

CHAPTER 8

WHY ATTACK ISRAEL?

“After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them. 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.”

—EZEKIEL 38: 8-9

In late March of 2011, the world received access to a 28½-minute video reportedly approved by the highest levels of the Iranian government for release to the nations of Islam. It is entitled, *The Coming Is Upon Us*. In it, the Iranian clerics describe how the protests and revolutions of the “Arab Awakening” are all part of Islamic end-time prophecies according to the Hadith⁶⁴ (the most important set of Islamic writings after the Koran). The video mentions Egypt, Yemen, and other nations as specific examples. The Iranian leadership sees the governmental upheavals and civil war as signs that their ultimate victory is at hand—that the Twelfth Imam, the Mahdi, is at work and his appearance is near.

According to the video, it is foretold that in the last days Iran—“the

people of the East”—will arise as a great power and begin the final jihad against the non-Muslim nations, most notably Israel, the United States, and Western Europe. According to their interpretation, it was foretold that the United States would attack Iraq as part of an overall war against Islam, that Iraq would become the center of world conflict, but that afterwards “it will serve as the capital of the world’s governance by Imam Mahdi.”⁶⁵ According to the Christian Broadcasting Network, the video also states:

Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, and Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Iran’s terrorist proxy Hezbollah, are hailed as pivotal end-times players, whose rise was predicted in Islamic scriptures.

The same goes for Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who the video says will conquer Jerusalem prior to the Mahdi’s coming.⁶⁶

These men will “pass on the flag of Islam to the last messiah.”⁶⁷ According to the teaching, the destruction of the Israeli regime and the liberation of Palestine will be the event that summons the return of the Mahdi and the beginning of a worldwide Islamic empire.

The video was released on the website of Reza Kahlil (a pseudonym), who once served as a CIA double agent within the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. According to Kahlil, the film was to be distributed throughout the Middle East with the hope of instigating further uprisings, all in pursuit of the Mahdi’s soon return. The texts state: “The messiah will not arise unless fear, great earthquakes, and seditions take place, . . . The splitters will split and progress; the swift winged will attack, . . . Adultery will become common. Men will dress like women. Men will content themselves to men and woman to woman,” and, “A Nation of the East will rise and prepare the way of the Coming of the Mahdi.”⁶⁸

In the same sequence, the video quoted the Hadith text: “The worst kinds of humans will become leaders,” and showed pictures of George W. Bush, Ariel Sharon, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Barak Obama. The video foretells that the Muslim Brotherhood will come to power and help in the work of the Mahdi, and that the current poor health of Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, an Iranian rival, is also a sign of the last days: “Whoever guarantees the death of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, I will guarantee the immediate appearance of the Mahdi.” According to Mr. Kahlil,

*They show clearly in the movie that one of the most significant Hadiths that predicts this day calls for the destruction of Israel and the conquest of Jerusalem by Islamic forces as a last sign, which must take place before the Madhi reappears.*⁶⁹

The video ends with the words: “I can tell you with utmost confidence: the promise of Allah for The Coming and the establishment of a new Islamic civilization is on its way Victory is near. Good tidings to the believers.”

At two points in reading texts about the coming of Imam Madhi, the film shows a man riding on a white horse, eerily reminiscent of the breaking of the first seal in the book of Revelation:

Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, “Come.” I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.—Revelation 6:1-2

We cannot afford to ignore the signs. The world is already in a battle between two books, two faiths, and a diabolically contradictory

set of prophecies for what will happen in the coming years. As Benjamin Netanyahu once asserted it in an interview:

I would be careful to make an analogy between Judeo-Christian traditions and prophecies and the radical Islamic traditions . . . The radical Islamists have a very violent tradition. In other words, it's not something that will happen, but it will happen by destruction we effect That is, we—the radical Muslims—should unsheathe our swords and embark on a great jihad of fire and blood

[The Judeo-Christian tradition is] basically a benign conception of rebirth and redemption, as opposed to a very warlike cult of blood that seeks to destroy. It's construction versus destruction. It's peace versus war. It's beating your swords into plowshares as opposed to beating your plowshares into swords. And it's a very, very different conception.⁷⁰

As we face the future, we must realize that Iran's vision of itself as the nation that must defeat Israel in order to facilitate the return of the Twelfth Imam is not simply some mad notion that will go away on its own. Iran has been arming itself for just such a clash of civilizations. It believes it is called by Allah to deliver the world from the Infidels, the Zionist regime, and their champions in the West. The proxies in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza have primed for this coming war for years. With such antagonistic rhetoric flowing, it won't be long until Iran and Hezbollah take things into their own hands in order to be the instigators of the return of the Mahdi they have proclaimed themselves.

If Iran is not stopped, what plays out will look exactly like what Ezekiel 38 and 39 describes.

PEACE AND SECURITY

As Ezekiel hears it, God confronts Gog and his coalition for their evil intentions against the nation of Israel:

“It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan, and you will say, ‘I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates, to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.’

