:15-16, 39:1-2 states that *it is God* that initiates Gog’s conflict against Israel. These two conflicts cannot be the same if they have different initiators.
2. ***The purpose of the two conflicts is different.*** As we will see below, in Ezekiel 38 - 39, the purpose of the conflict has a divine, redeeming purpose. That is, God will use the conflict to reveal Himself to the entire world and to redeem His covenant people, Israel. This is the same purpose that the entire book of Ezekiel focuses on: *that through the fulfillment of prophecy, God will be revealed as the Lord God*. The prophet Ezekiel uses the phrase “*you will know that I am the Lord*” twenty-five times in the book of Ezekiel. When the prophecy is fulfilled, the people of Israel “*will know that I am the Lord.*” This prophecy was fulfilled in 586 BC when Israel was defeated by the Babylonians and Jerusalem was completely destroyed. The prophecy of Gog has yet to be fulfilled. Yet, the destruction of Gog and his military Alliance will have a similar redeeming purpose; but it will not be Israel that will be judged. Rather, Gog and his Alliance of nations will be judged. In the process, the nations “*will know that I am the Lord.*” God will use the miracle of this judgment to reveal Himself.

Not so in Revelation 20. In Revelation 20, satan is released from his 1000 year imprisonment, along with his two companions, the beast and the false prophet, *to deceive once again*. The nations that are deceived are not Muslim nations; rather, they are the unbelieving world that has somehow not followed Christ in spite of His 1000 year Millennial reign. These nations will be deceived by satan so as to bring them to a final battle. Following satan’s brief deception of the nations, satan will be judged for his actions in the Lake of Fire, where he will remain forever, and the final judgment will take place (Revelation 20).

Therefore, the divine will in each passage is different. Both are fulfilled, but both in different ways. In Ezekiel 38/39, the divine will is fulfilled as God is revealed to the nations of the world, and Israel is redeemed. In Revelation 20, the divine will is fulfilled as satan is ultimately judged the final time for his lies and deceptions. Two separate events and two separate fulfillments. How then can the two events be the same?

3. ***The military forces of Gog and Magog are different.*** The conflict of Revelation 20:7 gathers the nations of the whole earth against the saints and the beloved city. The phrase “four corners of the earth” encompasses *the entire world*. “Four corners” communicates the “whole part” not a portion of the whole.³ A similar phrase is used in Revelation 7 as follows:

Revelation 7:1 *"After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree."*

Both passages use the phrase "four corners of the earth" to refer to the entire earth. The text is not referring to a region or even one or more continents. There are seven continents in the world: the "four corners of the world" symbolizes all of them or, at a minimum, the militaries of the nations that encompass the whole world! Conversely, Ezekiel 38/39 specifically locates the Russian coalition to the "remote north." How is it possible that the nations from the "remote north" (Ezekiel 38 and 39 above) are the same nations as those described as from the "four corners of the earth" (Revelation 20:7)? They cannot be!

Conclusion: Gog and Magog of Revelation 20:8 and Gog and Magog of Ezekiel 38/39 are not the same. They are two completely separate prophetic events separated by the 1000 year reign of Christ wherein satan is bound.

Is the Battle of Ezekiel 38/39 the same as the Battle of Armageddon described in Revelation 16 and 19? An important question is whether or not the conflict described in Ezekiel 38/39 is the same as that described in Rev 16:12-16 and 19:11-21. It is the view of this writer that they are the same. Here are the similarities:

1. Both battles are initiated by God and set in motion by God's wrath. In Revelation 16, the six bowls of wrath are all poured out by the angels of God to initiate God's ensuing wrath. The Battle of Armageddon is the 6th bowl poured out, and it is poured out at the initiative of God. Likewise, Ezekiel 38:18-19 describes Gog's conflict as initiated at the "wrath of God."
2. Israel comes to faith in Jesus following both battles. Ezekiel's text prophesies of an important future event, the salvation of Israel:

Ezekiel 39:25 *"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. . . . 28 "Then they will know that I am the Lord their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. 29 "I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," declares the Lord God."* (Emphasis added)

Notice the 29th verse above: it states: *"I [God] will no longer hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured forth of My Spirit upon the House of Israel."* The fulfillment of this prophecy can only take place, according to scripture, when Israel proclaims Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord; (Luke 13:34-35). Israel must repent of the sin of unbelief before God will demonstrate His favor by "pouring out His Spirit upon the house of Israel," and no longer "hiding His face."

The Old Testament warned of Israel's rejection of the Messiah:

Isaiah 53:3 *"He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."* (Emphasis added)

And prophesied of their repentance of this event:

Zechariah 12:10 "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn." (Emphasis added)

In Zechariah 12:10 above the people are mourning in the midst of God's grace. Why? The people are mourning because they will realize at the second of Jesus Christ that they missed Him the first time:

Zechariah 13:6 "And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will say, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'" (Emphasis added)

Likewise, a New Testament passage describes Israel's rejection of Christ at His first coming:

John 1:9 "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."

Here are other New Testament passages that prophesy that Israel will continue to reject Christ as their Messiah until the "time of the Gentiles" is fulfilled, i.e., the time beginning with the 1st coming of Christ and continuing until the Gentiles believers are raptured. Following the time of the Gentiles, Israel's sins will be taken away:

Luke 21:2 "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." (Emphasis added)

Romans 11:25 "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The deliverer will come from Zion , He will remove ungodliness from Jacob." 27 "This is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins." (Emphasis added)

Luke 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! . . . you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Emphasis added)

What event will bring Israel to the point that it repents of its rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? When they see with the naked eye Jesus Christ's return and experience personal deliverance from the "trampling of the Holy City" by the Gentiles (Rev 11:2). There is no other time in the history of Israel, post Jesus Christ, wherein Israel is spiritually restored. Luke 13:35, "you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

Here is how Revelation 19:11 describes Christ's return:

Revelation 19:11 "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. . . 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. . . . 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, . . . 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. . ." (Emphasis added)

Revelation does likewise:

Revelation 1:7 "*Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.*" (Emphasis added)

The time of rejoicing by Israel begins when she receives Jesus as Lord. Following the 2nd coming, Christ will then establish the Millennial Reign of His Church (Revelation 20:4). The Jews will witness the miracle of the return of Christ. They will witness the miracle of His defeat of Gog and His Alliance. In the process, they will come to know the reality of what God has done for them in Jesus Christ; and, they shall be saved – "all Israel" will be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (Romans 11:26). Thus, Ezekiel 38/39 and Revelation 19:11 must be describing the same battle for both events conclude with Israel coming to salvation.

Part 2 - The Nations Included in Gog's Alliance

The identity of the nations of Gog's Alliance. We have interpreted Gog to be an individual. Now we look to identify the nations he will lead against Israel.

Entire books have been written on Ezekiel 38 and 39 and the identity of the nations in Gog's Alliance. It is not the purpose of this writing to summarize all of the possible views on the identity of the members of Gog's Alliance. Interested readers have many other sources available should this be their intent. One resource this writer has found most helpful is that of Douglas Berner, "*The Silence is Broken, God Hooks Ezekiel's Gog & Magog.*" This work is recommended as a good survey of the different views that have been offered for Ezekiel 38 and 39.

Here is the text that includes the nations in Gog's Alliance. Notice that there are three separate groupings or "divisions" in Gog's Alliance, and possibly a fourth:

Ezekiel 38:1 "*And the word of the Lord came to me saying, 2 "Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him . . . ; 5 Persia, Ethiopia and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet; 6 Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops— many peoples with you. . . . 13 "Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages will say to you, 'Have you come to capture spoil? Have you assembled your company to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?'"*

The nations or groups comprising Gog's Alliance can be grouped into these four divisions:

1. *Those nations from the "land of Magog" (38:2-3; 39:1), led by Gog, its "prince" (38:3, 39:1):*
 - Rosh (interprets "Rosh" as proper noun as discussed below), Meshech, and Tubal (38:2-3; 39:1)
2. *Other nations specifically named in Gog's Alliance:*
 - Persia (38:5);
 - Ethiopia (38:5)
 - Put (38:5);
 - Gomer (38:6);
 - Beth-togarmah (38:6);
3. *"Many peoples with you" (38:6).*
4. *Possible additional allies in Gog's Alliance:*
 - Sheba (38:13);
 - Dedan (38:13);
 - Merchants of Tarshish with its "young lions" (or villages) (38:13).

Of this list, those that have been identified with near consensus by Bible scholars include:

- Persia - interpreted as modern day Iran;⁴
- Ethiopia (Cush) - interpreted as modern day Ethiopia (Africa), including Sudan to its north;⁵
- Put - interpreted as modern day Libya (Africa);⁶ alternatively, some have interpreted as Somali and Yemen;⁷ and some have interpreted as Asia Minor (Turkey);⁸
- Gomer - interpreted as modern day Turkey;⁹
- Beth-togarmah - interpreted as modern day Armenia and parts of eastern Turkey and northwestern Iran.¹⁰
- Sheba - interpreted as modern day Yemen (Arabian Peninsula);¹¹
- Dedan - interpreted as southeastern Arabia; or, perhaps, a neighboring country to Sheba in Arabia on the Persian Gulf; Sheba and Dedan were brothers through Raamah (Gen 10:7), and his father, Cush.¹²

We will now identify those nations in Gog's Alliance where consensus is lacking as well as discuss Gomer and Beth-togarmah, two important allies in Gog's Alliance.

The Land of Magog - Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. The text tells us that "Gog" is from the "land of Magog" (38:2). Unfortunately, we are immediately thrown into a quandary about Gog's identity. The translation of a Hebrew word in the 2nd verse is the subject of disagreement among Bible scholars. The word is "rosh," the literal meaning of which is "chief" or "head."¹³ In Ezekiel's context, "rosh" can be interpreted in one of two ways:

- 1st - as an adjective that describes the type of prince that Gog is: that is, a "*chief*" prince.
- 2nd - as a proper noun, that is, the name of a particular person, place, or thing (initial letter capitalized).

The New International Version (along with the Revised Standard Version and the English Standard Bible) interprets "rosh" using the first approach, i.e, "rosh" is an adjective modifying "prince." The NIV translates in this fashion,

Ezekiel 38:2 ^(NIV) "*Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him.*"

The New American Standard Version (NAS) (along with the New King James Version) translates “Rosh” using the 2nd approach, i.e., as a proper name. The NAS translates in this fashion,

Ezekiel 38:2 ^(NAS) *"Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him."*

These are the two primary interpretations of “rosh.” There are very qualified language scholars on either side of this interpretive issue; and, there is an absence of consensus among language scholars as to which approach is best. *So how can we possibly interpret the passage if modern language scholars cannot agree?* We will start down a pathway using one of our two options and see if each subsequent interpretation of other verses in Ezekiel 38/39 confirm our previous choices. In the end, our objective will be that all of our interpretations are confirmed by one another.

“Rosh” is a proper noun. The presence of the “miraculous” in the victory leads us to the first step in the identity of Rosh, of whom Gog is prince. Rosh will be a nation of significance and power that it is viewed by the world to be capable of leading the nations of the world against Israel! Thus, to identify Rosh, we need look for a superpower nation at enmity with the nation of Israel. It so happens that Rosh is interpreted by many scholars as Russia for reasons we will discuss below; and, *Russia is a superpower at enmity with Israel.* This leads us to begin our identification of Rosh by concluding that “Rosh” should be interpreted as a proper noun, i.e, the name of a particular nation, rather than as an adjective describing “prince.” This starts us down a pathway using the NAS translation of Ezekiel 38 and 39 rather than the NIV.

