

Chapter 16

The Mother of All Battles

I can hear the grumbling now. *Doggone it! It was all going so well. Everyone was getting along with each other, more or less. Religious intolerance was a thing of the past. There were no wars going on. We were on our way to utopia. And now this!*

“This” is a massive military buildup discovered to be underway in Iran (called Magog in Ezekiel’s prophecy) and its neighboring nations. Satellite imagery has caught the Iranians in a blatant breach of the European treaty, though their diplomats are vociferously denying any wrongdoing. Troop movements in Iran, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Azerbaijan are said to be NATO-style war games designed to sharpen the skills of their internal “peace-keeping” forces. But it all looks like preparations for an invasion to everyone else in the world.

The U.N. doesn’t really know what to think. The leaders of the western world had all been a bit surprised at the Ayatollah’s sudden willingness to sign the Europe-sponsored peace initiative a year ago. The Iranian head of state—who was now being hailed in the Middle East as “the Mahdi,” whatever *that* is—had shocked the world by agreeing to the European leader’s terms early in the negotiations, and other Islamic states from Morocco to Pakistan had quickly fallen into line. It was almost too easy—it had seemed, as the expression goes, too good to be true.

For years, the Muslim nations in the Middle East had been spending upwards of twenty percent of their gross domestic products on “defense”—six or seven times the world average. That number had been reduced somewhat under the terms of the European treaty. But now it has been discovered that since the treaty was signed, several nations, notably Russia and China, have been selling the Muslims huge amounts of war materiel under the guise of “farm equipment” and “heavy construction machinery.” Complicating things is the fact that Iran had joined the nuclear club several years before the Antichrist took the reins of power in Europe (but since the Ayatollah had not rattled his saber—or is that *scimitar?*—since then, the western nations had not pressed him about disarmament). In truth, they’d lost their taste for “preventative warfare” after watching the Americans “win” their fight in Iraq, only to lose thousands of their brave men one by one to Muslim terrorists (whom the press called “insurgents”) in the following frustrating years.

The foregoing scenario is admittedly speculative, but it does fit the requirements of the prophetic scriptures—as well as this morning’s newspaper.

All we can be sure of is what's written in the Bible: **"In the latter years you [Gog] will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you. Thus says Yahweh: 'On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: You will say, "I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates—to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.'"**" (Ezekiel 38:8-12) The *real* "mother of all battles" is about to begin. The objective: to drive Israel into the sea—after robbing them blind.

The plan will not go unnoticed, of course: **"Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder?..."** Sheba and Dedan, as I mentioned previously, represent the Arabian peninsula—who would prefer to sit this one out. And the "merchants of Tarshish and all their young lions" no doubt indicates the financial and commercial interests of the Western world—who don't want the boat rocked unless they're the ones doing the rocking. We'll meet them again when we discuss the demise of commercial Babylon. Their fate is sealed, as is that of Sheba and Dedan, but we'll have to defer that story for later.

"Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?" Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, 'Thus says Yahweh: "On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it?"'" (Ezekiel 38:13-14) Once again, we see that Muslim prophetic expectations will drive Gog's *modus operandi*. *Sahih Muslim*, in Tradition #6961, states that "Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: 'There would be a Caliph in the last period of my Ummah who would freely give handfuls of wealth to the people without counting it.' I said to Abu Nadra and Abu al-Ala: 'Do you mean Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz?' They said: 'No, he would be Imam Mahdi.'" Gog sees himself as a latter-day Muslim version of Robin Hood—buying support and popularity with every shekel he can steal. It will seem to him to be the perfect opportunity. The hated Jews now live in a "land of unwalled villages," that is, though their defenses are pitifully anemic and their cities vulnerable to attack, they feel "safe." And why is that? Because they have swallowed the Antichrist's promises of peace and protection, putting their own defense force, the IDF, under the suzerainty of the United Nations. The multi-million dollar security fence they built during the first decade of the 21st century to keep terrorists out has been pulled down in some places and leaks like a sieve everywhere else.

The general scenario rings a loud bell: back when Sennacherib the Assyrian was besieging Hezekiah's Jerusalem, his Rabshakeh (chief negotiator/hoodlum) chided the Jews for relying on help from Egypt, a **"broken reed...on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt [or the Antichrist, as the case may be] to all who trust in him."** (Isaiah 36:6) True enough. But then the Rabshakeh told Hezekiah that he couldn't rely on Yahweh, either. Big mistake. God replied through his prophet, **"Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high? The Holy One of Israel."** (Isaiah 37:23) And then He proceeded to kill the 185,000 Assyrian troops encamped outside the city walls. Gog's army will be big and scary too. Will Yahweh once again deliver His people? I wouldn't bet against it. Stay tuned.

Gog, of course, never read Isaiah. Nor does he know of Ezekiel, who reports, **"Then you [Gog] will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes.'** Thus says Yahweh: **'Are you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them?'"** (Ezekiel 38:15-17) Here we are given a bit more information. First, as we saw in Jeremiah 1, Gog's attack will come from the north. Second, his army will be very large, numerous enough to "cover the land like a cloud." And third, other prophets are said to have talked about him (though only Ezekiel calls him by name). As we shall see presently, the Bible has a great deal to say about Gog's war and the devastation it precipitates upon the earth.

In the previous chapter we saw that Daniel was given insight into the same campaign, but from the point of view of the Antichrist, not Gog. As we pick up the narrative, the Antichrist's U.N. troops are stationed in Israel, ostensibly to keep the peace. Daniel gives us a bird's eye view of the entire Middle-Eastern phase of the war: **"At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him [the Antichrist]; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he [the Antichrist] shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land [Israel], and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon [together comprising Jordan]. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels. But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him."** (Daniel 11:40-45)

The king of the south and the king of the north attack Antichrist's U.N. forces in Israel in a coordinated pincer action. Is there an echo in here? That's exactly what Egypt (the king of the south) and Syria (the king of the north) did in both 1967 and 1973. (Jordan, who shelled Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in 1967 and subsequently lost the West Bank to Israel, stayed out of the fray in '73.) These hot-headed sons of Ishmael apparently think the third time's a charm. They throw everything they've got at the under-defended Israelis (and yes, Syria *does* have a navy—mostly Russian-made Romeo submarines and missile frigates). It is at this point (SF2) that the Antichrist personally sets up headquarters in Israel, directing the war from his new base of operations. By the description, I'd place his command center in or near Hebron, between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas (the word "seas" *is* plural in the Hebrew text), not far from Jerusalem.

The Antichrist is able to repulse the attacks. Egypt is beaten back, and Gog's allies, Cush and Phut (i.e., northern and eastern Africa beyond Egypt's borders) cower, at least temporarily, to his intimidation. As the European leader consolidates his grasp on everything of value in Israel and Egypt, the king of the north—Syria—is neutralized, losing territory by the mile. Jordan, who learned a painful lesson in 1967, refuses to put her toe in the waters of war, so with his hands full, the Antichrist leaves her alone for now, trembling in anticipation of his next move.

And where is Gog all this time? Antichrist's next move, as it turns out, is a reaction against "news from the east and north." Who is east and north of Israel? Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran would all fit that description. But which of these nations has the potential at this point to alarm the Antichrist? Only Iran—Magog—the aggressive spiritual leader of the Muslim hordes (and quite possibly a nuclear power by this time), along with his eastern and northern allies, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Gomer, and Togarmah (all of whom we identified in the previous chapter). What is the "news" of which Daniel speaks? It is nothing short of the total collapse of his vaunted "peace plan." For the first time since the seventh century, the entire Muslim world is united in a common cause: unlike earlier Arab-Israeli wars in which the primary protagonists, Egypt and Syria, were left to extricate themselves from their own self-made predicament, virtually the whole Islamic world is now poised and committed to finishing off the Jews in Israel once and for all. Egypt and Syria may have started it, but this time Gog has no intention of letting Israel finish it—*again*. This is, needless to say, bad news for the Antichrist. It means that instead of a mere show of force ensuring peace in the Middle East as he had hoped, he is now faced with a full scale Middle-Eastern war, one that has the potential to spread like a wind-driven brush fire to the rest of the world. Specifically, the "news" that reaches him is that Gog's armies are on the move—they're headed toward Israel from Iran, Iraq, the Caucasus region, the "Stans," and Turkey: the whole Muslim world "east and north" of Israel.

A two-front war is every commander-in-chief's worst nightmare. World War II taught us how it works: America was forced to fight both Japan and Germany at the same time, and it took a total effort from a nation with vast natural resources to pull it off. Britain, who had no such resources, made a valiant effort to stave off the Japanese advance in Southeast Asia while fighting for her life against the German war machine in her own front yard. World War II was also Stalin's chance to prove himself, and he did: he proved himself an insecure and cowardly hypocrite (traits that are called "pragmatic" nowadays). America desperately needed Russia to engage Japan on the Asian mainland—which would have put Japan in a two-front war and probably shortened the conflict—but Stalin, remembering the spanking Imperial Russia had received at the hands of the Japanese in 1905, refused to declare war until after the Germans were defeated (in April 1945), just in time to scoop up the spoils in the East. At the same time, he did everything he could to induce America to force Hitler to wage a two-front war on the European mainland—in other words, to compromise and weaken the German effort against Russia.