“Therefore prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “On that day when My people Israel are living securely, will you not know it?” —Ezekiel 38: 10-12,14

There are some telling conditions in the details of this prophecy that give us insight into how it will come about and just how close it might be. The first is that this will come in a time of relative peace and security for Israel, something the Jews haven't really known since the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into Jewish and Palestinian states in 1947. This is what has made some suggest that this attack will happen in the initial years of the Tribulation, soon after the peace accord engineered by the Antichrist, and that it is impossible any time before that. However, the initial years of the Tribulation don't appear to be any more secure than what Israel is experiencing now. Revelation tells us those years will be filled with natural disasters, wars, plagues, and famines that will kill a quarter of the world's population. (See Revelation 6:1-8.)

In contrast to this, Israel is certainly a nation of “*unwalled villages . . . living without walls and having no bars or gates.*” Though it has had continued rocket attacks and suicide bombings even in recent months, it has not seen the threat of invasion since the Yom Kippur War of October 1973—almost four decades ago. Relatively, when not being openly rocketed, Israel is as much at rest and secure as it has been in a long time. There is no indication in Ezekiel’s writings that this rest and security is something Israel experiences for a long period of time, though it must be long enough that Gog’s coalition will see it as a window of opportunity in which to attack. A temporary settlement with the Palestinians could have produced such a window, and one was in the works. It could have been forced on Israel as early as the fall of 2011, after the U.N. General Assembly voted on unilaterally recognizing Palestine as a country—despite the Palestinians’ unsuccessful negotiations with Israel.”

If such a “peace” is brokered, the Quartet (Russia, The U.N., The E.U., and the United States) could unilaterally recognize Palestine as a state, with East Jerusalem as its capital. If the United States votes in favor of this move, it will pass. While at present President Obama has said he would veto such a plan if it came before the U.N. Security Council, how much influence he will have in stopping a vote in the U.N. General Assembly or convincing America’s allies to oppose it is unclear. From recent speeches, he seems to be expecting some great concession from Israel, though he has yet to really specify what it might be. Could such a move create a time of peace and security for Israel that lasts until Gog’s attack? As Paul described it:

*While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then
destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor
pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.
—1 Thessalonians 5:3*

It will be interesting to see how this plays out in the months immediately ahead.

GREED

While Islamist animosity may seem enough to spur this attack, there is another reason for this invasion suggested by Ezekiel's writings:

“You will say, ‘I will go up against the land . . . to capture spoil and to seize plunder . . . against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.’ 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?’”—Ezekiel 38:11-13

According to this, there are motives to this attack much more basic than the “liberation” of “occupied” Palestine. Gog’s army will be coming to plunder and loot. But what will they be after—Israel’s sheep and goats and whatever is in her treasuries? Israel is certainly much richer now than she has been for many centuries, but she doesn’t have the ornamental riches of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, and other nations of the Arabian Peninsula. All of these countries have been wealthy due to one precise commodity that is getting dearer as the days go by: oil. If Israel were to discover large oil reserves, would that create the impetus for Gog to join Iran in trying to wipe the Zionist Regime from the map? Of course, we know that all of the oil in the Middle East is in the Islamic countries not Israel, right?

Wrong. Although the news has flown mostly under the radar, there

are a handful of companies exploring for oil and natural gas in Israel and off its shoreline. Givot Olam Oil, which has been looking for oil in Israel since 1992, announced in August 2010 that it had discovered an estimated 1.525 billion barrels of oil accessible at its Rosh Ha'Ayin site, which is about ten miles inland from the coastline of Tel Aviv.⁷¹ In November 2010, estimates were that the field was worth between \$200 million and \$900 million⁷²—and at the time oil was only about \$80 a barrel, more than 25 percent less than it is as I write. Of course, these are just the initial estimates at one site, and they are optimistically conservative at best. Testing of the sustainability of producing oil from this site continued through the summer of 2011, but serious oil revenues could begin rolling in before the end of 2012. Givot Olam is also drilling at other sites in this general vicinity, searching for other deposits.

In May of 2010, a U.S. Geological Survey report estimated there could be 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil and 122 trillion cubic feet of natural gas off the shoreline of the Levant Basin, most of which is within Israel's jurisdiction. The Levant Basin includes the Mediterranean trough off the coast of Israel, Lebanon, and Syria that goes almost all the way to the island of Cyprus. It also includes most of the Israeli mainland, the West Bank, western Lebanon, and the Syria coastal regions. John Brown of Zion Oil and Gas, which has exploration rights to a good deal of that area, estimated there is \$917 billion worth of oil and gas (again at 2010 prices) in the region controlled by Israel.⁷³

More recently, Houston-based Noble Energy—working with several Israeli partner companies—confirmed the finding of what has been dubbed the “Leviathan” natural gas field off the coast of Israel. Experts speculate that the Leviathan has at least sixteen trillion cubic feet of natural gas,⁷⁴ worth around \$45 billion.⁷⁵ It is one of the largest deposits discovered in the last decade and could supply *all* of Israel's energy needs for the next century. As Noble and its partners start to extract that gas, Israel will go from a country dependent on the foreign import

of coal and natural gas to being a player in *exporting* natural gas to the Mediterranean region—a remarkable turn-around for a country surrounded by oil and natural gas rich neighbors who are ill-disposed to trade fairly with Israel.