Ezekiel 38:2 ^(NAS) *"Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him."*

To give us a little confidence in our initial step interpreting Rosh as a proper noun, consider the following from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia:

*"This name occurs in the prophecies against Gog in Eze 38:2,3 and 39:1, where the King James Version has "Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." This translation is due to ro'sh being the common Hebrew word for "head" or "chief" (compare the Greek variant and the Vulgate), and is regarded as incorrect, that of the Revised Version (British and American), "Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal," being preferred."*⁴

“Rosh” as Russia. The first nation named in the text from the “land of Magog” is “Rosh” (38:2). The identification of both Rosh and the other nations in Gog’s Alliance is made difficult because throughout history the names of nations have changed and the dominion of a particular geography has changed as well. Nor is there sufficient historical or other evidence to clearly identify who these nations were in Ezekiel’s day when the prophecy was first written. Further, given the existence in the 20th century of the “cold war” between the West and Russia, modern day interpreters are apt to interpret “Rosh” as Russia simply because of the presence of modern day factors leading to this conclusion. The most reliable historical references we must draw upon, then, are those written prior to the “cold war,” and before Russia became a superpower at enmity with the West.

There are two pre-20th century sources often cited by interpreters. The first is 19th century, Hebrew scholar, H. W. F. Gesenius (whose Hebrew Lexicon was first published in 1847), who provides the following definition of “Rosh”:

“II. Ezekiel 38:2, 3; 39:1; pr. n. Of a northern nation, mentioned with Tubal and Meshech; undoubtedly the Russians, who are mentioned by Byzantine writers of the tenth century, under the name of “Ros,” dwelling to the north of Taurus, and . . . described by Ibn Fosslan, an Arabic writer of the same age, as dwelling on the River Rha (Volga). (See Ibn Fosslan, Bericht von den Russen . . .) Compare Jos. De Hammer, Origines Russes, Petersburg, 1827, . . . In the Koran, Kor. Xv. 31; 1.12.”¹⁵ (Emphasis added)

Similarly, in a 19th century compilation by Lyman Coleman, we find the following regarding “Map 11,” *“The World as Known to the Hebrews.”* Coleman interprets Rosh as north of modern day Armenia, i.e., Russia; Togarmah as Armenia, and Gomer as modern day Turkey (Cappadocia, located in the heart of modern Turkey):

“This comprises the world as known to the ancient Hebrews, . . . The author, in locating these ancient tribes of men, availed himself of the labours of Gesenius, Ewald, Hitzig, and others, together with the researches of the most reliable geographies and antiquaries. Askenez, according to these authorities, occupies the western part of Asia Minor; Togarmah is Armenia, and Gomer occupies the region of Cappadocia between them; . . . Gog and Magog, the land of Gog, in conformity with classical and Armenian authors, is placed north of Armenia, in the neighborhood of Togarmah, Meshech, and Tubal; whose position is clearly defined. They are also set farther north, to represent the Scythian nations.”¹⁶ (Emphasis added)

Describing the descendants of Noah’s grandson, Japheth, Lyman Coleman continues:

“Togarmah is by common consent referred to as Armenia, . . . “Magog. . . The original country of Magog was the Caucasian mountains and the regions north around the Caspian. From this point they early overran all the north of Europe, driving back the Cimmerians; and in the age of the prophet Ezekiel they had already become a powerful people in the north of Asia. . . . The Russians and Scythians are the descendants of Magog. . . they are remote northern nations.”¹⁷ (Emphasis added)

Moving to modern day biblical encyclopedias, we find:

International Standard Biblical Encyclopedia:

“Some have supposed that the Russians are here meant, as one of the three Scythian tribes . . . They invaded the land of Judah in the days of Josiah. Herodotus, the Greek historian, says: “For twenty-eight years the Scythians ruled over Asia, and things were turned upside down by their violence and contempt.”¹⁸ (Emphasis added)

Smith’s Bible Dictionary adds:

“probably a proper name, referring to the first of the three great Scythian tribes of which Magog was the head.”¹⁹

Our initial conclusion, based on pre-20th century geographers, is that Rosh is Russia. As we will see, there are many additional reasons that support this initial conclusion.

1. Gog is the Supplier of Military Hardware to Other Members of His Alliance. Ezekiel 38:7 gives us important information to identify Gog. The text warns Gog that he must not only prepare himself for the battle, but also all those “assembled about you.”

This is a significant “identifier” for Gog. We are looking for a superpower that has the means to supply many nations with military armaments. Russia is a known supplier of military equipment to the enemies of Israel. It is, in fact, the world’s leading supplier of military equipment to the developing nations of the world.²⁰ As such, Russia is a superpower that has supplied Israel’s enemies with military supplies.

Consider this statement taken from the 2008 edition of the National Security Strategy of the United States which details a Russian retreat from “openness and democracy”:

“Russia’s retreat from openness and democracy could have significant security implications for the United States, our European allies, and our partners in other regions. Russia has leveraged the revenue from, and access to, its energy sources; asserted claims in the Arctic; and has continued to bully its neighbors, all of which are causes for concern. Russia also has begun to take a more active military stance, such as the renewal of long-range bomber flights, and has withdrawn from arms control and force reduction treaties, and even threatened to target countries hosting potential U.S. anti-missile bases. Furthermore, Moscow has signaled an increasing reliance on nuclear weapons as a foundation of its security. All of these actions suggest a Russia exploring renewed influence, and seeking a greater international role.”²¹

We will soon discuss Iran’s important role in Gog’s Alliance. For now, consider the following description of Russia’s ongoing supply of military arms to Iran. This statement is only one example of similar statements that could be found in other Middle East nations, *excepting Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq*. The statement is taken from a Congressional Research Study by analyst Richard F. Grimmett:

“Elsewhere in 2005, Russia made an agreement with Iran for 29 TOR-M1 (SA-15 Gauntlet) surface-to-air defense systems for over \$700 million. Russia also agreed to upgrade Iran’s Su-24 and Mig-29 aircraft, as well as their T-72 main battle tanks. Sales of advanced military equipment to Iran by Russia and others has been an issue of intense interest to U.S. policymakers for some time, given the hostile relations the U.S. and Iran have had since the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, and the rise to power of an anti-American government in Tehran. . . . As the U.S focuses increasing attention on Iran’s efforts to enhance its nuclear as well as conventional military capabilities, major arms transfers to Iran continue to be a matter of concern.”²²

Joel Rosenberg in his work, *Epicenter*, details the Russian agenda with Iran in an interview with Dore Gold, former Israeli Ambassador to the UN:

“The Russians want an empire, and to get one they need to establish ‘special relationships’ with Arab and Islamic regimes in the Middle East whom they can use as their agents of

*influence. . . . From 1948 to the collapse of the Soviet Union the Soviets were the main backers of the Arab threat to Israel. But they were never able to secure Iran as an ally until now. . . . Iran is pivotal in Russia thinking. It is a major regional power in its own right, and it is a gateway into the rest of the Middle East.*²³

2. Gog Possesses What Appears to be Nuclear Weapons. Why is the possession of nuclear weapons a significant “identifier”? Because the modern day nations that possess such weaponry is a short list! Let me first show you how the text describes the after affects of the battle. Then, we’ll look at the “short list” of nations possessing nuclear weapons.
 1. It takes 7 months to bury the bodies of Gog’s soldiers and “cleanse the land” (39:12).
 2. It takes 7 years to burn the weaponry (39:9).
 3. There is one location where the dead will be buried, “Hamon-gog.” (39:11) The bodies are not buried where they fall but in this special location (39:15);
 4. The valley where the bodies and equipment are buried will block off all passers by (39:11)
 5. Anyone who sees a dead man’s bone is not to bury it but to set up a marker so that the “buriers” can bury it in its designated burial ground (the valley of Hamon-gog) (39:15).
 6. It takes an “official person” to bury the bones and bodies; the buriers are referred to as “set apart men” (39:14);
 7. The “set apart men” will “constantly pass through the land” burying those “left on the surface of the ground,” and also those “passing through” (39:14).
 8. The reason why everything must be buried is to “cleanse the land” (39:12, 16).

The details of the battle scene have the characteristics of a modern day nuclear bomb that has contaminated the earth and everything in it. No one can pass through the land because the land is contaminated. Only those “set apart” can bury anyone or anything, i.e., only those who are trained to decontaminate the land! It is only in Hamon-gog that the burials take place, a burial ground specifically set aside for those contaminated. Finally, the dead include those killed in the battle as well as those killed who were “passing through.”

The aftermath of this battle is much like what happened after Russia’s nuclear accident at Chernobyl in 1986. The nuclear fallout from radioactive materials resulted in the relocation of large groups of people in the Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia due to contamination. Over 336,000 people were evacuated and eventually resettled, and areas still exist today that cannot be inhabited.²⁴

Now, notice how the text describes the military equipment possessed by Gog and his forces:

Ezekiel 38:4 "I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords; 5 . . . , all of them with shield and helmet; . . . 9 "You will go up, you will come like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you. . . ."

Don’t for a moment think that Gog will attack Israel with “bows and arrows.” However, you must think of their *meaning* to a reader in the 6th century BC. A literal reading of Ezekiel’s text describes an army advanced *only in the eyes of the 6th century BC; yet to that reader, this army*

was well equipped with the most advanced weaponry of the day. The meaning in the 21st century? The same. The army of Gog will be equipped with the best weaponry of the 21st century. The battle is clearly a battle in the future days as the text tells us that the battle will take place “in the latter years” (Ezekiel 38:8).

The “Short List.” Although my source is certainly not “official,” the New York Times article makes the point needed. The list of nations possessing nuclear weapons is “short,” at least so far as the public is concerned:

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Published: May 26, 2010

LONDON (AP) — *“Britain disclosed Wednesday that it has a stockpile of 225 nuclear warheads, its first public accounting of its total nuclear arsenal. The announcement, made without fanfare in the House of Commons, followed the Obama administration’s recent disclosure that the United States has 5,113 nuclear warheads in its arsenal and “several thousand” more retired warheads awaiting the junk pile — the first public description of the secretive stockpile born in the cold war and now shrinking rapidly. . . . The United States made the announcement at the May 3 opening of a five-year review of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, considered the cornerstone of global disarmament efforts, where Washington and its allies are seeking stronger measures to prevent the spread of nuclear arms. . . . Countries that do not possess nuclear weapons have long demanded more openness from the nuclear-weapon states — the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China — about the size and nature of their arsenals as an essential step toward nuclear disarmament, which is a crucial plank in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Four other nations have or are suspected of having atomic arms — Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea.”²⁵ (Emphasis added)*

3. Gog is from the “remote parts of the north.” We have already concluded that Gog is an individual, the commander of the military Alliance. Ezekiel 38:15 tells us that Gog is located in the “remote parts of the north.”

It is logical to conclude that Gog, as the leader of the superpower nation that equips and prepares the other members of the Alliance, makes his “abode” with the superpower nation he leads. The text tells us that Gog is located in the “remote north.” The significance of this geographical hint should not be underestimated. There have been many nations in ancient bible times who were Israel’s enemies “from the north.” Among those were Assyria and Babylon. The Assyrians defeated the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. The Babylonians defeated the Southern Kingdom of Israel in 586 BC (Jeremiah 1:13). Both of these nations were defined as “from the north” by scripture (Zephaniah 2:13, Jeremiah 1:13).

It is important to note that the present text includes a refinement of the meaning of “north” when it gives the location of Gog as the “remote north.” The Hebrew text in transliterated form is “yerekah,” meaning, “flank, side, extreme parts, recesses.”²⁶ Thus, the kingdom of Gog, the land of Magog, i.e., Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, is located geographically, not just to the north, but to the “remote north.”

The modern nation to the extreme north of Israel is Russia. In fact, Moscow, Russia, is on a line directly north of Jerusalem.

Conclusion. The text gives us "hints" to identify Rosh: 1) Rosh (through Gog, his prince) is the supplier of military hardware to the Alliance while also a nation at enmity with Israel. 2) Rosh is a superpower that possesses nuclear weapons. 3) Rosh is located in the "remote parts of the north." Modern day Russia meets all of these characteristics. We conclude, "Rosh" is Russia.