Now, back in Daniel, the Antichrist is facing two fronts—or worse. As the war progresses, Egypt's push from the south is reinforced by Gog's African allies, and Syria's northern attack is suddenly buttressed by the full weight of Middle-Eastern Islam. Saudi Arabia is making noisy diplomatic protestations, but she is at the same time quietly preparing for war herself. The Antichrist is between the devil and the deep blue sea—literally. If he turns tail and runs back to Europe, he will be the laughing stock of the world—his power base (not to mention his Messianic aspirations) will crumble. But his only alternative is a seemingly suicidal stand with Israel, surrounded on three sides by the Muslim hordes (and on the fourth side, the Mediterranean is crawling with Egyptian gunboats and Syrian submarines). I almost feel sorry for him.

As bad as it was, World War II was a rather leisurely and docile affair compared to what's coming. It took twenty years to set up and seven to play out. World War III will be all over except for the fallout (figuratively *and* literally) in—by my reckoning—about two years. As we shall see, several events will take place at the mid-point of the Tribulation (three and a half years into it) that imply the war is over many months before this point. Brevity is not the only point of contrast. As a result of World War II, 55 million people died. While that's horrible beyond comprehension, it's child's play compared to the carnage that will be wrought in the coming conflict. *Billions* will die. This war is more than just powerful men behaving badly, as in the past. This time, Yahweh has declared that the iniquity of man is full—it is time for judgment, for wrath. It is **"the hour of trial which will come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."** (Revelation 3:10) That is why the Holy Spirit is no longer restraining the evil in the world (see II Thessalonians 2:6-8).

The final straw that triggers Yahweh's righteous anger is Gog's invasion of Israel: "And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says Yahweh, "that My fury will show in My face. For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. (Ezekiel 38:18-20) Does this sound like a battle? No. Even though the Antichrist will be busy fighting his war against Gog, and will indeed have some successes ("**Many countries shall be overthrown...he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many**"), Yahweh will not be relying on him to destroy the enemy of His own chosen people. In the end, God will do the job Himself.

There are 1.3 billion Muslims in the world today. If half of them live within the territories of the Magog federation, and if a third of *them* are males of fighting age, it means that Gog could conceivably raise an army of two hundred million soldiers. If you're familiar with Revelation 9, you'll recognize this number immediately. It is the exact size of an army from beyond the Euphrates that's prophesied to kill one-third of mankind with weapons of fire, smoke, and brimstone.

Are Magog's armies and the Revelation 9 force one and the same? I don't think so. For starters, much of Gog's forces *start out* west of the Euphrates. And their objective is Israel—period. They're not interested in anything else (well, it *would* be a nice bonus if they could eliminate that meddling infidel Euro-trash who caused all this trouble in the first place). Even if they killed every living thing within the borders of the promised land, the number of slain wouldn't come remotely close to the one third of the earth's population at this time—two billion people plus—who are predicted to be killed by the eastern horde (cf. Revelation 9:18). Also, it's stated later in Revelation (chapter 16) that the Euphrates River will be dried up to allow this huge army from the east to "attend" a battle (presumably Armageddon). But the armies of Magog who start out east of the Euphrates will invade Israel from the north. Why? Because that's where it's logistically feasible to ford the great river—nearer its source. In other words, the river will still have water in it when they attack. The Muslims aren't like the Americans: they won't be flying (or sailing) their entire army to the battle zone. They'll be marching to it or riding in armored troop transports—all two hundred million of them (and even if it's only a tenth that size, it'll still be the largest single army the world has ever seen up to that time).

Whereas the Antichrist will, quite reasonably, see Gog's hordes as a formidable foe, Yahweh sees them as navel lint. "**The multitude of your [Ariel's—i.e.,**

Jerusalem's] foes shall be like fine dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones like chaff that passes away; yes, it shall be in an instant, suddenly. You will be punished by Yahweh of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire. The multitude of all the nations who fight against Ariel, even all who fight against her and her fortress and distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams, and look—he eats; but he awakes, and his soul is still empty; or as when a thirsty man dreams, and look—he drinks; but he awakes, and indeed he is faint, and his soul still craves. So the multitude of all the nations shall be who fight against Mount Zion. Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For Yahweh has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, namely, the seers.” (Isaiah 29:5-10) The armies of Gog will imagine that success is within their grasp. They can almost taste their victory. Their numbers are overwhelming, and their leader—the long expected Imam Mahdi—has promised that the angels of Allah are fighting by their side. *It will be like the glory days of Islam, when all the world trembled at the sound of your scimitars slicing the wind.* Yeah, right. Whatever. Yahweh is not impressed. He'll let the war play out, and then “in an instant, suddenly,” He will bring it all to an end—His way. The Muslim prophecies predicting a great and decisive victory for the Mahdi will prove in the end to be nothing but the inebriated ravings of cataleptic blind men—men, in fact, who have blinded themselves! All of Islam's pretensions, all their delusions of glorious conquest, are nothing but a dream.

“I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains,’ says Yahweh. ‘Every man's sword will be against his brother. And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am Yahweh.’” (Ezekiel 38:21-23) Some of the weapons Yahweh chooses to use against Gog's armies are listed here. We have already seen the great earthquake, with its accompanying storms, which I take to be the final blow. Here we see the opening acts: (1) purposeful infighting or large scale accidental fratricide among the Magog coalition—not surprising, considering Muslims have always been more lethal to other Muslims than to outsiders, (2) pestilence, or disease, which, in light of the relatively short time frame of this war is quite likely a man-made phenomenon—bioweapons they brought with them, (3) heavy flooding and (4) huge hailstones, implying that this war will take place during the first half of the Tribulation, since the second half will be characterized by a dearth of precipitation, and (5) fire and brimstone, i.e., Sodom and Gomorrah-style destruction raining down from the heavens.

There are similarities between the Battle of Magog and a later conflict, the battle of Armageddon, that might lead the casual reader to assume they're the

same thing: they both feature enemies from many nations converging on Jerusalem, for example, and they are both characterized by great hailstones and a destructive earthquake, and great noises are mentioned. But neither pestilence nor fire and brimstone are listed among the “weapons” to be used at the Battle of Armageddon, and the “flooding rain” that helps destroy Gog’s armies is not only not listed as an Armageddon weapon, it would be a highly unlikely one four or five years after the Battle of Magog, for the whole world will have been suffering from a devastating three and a half year drought when this confrontation takes place.

Is the last weapon mentioned, fire and brimstone, a metaphor for nuclear warfare? Listen to David’s description of God’s wrath: **“Yahweh tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain coals. Fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup.”** (Psalm 11:5-6) Though I’m reasonably certain David never saw a nuclear explosion, “a burning wind” describes it to a tee. But David could well be describing two things, two modes of wrath. For reasons I’ll explain later in this chapter, I’m convinced that the phenomenon described as “fire and brimstone” here in Ezekiel is *not* man-made nuclear holocaust, but rather an act of God, the same phenomenon that destroyed the cities of the plain in Genesis 19. There *will* be nuclear war, I’m afraid—just not within Israel’s borders.

We would be hard pressed to find an Old Testament prophet who *doesn’t* allude to this war. Even Moses gets in the act: **“For a fire is kindled by my anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell. It shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I [Yahweh] will heap disasters on them; I will spend My arrows on them. They shall be wasted with hunger, devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction; I will also send against them the teeth of beasts, with the poison of serpents of the dust.”** It’s pretty clear that you don’t want to be around when Yahweh gets angry. **“The sword shall destroy outside. There shall be terror within for the young man and virgin, the nursing child with the man of gray hairs.... Vengeance is Mine, and recompense. Their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them....”** Yahweh is speaking about all of His enemies here, not exclusively about Gog and Magog. But it certainly includes them.

“For Yahweh will judge His people and have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is no one remaining, bond or free....” This seems to be God’s *modus operandi*: wait until all rational hope is gone, until things are impossibly bleak. Then act. That way, the nations, and especially Israel, will have no excuse for failing to see His hand in their deliverance. Notice that God’s purpose here (one of them) is to “judge His people.” Israel has been called to repentance: this will turn out to be their last chance.

Moses continues: **“He will say: ‘Where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge? Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise and help you, and be your refuge....’”** Muslims make pilgrimages to Mecca to visit the black rock their god supposedly inhabits. Here Yahweh challenges the black stone of the Ka’aba to protect the armies of Gog from His wrath. **“Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me. I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand. For I raise My hand to heaven, and say, ‘As I live forever, if I whet My glittering sword and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies and repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the heads of the leaders of the enemy....’”** The Muslim god Allah is credited with making similar sounding statements throughout the Qur’an. Now it’s time to put up or shut up. The world is about to learn who the *real* God is.

