

Dr. Leslie Allen, Daniel, Session 20, Part 6 -- Israel's Security Put to the Test (Ezek 38:1-39:29)

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Allen, Ezekiel, Session 16, Israel's Good Shepherd (Ezek 34:1-31), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Leslie Allen's lecture focuses on Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39, which explore Israel's future security and God's protection. The lecture examines how these chapters serve as a test of Israel's security, presenting a worst-case scenario of invasion where God ultimately ensures their safety. **Allen highlights the recurrence of "security" as a key theme, drawing connections to earlier messages in Ezekiel and anxieties among exiles.** He discusses the foe from the north, represented by Gog, and God's intervention against this enemy. **The lecture considers theological aspects, such as God's holiness and the fulfillment of prophecies.** Ultimately, Allen connects these chapters to the New Testament, reassuring listeners of God's unwavering support.

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Allen, Ezekiel, Session 16 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Ezekiel).



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on20.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 16, Israel's Good Shepherd (Ezek 34:1-31)

Here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from Dr. Allen's lecture on Ezekiel 38-39:

Briefing Document: Ezekiel 38-39 - Israel's Security Put to the Test

Main Theme: The central issue in Ezekiel 38-39 is the *security* of Israel after their return from exile. These chapters present a "worst-case scenario" to test the promise of security given in earlier chapters, particularly chapter 34. Dr. Allen emphasizes the repetition of the word "securely" throughout the passage as a key indicator of this theme's importance.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Placement and Context:** Ezekiel 38-39 appear somewhat as an interruption within the book, as they leap ahead in time beyond the prophecies of chapters 40-48. "Chapters 38 and 39 keep us waiting for that sequel. And second, the passage leaps ahead, and we're going to be seeing, beyond chapters 40 to 48 a time long after the exiles had returned to their homeland." Despite this, Allen argues that the themes connect strongly with earlier promises of security, especially in chapter 34, and the idea of living securely in the land forever from 37:25.
- **Exile Anxiety:** The chapters address the underlying fear and anxiety of the exiles regarding their future security in the promised land. They had experienced devastating invasion before and worried about it happening again. "Because security was the last thing they had, the thing they never had back in the promised land in pre-exilic days. But very much the opposite."
- **Foe from the North (Gog and Magog):** Ezekiel 38-39 introduces a foe from the north, Gog of the land of Magog, reminiscent of Jeremiah's prophecies concerning Babylon, and even earlier references in Isaiah. This enemy is described as a powerful force with numerous allies. "And so, Ezekiel 38 and 39 is picking up this frightening notion of a foe from the north."

- **God's Opposition and Control:** The key reassurance is that God is against Gog. "Thus says the Lord God, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." (Ezekiel 38:3). God is also depicted as being in control of Gog's actions, even leading him out with his armies. This highlights God's sovereignty and protection of Israel.
- **Evil Scheme:** Gog devises an "evil scheme" (Ezekiel 38:10), which aligns with Isaiah 10 and Assyria going too far, incurring God's hostility. This foreshadows Gog's eventual defeat.
- **Judgment and Holiness:** God's judgment will fall upon Gog and his army. The purpose of this is to display God's holiness before the nations. "So that the nations may know me when through God I display my holiness before their eyes" (Ezekiel 38:16).
- **Prophetic Fulfillment:** Gog's attack is presented as a fulfillment of earlier prophecies concerning a foe from the north, though not exclusively limited to historical fulfillments like Assyria or Babylon. "Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants, the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them?" (Ezekiel 38:17).
- **Israel's Role:** Israel is not called to fight in this battle, but to engage in "mopping up operations" after God's victory. This includes collecting weapons for firewood (symbolizing the end of war) and burying the dead to cleanse the land.
- **Cleansing the Land:** The emphasis on burying the dead and cleansing the land highlights the defilement caused by the invasion and the need for restoration.
- **Feast for the Birds:** The vivid imagery of birds and wild animals feasting on the corpses of Gog's army symbolizes the completeness of God's victory.
- **Theological Summary:** The concluding verses (39:21-29) provide a theological summary of Ezekiel's messages, encompassing both judgment and salvation. This summary touches on God's reasons for sending Israel into exile, his promise to restore them, and his compassion for his people.
- **Bearing Shame:** Dr. Allen questions the translation of "forget their shame" in 39:26 and suggests that "bear their shame" aligns better with the book's overall emphasis on remembering past transgressions to avoid repeating them.

- **New Testament Parallels:** The lecture concludes by drawing parallels to Romans 8 and Psalm 23, emphasizing the ultimate security and protection that God provides for his people.