Meshech and Tubal. Having concluded that Rosh is Russia, the interpretation of Meshech and Tubal is not as difficult since they are described along with Rosh as from the "land of Magog" (38:2, 39:1). Once again, we turn to 19th century scholar, Gesenius:

*"Moschi, a barbarous people inhabiting the Moshian mountains, between Iberia, Armenia, and Colchis, Psa. 120:5, almost always joined with the neighboring Tibareni, Gen. 10:2, Ezek 27:13, 32:26, 38:2, 39:1; just as in Herodutus (iii. 94; vii. 78). . . ."*²⁷

Gesenius bases his view, at least partly, on the works of Herodotus, Greek Historian of the 5th century BC, and frequently regarded as the "father of history" in Western culture.²⁸ The specific statement in Herodotus which aligns Meshech with Tubal is as follows: "*The nineteenth provincial district – the Moschians, Tibarenoi, Makrones, Mossynoikians, and Mares– was assessed 300 talents.*"²⁹

Gesenius states regarding Tubal: "*Tubal, . . . , a nation of Asia Minor, dwelling by the Euxine sea, to the west of Moschi. . . .*"³⁰

As does Lyman Coleman: "*Her merchandise was with Tarshish in the far west, and Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, in the northeast, provinces in the Caucasian mountains, between the Caspian and Black Sea.*"³¹

And who is "Moschi"? Modern day "Moscow." Easton's Bible Dictionary goes so far as to name Meshech and Tubal as the ancestors of the modern day nations comprising Moscow and Tobolsk, Russia:

"They were in all probability the Moschi, a people inhabiting the Moschian Mountains, between the Black and the Caspian Seas. In Ps 120:5 the name occurs as simply a synonym for foreigners or barbarians. "During the ascendancy of the Babylonians and Persians in Western Asia, the Moschi were subdued; but it seems probable that a large number of them crossed the Caucasus range and spread over the northern steppes, mingling with the Scythians. There they became known as Muscovs, and gave that name to the Russian nation and its ancient capital by which they are still generally known throughout the East"⁶² (Emphasis added)

Fausset's Bible Dictionary agrees with Easton's and states,

"The Moschi, a warlike race in the mountainous region between Armenia, Iberia, and Colchis. Associated with Tubal, the Tibareni of Pontus. . . Moscow and Tobolsk may derive their names from Mesech and Tubal.. . . Mesech was once one of the most powerful nations of western Asia. The Assyrians were frequently warring with them, from 1100 to 700 B.C.; then living East of Taurus range and in Cappadocia. The inscriptions call them Muskai, the Tibareni Tuplai (Tubal)."³³ (Emphasis added)

Doug Berner quotes from Grant Jeffrey's work, *Armageddon - Appointment with Destiny*, as follows:

*Jewish commentaries such as Kesses HaSofer identify "Magog" with the Russians and state that the word "Mongol" for Siberian-Russian peoples is in fact derived from Magog. . . Arab writers confirm that in the Arabic language their name for the Great Wall of China is the "wall of Al-Magog" because the Great Wall was built to keep out the invading armies from Magog (Russia)."*³⁴ (Emphasis added)

Meshech and Tubal are nations geographically located in the vicinity of modern day Russia, north of the Caspian Sea, *perhaps now known as Moscow and Tobolsk*. Regardless of their specific modern day identity, i.e., whether they are actually Moscow and Tobolsk, they are certainly in proximity to, or geographically within, "Rosh," i.e., Russia.

Conclusion. Meshech and Tubal are interpreted as member countries, cities, of the modern day, post Soviet Union, Russian Federation.

Gomer. The ISBE identifies Gomer as we have noted above – *"the sons of Gomer. . . were all settled in the West Asian tract."* The West Asian tract is the modern land of Turkey. An important reference is found in the works of Josephus, the Roman-Jewish historian of the 1st century AD who describes the sons of Japheth as follows:

"Japhet, the son of Noah, had seven sons: they inhabited so that, beginning at the mountains Taurus and Amanus, they proceeded along Asia, as far as the river Tansis, and along Europe to Cadiz; and settling themselves on the lands which they light upon, which none had inhabited before, they called the nations by their own names. For Gomer founded those whom the Greeks now call Galatians, [Galls,] but were then called Gomerites. Magog founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who are by the Greeks called Scythians." (Emphasis added)

Thus, according to Josephus, "Gomer" was the area the Greeks called "Galatia," an area once located in modern day Turkey (actually, Anatolia).

Beth-Togarmah. Gesenius states the following regarding Beth-Togarmah ("beth" = "house", literally, the "house of Togarmah"):

". . . of a northern nation and country sprung from Gomer (the Cimmerians), abounding in horses and mules. We should, apparently, understand "Armenia," as very abundant in horses . . . Such is either tradition or the opinion of the Armenians themselves, who regard Torgom the son of Gomer. . . As the founder of their nation, and they call themselves the "house of Torgom." See J. D. Michaelis *Spicileg. Georg., t.i., p 67-78.*⁸⁵ (Emphasis added)

Conclusion. We interpret Gomer and Beth-Togarmah as Turkey and Armenia, respectively.

"Many Peoples" with You. The third division of Gog's allies is found in Ezekiel 38:6, 9, 15, and 22. In each of these four passages the phrase ". . . many peoples with you" is used.

It is important to note that this third division in Gog's Alliance is not identified by citizenship or

national identity. That is, the “many peoples” that join Gog’s Alliance are not described as “Persians,” “Ethiopians,” etc., but simply as “many peoples.” Who are the “many peoples” the text is referring to? They are Muslims from around the world, particularly, those Muslims living in countries neighboring Israel. As we will see next, they are now under the dominion of Iran. The “many peoples” of Ezekiel 38 refers to the Muslim populations of these subdued countries who will join Gog’s Alliance against Israel – *either by choice or by force*.

Al-Qaeda? There is another category of Muslims included in the “many peoples” of Ezekiel 38/39. As of December 31st, 2008, the United States Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counter Terrorism, listed forty-four organizations that it labeled as “Designated Terrorist Organizations.”³⁶ HAMAS (Islamic Resistance Movement), Hizbullah (Party of God), Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Al-Qaeda, are among this forty-four. The charter of most of these organizations includes specific language identifying their purpose: to destroy Israel; and, to reclaim the land of the Middle East that Islam acquired in its jihads of the 7th - 10th centuries (which Islam considers to be permanently theirs; *Dar al-Islam*). Thus, Gog’s “many peoples” also includes the organizations that make up the terrorist “watch lists” of the World’s free nations.

Conclusion. They say a picture is worth a 1000 words. Map 12-1 at the end of the chapter shows those nations included in Gog’s Alliance (outlined in “yellow”). Remember, however, that this Alliance only includes those specifically named in Ezekiel 39/39.

Look Who Got Left Out of Gog’ Alliance. Ezekiel 38/39 describes a battle against Israel in the Last Days (we interpret to be Armageddon which *concludes* at the end of the Tribulation period). We have identified those nations that the scripture tells us will be involved in this Last Day’s conflict. But did you notice the nations not involved in that conflict that should be involved? Those nations that have been at enmity with Israel since the earliest days of the Old Testament? Look at Map 12 - 2 which includes the nations named in Gog’s Alliance (in yellow) as well as those not named in the Alliance (in blue) that we would expect to be. All of these nations are neighboring lands to Israel and all of these nations have historically been at enmity with Israel. Yet, they are absent from Gog’s list! Why? Here is the group:

1. Iraq
2. Syria
3. Jordan
4. Lebanon
5. Saudi Arabia
6. Egypt

Why are these six nations not included in Gog’s Alliance against Israel, particularly since these six are all historic enemies of Israel? *I propose that the reason why the six neighboring nations are absent from Ezekiel’s list is because they have been previously subdued by one of the nations included in Gog’s Alliance.* At the time of the Alliance’s attack on Israel, they are all under the dominion of this nation, so that when this nation joins the Alliance, those nations previously subdued join as well; but not as independent nations but as “many peoples” now under the dominion of this nation. I also propose that the subduing nation in Gog’s Alliance is a Shi’ah Islam nation (as opposed to Sunni) based on our previous interpretations of Daniel 2, 7, 9, and Revelation 13 and 17.

Part 3 - The “Pre-Tribulation Conquest”

The Prior Conflict - Muslims vs Muslims. It is the view of this writer that Daniel 11:36-45, Daniel 7:24, and Revelation 17:12-13, 16, prophesy of a “pre-Tribulation conflict that precedes and leads up to the treaty of Daniel 9:27 (70th week); and that Ezekiel 38/39 finishes the Tribulation period at Armageddon and the gathering of the nations for the final battle. This conflict will begin with the destruction of Saudi Arabia’s oil. It will then continue to include three other Middle East nations. I will provide you with the basis of this interpretation below, but for now, the basic proposition is that in order for the world to agree to the 7 year treaty prophesied by Daniel 9:27, the *context in human history would have to be unparalleled in human suffering* (Daniel 12:1).

The aggressor nation in this Pre-Tribulation conflict? The aggressor must be one of the named nations in Ezekiel 38/39 in order for the latter prophecy of Ezekiel 38/39 to be fulfilled. *The neighboring nations to Israel are not included in the Alliance of nations named by Ezekiel 38/39.* There must be a reason for their absence since they have been at enmity with Israel since ancient times. It is the view of this writer that are under the dominion of one of those named nations in Gog’s Alliance in order for this to be the case. I will propose a Shi`ah nation from God’s Alliance to lead this prior conflict. The reasoning for a Shi`ah Islam nation is that Shi`ah Islam has fulfilled all of our prior interpretations of Last Day’s Bible prophecy where a sect of Islam has been identified.

There is only one nation in Gog’s Alliance that is Shi`ah Islam - Iran. Shi`ah Islam is also the sect of Islam from which we have interpreted the Antichrist/false prophet to arise.

A Time of World Chaos that Precedes the Tribulation Period. Our next chapter will discuss, in detail, the 7 year Tribulation period of Daniel 9:27. The battle that I am proposing will take place *prior to the beginning of this 7 year period of Tribulation.* To understand the battle that I am proposing, we must briefly review Daniel 9:27. This passage prophesies of a “firm covenant” that will be entered into in the 7 years preceding the return of Christ (the last “week” of the “70 weeks”).

The question that we must ask ourselves is what conditions would have to be present for the world to enter such a treaty? Economic chaos, famine, and starvation, will be prevalent in the world for such to occur. In a prior chapter, we interpreted Revelation 17 to foresee a coming destruction of Saudi Arabia, thereby plunging the world into economic chaos as a result of the removal of Saudi Arabian oil reserves from the world markets. But that is only the beginning of the chaos. Consider also that, according to the view being proposed for Ezekiel 38/39, not only would Saudi Arabia be defeated but also the other four Muslim nations (excluding Jordan as we will see below) surrounding Israel. Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt are all in this group. It is not just the removal of Saudi oil from the world markets that necessitates such chaos. Oil is just the beginning. Economic chaos followed by famine, and then followed by (or preceded by) WW 3. It is also not just “Iran” that is waging jihad against Sunni Muslim countries. It is Shi`ah Islam, predominantly located in Iran, and led by the miracle working al-Mahdi that leads this offensive. In the final analysis, this is Islam’s quest for world submission that begins with a pre-Tribulation conquest of its own.

A review of Revelation and the opening of the 7 seals by Christ, the Lamb, finds a prophecy of a coming financial crisis. This crisis occurs during the Tribulation period (not before it), but it gives a precursory view of what this author believes will begin to happen in the pre-tribulation conflict. When the 3rd seal is opened, a black horse and its rider usher forth from heaven. The text is as follows:

Revelation 6:5 "When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."