Then, reminding us that salvation is not only for the Jews, Moses concludes, **“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.”** (Deuteronomy 32:22-25, 35-43) In His mercy, Yahweh has been waiting to avenge the wrongs done to His people, both Jews and believing gentiles. But the time for mercy has past. Now is the day of vengeance.

Let’s pause and check our bearings. Where does all of this fit in the scheme of things as revealed in John’s Apocalypse? When we last looked, John had just been introduced to the rider on a white horse, “Mr. Wonderful,” the Antichrist. Now it seems, some of the luster has worn off Mr. Wonderful’s façade. He’s still going forth “conquering, and to conquer,” but his adversaries are no longer falling into his lap like ripe fruit. Taking over the world is getting to be nothing but work, work, work. In other words, war.

Now the second seal is broken. **“When He [the Lamb of God] opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, ‘Come and see.’ Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.”** (Revelation 6:3-4) Notice that peace isn’t taken just from Israel, or the Middle East, but from “the earth.” Man without God has just taken his best shot at running the world, and he’s blown it. Peace has been proven to be an impossible achievement even with Man’s best efforts. It will become a reality only when the Prince of Peace rules.

The “four horsemen of the Apocalypse” (of which we have seen two so far) are reminiscent of something recorded by the Old Testament prophet Zechariah: **“Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze [a metaphor for judgment]. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ And the angel answered and said to me, ‘These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth. The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country.’ Then the strong steeds went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. And He said, ‘Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth.’ So they walked to and fro throughout the earth. And He called to me, and spoke to me, saying, ‘See, those who go toward the north country have given rest to My Spirit in the north country.”** (Zechariah 6:1-8) Same metaphor, different meaning. This time, the horses represent spirits sent from Yahweh to summon the enemies of Israel to battle. As we saw in both Ezekiel 38 and Daniel 11, they will come into the Land from the north and the south. Interestingly, Zechariah doesn’t say where the red horses were sent. My guess is that they went east to beckon the final two hundred million, but we’ll have to save that whole discussion for later.

Perhaps you’ve noticed that we’re sixteen chapters into a book about the Last Things, and yet we’re only two paragraphs into the future stuff in the Book of Revelation, and you’re thinking, *This does not bode well*. Take heart; let me explain the structure of this most puzzling of books (John’s, not mine). Although many would disagree with me, I believe that the Revelation is not built like a banana—something meant to be consumed in a linear fashion, from one end to the other. Rather, I see it as an onion: it has layers one must peel back to get to the heart of it.

Huh? Okay, here’s what I mean. The prophetic part of the book speaks of seven seal judgments, followed by seven trumpet judgments, followed by seven bowl, or vial, judgments to be poured out upon the earth. Though they’re written in that order (and were no doubt delivered in that order to John) they are clearly (at least to me) broken down by subject. Every time a trumpet is blown or a bowl is poured out, some new category of wrath, some new manifestation of God’s judgment, is revealed. But I find it hard to picture one thing ending as the next one begins, like a line of toy soldiers. War doesn’t end before famine starts; famine doesn’t end before death starts.

Instead, I see the seven seal judgments as the whole outside “layer” of the onion. (Seven=complete, remember?) *Within* them (not *after* them) the trumpet judgments refine our understanding of what has transpired, and within *them*, a

third layer of detail, the bowl judgments, delves even deeper. This is confirmed by the fact that the seal judgments, the comprehensive outer “layer,” are imposed by none other than Yahshua Himself—the Lamb of God. The trumpet and bowl judgments are said to be delivered by angels. Thus to insist that Revelation is linear and strictly chronological is to imply that Yahshua’s involvement ceases a third of the way through—in other words, it’s nonsense. In the seal judgments we are given the entire picture in sweeping terms: we are shown generalized things like war, famine, and death. But in the trumpet and bowl judgments we see specific plagues, like nuclear war upon the earth, the sun’s increased power, or the death of all marine life. In addition, there are whole sections of Revelation that are parenthetical—that is, they aren’t strictly in the sequence of events at all but are sidebars meant to introduce us to key players, or explain the background history.

So if I seem to be skipping around, be assured that I’m not attempting to rip things out of context to fit my own preconceived timeline. I’m merely trying to make sense of the *larger* context—the one that includes not only the Revelation, but all of Scripture.

But now, since the most detailed explanation of World War III is found not in Revelation but in Ezekiel, let’s return there. **“And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, ‘Thus says Yahweh: “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; and I will turn you around and lead you on, bringing you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken,” says Yahweh.”**” (Ezekiel 39:1-5) Here we see the summary of what will happen to the hordes of Magog. Once they enter Israel, Yahweh will obliterate them there. Their weapons will be useless to them; their lifeless bodies will “fall upon the mountains of Israel,” a feast for carrion birds and scavenging animals. We’re talking about millions of troops, dead. And notice that there’s no indication here that they even get a shot off, although we’ll see that they make it all the way to the suburbs of Jerusalem before they’re annihilated—just as Sennacherib’s Assyrians did. Despite their vast numbers and overwhelming military superiority, they do not achieve their objective of slaughtering Israel.

We need to pause and reflect on this. Several times in Israel’s long history, she has been brought to the brink of extinction by the hand of Yahweh in judgment for her idolatries. The Assyrians, Babylonians and Romans all scattered her people among the nations. Evil, pagan nations just like Magog have often been used as instruments of God’s wrath. What’s different this time? Why is Yahweh protecting Israel? By all accounts, the Jews as a nation have not repented

at this stage; they have not turned *en masse* from the hollow caricature of true worship they've been practicing for the last two millennia. But I believe the pendulum will have begun to swing back, thanks in no small part to the 144,000 Jewish youths who have for the last few years been making inroads into the hearts of Israelis and Jewish expatriates alike. By this time, they will have planted the seeds: *Yahweh is not the God of the Rabbis, the Talmud and the Mishnah—He is the God of the Torah, of the Psalms, of the Prophets. He keeps his promises, both for blessing and cursing. And—and this is the one that sticks in the collective Jewish craw—He has already sent his Messiah, Yahshua of Nazareth, whom we rejected and crucified two thousand years ago. Our fathers blew it. Face up to it. It's time to repent.*

One by one, family by family, the Jews do repent (although, as we shall see, the process of reawakening won't be complete until the last few days of the Tribulation). It's not just persuasive preaching, either. It's desperation: even before Gog's attack, many had come to realize that without divine intervention Israel would not survive. Their covenant with the European leader, they sadly admit in private, was a deal with the devil. *Surrendering our own defense to a foreign power—even a multi-national power—was foolhardy. Of course, facing a billion angry Muslims on our own didn't look too smart either.*

As the tension builds, more and more Jews come to realize that they're dead if they can't somehow reestablish their relationship with Yahweh. It's just like back in the days of the Judges, when Yahweh had said, **“You have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.”** And the children of Israel said to Yahweh, **“We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.”** So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served Yahweh. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.” (Judges 10:13-16) Yahweh apparently *can't* stay angry in the face of true repentance.

By ones and twos, then by hundreds and thousands, Jews resolve that it must never again be like the days before the Babylonian captivity, when **“Yahweh, the God of their fathers, sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of Yahweh arose against His people, till there was no remedy.”** (II Chronicles 36:15-16) No, they would not mock these young messengers who were so obviously under the protection of Almighty God. To do so would be suicide. *These 144,000 young zealots are right: it's time to repent.*

Some people today think the Old Testament is a complete turn-off. They (not having read it) complain that it's all hell-fire and brimstone, wrath and retribution. *Where is the loving, personal God we see throughout the New Testament (excuse Revelation)?* We need to come to grips with the fact that it's all the same God—the Bible is one continuous story from beginning to end. The same compassionate deity who personally paid the penalty for our sins is also seen wreaking vengeance in a thousand Old Testament passages. How can this be? How does wrath square with forgiveness?

Like any loving Father, Yahweh wants to see his children doing well. He gives us opportunities, guidance, support, and love. When we screw up (and we all do), He even provides a way for us to come back into His good graces, providing for us, as the ubiquitous metaphor describes it, a “garment of light” that hides our sin from His eyes. All we have to do is put it on. But what's a Father to do when some of His children rebel against Him, refusing to accept His help, even going so far as to attack their siblings who want to have a close relationship with Him? Love can't be forced. The Father can only give His rebellious children time to repent, while (when it suits His purpose) protecting those who choose to love Him. At some point, though, time runs out: the Father must turn His back on the rebels, cut off their support, and write them out of the will. He finds no pleasure in doing so. But it's not His choice; it's ours.

