



The Russian Invasion of Israel According to Bible Prophecy

by the Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Eusebius Stephanou, Th.D.

Just recently, Russia’s Defense Ministry announced that they deployed Military forces to the Golan Heights (Jerusalem Post, April 3, 2024).

This move just adds tensions to the region since Russia initially moved forces into Syria from 2011-2015. Recent military analysts estimate Russian troops in Syria to be 17 thousand. Though no one knows the timing of this Biblical event, we know that it is a future event. It is amazing to think that Fr. Stephanou wrote this article in 1980. Sincerely, Joseph Abbate / President.

“Thou shall come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the Land. It shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land” (Ezekiel 38: 16).

Did you know that we are living today in an age both of expectation and fulfillment? Are you alive to the fact that Bible prophecy is being fulfilled in the earth-shaking events of our day? You need to get ready for the time God’s clock will strike. His program is unfolding in the events that are taking place in Afghanistan and Iran. The “signs of the times” are now before us. Jesus is coming back soon.

One of the major signs is the re-birth of the Jewish nation in 1948. I pointed out at length in a previous article that the regathering of the Jewish people in Israel is in the plan of God for the close of the age. It is included in the preparation of the world for the return of Jesus in glory.

God is definitely on the side of the Jews in the current Jewish-Arab

conflict. Nothing can thwart the purposes of God. Who can resist His will? Israel will not only survive the threats and attacks of its Arab enemies, but it will gather within its borders increasingly the returning Jews who have been scattered among the nations of the world. Those that go against Israel will only harm themselves.

But here is the main point of this article: It is not merely the restoration of national Israel that is connected to the return of Jesus. It is especially the fact that Israel will be linked directly to the cause of the military conflict that will envelope all of mankind. Satan knows that God is going to work out His purposes in Israel in a way that will bring glory to Him. Consequently, he seeks every opportunity to defeat those purposes by doing whatever possible to destroy the Jews as a people and as a nation. If Israel could be destroyed, there would be no necessity for a Messiah and God’s word would be discredited. Satan will incite Russia to launch an all-out assault against Israel. He has been putting a passionate hatred for the Jews in their hearts.

Through human eyes Russia will want to invade Israel because the world is demanding a peace agreement with the Arabs. She intends to enforce a peace settlement with the Arabs and to establish a Palestinian state, as well as to gain access to the oil in the Middle East. She “will

go... to take a spoil,” in the words of the prophecy of Ezekiel. Moshe Dayan of Israel stated in 1968: *“The next war will not be with the Arabs, but with Russia.”*

“Moscow,” Menachem Begin once warned, *“wants to take the free world in two places – one in Africa with the aid of the Cubans and one in the Middle East with the aid of those who call themselves Palestinians.”*

Dr. Scofield, a prominent Biblical scholar, spoke of the invasion of Israel by the Russians as far back as 1908 when Russia was a backward peasant nation. But A.C. Gaebelein in 1890 crossed the U.S., preaching that the Russians would march to Jerusalem for the last great war. Over two hundred years ago Bishop Laud in London preached that the Russians would invade Palestine before the last great war.

We are not just simply looking for something in the Bible to fit current events. Neither is this truth simply part of the sensational apocalypticism of the fundamentalist Protestants. Fr. Neilos Soteropoulos, a Greek Orthodox monk-priest of Mt. Athos, states in his book *The Coming Sharp and Two-edged Sword (Athens, 1966)* the following in this regard:

“While Ezekiel prophesies the second coming and permanent regathering of the Jews in Palestine, he predicts in the two chapters, immediately after the prophecy about the regathering, an important but sorrowful event that will occur in Palestine at the expense of the newly returned Jews. The prophecy in those two chapters of Ezekiel tells us clearly about the descent of the Russians upon Palestine and Egypt with much power and a great army” (p.86).

The eschatology of the Church

remains simply: *“He shall come again to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.”* **The full teaching of Scripture – particularly, on the predictive prophecy in the book of Revelation and in the Old Testament prophets – has yet to be researched, articulated and discussed. The doctrine of the last things remains in an undeveloped state.**

I want to examine the actual text of the prophecy relating to the Russian invasion of Israel. It has been attracting fresh attention throughout the Christian world. Since the ancient patriarchates lay in the very region of the world where prophecy is being fulfilled – at the very powder keg of World War III – the Orthodox Church can ill afford to ignore this vital matter. How long can we bury our heads in the sand and pretend that all is well? How long will it be business-as-usual with the Orthodox Church, while planet earth finds itself at the precipice of a nuclear holocaust?