The "pair of scales" in the riders hand is a metaphor for commerce. Scales were used in the first century and earlier times as a means of weighing and measuring grains and similar food quantities to calculate the price in coinage of the day (Amos 8:5, Micah 6:11). The next verse is important to understanding the prophecy. It states that *1 quart of wheat and 3 quarts of barley are priced at the same amount, one denarius* (one denarius was equal to a day's wage). In the first century, wheat was the main food source. Barley was also a main source of food, yet it was the cheaper food. One day's food needs were equal to one quart of either food source, whether barley or grain; and the price was the denarius, the wage for one day.³⁷ The text is prophesying of a time when a day's wage will pay for a day's food. This will be a time of world famine. No longer will the choice be made for the better food, wheat. People will buy the barley because they will be able to get three times as much food for the same price (3 quarts of barley go a lot further than 1 quart of wheat). The wheat and barley are not to be taken literally, but metaphorically. The metaphor is prophesying of a time when luxuries will no longer be the choice of humanity, but rather, the basics necessities of life is all people will be able to afford. In other words, no more "steak and lobster" for the whole of humanity. The concluding verse states, "do not harm the oil or the wine." Oil and wine are for the rich. The text is telling us that the rich will not be impacted by the famine.

Muslims against Muslims, all of which are in the Middle East, throwing the economies of the world into complete meltdown. This campaign is Shi`ah Iran against the Sunni nations of the Middle East, a continuation of the divide prophesied by Daniel 2:41. How does the Mahdi do it? Presumably with nuclear or other modern weaponry of Iran; regardless, something happening so quick that the Middle East is subdued before the entire world wakes up to the destruction. What do the nations of the world do in response to the pre-tribulation conquest? Eventually, they will "pull the trigger" that begins WW3. Here is the text that prophesies of this occurrence, once again, from one of the "seals that is broken." The breaking of this seal is also prophesying of a time during the Tribulation rather than before it, but it gives you a picture of where the Middle East conflict will eventually lead:

Revelation 6:7 "And when He broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come ." 8 And I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. And authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth."

The breaking of the 4th seal unleashes the ashen horse (pale green, the color of death) and its rider, "Death." Notice how many are killed: 1/4 of the world's population. In today's terms that means 1.5 billion people (6.0 billion population in the world)! They are killed by "sword, famine, pestilence, and the wild beasts of the earth." That is, through war (the "sword") and all that

follows war – “famine, pestilence, and wild beasts,” all terms symbolizes the “whole” of death that results in a time of world chaos precipitated by conflict among the nations.

So then, where does this pretribulation conflict lead us? It leads the world’s nations to a point that they are willing to negotiate with Islam and enter into a treaty calling for world peace. Such a treaty would hardly be an event one might seek to enter unless to do so forestalls a greater world calamity than that envisioned by the treaty. The 7 year treaty described in Daniel 9:29 is simply the vehicle to this end. Far fetched? How else do we explain the nations missing from Gog’s Alliance against Israel? And how else do we explain passages such as Daniel 12:1 that prophesies of a coming time of distress like the world has never experienced?

The Pre-tribulation Conquest of the King of Daniel 11:36f. In an earlier chapter, we interpreted many of the characteristics of the kingdom of Daniel 11:36f to be an Islamic kingdom. Now, we will look at some specific prophesies in Daniel 11:36 that extend beyond the spiritual makeup of the kingdom and leader to the kingdoms in conflict, specifically, the pre-Tribulation conflict that I am suggesting.

The following list itemizes the specific prophecy of Daniel 11:36f. It begins with a recounting of the specifics and concludes with the interpretation.

1. A “king” will arise. He will do as he pleases. Daniel 11:36
2. The “king of the south” and the “king of the north” will “collide” with him. Daniel 11:40.
3. He will enter the “Beautiful Land” (Israel).
4. He will make his headquarters “between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain.” Daniel 11:45.
5. Many countries will fall to him, including, apparently, the king of the south and the king of the north. Daniel 11:41
6. He will come to his end and no one will help him. Daniel 11:45.

As we interpret the above specifics, we will do so with the assumption that Shi’ah Iran is the aggressing nation. Part 4 of this chapter will offer some additional evidence that support this view. Also, we will identify the “king” as the Antichrist/false prophet, al-Mahdi. The reason is because of the many spiritual identifiers in Daniel 11:36f that we have interpreted to be the Antichrist/false prophet in prior chapters. I have underlined these identifiers in the following text:

Daniel 11:36 "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. 37 "He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all."

These are the same identifiers that we found in Daniel 7:25, 2 Thessalonians 2:4, Revelation 13:12-18, 17:8, 11. In all of these passages we interpreted the Antichrist/false prophet to be present.

The “King of the North” and the “King of the South.” Most Bible scholars have interpreted the king of the south as Egypt and the king of the north as Iraq (or Syria).³⁸ This writer concurs

with the prevailing view. The text then describes a conflict between the Antichrist/false prophet and each of these nations (Daniel 11:40) that occurs at the “end time.”

Egypt will not be rescued. Daniel 11:40, 43 tells us that the king of the south, i.e., Egypt, will be overcome by the Antichrist/false prophet. The prophecy is that this “king” (Iran) will “gain control” of the “precious things” of Egypt. How likely is it in the modern day that Egypt would be attacked by Iran?

Egypt is one of two Muslim nations in the world that has normalized relations with Israel (the other is Jordan).³⁹ This immediately distinguishes Egypt from the other Muslim nations neighboring Israel and places it at the top of Iran’s list since they have shown some “favor” to Israel. Further, Egypt is aligned with Israel’s ally, the United States, the “Great Satan,” a term of derision first used by the Ayatollah in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution of 1979.⁴⁰

Here is a recent statement summarizing relations between Egypt and the United States – the importance of which is that it places Egypt alongside the United States and its allies rather than on the side of Iran (and Russia):

“U.S. policy toward Egypt is aimed at maintaining regional stability, improving bilateral relations, continuing military cooperation, and sustaining the March 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Successive Administrations have long viewed Egypt’s leaders as a moderating influence in the Middle East, though in recent years, there have been increasing U.S. calls for Egypt to democratize. . . The United States has provided Egypt with an annual average of over \$2 billion in economic and military foreign assistance since 1979. The Administration has requested \$1.3 billion in military aid for Egypt in FY2009 — the same amount it received in FY2008. For FY2009, the Administration is requesting \$200 million in ESF for Egypt, a notable decrease from previous fiscal years. According to the U.S. State Department’s FY2009 Congressional Budget Justification, “FY 2009 economic assistance funds for Egypt will decrease from the FY 2008 level, reflecting a more balanced, mature bilateral relationship consisting of foreign assistance and commercial linkages.”⁴¹ (Emphasis added)

Conclusion: Egypt will be one of three Arab Muslim nations that will be subdued by Iran. Daniel 11:40-42 specifically names it and modern alliances support this conclusion.

Iraq will be One of the Three Nations Subdued by Iran. As we have stated, scholars have concluded the “king of the north” is symbolic for Iraq (or Syria).⁴² The text then states that both the king of the south (Egypt) and the king of the north (Iraq) will collide against the kingdom led by the Antichrist/false prophet.

Here are other factors to support this view. Iraq has a Shi`ah majority (60%), located predominantly in southern Iraq on the border with Iran. Iraq and Iran have historically been rivals from ancient times. Iraq, the modern day equivalent of Babylon in the Old Testament, was defeated by Media-Persia in 539 BC under the leadership of Cyrus the Great.⁴³ Encarta Encyclopedia gives the following background of the more recent Iran/Iraq divide:

“The border between Iraq and Iran has been contested diplomatically and sometimes militarily for several centuries. After the Ottoman Empire conquered present-day Iraq in

1534, making it the easternmost part of its empire, Iran, its eastern neighbor, became a frequent rival. More recently, when Iraq was made a separate state in the aftermath of World War I (1914-1918), Iraq and Iran disagreed sharply over the precise border between them, especially in the area of the Shatt al Arab, a river channel providing Iraq's only outlet to the sea, via the Persian Gulf."⁴⁴

"The Iran-Iraq War began . . . when Iraq invaded Iran in September 1980 and ended in August 1988 after both sides accepted a cease-fire sponsored by the United Nations. The war was one of the longest and most destructive of the 20th century, with likely more than one million casualties. Despite the conflict's length and cost, neither Iran nor Iraq made significant territorial or political gains, and the fundamental issues dividing the countries remained unresolved at the end of the war."⁴⁵

GlobalSecurity.org, describes the Iran/Iraq conflict similarly:

"The Iran-Iraq War permanently altered the course of Iraqi history. It strained Iraqi political and social life, and led to severe economic dislocations. Viewed from a historical perspective, the outbreak of hostilities in 1980 was, in part, just another phase of the ancient Persian-Arab conflict that had been fueled by twentieth-century border disputes. . . . In this respect, Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Iran has historical precedent; the ancient rulers of Mesopotamia, fearing internal strife and foreign conquest, also engaged in frequent battles with the peoples of the highlands." The Iran-Iraq War was multifaceted and included religious schisms, border disputes, and political differences. Conflicts contributing to the outbreak of hostilities ranged from centuries-old Sunni-versus-Shi'ah and Arab-versus-Persian religious and ethnic disputes, to a personal animosity between Saddam Hussein and Ayatollah Khomeini. Above all, Iraq launched the war in an effort to consolidate its rising power in the Arab world and to replace Iran as the dominant Persian Gulf state."⁴⁶ (Emphasis added)

It is unlikely that the rivalry between these two nations will ever be healed much less cause them to align on the same side of a military dispute. This statement is affirmed by the present context of Iran/Iraq relations in the post-Sadaam era. Iraq is presently "aligned" and supported by the United States. At the date of this writing, United States and coalition troops are still on Iraqi soil. It is well documented by the Intelligence community that Iran has actively participated in the arming and supplying of the insurgency in Iraq in an effort to destabilize the U.S. backed government in Iraq. Where Iran has supported Iraq, it has not been the post-Sadaam Shi'ah majority government led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, but the Shi'ah Islamist leaders. Consider the following description of Iran's influence in Iraq in the modern day:

"The significance of the issue of Iranian influence in Iraq derives not only from the U.S. interest in stabilizing Iraq but also from tensions between the United States and Iran over Iran's nuclear and regional ambitions. Now that the conventional military and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threat from Saddam Hussein has been removed, the thrust of Iran's strategy in Iraq has been to perpetuate domination of Iraq's government by pro-Iranian Shiite Islamist leaders, as well as to obtain leverage against the United States to forestall a potential confrontation. Iran sees control of Iraq by friendly Shiite parties as providing Iran with "strategic depth," ensuring that Iraq remains pliable and attentive to Iran's interests. At the same time, Iran's aid to Iraqi Shiite parties and their militias is

*contributing to sectarian violence that, in addition to causing about 3,000 Iraqi civilian casualties per month, is threatening the U.S. stabilization effort as well as U.S. and partner forces in Iraq.*⁴⁷ (Emphasis added)

From updated CRS Report #22323, Iran's continuing influence on the post-Saddam Iraq regime is purposeful: "to ensure that Iraq can never again become a threat to Iran":

*"With a conventional military and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threat from Saddam Hussein's regime removed, Iran seeks to ensure that Iraq can never again become a threat to Iran, either with or without U.S. forces present in Iraq. Some believe Iran's intentions go well beyond achieving Iraq's "neutrality" – that Iran wants to try to harness Iraq to its broader regional policy goals and to help Iran defend itself against international criticism of Iran's nuclear program. By supporting armed Shiite factions, Iran's activities in Iraq have hindered – and continue to pose a threat to—U.S. efforts to stabilize Iraq, and have heightened the U.S. threat perception of Iran generally. However, Iran faces difficult choices in Iraq now that its protégé Shiite factions, formerly united, are competing and often fighting each other. This competition is intensifying in the run-up to January 31, 2009 provincial elections."*⁴⁸ (Emphasis added)

Conclusion. Iraq is the modern day equivalent to the "king of the north" of Daniel 11:36f. This conclusion does not change if the United States were to remove itself from active military involvement with Iraq. Iran cannot afford for Iraq to ever become a military threat to its survival. Iraq is the "king of the north" prophesied to be in conflict with the Antichrist/false prophet, of Shi`ah Iran.