That in a nutshell is what we see happening in the story of the Bible. Yahweh has given his children 6,000 years in which to repent. Some have, and some have not. But as He said in the days of Noah, **“My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.”** (Genesis 6:3) The day will come when God will say “Enough.” It is that day of which the “wrathful” Old Covenant scriptures speak when they describe the judgment of God, though the subject is brought up *all the time* in the New Covenant as well. And although many—even most—of these prophetic “wrath” passages have seen some degree of fulfillment in history, I believe that most were intended to ultimately apply to the events of the final seven years before the return of Christ—especially to the war of Gog and Magog and its aftermath.

For example, there is no remotely literal fulfillment in history for many of Isaiah's prophecies. **“Come near, you nations, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it. For the indignation of Yahweh is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter. Also their slain shall be thrown out. Their stench shall rise from their corpses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.”** (Isaiah 34:1-3) This hasn't happened yet except in a very limited and localized sense. But in the Last Days, no one will be able to hide from the wrath of Yahweh; *all* nations will be judged. This passage reveals that the War of

Magog will spread beyond the Middle East to involve the whole earth. We'll explore how that might happen later in this chapter. Note also that there will be too many corpses to bury. The death toll from the War of Magog will exceed 1.5 *billion* people—one quarter of the earth's population, *thirty times* the unspeakable carnage of World War II. That number is revealed in reference to the fourth seal judgment: **"Power was given to them [death and Hades] over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth."** (Revelation 6:8)

Therefore, it shouldn't be such a surprise that the Bible spends so much time warning us about it. Isaiah goes on to say, **"Please hear this, you [who are] afflicted, and drunk but not with wine. [He is speaking to Israel, who is reeling from her affliction] Thus says your Lord, Yahweh your God, Who pleads the cause of His people: 'See, I have taken out of your hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of My fury. You shall no longer drink it. But I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you, who have said to you, "Lie down, that we may walk over you." And you have laid your body like the ground, and as the street, for those who walk over.'" (Isaiah 51:21-23)** That's a perfect description of Israel and her adversaries in the final years. *Dar al-Islam* wants to walk all over her. And Israel has bent over backwards trying to be fair with its Arab citizens, stopping barely short of committing national suicide. God reminds Israel that it is *His* fury they have been enduring for the last two thousand years (since they rejected the Messiah) but that is about to change—the shoe of adversity is about to go onto the other foot.

Isaiah later says: **"According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; the coastlands He will fully repay. So shall they fear the name of Yahweh from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of Yahweh will lift up a standard against him."** (Isaiah 59:18-19) Here is confirmation that Yahweh intends to wait until Gog's armies have invaded Israel before He destroys them. But notice that His judgment won't fall only on the nations who march into Israel: the outlying areas—the "coastlands"—will also receive His attention.

Why would anybody attack God's chosen people? His word is abundantly clear about the fate of those who do. There is a very short list of possible answers. One: you don't know any better—but since the Bible is the world's best selling book, that's a pretty lame excuse. Two: you don't think there is a God—that the Bible is just a collection of myths and fairy tales. But to believe *that* in the twenty-first century, you've got to be willingly ignorant of a great many things. Or three: you think you're smarter-better-stronger than Yahweh, or you think your god is—which is the status of Gog's Muslim hordes. In a fascinating discourse that took place long before there even were Jews or Arabs on this planet, a man named Job philosophized about that:

He said, **“How can a man be righteous before God? If one wished to contend with Him, he could not answer Him one time out of a thousand. God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered? ...He does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number. If He goes by me, I do not see Him; if He moves past, I do not perceive Him; if He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’ God will not withdraw His anger. The allies of the proud lie prostrate beneath Him. (Job 9:2-4, 10-13)** Unfortunately, we don’t talk with that kind of eloquence any more. Now, the best we can come up with is, **“What kind of stupidity would it take to purposely challenge the God who made you?”**

Job goes on to say, **“[Yahweh] makes nations great, and destroys them; He enlarges nations, and guides them. He takes away the understanding of the chiefs of the people of the earth, and makes them wander in a pathless wilderness. They grope in the dark without light, and He makes them stagger like a drunken man.” (Job 12:23-25)** Pretty astute for a guy whose idea of a “nation” was a thousand people who could actually get along with each other. His assessment is still true today, more poignant than ever. If potentates and presidents refuse to walk in His light, He will eventually flip off the switch.

Job’s friend Elihu had a good grasp on the awesome power of Yahweh as well. **“Surely God will never do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert justice. Who gave Him charge over the earth? Or who appointed Him over the whole world? If He should set His heart on it, if He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.” (Job 34:12-15)** In case you’ve been living too long in this present world, those were *rhetorical* questions he was asking: *nobody* put Yahweh in charge—He just is. We need to be reminded—often—that it is only God’s constant care that makes life possible. If he were to merely “hold His breath,” we would not survive two minutes.

Strangely, one Biblical word that modern Christians often choke on is “vengeance.” It was used three times, for example, in Moses’ quote we saw earlier. The increasingly liberal society we live in finds “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” a barbaric concept. Nowadays, folks would much rather think in terms of rehabilitation (which explains why they have no idea how to cope with the evil of Islam). They have been conditioned to shudder at the thought of anyone—even God—being the personification of absolute truth—as in **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)** If that were so, they reason quite rightly, *they* would be held to a standard of holy conduct themselves, one they have no intention of trying to live up to. So to avoid this uncomfortable reality, they insist that there is no black and no white, only shades of gray; that vengeance is a crude relic of our caveman past, that there are no concrete standards of behavior, that morality is situational. But if that were really true, our legal system would find itself with no foundation. If we

“rehabilitate” people whom society finds “inconvenient”—instead of punishing people who do wrong—we become the most immoral and irrational of people: law degenerates into the capricious bludgeon of those in power.

If we’re honest with ourselves, we all sense that there actually are such things as right and wrong. (Ask the man who’s being mugged whether he still believes there’s no such thing as moral absolutes.) But where do the standards come from? They emanate from the One who created us, who planted a sense of conscience within us, and backed it up with His recorded commandments—His Torah, or Instructions. We can deny it all we want, but deep down inside, we *know* it’s wrong when we murder, steal, cheat on our spouses, and lie about our fellow man in order to gain an advantage. That’s why we try to keep such things a secret. The one thing guaranteed to kill an insanity defense is an attempt to hide the crime.

The bottom line is that vengeance is a right and proper response to sin/crime—but not wielded by just anyone, not from self-appointed arbiters of moral uprightness. Rather, Yahweh has delegated this function to human governments—whom He then holds responsible to exercise His will. Yet in the end, only the One who set the standards in the first place is qualified to exercise vengeance. And ultimately, God will do just that: **“O Yahweh our Lord, to whom vengeance belongs...shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render punishment to the proud. Yahweh, how long will the wicked...triumph? They utter speech, and speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves. They break in pieces Your people, O Yahweh, and afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, ‘Yahweh does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand.’ Understand, you senseless among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge? Yahweh knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile.”** (Psalm 94:1-11) In other words, don’t mistake God’s patience for senility.

Each of us needs to be very clear on this point: vengeance belongs to Yahweh. It’s not a pleasant thought; it makes some of us uncomfortable, even afraid. And well it should, if we’re among those who’ve declared the blood of His Anointed One to be of no value by refusing to acknowledge our sin and accept God’s remedy for it. The Psalmist had a perfect right to pray, **“May sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more...”** (Psalm 104:35) or say, **“Tremble, O earth, at the presence of Yahweh, at the presence of the God of Jacob.”** (Psalm 114:7) If you’re one of the billions who think you’re too good for Yahweh’s gift of eternal life, then get ready to **“Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of Yahweh and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and Yahweh alone shall be exalted in that day.”** (Isaiah 1:10-11)

A metaphor we see time after time in scripture is that of a man reeling on his feet as though he were drunk—but he is not intoxicated; he is staggering under the weight of God’s judgment. For example, Asaph writes, **“For in the hand of Yahweh there is a cup, and the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out. Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain and drink down.”** (Psalm 75:8)

The prophet Jeremiah uses this same figure of speech to describe coming judgment. The context is the Babylonian conquest, but I believe the prophet is also identifying the participants of the coming dark times, for the destruction described extends far beyond historical Babylon. **“For thus says Yahweh, God of Israel, to me: ‘Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.’ Then I took the cup from Yahweh’s hand, and made all the nations drink, to whom Yahweh had sent me: Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and its princes, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day....”** It’s no accident that Israel is first on the list. As the keepers of the Oracles of God, they are held to a higher standard than the gentile nations that surround them—they’re supposed to know better. We should not be unaware that part of the purpose of God’s wrath in the Last Days is to purge Israel itself—to separate the wheat from the chaff, as it were. As Yahweh removes the rebels from among Israel, she will become pure, just as gold refined in a crucible is made pure by skimming off the dross.