Key Quotes:

- "This is why I call these chapters a test of Israel's security."
- "And so, it has come, it has happened, says the Lord God, this is the day of which I have spoken."
- "If God is for us, who is against us?" (referencing Romans 8)
- "I fear no evil for you are with me." (referencing Psalm 23)

4. Study Guide: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 16, Israel's Good Shepherd (Ezek 34:1-31)

Ezekiel's Test of Security: Chapters 38-39 Study Guide

Key Concepts & Themes

- **Israel's Security:** The central theme of Ezekiel 38-39 is the question of Israel's future security after their return from exile. The chapters serve as a test, or a dramatic illustration, of God's promise to protect his people.
- **Worst-Case Scenario:** The passage envisions a worst-case scenario where a powerful enemy (Gog) attacks Israel after they have returned and are living securely in their land.
- **Foe from the North:** The threat from Gog echoes earlier prophecies, particularly those of Jeremiah, regarding a foe from the north (initially Babylon). It taps into the exiles' anxieties about renewed invasion and vulnerability.
- **God's Sovereignty:** Despite the apparent threat, God is portrayed as being in control. He declares himself to be against Gog and orchestrates the events, ultimately defeating Gog and demonstrating his power to the nations.
- **Holiness of God's Name:** The invasion by Gog is seen as a potential profanation of God's holy name. God's victory over Gog serves to display his holiness and re-establish his reputation among the nations.
- **Fulfillment of Prophecy:** Ezekiel 38-39 are interpreted as another fulfillment of earlier prophecies regarding a foe from the north. This demonstrates that prophecies are not necessarily exhausted in their initial historical fulfillment and can have future applications.
- **Mopping Up Operations:** After God's victory, the people of Israel are tasked with "mopping up" operations, such as collecting weapons for firewood and burying the dead to cleanse the land.
- **Comfort and Reassurance:** The main purpose of the text is pastoral. Despite the frightening imagery, the passage aims to calm the anxieties of the exiles and assure them of God's protection.

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the primary question being addressed in Ezekiel 38-39?
2. What previous prophecies does the threat from Gog echo?
3. How is God portrayed in relation to Gog and the invading forces?
4. What is the significance of God's holy name in the context of this future invasion?
5. How do chapters 38-39 relate to earlier prophecies about foes from the north?
6. What is the role of the people of Israel in the conflict described in Ezekiel 38-39?
7. What practical actions are the Israelites instructed to take after the defeat of Gog?
8. What is the theological significance of the Israelites burning the weapons of Gog's army?
9. According to the lecture, what is the overall purpose of the Gog and Magog narrative?
10. How does Dr. Allen compare Ezekiel 38-39 to Romans 8 in the New Testament?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary question in Ezekiel 38-39 is whether Israel will remain secure in their land after returning from exile, despite facing potential threats. The passage seeks to reassure the exiles that God's promise of protection will hold true even in the face of a "worst-case scenario."
2. The threat from Gog echoes earlier prophecies, especially those from Jeremiah, about a "foe from the north." These prophecies, initially fulfilled by the Babylonian invasion, instilled fear in the exiles.
3. God is portrayed as sovereign and in control, declaring himself to be against Gog and orchestrating the events. He uses Gog's attack to display his power, defeat his enemies, and demonstrate his holiness to the nations.
4. The invasion by Gog poses a potential profanation of God's holy name, as it suggests that God is unable to protect his people and land. God's victory over Gog serves to re-establish his reputation and prove his holiness to the nations.
5. Ezekiel 38-39 are interpreted as another fulfillment of earlier prophecies about a foe from the north, demonstrating their enduring relevance. This suggests prophecies aren't limited to their historical context.