Jordan will be "rescued." Daniel 11:41 tells us that Jordan will be rescued:

Daniel 11:41 *"He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon."*

The text tells us that "Edom, Moab, and the foremost sons of Ammon" will be "rescued out of his hand." According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, Smith's Bible Dictionary, and International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, these three ancient nations were all located east of the Dead Sea in the modern day nation of Jordan.⁴⁹ Stephen R. Miller states in his commentary on Daniel:

*"Edom, Moab, and the leaders of Ammon" refers to ancient countries southeast of Palestine that today are part of modern Jordan.*⁵⁰

The Third Nation to be Subdued by Iran. Daniel 11:36f names two nations to be defeated by the "king," al-Mahdi of Shi`ah Islam. It names Jordan to be rescued. We must look to another prophecy to complete the list of Pre-Tribulation nations. Daniel 7:24f tells us that three nations will be subdued. It does not tell us who those three nations will be. We have interpreted Rev 17 that Saudi Arabia will be defeated by al-Mahdi and his Alliance, and therefore, possibly a fourth nation subdued by Iran (it is possible that Saudi Arabia is counted in the three). Who might be the third nation that is prophesied by Daniel 7:24 to be subdued by al-Mahdi? We can only speculate, but there are only two Middle East candidates remaining: Syria and Lebanon.

Both of these countries are historically at enmity with Israel. Both of these countries are

predominantly Sunni Islam (although Lebanon has significant Shi`ah populations). I will give information that aligns the two. It is my proposal that the two together represent the third nation that comes under al-Mahdi's dominion. The nature of that dominion and the specifics of how it occurs cannot be concluded with certainty as the scripture does not provide us the details. It is quite possible that the dominion given to al-Mahdi is not the result of a military defeat but a surrender and yielding similar to what happened in Revelation 17 that defeated the harlot, Saudi Arabia. We will first look at their enmity with Israel and then their alignment together.

Syria and its Enmity with Israel. Syria has been designated by the United States as a "sponsor of international terrorism."⁵¹ The consequence of this designation is the prohibition of direct aid by the United States to Syria and the restriction of bilateral trade relations between Syria and the United States. Additionally, on December 12, 2003, President Bush signed the Syria Accountability Act, H.R. 1828, which imposed additional economic sanctions against Syria.⁵² The United States has also "designated several Syrian entities as weapons proliferations and sanctioned several Russian companies for alleged WMD or advanced weapons sales to Syria."⁵³

Here is a description of the relations of Iran and Syria taken from a recent CRS Report to Congress. Notice particularly the recent agreement between Syria, Iran, and Turkey (another member of Gog's Alliance) to allow Iran to export natural gas to Syria via Turkey; and, the \$1 billion in military aid by Iran to Syria to purchase Russian anti-ship missiles:

"Reliable information on the extent of Iranian influence in Syria is difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, there have been several recent reports of increased Iranian investment and trade with Syria. In the manufacturing and industrial sectors, Iran has proposed to build car manufacturing plants in Syria, establish an industrial zone for Iranian companies in Damascus, invest in concrete production and power generation, and overhaul Syria's urban transportation network. In the energy sector, Syria, Iran, Venezuela and Malaysia recently established a joint petroleum refinery in Homs, Syria. In addition, Iran, Turkey, and Syria reached a new natural gas deal that would allow Iran to export 105 billion cubic feet of natural gas annually to Syria via Turkey. Syrian-Iranian military cooperation also may be expanding. During a visit to Damascus in the summer of 2007, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reportedly offered to provide Syria with \$1 billion in military aid with which Syria would purchase tanks, MIG-31 fighter jets, and anti-ship missiles from Russia and North Korea."⁵⁴ (Emphasis added)

Consider this modern day statement by the Syrian Education Minister Dr. Ali Sa`d regarding Syria's school curriculum changes naming Israel as a "terrorist Zionist entity" and having perpetrated another Nazi holocaust in the recent Gaza Strip conflict:

"At the Second Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood, held February 3, 2009 in Khartoum, Syrian Education Minister Dr. 'Ali Sa'd announced that the concept of the "terrorist Zionist entity," presented by Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad in his speech at the January 16, 2009 Doha summit, would be incorporated into the Syrian school curriculum. In that speech, Assad accused Israel of perpetrating another Nazi holocaust in Gaza, claiming that the spilling of Arab blood since the establishment of Israel was intended to bring about a purely Jewish state. Assad also called to instill in the future Arab generations the principle "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," to ensure that they would never forget or forgive

*Israel's actions.*⁵⁵ (Emphasis added)

Consider this statement from CRS #33487 which describes Hizbullah, the Lebanon based terrorist organization, and the role it plays to connect Syria, Lebanon, and Iran:

“Syria is an important interlocutor between Iran and its Hezbollah protégés; Iranian weapons transit through Syria on their way to Hezbollah caches in Lebanon. Syria emerged as a key, if indirect, actor in the 2006 Israel-Lebanon-Hezbollah crisis, primarily through its role as a source and conduit for the delivery of rockets and other mainly Iranian weaponry to Hezbollah units in southern Lebanon; some believe Syria is still shipping weapons from its own inventories to Hezbollah as well. In March 2007, Israeli officials presented the U.N. Security Council and foreign governments with evidence and pictures of trucks crossing from Syria into Lebanon and unloading weapons.²⁵ One former U.N. peacekeeping official said it would be “humanly impossible” to cut off the flow of arms to Hezbollah without Syrian help,²⁶ commenting on the task of interdicting Lebanon’s porous 230-mile border with Syria and 140-mile Mediterranean coast line.”⁵⁶

Analyst Jeremy Sharp continues to describe the Syrian/Iran relationship:

“Finally, Syria’s longstanding relationship with the Iranian clerical regime is of great concern to U.S. strategists. As Syria has grown more estranged from the United States, Syrian-Iranian relations have improved, and some analysts have called on U.S. policymakers to woo Syrian leaders away from Iran. Others believe that the Administration should go even further in pressuring the Syrian government and should consider implementing even harsher economic sanctions against it.”⁵⁷

Syria and Oil. Revenues from oil account for an estimated 40% - 50% of the annual budget for the Syrian government.⁵⁸ Syria has one of the smallest known reserves of oil in the Middle East and most energy experts believe that barring significant new discoveries, Syria will exhaust its oil reserves in the coming decades.⁵⁹ The significance of this fact must not be overlooked for it places Syria at a distinct disadvantage in coming years. Without oil, Syria will be forced to rely on outside interests for its economic survival. As we have seen in prior chapters, Iran has significant oil and gas reserves, in fact, second only to Saudi Arabia. However, in spite of Iran’s reserves, Iran’s infrastructure needed to bring oil to market is severely lacking.⁶⁰ Saudi Arabia has the infrastructure that Iran does not have. This fact reinforces our interpretation that Iran will attack Saudi Arabia for its oil and its infrastructure. It will need it for itself as well as the nations it will bring under its dominion, i.e., Syria.

Nuclear Syria? In a 2002 speech to the United States Senate, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described Israel’s inherent right to protect the lives of its citizens.⁶¹ Israeli leaders have vowed to bomb any nuclear facility of Arab nations it considers a threat to its people. It doesn’t appear that Syria has taken Israel’s warning to heart. Consider the report below by the Washington Post which describes Israel’s 2007 bombing of Syria’s nuclear facilities:

*“**Shock Waves From Syria, Did Israel bomb a secret nuclear facility equipped by North Korea?** Thursday, September 20, 2007; Page A20*

*“THERE'S BEEN no official confirmation of the targets or results of an Israeli air raid in northeastern Syria on Sept. 6. Yet, like a subterranean explosion, the event is sending shock waves through the Middle East and beyond. Syria has protested to the United Nations, though it hasn't been very clear about what it's protesting. On Tuesday, a front-page editorial in Damascus's main government-run newspaper criticized the United States for not condemning the attack. An Israeli newspaper, meanwhile, noted triumphantly that no nation other than North Korea had come to Syria's defense, rhetorically or otherwise.”*⁶²

For those who need more information on Syria's construction of nuclear facilities, point your browser to this phrase: “Israel bombs Syria,” and you will find a 1,455 page “*Sourcebook on the Israeli Strike in Syria, 6 September 2007, Version of 2009-02-01*” located at web address: <http://www.fas.org/man/eprint/syria.pdf>. This “Sourcebook” includes hundreds of pictures documenting Syria's construction of a nuclear facility as well as its interactions with North Korean leadership who allegedly supplied the materials in this clandestine effort.

Lebanon and its Relationship with Syria. In recent years, Lebanon has depended upon Syria for military and intelligence support. This has created a dependence by Lebanon upon Syria. Analyst, Alfred B. Prados, states the following in his report to Congress dated, November 23, 2007:

*“Syria has long regarded Lebanon as part of its sphere of influence. . . . Another remaining question concerns the ability of the Lebanese security forces to assume responsibility for maintaining order in areas vacated by Syrian forces. Lebanon's ground forces number approximately 70,000 organized into 11 under strength brigades and a few separate units and armed largely with obsolescent equipment, plus minuscule air and naval forces, each consisting of about 1,000 personnel. In this connection a Lebanese study group has prepared a report indicating despite Syria's formal withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005, Syria continues to occupy as much as 180 square miles of Lebanese territory (approximately 4.5% of the country). The drafters of the report believe Syria maintains camps and smuggling routes through which they infiltrate foreign fighters and weapons into Lebanon.”*⁶³

*“A cornerstone of Syrian foreign policy is domination of the internal affairs of Lebanon. Many hard-line Syrian nationalists consider Lebanon to be an appendage of the Syrian state and, to this day, there is no official Syrian diplomatic representation in Beirut. From a geostrategic standpoint, Lebanon is considered Syria's “soft underbelly” and a potential invasion route for Israel. The Lebanese economy also is deeply penetrated by pro-Syrian business interests.”*⁶⁴ (Emphasis added)

Based on the current relationship of Lebanon and Syria, it is likely that these two countries will align similarly in any effort that endangers either country, whether Iranian or otherwise. Further, Lebanon is host to Hezbollah. CRS Report to Congress #RL32048 details the Iran/Hezbollah relationship as follows,

“Iran has maintained a close relationship with Hezbollah since Hezbollah's inception in 1982. Hezbollah was formed by Lebanese Shiite clerics sympathetic to Iran's Islamic revolution and responsible for several acts of anti-U.S. and anti-Israel terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s. . . . Whether or not Iran instigated Lebanese Hezbollah to provoke the

July-August 2006 crisis with Israel, Iran has long been a major supplier and benefactor of Hezbollah. Iranian-supplied rockets were fired by Hezbollah on Israel's northern towns during the fighting. As part of a package of aid to Hezbollah said to exceed \$100 million per year, reported Iranian shipments to Hezbollah over the past five years have included the "Fajr" (dawn) and Khaybar series of rockets that were fired at the Israeli city of Haifa (30 miles from the border), and over 10,000 Katyusha rockets that were fired at cities within 20 miles of the Lebanese border."⁶⁵

Conclusion. Syria/Lebanon are the third likely dominion prophesied by Daniel 7:24 that will occur during the Pre-Tribulation conquest of al-Mahdi. This writer sees them both combined as one. Bottom line – where Syria is, so Lebanon will be.