Jeremiah’s list of nations that will stagger under the effects of Yahweh’s wrath continues: **“Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his princes, and all his people; all the mixed multitude, all the kings of the land of Uz [probably Aram—today’s Syria], all the kings of the land of the Philistines (namely, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod) [I think we can safely read the modern Palestinians into this, though the link is geographical, not genetic]; Edom, Moab, and the people of Ammon [these three nations together comprise modern Jordan—it’s fascinating to observe how often the prophets group them]; all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon [in other words, Lebanon], and the kings of the coastlands which are across the sea [anybody’s guess—this could include anyone on earth]; Dedan, Tema, Buz [Arabian nations], and all who are in the farthest corners; all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed multitude who dwell in the desert; all the kings of Zimri [an Arab tribe], all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes [both in modern Iran]; all the kings of the north [Turkey and the post-Soviet Islamic nations, at the very least], far and near, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the world which are on the face of the earth [so much for a localized Middle-East war—the whole world is in for it]. Also the king of Sheshach [Babylon, a.k.a. Iraq] shall drink after them....”**

This list, in case you didn’t notice, is almost identical to that of Ezekiel 38 (except for the “all the kingdoms of the world” time bomb). The differences seem

to be that Jeremiah gives less importance to the nations of northern and eastern Africa (Cush and Phut) and he includes the Arabian nations. Note, however, that he's describing a slightly different thing. Ezekiel's list are those nations who formally ally themselves with Gog with the express purpose of annihilating Israel. Jeremiah's list, on the other hand, are those nations who will **"stagger and go mad because of the sword that [Yahweh] will send among them,"** i.e., the nations who will be on the receiving end of God's wrath—apparently *all* of them, but with a special emphasis on the Islamic nations. Note that although not all Muslim nations formally join the Magog federation, they will all taste the wrath of God anyway. Jordan won't get off Scot free just because Daniel says it will escape from the clutches of the Antichrist; and Saudi Arabia's diplomatic protests won't make it immune to the ravages of war. Yahweh is cleaning house.

"Therefore you shall say to them, 'Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: "Drink, be drunk, and vomit! Fall and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you." And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, 'Thus says Yahweh of hosts: "You shall certainly drink! For behold, I begin to bring calamity on the city which is called by My name, and should you be utterly unpunished? You shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth," says Yahweh of hosts...."' There he goes again, forecasting God's fury against *everyone*, starting with Israel. I realize this is hard for some to accept, hard to even comprehend. Perhaps that's why God warned us about it so many times. I feel like one of those shaggy prophets of doom in the funnies with their sandwich boards announcing, "Repent! The end of the world is coming." The only problem is, it *is*—at least, the world as we know it.

Jeremiah's not done, either. No one alive today has ever heard Yahweh do this: **"Yahweh will roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He will roar mightily against His fold. He will give a shout, as those who tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise will come to the ends of the earth—for Yahweh has a controversy with the nations; He will plead His case with all flesh. He will give those who are wicked to the sword,' says Yahweh. Thus says Yahweh of hosts: 'Behold, disaster shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth.'" (Jeremiah 25:15-32)**

Do you remember how World War I got started? A young man named Gavrilo Princip, who believed that God's law, **"You shall not murder,"** somehow didn't apply to him, went to Sarajevo and assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A month later, as a direct result, Austria-Hungary declared war on Russia. Because Germany had ties to Austria-Hungary, it too declared war on Russia, and then, because Russia had signed a mutual defense pact with France, Germany attacked her as well. Having now made enemies on two fronts, Germany decided to invade neutral Belgium in order

to consolidate its position (and gain a vital North Sea port—Bruges—for its U-boats). Alarmed, Great Britain felt it had no choice but to declare war on Germany, thus setting up America's entry into the war a few years later. That is what it means for **“disaster [to] go forth from nation to nation.”** The conflicts that are on our horizon, however, will leave no one untouched. They will make World War I look like a pillow fight.

Piecing together the clues from scripture, it looks like World War III *will* follow this pattern—disaster proceeding from one nation to the next. As they did in '67 and '73, Egypt and Syria will attack Israel together. But this time, the Antichrist's U.N. forces are tasked to “protect” her. The Antichrist strikes back, gaining ground—lots of it. However, this time, rather than letting their Muslim co-religionists take it on the chin as before, the leader of Iran unites much of *dar al-Islam* in holy war: they will attempt to finish once and for all what their impetuous brothers had started. What's different this time? I think we can safely trace this newfound spirit of unity among the Muslim nations to a general shift toward Islamic fundamentalism—a trend we can see gaining momentum even now.

From this point, it all gets pretty speculative. One scenario consistent with the prophecies is that Russia becomes worried that her prime source of hard currency—the oil-rich Muslim nations—will be overrun by the aggressive and imperialistic new European dictator. The parallels between the Antichrist and Hitler will be lost on no one. Moscow figures that if they just sit there like Stalin did, they'll be next. So they dust off their old Warsaw-pact battle scenarios from the cold war—the ones pitting the Soviet bloc against NATO—and come to a horrible realization: there's no Poland, no East Germany, no Czechoslovakia in their corner any more, and that changes everything. With no buffer of “client states” in which to slow down the Antichrist's advance, the Motherland is a sitting duck, just as it was in 1940. And it's all too clear that without the brutal machine of Communism to push from behind, the Russian armed forces would disintegrate at the first sign of trouble. There's no lack of patriotism, you understand, only money: their military infrastructure is in shambles. Bottom line: conventional warfare is not an option. They're going to have to think—and fight—outside the box.

The Russians slowly come to the grim realization that whether economically or militarily, they're as good as dead—probably within a couple of years. Ironically, they can't even appeal to the United Nations: this European madman has *them* in his back pocket. He's *already* got U.N. troops fighting against Russia's most important allies. Worse, since Gog was clearly the aggressor, they don't have a prayer of getting the U.N. to back down, permanent Security Council seat or no. The Russians come to understand that they can't buy the Antichrist off,

out-negotiate him, or outfight him with conventional weapons. They can't even depend on the Russian winter to save them anymore—between advanced cold-weather battlefield technology and climate altering wizardry like the Americans' HAARP (or their own Woodpecker system) all bets are off. They know they must defend the Rodina against this new-age Hitler. But how?

Hold that thought for a minute. Jeremiah wasn't quite done telling us about Yahweh's wrath. **"And at that day the slain of Yahweh shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground."** The dead will be so numerous, burying them will be a hopeless task. Nor will this be a local phenomenon—the carnage will be strewn worldwide. **"Wail, shepherds, and cry! Roll about in the ashes, you leaders of the flock! For the days of your slaughter and your dispersions are fulfilled; you shall fall like a precious vessel. And the shepherds will have no way to flee, nor the leaders of the flock to escape. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a wailing of the leaders to the flock will be heard. For Yahweh has plundered their pasture, and the peaceful dwellings are cut down because of the fierce anger of Yahweh. He has left His lair like the lion; for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the Oppressor, and because of His fierce anger."** (Jeremiah 25:33-38) The word "Oppressor" here (obviously referring to Yahweh) is an unfortunate translation of the Hebrew *yanah*, which means "Destroyer" or "One who treats violently." Yahweh is angry, not oppressive. The "shepherds," of course, are the world's political leaders. Every one of them will know that there's no way out. Their sins have come back to haunt them. Not only will they *not* be able to keep their positions of power—the one thing every politician wants—but now they realize that they'll be lucky to get out of this mess with their lives.

What's happening? **"Behold, the whirlwind of Yahweh goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind. It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of Yahweh will not return until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart. In the latter days you will consider it."** (Jeremiah 30:23-24) Yahweh's continuing whirlwind, appearing in the latter days? What does that mean? You were hoping for something a little more specific? How about the words of Yahshua? **"And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."** (Luke 17:26-27) No more business as usual. No more behind the scenes maneuvering. No more politically correct injustice. The time of Yahweh's wrath has finally come. But what's *happening*, you ask? The unthinkable is happening.

Upon the first successful test of the atomic bomb on July 16, 1945, the man most responsible for its development, Robert J. Oppenheimer, “quoted” the Hindu demon-god Vishnu: “I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.” Seven years later, presidential candidate and Council on Foreign Relations member Adlai Stevenson intoned, “There is no evil in the atom, only in men’s souls.”

Demons and mortals alike know what’s coming, or at least they did at one time. But speaking for us mortals, we have forgotten to be terrified. We have “progressed” from paranoia and backyard bomb shelters to cold war stalemate (in which the concept of mutually assured destruction—MAD—kept the two superpowers from “pushing the button”) to a new state of post-cold-war denial. At the moment, most people are willingly ignorant of the fact that the threat of nuclear holocaust didn’t go away just because Russian Communism collapsed. When the Berlin wall came down, the whole world breathed a collective sigh of relief: the cold war was over. But the weapons, many of them, remain intact. And human nature remains evil.