There is more. The Israeli stock market surged to an all-time high in the spring of 2011, up 130 percent since November of 2008, despite continued tensions in the region. If these discoveries pan out, Israel will certainly be supplied with enough “*silver and gold, . . . cattle and goods*” to make its neighbors envious!

Thus, the future is full of possibilities. As Israel begins to reap the benefits of these finds, its electrical plants will switch from burning coal to burning natural gas—a conversion that U.S. utility companies have found to be fairly straightforward—and end its dependence on foreign coal. And where does Israel get most of its coal? Seventy-one percent of Israel’s coal comes from Russia.⁷⁶

As the green revolution continues with the introduction of electric and natural gas vehicles, Israel could easily meet all of its own energy needs beginning as early as sometime in 2012. At the same time, it would likely begin to reap significant revenues from exporting these coveted resources. These exports would mean one of two things: 1) Israel could dramatically undercut the prices for these precious commodities to the chagrin of the other oil-rich states, or 2) Israel will see huge profits as prices continue to rise. Would Israel have enough of these resources to do this? Possibly. These are only estimates at this time, but considering that the concern for Libyan oil, which is only about 2 percent of the world’s supply, sent prices over \$100 a barrel as civil war began there, Israel’s supplies could easily affect the world market. Even Israel’s energy self-sufficiency would be enough to rock the boat. And with new discoveries in this vast region that have yet to be brought online, it won’t be long before China and Europe start knocking on Israel’s door, hungry to be better friends. Looking ahead to its future energy needs, China has left

no stone unturned in negotiating deals for energy resources worldwide.

As for Russia, suddenly having an important consumer of its coal disappear and then finding it has to compete with that same tiny nation in selling “cleaner” natural gas resources to other nations will certainly sour their relationship even further. “Magog” will gain no new love for Israel. It might finally be time for Russia to deal with this nation that has been a thorn in its influence in the Middle East for more than a half century.

THE END OF THE AGE

I believe after reviewing these facts that this battle will mark the true beginning of the final days for the world as we know it. When this invasion takes place, we will either already be or soon will be in Daniel’s Seventieth Week. At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will return and set up His kingdom that will last a thousand years. The Millennium will be a time of peace, justice, and prosperity like the world has never known. The Battle of Gog and Magog will be the tipping point to all of the events described in the book of Revelation—very likely leading up to the Battle of Armageddon.

Many may then ask, “Why fight it? Why shouldn’t we welcome God’s end-time clock counting down to midnight so that Jesus can come again and come quickly? Isn’t that the hope we should all be looking for?”

I find that an interesting question. In my life I have written many books on Bible prophecy and the political threats that could well be signs of it coming to pass, but I have no desire to see the world destroyed any more than God does. He, like a good farmer, is patient for the harvest. He wants the maximum number of people to be saved—He is willing to wait for the collection of “*the precious fruit of the earth*” (James 5:7 esv). Though Evangelical Christians have been accused of madly wishing attacks on Israel because they will signal the return of our Messiah, I can

tell you that simply isn't true. We have no design to instigate a nuclear war in the Middle East in the hope it will bring about the return of our Messiah. We are not "extremists" hoping for destruction; we instead hope *extreme* good will happen.

Certainly I can't wait to see my Savior face to face, but at the same time there are lots of things I feel I need to do before I meet Him at the Rapture. The reactions I get to what I teach tend to fall into one of two camps: 1) people get excited and start listening for the trumpets to sound, so that we can get out of this crazy world; or 2) they realize that it is time for the "*light of the world*" (Matthew 5:14) to shine brighter than ever. Unfortunately, there is usually an 80 percent/20 percent split in those reactions, with far too many in the first group and far too few in the second. It is my prayer that as you read this, you will be among those spurred to action, not those who want to collect all the canned food available and head for the hills to hold out for Jesus to come and rescue them.

For that reason, the "doomsday scenarios" I share with you in these chapters are but signs of the times. From what I am seeing and have seen over the last thirty-some years of being a correspondent on and advisor in the Middle East, we are truly on the cusp of Daniel's Seventieth Week, which is the Tribulation. As believers in Jesus Christ, this is important for us to know. These facts should be inspiration for us to act with renewed excitement about being Christians, to pray and act according to God's will as never before. Why? Because there is a great deal more for us to do before God calls us home.

Before we discuss that further, what will happen when Gog's coalition attacks Israel? How is that likely to play out? And what will the aftermath resemble? Let's take another look at the details God showed Ezekiel about this attack.