What About the Palestinians and the Gaza Strip Upon Which they Locate? Why does the Gaza Strip matter? This small strip of land hardly seems significant to be mentioned in Last Day's Bible prophecy. Look at Daniel 11:45:

Daniel 11:45, ". . . he will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain. . ."

To "pitch the tents of his royal pavilion" means that the "king," al-Mahdi, will set up his "headquarters" at a particular location; that location is given to us - "*between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain.*" Look at our maps in the back of the chapter. The only seas that the text could be speaking of are the Mediterranean Sea to the west of Israel and the Dead Sea to the east of Israel. The "Holy Mountain" is a specific reference to Jerusalem (Isaiah 27:13). There is but one strip of land between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean Sea – *the Gaza Strip*. The Gaza Strip has been occupied by Israel ever since Israel's 1967 6-Day War.⁶⁶ The Strip has a population of 1.5million people, "1 million of whom were, as of March 2005, refugees who fled to the territory from other parts of Palestine as part of the 1948 Palestinian exodus arising from the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and their descendants. The population is predominantly Sunni Muslims and speak a Western Egyptian dialect of Arabic."⁶⁷ As of the 2007 election, HAMAS (Islamic Resistance Movement) is the leading "political" party. According to GlobalSecurity.org:

*"HAMAS receives funding from Palestinian expatriates, Iran, and private benefactors in Saudi Arabia and other moderate Arab states. Some fundraising and propaganda activities take place in Western Europe and North America. . . . Syria serves as an important base of the Hamas organization, from a political, information and operational perspective. Officials in the Hamas leadership reside in Syria and conduct their operations from there. This applies particularly to the so-called political office of the Hamas, headed by Khaled Mashal. They are in regular daily contact with the Hamas leadership in the territories, headed by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and with the terrorist operatives of Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam (Hamas battalions) in the territories."*⁶⁸ (Emphasis added)

The text is telling us that the al-Mahdi will set up his headquarters, not in Iran, but on the Gaza Strip. Why the Gaza Strip? The text is silent. Perhaps Syria's cooperation with HAMAS has some bearing on the location. Or perhaps, the Strip's proximity to Israel precludes a nuclear or other cataclysm by Israel. Regardless, the Antichrist/false prophet does not defeat the Beautiful Land at this time. Daniel 11:41 states, "*he will enter the Beautiful Land.*" He does this when he sets up his headquarters on the Gaza Strip (occupied by Israel since 1967). It will take the midpoint of the Tribulation period before he overcomes Israel. Revelation 11 tells us

that Jerusalem will be “trampled under foot” for 42 months. That’s 3 ½ years. This writer sees this as the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation period which means that at the mid-point of the Treaty of Daniel 9:27, the Treaty will be broken, and Jerusalem will be trampled.

Shi`ah Islam’s Prophecy of al-Mahdi’s Base of Operations. We have mentioned the belief of Shi`ahs that al-Mahdi is in “hiding” (occultation) where he has been “concealed” for 1200 years. Some Shi`ahs believe he locates himself in a well behind the Jamkaran Mosque in Qom, Iran, where he is believed to have “appeared” for a brief moment. On Tuesday evenings, Shi`ahs gather to leave prayer notes in the well petitioning the Hidden Imam with their prayer requests.⁶⁹ It is believed by some Shi`ahs that when the Hidden Imam rises to begin his final work (as al-Mahdi), he will do so from Mecca.⁷⁰ Shi`ahs believe the Hidden Imam comes for *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) every year but he is “concealed” from their view.⁷¹

There is a Shi`ah prophecy that al-Mahdi will govern from Kufa located in modern day Iraq.⁷² “Kufa . . . is a city in Iraq, about 170 kilometres (110 mi) south of Baghdad, and 10 kilometres (6.2 mi) northeast of Najaf. It is located on the banks of the Euphrates River. The estimated population in 2003 was 110,000. Along with Samarra, Karbala, Kadhimiya, and Najaf, Kufa is one of five Iraqi cities that are of great importance to Shia Muslims. The city was the final capital of Ali ibn Abi Talib [from whom Shi`ahs are founded] The Great Mosque of Kufa . . . is located here, one of the earliest mosques in Islam. It was constructed in the middle of the 7th century after the Caliph Omar established the city. The mosque contains the remains of Muslim ibn ‘Aqil, first cousin of Husayn ibn ‘Ali [Ali’s son by Fatima],”⁷³

Shi`ahs have no prophecy that al-Mahdi will govern from the Gaza Strip. This is one area where Bible prophecy and Islamic prophecy differ.

What about Yemen and Oman in the Pre-Tribulation Conquest? Ezekiel 38:13 states, “*Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages will say to you, “Have you come to capture spoil? Have you assembled your company to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?”*”

As we will see, Sheba and Dedan are the modern nations of Yemen and Oman, respectively, located on the southern most tip of the Arabian Peninsula. The statement of Ezekiel 38:13 seems to imply that Sheba and Dedan are not involved in the Alliance at the same level or the same time as that of the other named nations in Ezekiel 38:4-6. It is almost as if these two nations are more interested in the economic ramifications of Gog’s assault against Israel than other ramifications. It is for this reason that this interpreter opts that Sheba and Dedan are brought under Iran’s dominion in the Pre-Tribulation conquest rather than specifically in Gog’s conquest of the latter half of the Tribulation. When Saudi Arabia falls to Iran in the Pre-Tribulation conquest is the more logical time that the neighboring lands to the Saudis will join al-Mahdi as well. Certainly, the text gives us little to make this conclusion so we hold to it “loosely.”

What about Russia in the Pre-Tribulation Conquest? There is but one very weak hint that Russia assists al-Mahdi and Iran in the Pre-Trib conquest. Daniel 11:39 states, “*He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; . . .*” Perhaps “*help of a foreign god*” is referring to Russia’s provision of military and other supplies to Iran in the Pre-Trib conquest? We have already come to this conclusion for our interpretation of Ezekiel 38:7 in the battle of Armageddon. Perhaps Russia is doing the same in Daniel 11:39 as well. We

cannot hold to this view with certainty for the Hebrew word translated “god” is translated in this way in many other Bible verses.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the metaphor works quite nicely.

What about Turkey in the Pre-Tribulation Conquest? Daniel 8:19f prophesies of a coming event that has applications in Daniel’s time as well as the Tribulation at the end of days. In our next chapter, we will review the dividing of the 7 year period of Tribulation into two periods of 3 ½ years. The first 3 ½ years are the period of the “wrath of satan,” and the last 3 ½ years are the period of the “wrath of God,” and specifically the “finishing” of God’s “indignation.” Notice a similar reference in Daniel 8:

Daniel 8:19 *“He said, “Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.”*

The view we will discuss in the next chapter is that Gog’s battle does not occur until the time of the wrath of God, i.e., the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation. Daniel 8’s prophecy will occur at that time period as well. This period is also the “final period of the indignation, . . . the appointed time of the end.”

Scholars have almost uniformly interpreted Daniel 8 as having been fulfilled with the coming of Alexander the Great and the eventual division of his kingdom into four divisions following Alexander’s death.⁷⁵ One of Alexander’s leaders was Antiochus Epiphanes who is interpreted by most scholars to be the “little horn” that “*grows exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land*” (Daniel 8:9). The “growth” of Antiochus’ kingdom is thought to have been fulfilled when in the 2nd century BC, Antiochus overran Palestine and Jerusalem, including his desolation of the Temple in 168 BC.⁷⁶

This writer concurs with the interpretation that Antiochus Epiphanes fulfills Daniel 8. He is the “little horn” of Greece, and Greece is the “goat” in Daniel 8. However, Antiochus is also a “type” that will occur in the end of days, specifically, the “final period of the indignation,” the “appointed time of the end.” This period is not the Pre-Tribulation conquest that we have previously interpreted as occurring prior to the entering into the 7 year Treaty. Rather, the “appointed time of the end” is the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation. Daniel 8:21 ultimately adds Turkey to the group (located in Alexander’s Greek kingdom) that includes Iran but this does not take place until the second half of the Tribulation period (Turkey is also specifically named by Ezekiel 38/39 as “Gomer”).

Another reason which supports Turkey not joining Iran until the latter half of the Tribulation is that Daniel 8:24 predicts the destruction of “*mighty men and the holy people.*” The “holy people” are, without question, the Jews (Isaiah 62:12). Other passages tell us that the Jews are not “destroyed” until the end of the 7 year Tribulation period. Daniel 12:7 states, “. . . *and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.*” The “events” will not be completed until the “shattering of the power” of the Jews. This “ending” cannot occur until the end of the Tribulation period (at the 2nd coming of Christ).

The conclusion that the “power of the holy people” is not shattered until the end of the Tribulation period is also supported by Revelation 11:2. Revelation 11:2 states, “. . . *and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.*” The forty-two months refers to the last 3 ½ years of the 7 year tribulation period when Israel is overcome by converging forces. This overcoming of Israel will begin at the midpoint of the 7 years (Daniel 9:27). Jerusalem will be

“trampled” for the remaining period of the Tribulation period. Daniel 12:8 gives us the number of days - 1,290 days or 43 months. The trampling of Israel will be ended with the defeat of the overcoming forces by Jesus Christ and his heavenly forces at the 2nd coming of Christ. We will discuss this event in our next chapter.

With all the nations surrounding Israel that make up Gog’s Alliance as well as the four nations subdued in the pre-Tribulation conquest, the question arises is why does it take so long before Israel is completely destroyed. The 42 months of “trampling” that Revelation 11:2 prophesies seems to be 41 months too long! It seems Israel would be annihilated sooner and thereby necessitate a more rapid second of Jesus Christ to overcome Gog and his forces. Actually, Daniel 12:7’s reference to the shattering of the “power of the holy people” could quite possibly be referring, not to the Jews, but to a country that is protecting the Jews. This country would be the “power of the holy people” that is shattered, thereby bringing the End. When that country is shattered, then so will the holy people be shattered. Interpreting the phrase “power of the holy people” in the modern day could result in America being that “power of the holy people” in the Tribulation period. This view interprets America as somehow holding the forces of the Antichrist/false prophet at bay until America itself is shattered. Then comes the End.

Conclusion. Turkey will join Iran in its onslaught against Israel in the latter half of the 7 year period of Tribulation, not the pre-Tribulation conquest.

To Summarize. Here is what we have concluded regarding the pre-tribulation conflict prophesied by Daniel 11:36f:

1. The “king” is al-Mahdi, the Antichrist/false prophet. Shi`ah Islam is his religion, and Iran is his country.
2. The king of the south is Egypt. The king of the north is Babylon, located in modern day Iraq. Egypt is defeated. The text tells us this specifically. Daniel 11:42-43. The implication is that Iraq is also, but this is not stated specifically. Many other nations are likewise defeated.
3. Edom, Moab, and the sons of Ammon are “rescued.” The “sons of Ammon” comprise modern day Jordan. They are likely rescued by Israel although we cannot make this conclusion with any certainty as the text is silent of the reason of the rescue. Daniel 11:41.
4. Al-Mahdi will locate his headquarters on the Gaza Strip.
5. We have previously reviewed Revelation 17 and concluded that Saudi Arabia would be defeated by a consortium of 10 Muslim nations led by the Antichrist/false prophet. Combining this earlier interpretation with the interpretation at present results in the following conclusion:
 - Saudi Arabia, the harlot, is defeated by al-Mahdi and his Alliance of ten Muslim nations (Rev 17:12);
 - Egypt, the “king of the south, is defeated by al-Mahdi (Daniel 11:40, 42)
 - Iraq (or Syria), the “king of the north” is defeated by al-Mahdi (Daniel 11:40)
 - A third Muslim nation is defeated by al-Mahdi (Daniel 7:24), likely, Syria/Lebanon.
6. Other Muslim nations submit to al-Mahdi, namely, those nations of the Middle East other than Israel and Jordan. Daniel 11:40. Those countries likely include Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates, and eastern African nations, Somalia, Sudan.
7. Libya and Ethiopia “follow at his heels,” meaning they will submit to this leader. Daniel 11:43.