The official score at the time of this writing is: Russia holds 22,500 nuclear warheads (down from a high of almost 45,000); United States: 12,000 warheads; France: 450; China 400; United Kingdom: 380; Pakistan: 18; India 18. Those are the nations that admit to having nukes, and the numbers of nukes they admit to having. In addition, Israel is believed to have up to 100 warheads, and North Korea (who withdrew from the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty in January, 2003) has announced that it too is a nuclear power. Iran’s nuclear program, ironically, slowed down somewhat after the Islamic fundamentalists seized power in the late ’70s. (Seems it’s even harder to get things done under Muslim repression than it is under secular repression.) But their quest for the ultimate weapon continues. Libya has given up trying to build its own bomb, but it is both willing and able to buy its way in to the nuclear clubhouse. Iraq, in case you didn’t notice, has been forced to put her nuclear aspirations aside for the moment—a factor that increases the chances that she will align herself with her fundamentalist neighbor Iran when the chips are down. The region’s wild card is Saudi Arabia, a signer of the NPT with no atomic weapons development program of its own. What *do* they have? 120 Chinese-built CSS-2 ballistic missiles topped, the CIA fears, with Pakistani-built nukes—ostensibly for defense against Iran, a.k.a. Magog, which helps explain Saudi’s initial diplomatic protestations mentioned in Ezekiel 38:13—they’ve *always* been wary of Iran’s aggressive behavior. We need to be aware that Saudi Arabia under the al-Saud royal family practices its own perverse brand of Islam—almost a cult—known as Wahhabism. The Wahhabi sect is an equal opportunity hater: the mantra that pours unabated from its mosques and universities is “Death to Jews, Christians, Hindus, and Shiites.” It is no fluke that fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers were Saudis. Although our politicians

routinely kiss this devil on the lips, the Saudis have been accurately characterized as “Talibans with oil and a good P.R. company.”

We are told that three former Soviet states (Kazakhstan, Belarus, and the Ukraine) have relinquished their nuclear arsenals, and four other nations who previously had nuclear weapons programs (South Africa, Algeria, Brazil, and Argentina) voluntarily shut them down in the early '90s. Even if all of this is true (and I'm not suggesting that it is) that leaves Russia with almost twice the nuclear arsenal of the rest of the world combined, with delivery systems second only to those of the United States. (And to put things in perspective, John Maté of Greenpeace reports that as of the turn of the twenty-first century, “The United States alone has spent over 3.4 trillion dollars on preparing for nuclear war since the Second World War and continues to do so at a rate of nearly 30 million dollars a day.”) Thus I would submit that it's not a particularly smart move to create insoluble problems for Russia in the unrestrained post-Holy-Spirit world. Yet that's precisely what Gog will be doing by attacking Israel, and what the Antichrist will be doing by overrunning the Middle East in retaliation.

With that in mind, let's return to Ezekiel's narrative. **“And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I am Yahweh.”** (Ezekiel 39:6) We have already seen how Gog's armies will “fall upon the mountains of Israel.” This is different. This is Yahweh's judgment upon the homeland of Magog, as well as on other nations. Although **“those who live in security in the coastlands”** is a maddeningly imprecise phrase, I believe it implies global war—excluding the Far East, for reasons that will become clear later. If these people are living “in security,” then they're *not* at war—yet. That, in turn, means they are *outside* the Magog Federation. The war, just as it did in 1914, is spreading to those nations who thought they were safe.

Sending a “fire on Magog” could, of course, mean Sodom-and-Gomorrah style divine judgment. But a far simpler interpretation in light of our current geopolitical predicament is that this phrase means nuclear warfare. Magog's opponent, the Antichrist, has decided to employ tactical nuclear weapons against those who had allied themselves against his protectorate, Israel. But why would he do this? He has to know how threatened Russia will be by his actions—and what her possible reaction might be. More to the point, by this time, the armies of Magog will have *already* been destroyed. Their corpses lie rotting on the mountains and fields of Israel. Magog has been de-fanged; her military capability has been annihilated. *Dar al-Islam* is no longer a threat. So why attack Magog's homeland?

Because he *has* to. Look at the big picture—the spiritual picture: the only reason the Antichrist is there in Israel is because he is trying to present himself as the Jews' Messiah—the savior of the world—the son of God. As we shall see, his

whole *raison d'être* is to make people worship him. But the defeat of Gog's army within Israel is clearly not the result of *his* actions, but of Yahweh's: **"Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel...Every man's sword will be against his brother. And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone."** (Ezekiel 38:19, 21-22) Yahweh has chosen as weapons: a massive earthquake, confusion and fratricide in the Muslim ranks, floods, hailstorms, fire and brimstone. The list consists of what people usually call "natural" phenomena or "acts of God"—things that are all in some other way beyond the capabilities of conventional combat. Thus the Antichrist can't plausibly claim credit for destroying Gog's army. (Of course, he will anyway, plausibly or not.)

But what about fire and brimstone? That's not your ordinary run-of-the-mill "freak weather occurrence." We just got through explaining **"And I will send fire on Magog..."** as nuclear war. Isn't this the same thing? It *could* be descriptive of atomic warfare, but it almost certainly isn't in this case. Yahweh will not allow His land to be polluted in this way. And this isn't just a theory of mine based on a love of Israel and a healthy dose of wishful thinking. Biblical descriptions of events subsequently taking place within Israel clearly preclude nuclear holocaust.

So what is fire and brimstone? "Fire" could be anything from conventional artillery to napalm to lightning from the heavens—or, of course, the literal burning of brimstone, which I'll discuss in a minute. Isaiah, if you'll recall, described Yahweh's "weapon" as **"the flame of devouring fire."** Elijah had called down fire from heaven to consume the overconfident soldiers of the idolatrous Samaritan King Ahaziah who had come to fetch him. This was a fact well known by Yahshua's disciples: **"Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.'" (Luke 9:51-56)** The first advent of Messiah was not a time of judgment; that time, however, is coming. Note that Yahshua didn't deny that the power to send fire in judgment was His to wield. Yahweh apparently has no problem putting fire wherever He wants it.

Brimstone, technically, is just sulfur. To this day you can walk around near the ancient sites of Sodom and Gomorrah west of the Dead Sea and pick up golf ball sized pieces of ash-encrusted "brimstone" off the ground. It tests out at about

98% sulfur, burns with a “fervent heat” (as Peter would say), and gives off noxious sulfur dioxide fumes in the process—don’t try this at home, boys and girls. It seems likely to me that Yahweh’s destruction of Gog’s armies within Israel will be a rerun of Sodom’s demise—which Yahweh probably achieved with a pinpoint-accurate sulfur-rich asteroid strike.

Later we’ll see how the Israelis will bury the bodies and collect what the armies left behind. If nuclear weapons were used, there would be precious little left to retrieve. Nor do I think the Antichrist would use tactical nukes within Israel—not if he were trying to establish himself as the Messiah. *See what a great thing I’ve done to protect you Jews? I nuked ’em back to Allah for you. Oh, sorry about the radiation. But you should be able to come back and live here quite safely in two, three generations, tops.*

Outside of Israel, though, is another matter. The Antichrist may calculate that if he drops Israeli nukes on strategic targets within *dar al-Islam*, especially on Iran itself—described in scripture as “sending a fire on Magog—other Islamic nuclear-equipped nations (like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) won’t return his “unconventional” fire because of the likelihood of taking out their “holy” shrine, the Dome of the Rock. (Having their own launch capabilities knocked out in the initial attack won’t hurt, either.) The decision to nuke Magog will be a hasty and poorly thought-out improvisation, of course, but the Antichrist desperately needs a quick diversion: something—*anything*—to disguise the obvious fact that Yahweh is actually responsible for crushing Israel’s antagonists. In other words, the Antichrist is trying to prevent that which is clearly predicted in scripture: **“So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not let them profane My holy name anymore. Then the nations shall know that I am Yahweh, the Holy One in Israel. Surely it is coming, and it shall be done,” says Yahweh. ‘This is the day of which I have spoken.’”** (Ezekiel 38:7-8)

I can hear you groaning. *You mean to say that the Antichrist risks turning this conventional regional war into a world-wide nuclear holocaust because he’s trying to hide the fact that he’s not God?* Yes, it could be just that simple. Let’s face it: since Nagasaki, there’s been no *good* reason for using nuclear weapons in warfare. That fact kept the cold war cold for forty years. But now that the Holy Spirit isn’t in the “restraining” business any longer, self-control is in short supply among the world’s leaders. This may not be the only scenario that works, but it does address the means, motive, and opportunity needed for the Bible’s many “wrath of God” prophecies to come to pass.

