

Gog Magog Invasion of Israel

Chief Prince or Prince of Russia?

Ezekiel 38-39

The Gog Invasion Is Between Two Important Prophetic Chapters

Ezekiel prophesied about the Gog and Magog invasion of Israel in chapters 38-39. It is noteworthy that these two chapters are located between two other significant prophetic passages. God's words in Ezekiel chapter 37 foretell the Dry Bones prophecy. The Dry Bones prophecy, which practically every Jew is familiar with, speaks of Israel being reestablished as a nation. Ezekiel foresees in the Dry Bones prophecy that the Jews would return to their promised land after being a very long time in exile. This return of God's chosen people to the land of their fathers happens in two stages: unbelief and belief. The Jews will first return to the land of Israel and reestablish their nation in unbelief, without national salvation. They will live in their land but most will not accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah during that time. Then there will be a second international gathering (Isaiah 11:11) of the Jews to their land in belief. At this second gathering from the many nations, all of the living Jewish people will all accept Jesus as their Christ, as their Messiah. This is the time of national salvation for Israel, for every living Jew (Romans 11:26-27).

Ezekiel chapter 40 describes the Millennial Temple. There will be a new temple erected in Jerusalem when Messiah comes. Ezekiel's temple will be built when Jesus Christ returns in great power in order to set up his 1,000 year reign on earth (Revelation 20).

The placement of the Gog Magog invasion between the prophecy of Israel returning to her land yet prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is significant. This divine arrangement infers that the Gog Magog invasion will take place after the Jews are back in their land but before Jesus returns to set up his Millennial rule. Israel now has been reestablished and recognized as a legitimate nation since 1948. We are presently living between the time when Israel was recognized as a nation and the time of the Second Coming of our Lord. This means the Gog invasion of Israel could be near.

Who Is Gog?

The first time the word Gog is used in the Bible is in I Chronicles 5:4. That man was a relative of Reuben. Gog is named again in Revelation 20:8-9 at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ. Other than those two times, the remainder of occurrences are in Ezekiel 38-39. Let's take a look at Ezekiel's use of the name Gog.

Son of man, set thy face against **Gog**, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, (Ezekiel 38:2, The Holy Bible)

Gog is identified with the land of Magog. Magog is known as the land of modern Ukraine and Russia. Magog was a son of Japeth, which would make him Noah's grandson. Japeth settled the area now known as Europe. Magog is named in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10:2. Magog's descendants are associated with the Scythians, also known as the Tartars. These are known as the people who settled the area north of the Black Sea which now is Ukraine and Russia. Paul names the Scythian people in his book to the church at Colossae.

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian,
Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

(Colossians 3:11, The Holy Bible)

The Scythians are generally agreed to be the people who settled the area north of the Black Sea. This points predominantly to what is now Ukraine and Russia. The Scythians originated in Persia (Iran) and migrated to southern Russia in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. (Encyclopedia Britannica 1990, Scythian entry, volume 10) Jerome also identifies the Scythians with those of the land of Gog (Unger's Bible Dictionary, Scythian entry, p. 987)

Noah's ark landed in the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4). The mountains of Ararat are located in eastern Turkey. When Noah and his family disembarked the ark, they began to settle. Their descendants migrated all around the Black Sea region. Several of the location names specified in these Ezekiel passages concern the areas surrounding the Black Sea.

Magog is reckoned to be the land north of the Black Sea; Ukraine and Russia. At times Magog includes the people of the land. Magog is the place and also can refer to the people of that place.

Gog is the leader of the people of the North. Gog is the leader of the people of Ukraine and Russia. Gog is a male leader because Ez. 38:2 refers to Gog as "him."

Gog Is The Leader Of The Invading Nations

Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the **chief prince** of Meshech and Tubal,
and prophesy against him, (Ezekiel 38:2, The Holy Bible)

Ezekiel calls Gog the chief prince. There is no reason to wonder if the Bible is correct and that Gog is not the chief prince as stated. Strangely, some expositors go to extreme efforts attempting to cast doubt upon the words of the Bible here. There is no reason to question the Bible. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Wilhelm Gesenius is commonly the primary revered (and also referenced) source supposedly giving permission to change words here in Ezekiel. May we be among those who trust God's words and not among those who question the validity of God's words.

Rosh is the Hebrew word for chief. Gesenius in his Hebrew Grammar (Second Edition edited by Kautzsch and Cowley pg. 284) names the word "head" as the simple meaning for *rosh*. Certainly, the primary meaning of *rosh* is head, chief and words such as: ruler, captain, sum, first, beginning, highest, supreme. This is what any credible Hebrew grammar teaches. Head or chief is the basic meaning.