The remaining part of this chapter will offer modern day evidence that Iran is a likely candidate to lead this pre-tribulation battle in fulfillment of Daniel 11:36f, Daniel 7:25-26, and Revelation 17:12-13, 16-17.

Part 4 - Iran in the Last Days

A Shi`ah Nation that Leads the Pre-Tribulation Conquest. Our objective is to identify the nation named in Gog's Alliance that is also a Shi`ah Islam nation. We are looking for Shi`ah Islam because our earlier interpretation of Bible prophecies, i.e., Daniel 2, 7 and Revelation 13 and 17 all pointed us to Shi`ah Islam. This nation will be the lead Muslim nation that will follow al-Mahdi's leadership in bringing the world under Islam.

Iran is the only Muslim country in Gog's Alliance with a 90% Shi`ah population.

Iran also satisfies a requirement of Daniel 7:23-24 that we have not discussed, "different." Iran is "*different*." In our earlier chapter, we interpreted Daniel 7:24 to refer to the Mahdi as a supernatural, demonic incarnation, and therefore, "different" from the other "kings" (who are human beings). We also stated that in prophetic scripture, "horns" refer to kings and/or the kingdoms they lead, interchangeably. Thus, in the same way that the Mahdi/Antichrist will be "different," we should expect that the kingdom he leads to be different.

Iran is "different" from the other nations surrounding Israel, both those named in Ezekiel 38/39 and included in the Alliance, and those omitted from the Alliance. There are six Middle East neighbors of Israel left out of Ezekiel 38/39. These six nations are all Arab nations. *Iran is not Arab. Iran is Persian.*

Consider this statement as reported by *The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI)*, Inquiry and Analysis - No. 426, March 12, 2008. The statement is made by Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu Gheit in response to Iran's desire to renew relations with Egypt (*Egypt is an Arab nation*). It seems that the Egyptian Minister prefers that "Arab problems . . . should be dealt with by Arabs," not by Persians:

"Iran is an influential power in the Gulf. For the last two or three years . . . it has been trying to involve itself in Arab problems so as to gain influence that will serve it in its struggle with the West. Thus, Egypt believes that Iran has a problem with the Arab world, and that its interference in [Arab] problems is detrimental to Arab interests. This is Egypt's position at this stage. . . . The Arab problems in the region should be dealt with by the Arabs, and not by other forces inside or outside the region. . . . "Let me stress that there is no conflict between Egypt and Iran. Egypt recognizes Iran's value, and respects it as a religious [force] with a [distinguished] Islamic history. Egypt also appreciates Iran's influence in East Asia, in Afghanistan, in Pakistan and in the Gulf... [However], it would be inconceivable for Egypt to consent to [establish] full and normal relations with a country that reveres the man who assassinated [the late] Egyptian president [Anwar Sadat]. There is an Egyptian consensus [on this]. . ."⁷⁷ (Emphasis added)

I quote this statement from the Egyptian Minister only to demonstrate that in the Middle East, to be "Arab" is quite different than to be "Persian." This "difference" matters in the Middle East! It

also matters in Bible prophecy.

The Threat of Iran. We have tentatively identified Iran as the “different” Shi`ah Islam nation that will subdue Arab countries neighboring Israel in the Last Days. Is Iran able to accomplish such a feat? Does it have the military to accomplish such? Does it have the spiritual will to see such a feat through to the end? Consider this Senate Intelligence Report which describes Iran’s current missile inventory as “among the largest in the Middle East” (see Map 12-3 at end of chapter for the range of Iran’s missiles as described in the following paragraph):

“One of the most disturbing aspects of the Iranian WMD [“weapons of mass destruction”] program is its determined effort to construct ballistic missiles that will enable Tehran to deliver conventional or, potentially, chemical, biological, or nuclear warheads against its neighbors in the region and beyond. Iran claimed last fall that its Shahab-3 missile can currently strike targets at distances up to 2,000 km (1,200 miles), including Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and southeastern Europe. It is believed that Iran's Shahab-4 will have a range of 4,000 km (2,400 miles), enabling Iran to strike Germany, Italy, and Moscow. The below map by the Congressional Research Service illustrates the estimated ranges of the ballistic missiles Iran is developing [See Map 12-3 at end of chapter]: The U.S. Intelligence Community concluded in its November 2004 721 Report: “Iran's ballistic missile inventory is among the largest in the Middle East . . .”⁷⁸ (Emphasis added)

Quoting from the same Congressional Report, it seems that Iran and its President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have made public threats against both the United States and Israel, the sum of which pose a “serious threat to national security and to the security of friends and allies” of the United States:

“Iran poses a threat to the United States and its allies due to its sponsorship of terror, probable pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and support for the insurgency in Iraq. The profile of the Iranian threat has increased over the last year due to the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has made public threats against the United States and Israel, the continuation of Iranian nuclear weapons research, and the recent attacks by Hezbollah, an Iranian terrorist proxy, against Israel. Iran has provided Hezbollah with financial support and weapons, including the thousands of rockets Hezbollah fired against Israel in July and August 2006. Iran thus bears significant responsibility for the recent violence in Israel and Lebanon.”⁷⁹ (Emphasis added)

“This report attempts to explain to the American people that, although intelligence is inadequate to develop a thorough understanding of the threat posed by Iranian activities, there is sufficient information available to conclude that Iran poses a serious threat to U.S. national security and to the security of our friends and allies. . . . Iran’s missile programs provide Tehran with the ability to strike targets far beyond its borders, as do its support of terrorism and meddling in Iraq. Moreover, the IAEA’s belief that the Iranians may be testing missile reentry vehicles with nuclear applications poses the real possibility that Iran could spark a major regional war.”⁸⁰ (Emphasis added)

Quoting from CRS Report to Congress #32048, by Kenneth Katzman, we find that Iran’s nuclear program is but one of Iran’s threats to the United States. Iran regularly provides “material support to groups that use violence to prevent Israeli-Arab peace.” Additionally, Iran

provides support to terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and Hizbullah:

*"Iran's nuclear program is not the only major U.S. concern on Iran. Successive administrations have pointed to the threat to the United States and its allies posed by Iran's policy in the Near East region, particularly material support to groups that use violence to prevent Israeli-Arab peace. Such groups have long included Lebanese Hezbollah and the Palestinian groups Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Although there is no evidence of an operational relationship with Al Qaeda, some senior Al Qaeda activists are believed to be in Iran, although Iran claims they are "in custody." U.S. officials also accuse Iran of attempting to exert influence in Iraq by providing arms and other material assistance to Shiite Islamist militias, some of which are participating in escalating sectarian violence against Iraq's Sunnis there."*⁸¹ (Emphasis added)

Iran is Aligned with Russia. We have interpreted Rosh as Russia. We have stated that Russia will align with a nation from the Middle East in its attack against Israel; and, we have posited Iran to be that nation. If this interpretation is correct, then we must find evidence in the modern day that Iran and Russia are aligned with one another.

As reported by Internet Yahoo.news, Associated Press, the alignment of Russia and Iran is far from a secret relationship:

"Iranians in test run of first nuclear power plant" Associated Press Writer Nasser Karimi,– Wed Feb 25, 2009, 2:22 pm.

*BUSHEHR, Iran – Iranian and Russian engineers carried out a test-run of Iran's first nuclear power plant Wednesday, a major step toward starting up a facility that the U.S. once hoped to prevent because of fears over Tehran's nuclear ambitions. American opposition to the plant eased when Iran agreed in 2005 to return spent fuel to Russia to ensure it can't be reprocessed into plutonium. Russia is providing enriched uranium fuel for the plant in the southern port city of Bushehr. But the U.S. and its allies say there are deep questions about whether Iran intends to use other parts of its nuclear program to develop atomic weapons. Tehran denies that. The United States said Wednesday that the fuel deal with Russia shows Tehran does not need the most controversial part of its nuclear program — facilities to produce its own enriched uranium. . .*⁸² (Emphasis added)

"Reset" Sought on Relations With Russia, Biden Says, Speech at Security Conference Offers Look at Policy, By Craig Whitlock, Washington Post Foreign Service , Sunday, February 8, 2009; Page A18: MUNICH, Feb. 7 -- Vice President Biden told an international security conference here Saturday that the White House wants to "press the reset button" on one of Washington's biggest challenges: its increasingly troublesome relationship with Russia. Biden ticked off a list of security headaches that the Kremlin has the potential to help or hinder, including the faltering war in Afghanistan and fruitless efforts to persuade North Korea and Iran to forswear nuclear weapons. . .⁸³ (Emphasis added)

From a 2006 Report by Lionel Beehner, Council of Foreign Relations, on the history of Russian-Iranian arms sales, it seems that the Iran/Russia alignment began with the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979 and the rise of the Ayatollah:

"What is the history of Russian-Iranian arms sales? After the fall of the Shah in 1979,

the Islamic Republic of Iran sought to secure itself by purchasing conventional arms mainly from China, North Korea, and, despite prickly bilateral relations, the Soviet Union (under the Shah, its chief supplier had been the United States and Britain). In 1989, following the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Moscow and Tehran negotiated their first major arms deal along with agreements on scientific-technical cooperation, which included pledges of non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. Relations soon improved. By the end of the 1990s, once Iran's cooperation with North Korea had slowed, Russia emerged as Iran's main supplier of conventional arms. Between 1995 and 2000, Russia suspended its advanced weapons trade with Iran as part of a voluntary agreement with the United States. The value of arms transfer agreements between the Iran and Russia ballooned from \$300 million between 1998 and 2001 to \$1.7 billion between 2002 and 2005.⁸⁴ (Emphasis added)

From another 2006 Report by Lionel Beehner, Council of Foreign Relations, on Iranian Russian relations:

***"Russia, Iran: Brothers in Arms.** The burgeoning partnership between Iran and Russia threatens to unravel UN efforts to squeeze Tehran to forego its nuclear ambitions. A veto-wielding member of the Security Council, Russia has thus far resisted efforts to punish the Iranians for forging ahead with their enrichment activities and ignoring a raft of UN resolutions. Of course, Moscow is motivated by fears of losing lucrative business opportunities, not to mention an important ally in the region. Bilateral trade eclipsed \$2 billion in 2005, and as this new Backgrounder explains, Russia now supplies the bulk of Iran's conventional arms. That includes a proposed air-defense system that would give Iran a credible deterrent against any American or Israeli move to strike its nuclear installations. Russia also built a light-water nuclear power plant at Bushehr, an \$8 billion project set to go online as early as next year (GlobalSecurity.org).⁸⁵ (Emphasis added)*

Conclusion. I could quote report after report. The bottom line? Iran is a significant military threat in the Middle East and, therefore, the entire world. As a Russian supplied Middle East nation and as an emerging nuclear armed nation, it is a likely candidate in the modern time to fulfill our interpretation of Last Day's Bible prophecy.

Iran's Public Statements Against Israel. It is doubtful that any of our readers will wonder if Iran is at enmity with Israel, a Biblical characteristic that clearly must be satisfied. However, so as not to minimize the obvious, we have included a few quotes to document what most of us already know.