Gog, Rosh, Meshech and Tubal

Now let us take a close look at Ezekiel’s prophecy, chapters 38 and 39, selecting the most relevant verses: *“Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal”* (v. 2, 3).

“Gog” is the translation of the Hebrew *Rosh* which means head, principal authority or chief prince. It can be understood as the chief prince among the fallen angels or evil spirits in the same way that Michael is a principal and exalted angel in the kingdom of God.

“Gog” is the evil spirit that will incite the great military movement from the north toward the land of Is-

rael. In Daniel (10: 13, 20), for example, we read about the *“prince of Persia and prince of Grecia.”* These are chief angels who exercise evil influence over individual nations.

Rosh is a variant spelling of “Russia” and it is used in Hebrew today. It hasn’t changed in 2500 years. In the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament we find two words *archonta Ros* before *“Meshech and Tubal”* in both verse 2 and 3. *Ros* is the Greek variant of the Hebrew *Rosh* from which the Greek *“Rossia”* and the English *“Russia”* are derived. In the Greek text we find “chief prince Rosh, Meshech and Tubal” in a series of names. In other words, the definition of the word “Russia” (Rosh) is chief prince,” as the definition of the proper noun *“Smith”* is “one who makes or repairs metal objects.”

Magog and Tubal, as well as Gomer (mentioned in verse 6), are the sons of Japheth, one of the three sons of Noah, as recorded in Genesis 10: 2, 3. *“Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.”* The sons of Japheth are mentioned in verse 2: Gomer, Magog, Madia, Javan, Tubal, and Meshech.

Noah’s sons migrated to Asia Minor in the Caucasus area. Magog fathered the inhabitants of Mt. Ararat in the southern Caucasus, the province of Georgia in Russia. According to Josephus two-thousand years ago they were called Magadites or Magods. The Greeks called them Schythians. Another son went to the area which today is Moscow. Another went to an area where Tubal or Tobolsk is found – the Eastern capital of Russia in the southwestern part of Siberia.

“Mesech,” the brother of Magog, derives from the Hebrew *Moshak*, meaning “to draw out.” From him descended a barbarian people who

inhabited the Moschovian mountains between Iberia, Armenia and Colchis. The Greek text renders in “Mosoch.” Obviously the names of the city Moscow comes from “Mesech,” Moshak and Mosoch.

Tubal is a grandson of Noah. His descendants are called Tibareni in Asia Minor. The territorial boundaries of these two brothers touched in the area of southern Russia between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Ethnologists view the sons of Japheth as having migrated from Asia Minor to the north, while the Shemites and the Hamites moved to the south.

God in His omniscience foreknows the plan of Satan. He is aware of the strategy that is being engineered against Palestine by Gog, the high principal authority out of the satanic kingdom. God begins by declaring His wrathful displeasure against Gog. *“Behold, I am against thee O Gog, and the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal”* (38:3). God has already conceived of His counter-plan against Satan. God always has the last word.

God permits this satanic plan to come to pass, because He intends to work out His own purposes by it. He desires to glorify His own name at the finale. It almost appears that God is leading the enemy to invade Israel. But in the Old Testament there is care not to give the impression to the Jewish mind that there is a duality of absolute authority and power. In order to vindicate God’s sovereignty against the thought of a rival divine principle, it sometimes seems as if God is the cause of evil: *“And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army”* (v.4).

An Assault of Enormous Proportions

Ezekiel foretells a military movement of enormous proportions.