If not nuclear war, what on earth could John have been describing when he recorded this: **“The first angel sounded [his trumpet]: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”** (Revelation 8:7) This seems to be implying that the

atomic warfare will touch one third of the earth's land surface. The total landmass of the earth is about 56,890,000 square miles. Call it a coincidence if you want, but the areas of the nations described in the previous chapter as the Magog federation, plus the parts of Europe within the old Roman empire, plus Russia, plus the United States (whose participation is implied in Isaiah 18) add up to just short of 19,000,000 square miles—*one third* of the earth's land surface.

Realistically, there are probably going to be some trade-offs. I can't imagine too much of Siberia will be targeted, but on the other hand, I can easily envision India and Pakistan using the general mayhem as an excuse to rekindle their old hatreds by trading nukes. And although Arizona and Iowa may not make particularly tempting targets, Toronto and Montreal shouldn't feel safe just because they're north of some line on a map.

Comparing this, the first "trumpet" judgment, with what we saw in the fourth "seal" judgment (Revelation 6:8), we conclude that nations comprising one third of the land surface of the earth will be directly involved in the nuclear catastrophe, and one quarter of the earth's population (many of whom are within those nations) will be killed as a result of the warfare or the disease and famine that will inevitably follow. If we're starting out with more than six billion people on earth, that's over 1.5 *billion* souls—dead.

We've seen how the "seals" of the scroll John witnessed in his vision represented the unique authority of Yahshua to exact God's wrath upon the unbelieving world. The second level of revelation is represented by the blowing of trumpets. The *shofar*, or ram's horn trumpet, was used to get Israel's attention—whether to gather at the tent of meeting, or to prepare for war. But when Yahweh or his angels blew the trumpet, the effect on His people was "shock and awe": **"There were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled... Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off."** (Exodus 19:16; 20:18) Like God's trumpet on Sinai, the "trumpet" judgments are designed to wake the world up, to command its complete attention.

Isaiah's warnings should have been enough, but we keep snoozing. **"Behold, Yahweh makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants. And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for Yahweh has spoken this word. The earth mourns and fades away; the world languishes and fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish...."** A nuclear warhead is very democratic—it doesn't care if you're rich or poor, black or white, ugly or beautiful, brilliant or

dumb as a bag of hammers. If you're too close to it when it goes off, you're dead. But when World War III starts, 144,000 people will be immune to its effects—the young Jewish evangelists who, as we have seen, have been “sealed” by God. It is my guess that most of them will have emigrated to Israel by this time, along with millions of Jews fleeing worldwide persecution. It's one more hint that Israel itself will not experience nuclear war. It should be noted that both “land” and “earth” throughout this passage are translated from the same word, the Hebrew *'erets*. “World” is from *tebel*, meaning “the habitable part of the earth.” So it should not be imagined that Isaiah is making a distinction between “the promised *land*” and the rest of the earth. He's talking about the whole *enchilada*.

The prophet continues, explaining the “why” of it all: **“The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left....”** For my money, this is one of the saddest verses in the Bible. This nuclear holocaust didn't have to happen. Mankind has brought the curse upon himself.

“The new wine fails, the vine languishes; all the merry-hearted sigh. The mirth of the tambourine ceases, the noise of the jubilant ends, the joy of the harp ceases. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink is bitter to those who drink it. The city of confusion is broken down; every house is shut up, so that none may go in. There is a cry for wine in the streets, all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city desolation is left, and the gate is stricken with destruction. When it shall be thus in the midst of the land among the people, It shall be like the shaking of an olive tree, like the gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done.” (Isaiah 24:1-13) Our hedonistic lives are going to look pretty stupid after the leaders of the “great” powers all drop the big one on each other. No one is going to feel like partying anymore, though the natural inclination of many will be to get drunk and stay that way so they don't have to face the grim new reality. The “gate” Isaiah mentioned is roughly equivalent to “city hall.” In context, it indicates that the capital cities of the war's participants are toast, leaving “government” in the hands of whoever is strong enough to seize it. Mogadishu will serve as the model. But there will be precious few people left to govern—or exploit.

An anonymous Psalm describes the effects of the warfare: **“A fire goes before Him and burns up His enemies round about. His lightnings light the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax at the presence of Yahweh, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory.”** (Psalm 97:3-6) From the experiments our government performed in the 1950s we have a reasonably good idea what one nuclear bomb will do. But we have no concept of what will happen when hundreds or thousands of these

weapons are detonated more or less simultaneously. Changes in weather patterns—not just a nuclear winter, but a nuclear hurricane or tornado season—are a distinct possibility. Remember what Jeremiah said about **“the whirlwind of Yahweh”** in chapter 30? And how many nukes will it take to get a major fault system like the San Andreas in California to let go? References to earthquakes (the “trembling” earth) are ubiquitous in these prophetic passages.

It’s interesting that both Ezekiel and John mention hailstones as a part of the phenomenon of God’s wrath. This isn’t the first time Yahweh has used hail against an enemy of His people. During the conquest of Canaan, He rained down hail upon the Amorites. **“And it happened, as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of Beth Horon, that Yahweh cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.”** (Joshua 10:11) Or as Yahweh put it to Job, **“...Have you seen the treasury of hail, which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war?”** (Job 38:22-23)

Although God obviously doesn’t need a nuclear war in order to rain hail down on His enemies, the atomic weapons researchers in the ’50s discovered that hail often accompanied nuclear detonations. Moisture was pulled aloft to where the air temperature is sixty or seventy degrees below zero. This resulted in hailstones—and not your ordinary pea-sized stuff, either, but hail large enough to dent the armor deck plating of warships anchored near the blast zone. This is reminiscent of what John described in the seventh bowl judgment: **“And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent [75-90 pounds]. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.”** (Revelation 16:21) *Question: Will men repent from their wickedness if Yahweh shows them signs from heaven? Answer: Hail, no!*

One wonders what David was contemplating when he penned these words: **“Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered. Let those also who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.”** (Psalm 68:1-2) David had never seen an explosion, but he knew what fire would do. The Psalmist Asaph continues the thought: **“Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.”** (Psalm 50:3) The psalms from which these generalized predictions of God’s fiery wrath are taken both refer to places within Israel. It’s not too much of a stretch to find their ultimate fulfillment in the future war against Magog.

David also says, **“Your hand will find all Your enemies; Your right hand will find those who hate You. You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; Yahweh shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth, and their descendants from among the sons of men. For they**

intended evil against You; They devised a plot which they are not able to perform. Therefore You will make them turn their back; You will make ready Your arrows on Your string toward their faces. Be exalted, O Yahweh, in Your own strength! We will sing and praise Your power.” (Psalm 21:8-13) Who are these “enemies” the king is describing? Having studied Islam, the term “plot” jumped off the page and bit me. In the Muslim scriptures, Muhammad and his “god” are forever talking about plots and schemes. Typical—and telling—is this passage from the Qur’an: “*Do they not see Us advancing from all sides into the land they control, reducing its borders? When Allah dooms there is none who can postpone His doom. Surely they devised their plots, but We [i.e., Allah] are the best of schemers.*” (Qur’an 13:41) This is but one of thousands of confirmations that Islam is all about conquest. But Yahweh knew about their feeble plots sixteen hundred years before Muhammad put the words in Allah’s mouth. They have no idea Who they’re dealing with.

Notice the nature of judgment here: fire will be the primary means of Magog’s destruction. But beyond that, it appears that their entire race will be annihilated—their offspring, their descendants, will also be destroyed. Earlier in this chapter we covered the first few verses of Ezekiel 39. In verse 2 there is a play on words that’s totally lost in the English, especially in the NKJV. The Authorized, or King James Version renders it like this: “**And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee....**” There is a single Hebrew word for the phrase “leave but the sixth part.” *Shawshaw* is the poetic way of saying “annihilate” in Hebrew. The word play comes from its resemblance to *shashah*, pronounced exactly the same way, which means “to divide into sixths.” Whether Yahweh meant He was going to kill five-sixths of Gog’s armies within Israel or five sixths of the combined citizenry of the Magog Federation (or whether He really meant *annihilate*—totally obliterate them) the carnage will be unprecedented in the history of man. Bear in mind that the total death toll from this war will be one-quarter of the earth’s population, over 1.5 billion people. So the only question is whether the first billion out of that 1.5 billion who’ll die will be followers of Islam (i.e., five-sixths of the earth’s 1.3 billion Muslims), or five-sixths of the population of the Magog Federation proper (perhaps a third to half of that number), or only Gog’s *armies* are completely wasted, leaving the rest of the carnage more generalized. The Psalm 21 passage quoted above (especially verse 10) seems to favor the former theory—leaving a “mere” half-a-billion casualties (nine or ten times the death toll of World War II) spread out over the rest of the earth.

Though thermonuclear war won’t be visited upon Israel proper, the fire of Yahweh’s wrath will be employed there (among other things) to destroy Magog’s armies, leaving devastation and famine in its wake. The newly appointed priests will waste no time in going to the new temple to intercede on behalf of the Jewish people. The prophet Joel describes the scene: “**Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, lie all night in sackcloth, you who**

minister to my God. For the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of Yahweh your God, and cry out to Yahweh....”