6. The people of Israel do not actively fight against Gog; instead, God himself intervenes to defeat the invading forces. The Israelites' role is to engage in "mopping up" operations after the victory.
7. After the defeat of Gog, the Israelites are instructed to collect weapons for firewood, which they will burn for seven years. Additionally, they are tasked with burying the dead soldiers to cleanse the land from defilement.
8. The burning of weapons is a symbolic act that harkens back to Psalm 46, a Song of Zion. It celebrates God's defeat of Israel's enemies and signifies the end of war.
9. The overall purpose of the Gog and Magog narrative is to reassure the exiles of God's protection. It promotes God's glory through a demonstration of his sovereignty and power over Israel's enemies.
10. Dr. Allen compares Ezekiel 38-39 to Romans 8, emphasizing that just as nothing can separate believers from God's love in Christ, the worst-case scenario posed by Gog will ultimately do no harm to Israel. This highlights God's unfailing protection and care for His people.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the "foe from the north" motif in Ezekiel 38-39, and explain how it connects to earlier prophecies in the Old Testament.
2. Analyze the ways in which Ezekiel 38-39 addresses the anxieties of the exiles regarding their future security in the land.
3. Explore the theme of God's sovereignty in Ezekiel 38-39, and explain how it is demonstrated through the defeat of Gog.
4. Discuss the role of prophecy and its fulfillment in Ezekiel 38-39, and analyze how this passage can be interpreted as a renewed application of earlier prophecies.
5. Examine the theological implications of Ezekiel 38-39, focusing on the themes of God's holiness, his relationship with Israel, and his ultimate purpose in the Gog and Magog narrative.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Gog:** The chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; the leader of a future invasion against Israel.
- **Magog:** The land of Gog; the people ruled by Gog.
- **Meshech & Tubal:** Ancient regions in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), associated with Gog.
- **Foe from the North:** A recurring motif in the Old Testament, representing a powerful enemy invading Israel from the north; initially referred to Babylon.
- **Security (living securely):** The central theme of Ezekiel 38-39; the state of being safe and protected from harm.
- **Holiness:** The state of being sacred or set apart; refers to God's divine nature and his separation from sin and impurity.
- **Profane:** To treat something sacred with disrespect or irreverence.
- **Mopping Up Operations:** Tasks undertaken by the Israelites after the defeat of Gog, such as collecting weapons and burying the dead.
- **Zion Theology:** A belief system centered on the sanctity and inviolability of Jerusalem (Zion), often expressed in the Psalms.
- **Exiles:** The Jewish people who were forcibly removed from their homeland and taken into captivity in Babylon.

5. FAQs on Allen, Ezekiel, Session 16, Israel's Good Shepherd (Ezek 34:1-31), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Ezekiel 38-39 FAQ

- **What is the main theme of Ezekiel 38 and 39?** The main theme is the test of Israel's future security after their return to the land. These chapters explore the question of whether the exiles could truly be secure in their homeland, addressing their underlying fears of another devastating invasion. The repeated emphasis on "living securely" (or "in safety") underscores this concern, and the chapters present a worst-case scenario to ultimately demonstrate God's ability to protect His people.
- **Why do Ezekiel 38 and 39 seem like an interruption in the book's structure?** They appear as an interruption because the closing verses of chapter 37 look forward to the temple vision in chapters 40-48, serving as a theological summary. Chapters 38-39 leap beyond this immediate restoration to a time much later, after the exiles have returned. Additionally, the focus on security in these chapters shifts the immediate thematic emphasis.
- **What is the significance of the "foe from the north" mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39?** The "foe from the north" evokes the historical threat of invasions from the north, particularly reminiscent of Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the Babylonians. In Ezekiel, this threat is embodied by Gog of Magog, a symbolic figure representing a powerful enemy. This harkens back to the exiles' historical vulnerability and the anxieties surrounding potential future invasions.
- **Who is Gog, and what is the significance of his role in these chapters?** Gog is identified as the "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" from the land of Magog. While Gog's identity is linked to historical figures (possibly a king of Lydia), he functions symbolically as a future, powerful enemy who will attack Israel. The fact that God declares Himself against Gog from the outset offers reassurance, indicating that God will not allow Gog to succeed.

- **What is the "evil scheme" that Gog devises, and how does it relate to Isaiah 10?** Gog's "evil scheme" is a plan to attack Israel despite their apparent security. This evil scheme leads to God's judgement of Gog and his army. This idea has similarities to Isaiah 10, where Assyria is the "rod of God's anger" sent to punish Israel, but Assyria oversteps its mandate and incurs God's wrath in turn. While Gog is not presented as God's instrument of punishment, his evil scheme similarly invites divine judgment.
- **How do Ezekiel 38 and 39 address the exiles' fears and anxieties about future security?** Ezekiel 38 and 39 address the exiles' fears by acknowledging their historical vulnerability and the possibility of future invasions. The chapters present a worst-case scenario, depicting a massive attack against a seemingly secure Israel. However, they also emphasize God's control, His promise to protect His people, and His ultimate victory over Gog, thus offering reassurance that God's promise of security will hold true.
- **What role do the people of Israel play in the defeat of Gog?** The people of Israel do not actively fight against Gog; rather, God Himself intervenes to defeat Gog and his army through divine means like earthquakes, self-destruction, and plagues. Israel's role is limited to mopping up operations after God's victory, such as collecting and burning the weapons of the defeated enemy for firewood and burying the corpses to cleanse the land.
- **What is the theological significance of the defeat of Gog and Magog, according to Ezekiel 38 and 39?** The defeat of Gog and Magog serves several theological purposes: It demonstrates God's power and holiness to the nations, reaffirming His ability to protect His people and fulfill His promises. It re-establishes God's holy name, which had been profaned during the exile. Finally, it underscores the security and restoration of Israel, fulfilling the prophecies of return and promising a future where God will never again hide His face from them. This is all done for God's name, God's glory.