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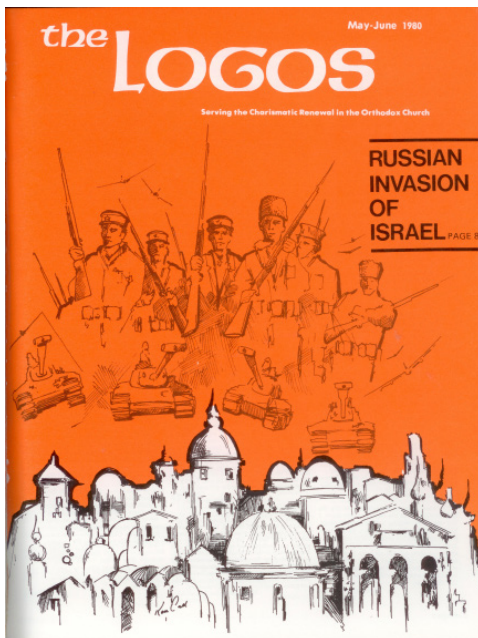
It will involve a massive army of men that will “cover the land like a cloud.” Russia will face a major confrontation with Israel. The prophet is not referring to a past event, nor to an event that would transpire during his own lifetime or soon after. Ezekiel prophesied in 593-560 B.C. while Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine before 600 B.C.

Ezekiel tells us that this assault will take place “in the latter years.” “It shall be in the latter days... (38:16). The time that the “king of the north” will engage in this ambitious operation is in the last days. Daniel 11:40 predicts likewise that the “king of the north shall come against him at the time of the end.” The reference is to the Israel of our own day. The description of the land as being “of unwalled villages” and being “at rest,” that is dwelling safely, and having neither bars nor gates fits the Israel of the present day and not the Israel of that time.

The leader of the Federated States of Europe will have made a covenant with Israel, guaranteeing her claims to freedom and sovereignty in Palestine against the Arab demands and threats. The Arab nations will then join the Soviet camp. The inhabitants of Israel will relax their guard and vigilance. They will rely on the assurances that will be given by the “king of the west.” They will be caught off guard, as they bask in what they will regard as permanent peace. We are reminded of the prophetic words of St. Paul: “For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thess. 5:3).

Daniel states that the: “king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind.” Russia will sweep down “like a storm” and “like a cloud to cover the land” according to the description of Ezekiel. **The head of the coalition of European States, however, will be incapable of coming to the defense of Israel. The western nations will be too weak to intervene and save the Jewish nation. They, too, will be taken by surprise and will be found unprepared.**

Russia will come down in formidable power. She will draw from her enormous arsenal. The description of the weapons is made in language understandable to the people of Ezekiel’s day. If he were to have used modern terms, as “tanks,” “artillery,” “airplanes,” “nuclear power,” he would not have made any sense. Thus the prophet speaks of “all sorts of armor, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords... with shield and helmet” (38:4).



Think of it! The entire combined military power of Russia, its satellites and the Arab nations! Daniel also gives us a picture of this massive armed invasion. “The king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries and shall overflow and pass over” (11:40).

It will be a combined land, sea and air movement of military power. The Russians will have direct and unhampered access to Israel by land through the Arab nations of the Middle East. En route to Israel they will be recruiting additional help. “Gomer” in verse 6 of chapter 38 in Ezekiel is regarded as referring to the Cimmerians who inhabited the area of Central Europe for many thousands of years. Bible scholars regard “Togarmah” as referring to Turkey and Syria.

Both prophets speak of Africa’s support of the Russian invasion. It is certainly not difficult to believe when one considers the general disposition of the new nations of Africa to be more pro-Soviet than pro-American. The combined military power of the African nations will be impressive.

Ethiopia and Libya was viewed by Herodotus (5th Century B.C.), the ancient Greek historian, as being in the interior of Africa. Ezekiel uses the names of the two nations which were known to his contemporaries to denote the whole continent of Africa. “The king of the south” invades Egypt (which presumably was at peace with Israel) and seizes its treasures and resources to help the “king of the north” He gives him the opportunity to invade Jerusalem, while the Jews are distracted by the military conflict in Egypt. “He shall stretch forth his hand upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape” (Daniel 11:42).

The Plundering of Israel

According to one school of thought, the Russian invasion of Israel will trigger the war that will end all war, namely the battle of Armageddon. The invasion will draw China into this conflict. Daniel 11:44 tells us: “But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to take away many.”

Space does not allow us to consider this question at length, suffice it to know that there is unanimous agreement that an invasion of Israel by the Russians is an actual event that is to come to pass in the end time. **The Holy Spirit in the passage of time will shed more light in the church as to the chronology of events.**

What will be the extent inflicted upon Israel? The enemy will bring death and bloodshed and will plunder, rob and spoil the land of Israel in a veritable bloodbath. The desolation of Jerusalem will be similar to that brought about by roman Emperor Titus in 70 A.D. The Russian conquest will be a total success.