Remember, one of Yahweh’s stated purposes for allowing this costly victory to transpire is to drive Israel back into His arms of protection.

“Alas for the day! For the day of Yahweh is at hand. It shall come as destruction from the Almighty. Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed shrivels under the clods, storehouses are in shambles; barns are broken down, for the grain has withered. How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, because they have no pasture; Even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment. O Yahweh, to You I cry out; for fire has devoured the open pastures, and a flame has burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field also cry out to You, for the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the open pastures.” (Joel 1:13-20) The Muslims are gone, but so are the crops, orchards, grasslands, and water supply. The Israelis are victorious, but in dire straits.

Yahweh will hear their cry and meet their needs, even in this most dire of circumstances. “He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail. But those who wait on Yahweh shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:29-31) Not all of the Jews will wait on Yahweh, of course. But those who do will find shelter and renewed strength to face the challenges yet to come. They’ll need it—it’s not over yet.

Having observed Yahweh’s *modus operandi*, I believe He will let Gog’s armies get all the way to the suburbs of Jerusalem before He burns their biscuits. Somehow, it just wouldn’t be *Him* to miraculously cut off his people’s enemies before all rational hope was lost. Jerusalem may get a little singed around the edges, but God won’t let it be destroyed—not this time. “Yahweh said to Satan, ‘Yahweh rebuke you, Satan! Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?’” (Zechariah 3:2) Indeed: a smoldering stick rescued from the fire and used as a club to bludgeon those who hate Yahweh and His people.

Zechariah has a lot to say about these days: “The burden of the word of Yahweh against Israel. Thus says Yahweh, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: ‘Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples [that’s *dar al-Islam*], when they lay siege

against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples [this, in contrast, is the whole world, and a bit later]; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it..." God reminds us of His greatness—His résumé as it were—and then assures us that in the Last Days He intends to defend his chosen city.

How? "In that day," says Yahweh, "I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness; I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in Yahweh of hosts, their God." In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem...." The Israelis won't just sit around waiting for the Antichrist and his U.N. "peacekeepers" to deal with Gog and his armies. It's their homeland: they will be on the front lines defending it. This new generation will have heard of the miraculous victories of '48, '67, and '73, of course, but the Israelis have never faced such impossible odds before. They're under no illusions: if Yahweh isn't fighting with them and for them, they're dead. Zechariah confirms here that He is. The "governors" whom God will raise up to lead the Israelis in battle will be "a fiery torch among the sheaves," inciting their troops to valor and victory in the strength of Yahweh wherever they confront the Muslims. The reference to blinded horses seems to mean that Magog's expensive battlefield technology will fail, leaving them with catastrophically errant comprehension of the battlespace, and contributing, as we have seen, to a disastrous level of friendly fire fratricide. "Rider madness" indicates a pattern of disastrous blunders on the part of the Muslim military leadership.

"Yahweh will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah. In that day Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of Yahweh before them. It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." (Zechariah 12:1-9) Historically, Judah is the territory south of Jerusalem. Much of it is barren wasteland today. Well over half of Israel's population lives in the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem corridor at the country's "waist." It seems reasonable to assume that since, according to Daniel, the Antichrist has overrun Egypt, the Israelis will use this southern territory as a fallback position as Magog's forces attack Jerusalem and Tel Aviv from the north. Yahweh gives the least of them the valor of a King David (of whom it was sung, "He killed his ten-thousands") as they go out against Magog. And beyond that, we should not ignore the implications of genetic links to the house of David and the tribe of Judah here. Yahweh is quite involved with individual Israelite tribal

affiliations at this point in time. Apparently, the “stars” of the battle of Magog are from the tribe of Judah—King Yahshua’s tribe. Yahweh knows who they are, even if they don’t.

But the numbers of enemy troops are positively overwhelming. As hope runs out, as the unstoppable flood of Muslim troops reaches the Jerusalem city limits, Yahweh seems to say, “Well done, boys and girls. I’ll take it from here.” Zechariah paints the scene: **“And this shall be the plague with which Yahweh will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths. It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from Yahweh will be among them.”** (Zechariah 14:12-13) Panic? No kidding, Zack.

I’m admittedly extrapolating (again) here, but I believe the very next sentence (v.13) offers us a clue as to what has happened. **“Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor’s hand.”** We’ve already seen how among the troops of Gog, **“Every man’s sword will be against his brother. And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed...”** (Ezekiel 38:21-22) Zechariah may be giving us a hint as to the nature of this “pestilence.” When the Muslims lose focus and turn on each other (which is something they’ve historically done far more frequently than attacking non-Muslims) they’ll employ the biological or chemical weapons they intended to use against the Israelis, weapons that cause the gruesome symptoms described by Zechariah. This agent works so fast that the victim’s flesh begins to rot away even before the corpse hits the floor.

I can guarantee that if I could come up with a formula that would do what Zechariah described, and I sent it to every government on earth, half of them would make up a batch and test it, and a third of them would manufacture it and stockpile some for a rainy day. I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that it already exists. In case you were wondering, it works on animals, too. **“Such also shall be the plague on the horse and the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So shall this plague be.”** (Zechariah 14:15) Notice that its deployment will be localized: **“in those camps.”**

It’s worth noting that the plague of Zechariah 14 *may* primarily reference events of a later battle, Armageddon—the effect of “the sword that proceeds out of the mouth of Yahshua,” acoustic waves that turn His enemies to goo. Perhaps I should have brought it up in Chapter 24 instead of here. But the circumstances are so similar, it’s hard to be dogmatic either way. Either way, it doesn’t pay to attack God’s people.

Perhaps the trickiest part about crushing Gog’s armies within Israel will be managing to avoid killing the Israelis who are fighting them in such close proximity. But it is this very selectivity that will convince the Jews that Yahweh has been fighting on their behalf. **“Then Yahweh will be seen over them, and His arrow**

will go forth like lightning. Yahweh will blow the trumpet, and go with whirlwinds from the south. Yahweh of hosts will defend them; they shall devour and subdue with slingstones. They shall drink and roar as if with wine; they shall be filled with blood like basins, like the corners of the altar. Yahweh their God will save them in that day, as the flock of His people. For they shall be like the jewels of a crown, lifted like a banner over His land.” (Zechariah 9:14-16) The single Hebrew word mis-translated “lifted like a banner” (*nasas*) means “sparkling, or glittering.” Yahweh sees His people as precious jewels in His crown. Here, amid the pregnant metaphor of the trumpet of Yahweh, we see the final outcome of the battle. The Israelis are doing the fighting, devouring Gog with “slingstones.” This could mean missiles and artillery, but I think it’s just as likely that Zechariah also meant weapons of opportunity, such as those David used to slay Goliath. Now as then, the Jews wield the weapons, and Yahweh provides the victory. Of course, the slingstones could be the hail Ezekiel reported.

Using a different metaphor, the prophet Micah confirms this. “Now also many nations have gathered against you, who say, ‘Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.’ But they do not know the thoughts of Yahweh, nor do they understand His counsel; for He will gather them like sheaves to the threshing floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hooves bronze. You shall beat in pieces many peoples; I will consecrate their gain to Yahweh, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth.” (Micah 4:9-13)

Malachi has the last word on the matter: “But to you who revere My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. And you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,’ says Yahweh almighty. (Malachi 4:2-3) Reverent Israelis—those who actually know and use God’s name—not “the Lord,” not “*ha-Shem*,” not Jehovah, but *Yahweh*—will “trample the wicked,” but it’s Yahweh Himself who’s “doing it.” We are also graphically reminded here of the fire Yahweh will use against Gog’s forces: “They shall be ashes under the soles of your feet.”

And Magog? Micah’s imprecation against Assyria goes far beyond ancient Nineveh: “And it shall be in that day,’ says Yahweh, ‘that I will cut off your horses from your midst and destroy your chariots. I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds. I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst. You shall no more worship the work of your hands; I will pluck your wooden images from your midst. Thus I will destroy your cities, and I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard.’” (Micah 5:10-15) *Vengeance on those who have not heard?* This sounds totally unfair, but it’s really just another mis-translation. The word “heard” is *shama*, meaning “to listen, take heed, pay attention, or hear in the sense

of believing information and responding on the basis of having heard.” It’s the perfect description of *dar al-Islam*.

Yahweh is talking not about merely punishing nations for their naughty behavior. He is talking about dethroning their false gods. Islam today holds 1.3 billion souls in bondage to a false god, Allah, who bears a striking resemblance to *Halal ben Shachar*—“Lucifer, son of the dawn,” the fallen spirit who poses as the sun god, the adversary of mankind—Satan himself. Gog’s war against the Jews is in reality Allah’s war against Yahweh. When it’s over, *no one* will call upon the name of Allah. Another false god will have bitten the dust.