Rosh is a man's name in Genesis 46:1, otherwise it is a descriptive word. **Rosh** is **chief** in Ezekiel 38:2 and 39:1. Chief has a similar meaning as head. We sometimes use both of these words in the same way. A Chief Petty Officer leads those that are enlisted in the Navy. A chief cook is the main cook in a restaurant. A headmaster is the leading teacher of an academy. A head nurse is the nurse that is in charge. In Ezekiel, a chief prince is the leading prince among other princes. "When the common sense makes sense, seek no other sense lest it result in nonsense." The basic definition, the grammar, and the context all affirm we should not seek another meaning for the word chief (*rosh*) in this verse.

Wilhelm Gesenius was an intense student of Hebrew who died in the mid 1800's. In his Hebrew Dictionary, *rosh* (751-752) has two entries. The first entry is the prime meaning: a head, highest, supreme, sum, amount, first, foremost, the beginning and similar citations. The head of something is the simplest way the word *rosh* is used. The Jews call their new year Rosh-HaShanah.

New Year's Day is the head of the year, the first of the year, the beginning of the year. Rosh-HaShanah is the chief day of the year. It comes first. Likewise, Gog is the chief prince who comes first among the other princes. Gog is the head leader, the first among the other nations' leaders.

Rewriting What Is Not Liked

Gesenius gives a second entry for *rosh*. This is where he has lead others in trying to change the plain meaning of the Bible. Gesenius is the chief (*rosh*) doubter of the normal meaning of God's words in this setting. His second entry (pg. 752) references Ezekiel 38-39 as having a different meaning than the regular meaning, chief. He calls *rosh* not a descriptive word but a proper noun. He believed *rosh* was a name which referred to the Russian people. For his support he references tenth century Byzantine Greek. And, he references Arabic, the Koran. Neither of these speculative sources need erode one's confidence in the ordinary meaning of the Bible.

His Greek word for Russia is Roos. It may be that the Byzantines called their neighbors to the north, the Roos. However, it is a great perilous leap to morph the Greek Roos back into the Hebrew rosh (a technique similar to rewriting history). A beginning reader can see obvious differences. Car and care are similar words with some of the same letters. However they have different vowel sounds and different word endings. The same kind of differences are found in Roos and *rosh*. Neither set of words have the same meanings.

Citing the Koran is not the best way to convince Bible-believers to distrust the Bible. The Koran was supposedly written around AD 600. Doesn't it seem odd for someone to reach for a late Arabic book to correct the far earlier inspired Hebrew? Should the Bible-believer look to the Book of Islam for license to correct the Holy Bible? God forbid! Let's trust God's words. Bible scoffers are uncertain when it comes to the plain words and the plain meaning of the Bible. **Chief** prince means **chief** prince.

While other sources may be cited for permission to change the meaning of God's words, Gesenius seems to be a fountainhead. Have we forgotten these Hebrew scholars whom God used in giving us our English Bible: Lancelot Andrews, William Bedwell, Miles Smith? These scholars, and many others, agreed *rosh* be translated as chief, and that's what we see.

Faithless Tendencies

Bible students need to be on guard against rationalistic beliefs that question the authority of God's words. Gesenius was for certain intelligent and dedicated to the details of his work. We are better off for the work he has done. Still, he was influenced by European rationalistic influences of his day. Other scholars knew to watch for those certain influences in his work. Samuel Tregelles was one. He made a "new impression" of the Gesenius Lexicon. In his "To The Student" remarks of the Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament, Tregelles warns of rationalistic Bible scoffers. Here are some of his comments in his introduction (bold emphasis added).

"The accurate study of the Old Testament in the original Hebrew, so far from becoming of less importance to Christian scholars than heretofore, is *now* far more necessary. For the **attacks on Holy Scripture**, as such are far more frequently made through the *Old Testament*..."

"Much of this has been introduced since the time of Gesenius, so that although **he was unhappily not free from Neologian bias [making up new words]**, others who have come after him have been far worse."

“That **Rationalistic tendencies** should be pointed out, that such things should be noted and refuted, was only the proper course for any one to take who really receives the Old Testament as inspired by the Holy Ghost...”

Tregelles was aware that the scholar Gesenius was influenced by the German rationalism of that day. Tregelles tried to keep the Lexicon the way it was written while trying to sift out the rationalistic-leaning concepts. A careful Bible student will make use of the fruit of Gesenius's labor, but not use it like a skeptic to change the Bible, such as with *rosh* in Ezekiel 38-39. Chief means chief. [Rationalism does not fully trust in the words of the Bible. Rationalistic thoughts question the full authority of God's written words, the Bible.]