Two-thirds of the inhabitants of Israel will perish. Again God will continue to work out His purpose in the midst of His chosen people with a remnant. Israel will be purged of disobedience and rebellion.

Zechariah (13:8; 14:2) gives us a vivid description of the calamity that will befall Jerusalem: *“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein”. “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the woman ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.”*

The Russian Armies Doomed

Until now Gog has been on the move. But at this point it is time for God to move. In the prophetic vision we see God intervening in grace and supernatural power. He will unleash His wrath against the enemies of His people Israel. God will step into this situation to manifest His dreadful might and His glory.

Just when the conquering forces will begin to enjoy their spoils, they will sustain a devastating blow. *“Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.”* (Ezekiel 38:19f).

We have a further account of the destruction of the invading forces recorded in Zechariah (14:12): *“And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongues shall consume away in their mouth”*. Five-sixths of the Russian army will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel (Ezekiel 39:2). There will be a feast for the fowls of the air (v.4). The extent of the deaths that the enemy will sustain will be so great that seven months will be required to bury the dead (v.12).

Jesus will touch upon the Mount

of Olives when He returns, which will cause an earthquake: *“And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. Which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south”* (Zac. 14:4).

Predictive Prophecy in the Orthodox Church

Predictive prophecy in the Orthodox Church, dating from the fourth century, is extra-scriptural. Rooted in the charismatic experience of the Holy Spirit, it comes to fill the gaps in Old Testament prophecy regarding future events related to the Orthodox Faith.

The prophetic tradition in Orthodoxy seems to focus exclusively on future happenings connected with a Turkish assault against Greece, a Russian intervention from the north, and invasion of Constantinople (Istanbul), penetration into the straits of the Dardanelles and a final triumph of Orthodox Christianity over Islam in Turkey.

Fr. Neilos Soteropoulos who discusses these prophecies at length in the book quoted above makes these interesting observations about the Russian intervention in the Greco-Turkish conflict: *“The Lord used the Mohammedan beast to chastise our Nation; but the beast will also be punished by another dark power, until God’s truth prevails. Behold, today’s Russian Communism is, without suspecting it, the vanguard of Orthodox Christianity. The so-called godly Czars of Russia did not attempt to destroy the beast, but left the Christians of the Balkans and of Asia Minor at its mercy for about four centuries. But atheistic Communism shall do what the Czars failed to do; and they refrained from doing it not for the love of Christ, but for the love of gold.”*

“The prophecy calls the Russians and their Satellites ‘Orthodox peoples,’ because their reli-

gion was orthodox Christian. The prophecy records; ‘And the blond nation together with its Agents will briefly defeat all Ishmael, and will take the town of the seven hills (Constantinople) with her privileges... The decay of the followers of Ager will result, and then the Apostolic Church triumphs.” (P.87).

This makes for a fascinating study, but space does not permit me to elaborate any further. Meanwhile, we can ponder on these questions: Are these prophecies authentic or do they reflect fanciful, wishful thinking on part of the Greeks? Do they conflict with or do they harmonize with Bible prophecy?

The return of Christ to most priests and laity is a distant event that may take place millions of years from now. For the true Orthodox Christian the second coming of Christ is that Blessed Hope. It is what makes faith in the Divine Savior worth it all. It affords courage to the believer in this hour of suffering. Knowing that Jesus is returning soon provides hope in the day of testing and adversity.

Satan hates with a passion that Jesus is returning in glory to deliver earth from its evils. He has done a good job on the clergy in making the word of God of none effect in this regard. He knows that his time is short and that the return of Christ will deal a final deadly blow to him and his kingdom of darkness.

You are doing Satan a favor by avoiding the subject on the return of Christ. You are harming your own soul when you put a damper on the truth that Jesus is returning soon to execute judgement and establish His kingdom of righteousness. You are violating the Spirit and the letter of the Gospel and the Orthodox Faith of the Apostles, Martyrs, and Fathers of the Church! A true child of God lives with the exciting expectation of the return of Jesus. Are you living with that Blessed Hope? Jesus warned us: *“Be ye ready also, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh”*.