From CRS Report to Congress #RL32048 describing Iran's current president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and other Iranian leaders of the past, we find a statement clearly indicative of Iran's enmity to Israel:

"Iran's support for Palestinian militant groups has long concerned U.S. Administrations, particularly since doing so gives Tehran an opportunity to try to obstruct Israeli-Palestinian peace prospects. . . . However, other Iranian leaders have made similar statements in the past. In the 1990s, Khamene'i called Israel a "cancerous tumor" and made other statements suggesting that he seeks Israel's destruction. In December 2001, Rafsanjani said that it would take only one Iranian nuclear bomb to destroy Israel, whereas a similar strike against Iran by Israel would have far less impact because Iran's population is large.⁸⁶ (Emphasis added)

Iran's president at the time of this writing, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has been equally public of his enmity towards Israel. The same Report to Congress states,

"Ahmadinejad has inflamed world opinion with several anti-Israel statements (Emphasis added):

- *On October 26, 2005, he stated at a Tehran conference entitled "A World Without Zionism" that "Israel should be wiped off the map" and that "anybody who recognizes Israel will burn in the fire of the Islamic nations' fury." A U.N. Security Council statement and Senate and House resolutions (H.Res. 523 and S.Res. 292), passed in their respective chambers, condemned the statement.*
- *On December 9, 2005, and then again on December 14, 2005, and May 28, 2006, he questioned the veracity of the Holocaust. In the CRS-5 December 14 case, he called it a "myth" — and stated that Europe should create a Jewish state in Europe, not in the Middle East.*
- *On January 1, 2006, Ahmadinejad said that the European countries created Israel after World War II to continue the process of ridding the European continent of Jews.*
- *On April 14, 2006, he said Israel is "heading toward annihilation."¹⁸⁷*

"Other accounts say Ahmadinejad believes his mission is to prepare for the return of the 12th "Hidden" Imam, whose return from occultation would, according to Twelver Shiite doctrine, be accompanied by the establishment of Islam as the global religion."¹⁸⁸ (Emphasis added)"¹⁸⁹

A Very Important Prophecy About Iran. Unlike the six Arab nations that border Israel, Iran is not prophesied to be at enmity with Israel based on passages such as Psalm 83 or Numbers 24 (which apply to the sons of Ishmael, of which Iran is not).⁹⁰ Neither is Iran "to the north" of Israel and thereby referenced in prophecy as a "natural enemy" of Israel. If we look at our previous map of the six nations neighboring Israel, Iran is located due east of Israel, not north of Israel.

The question we must answer is whether or not the Bible prophesies of a nation *from the east* of Israel that will be at enmity with Israel in the Last Days? If there is no such prophecy, then it is irrelevant how capable and likely Iran may be in the modern day to defeat the six neighboring nations to Israel. Here are the Bible's prophecies that make Iran very relevant in our day:

Isaiah 41:2 *"Who has aroused one from the east whom He calls in righteousness to His feet? He delivers up nations before him And subdues kings. He makes them like dust with his sword, As the wind-driven chaff with his bow."*

Isaiah 46:11 *"Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it."*

Revelation 16:12 *"The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. 13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty . . . 16 And they gathered them*

together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.”

In each of the three texts above, God initiates the nation “from the east” into battle. This factor is also present in Ezekiel 38:16. Each of the texts include specific information identifying the geographical location of the nation God will direct – it is “from the east.” *Iran is the only nation included in Gog’s Alliance that is “from the east” of Jerusalem.*

What about Iraq? First, Iraq is *not included in the list of five nations specifically included in Gog’s Alliance* in Ezekiel 38/39; and, unless the nation is included in this list of nations, it should not be considered as a candidate for this Last Day’s conflict against Israel. Even if Iraq were included in Ezekiel 38/39, it is not “from the east.” Iraq is the location of ancient Babylon. Whenever the Bible refers to “Babylon,” it always uses the phrase “from the north” (Ezekiel 1:4, 26:7). Therefore, Iraq is eliminated Biblically since it is not included in Ezekiel 38/39 and it is also not “from the east.”

Let me say again: *Iran is the only nation in Gog’s Alliance that is uniquely located east of Israel.* Looking at Rev 16:16 closely, we see the addition of specifics very relevant to our interpretation. The text states that a nation “from the east” will “go” with the “*dragon. . . the beast. . . and the false prophet*” in the “*war of the great day of God, the Almighty.*” The dragon is satan (Rev 12:9). We have interpreted the “beast” to be Allah (Rev 13:4). We have interpreted the “false prophet” (Rev 13:11-13) to be the coming Antichrist, Shi`ah Islam’s al-Mahdi who will “rise” in the Last Days. We have interpreted “Gog” to be a human being, a leader of a superpower nation at enmity with Israel. Revelation 16:12 tells us that the “*water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.*” We must interpret this phrase metaphorically, not literally. In modern times, the presence of water in the Euphrates River does not limit a nation’s army from crossing the Euphrates. The text is telling us that, in the Last Days, something will happen that will allow the nations “from the east” to cross barriers otherwise present so as to initiate Armageddon. Whatever the barriers are, their removal will cause an advantage to be realized by the nations from the east. Otherwise, the “*way prepared for the kings from the east*” would have no relevance or meaning. The ultimate purpose? *Iran will be used by God to gather the nations of the world for Armageddon, and in the process, God will execute His judgment against the nations of Gog’s Alliance and the world.*⁹¹ The opposing army in this battle will be the forces of God led by Jesus Christ (Rev 19:11-21).

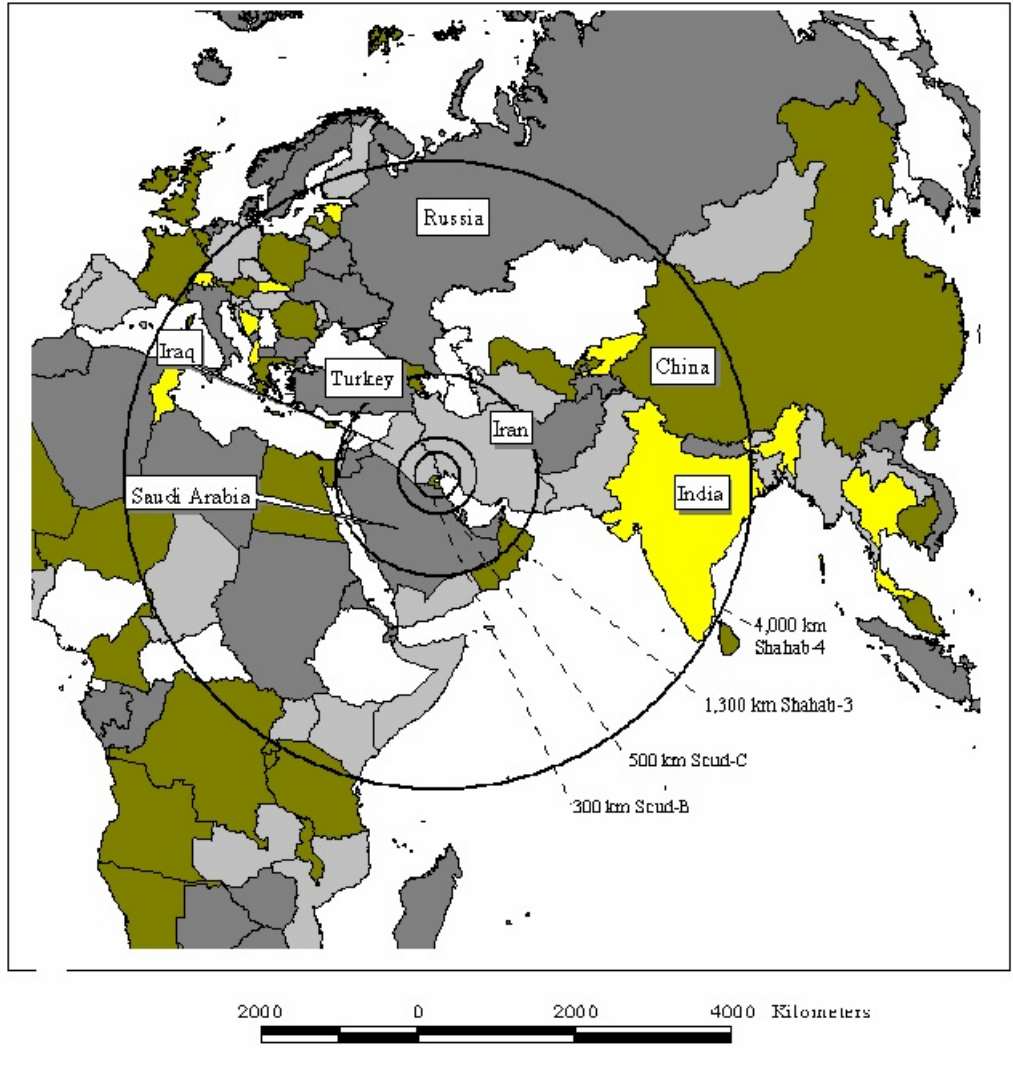
Conclusion. Iran is the nation “from the east” that will follow al-Mahdi’s lead in the pre-Tribulation conquest as well as in Gog’s Alliance at the close of the Tribulation period.



Gog's Alliance - Ezek 38/39 = yellow
 Israel's Neighbors Not Named in Alliance = blue
 Jordan = pink (rescued)

Map 12 - 2, Neighboring Nations Not Named in Gog's Alliance

Ranges of Iran's Missiles



Map 12 - 3
From Congressional Research Report
Map Showing Range of Iran's Missiles

Summary of Key Points in this Chapter 12	
Point 1	“Gog” is a specific human being in the Last Days who will lead an Alliance of nations against Israel. .
	Gog is not the Antichrist
Point 2	The battle(s) of Ezekiel 38/39 is not the same battle as described in Revelation 20:8 when satan is released following his 1000 year prison term.
Point 3	The battle(s) of Ezekiel 38/39 culminate in the Battle of Armageddon described in Revelation 16:12-16 and 19:11-21.
	After the Battles of Ezekiel 38/39 and Armageddon, Israel repents of the sin of unbelief in Jesus and receives the pouring out of the grace of God. This occurs in conjunction with the second coming of Jesus Christ.
Point 4	The nations of Ezekiel 38/39 are: “Rosh” is Russia, from the “remote north.” “Meshech” and “Tubal” are modern day countries of the Russian Federation. “Gomer” is Anatolia (Turkey). “Beth-Togarmah” is modern day Armenia. Other named members of Gog’s Alliance are shown on Map 12-1 in yellow.
Point 5	The “many peoples” of Ezekiel 38/39 that join Gog against Israel include six nations neighboring Israel that have been subdued by a named member of Gog’s Alliance. The six nations that have been subdued are: Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. The nations are subdued by a Shi`ah nation. This conflict occurs before the Tribulation period begins and results in a worldwide economic crisis that puts the world in a position whereby a treaty with the “conquering nation” is entered into.
Point 6	Iran is the Shi`ah nation included in Gog’s Alliance that launches the pretribulation conquest. Iran is “from the east.”

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79. Ibid, p. 6.
80. Ibid., p. 22.
81. CRS Report to Congress, #RL32048, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, dated November 1, 2006, by Kenneth Katzman, summary page.
82. http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090225/ap_on_re_mi_ea/ml_iran_nuclear (accessed February 24, 2009).
83. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/07/AR2009020700756.html> (accessed February 24, 2009).
84. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/11869/> (accessed February 26, 2009).
85. http://www.cfr.org/publication/11873/russia_iran.html (accessed February 26, 2009).

86. Ibid., p. CRS -23.

87. Ibid., p. CRS - 4-5.

88. Ibid., p. CRS - 5.

89. Ibid.

90. The difficulty arises when one considers the Persian Empire at its greatest extent vs Persia as a nation. The Empire at one time included most of the Middle East and Egypt as well as Asia Minor. See Smith's Dictionary, under key word search "Persia." The Empire of Persia would be covered by the prophecies of Psalm 83 and Numbers 24, but not the nation of Persia.

91. Since the text of Revelation 16:12 is plural ("kings from the east"), it is conceivable that Iran will not be alone but will be joined by other nations "from the east," e.g., Afghanistan, Pakistan or India.