It seem Gesenius was prone to Neologism. That is, he made up new words. This is the most likely explanation why he coined a new word that was not in the sacred Hebrew Scriptures: *rosh* now meant Russia to him.

A Prominent Linguist

Like Gesenius, Martin Luther lived in the German language. Luther predates Gesenius by about 300 years. Dr. Luther worked in detail with the Old Testament Hebrew and knew better than to change the meaning of *rosh*. Here is an excerpt from Ezekiel 38:1 from the Luther Bible (bold added for emphasis).

Du Menschenkind, wende dich gegen Gog, der im Lande Magog
ist und der **oberste Fürst [chief Prince]** in Mesech und Thubal

(The Holy Bible in German - Martin Luther)

Martin Luther knew it was chief prince. The English Bible translators knew it was chief prince. Probably most elementary Hebrew grammars and dictionaries know *rosh* means head or chief. Let us believe what God has said is true.

Not Modern Hebrew Either

A certain recent prophecy show said that the modern Hebrew word for Russia is Rosh, though no evidence was provided for this. Just because there are somewhat similar sounds does not mean the words have the same meaning. Those that teach English as a foreign language know that Google translate is not always correct. Yet, sometimes it can help in a pinch. Here are the results of putting Russia, chief, and head into Google translate. The translation was made from English to Hebrew (Google Translate was accessed 3/12/2022.) The modern Hebrew has been transliterated into English letters. As we can see, there is no reason to believe that modern Hebrew calls Russia, Rosh.

English	Hebrew (modern)
Russia	Rusiah
Head	rosh
Chief	rosh

Why are some prophecy teachers twisting Ezekiel's words to make it mean Russia?

Changing Words For The West

Gog is the leader of the nations around and north of the Black Sea. That leader comes from the area of Ukraine and Russia. That is already apparent from the location of Magog and the direction of the north parts (north of the Black sea).

It is part of the western, and particularly the American, mindset to think of Russia as the perpetual enemy. It may be more sensational and tickle people's ears by trying to change the Bible to include the word Russia in some way. If so, this would be a poor reason to change the Bible.

God made all of the Russian people. God loves all of the Russians. Christ died for every Russian person. There are many Russian brothers and sisters in Christ in that land, even today. Yet, Russia is an atheist nation, Godless. Many of the nations that Gog will lead are now Islamic nations. Atheistic and Muslim people have no room for Israel. Gog will make his move when it is his time. Changing the word chief to mean Russia is sensational, and apparently it sells. May we be among those who tremble at God's words and not try to change them.

The Missing Vav

A Vav conjunctive is a Hebrew connector translated into English most commonly as “and.” There is no extra Vav conjunction in the Hebrew in Ezekiel 38:2 or 39:1. There is no extra “and.” Here is an example where such a situation does occur in the same book.

Take thou also unto thee wheat, **and** barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches...

(Ezekiel 4:9, The Holy Bible)

In other words, the Hebrew does not support the translation “The prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal”. There should be a Hebrew Vav conjunctve (and) placed before the word Mesech but there is none. The descriptive word *rosh* is just where you would expect to find it in the sentence. This is further support the that **chief** prince has been correct all along. “When the common sense makes sense, seek no other sense lest it result in nonsense” applies again.

[Also, the reader would expect in this case that the descriptive word would be in like form as the word it is modifying. This is what we see. Prince and rosh are both in the construct state (possessive form). “Chief prince” is the natural translation. One would need to read English grammar back into the Hebrew to get “Prince of Rosh/Russia”. It seems that is one error some are making.]

Let Us Not Be Unbelieving But Believing

We can safely conclude that a leader from Russia/Ukraine will lead other nations to invade Israel. It is not necessary nor wise to change words in the Holy Bible in order to come up with that conclusion. There are no reasons from the grammar or syntax to change God's words or to doubt the Bible. *Rosh* means chief.

One unfortunate result of altering *rosh* to mean Russia shifts the focus of the Bible. The fascination turns toward Ukraine or Russia instead of fascination with the Lord himself. News media exegesis with its concentration on Russia tugs the believing heart away from glorifying the Lord first. May we magnify the Prince of Peace and not the chief prince of Ezekiel.

The bold emphasis in the Bible verses in this article was added.

Hebrew and Greek words were transliterated into English for ease of reading.

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