

Ezekiel 38 & 39

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CHAPTERS XXXVIII. XXXIX.

THE ASSAULT OF GOG, AND HIS DESTRUCTION.

THE last portion of the prophecy, which began at chap. xxxvii., stretches through these two next chapters, which properly form but one piece. It is one of the most remarkable predictions in the book of Ezekiel; and before offering any remarks on its general purport and design, we shall present an exact translation of the whole, with such explanatory notes as may be needed to elucidate the meaning, that the subject in its entire compass may be distinctly in view.

Chap. xxxviii. Ver. 1. And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against Gog, of the land of Magog,¹ prince of Rosh (or Rhos),² Meshech, and Tubal; and prophesy upon him; 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I am against thee, Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal: 4. And I make thee turn back,³ and

¹ The name Magog occurs only once elsewhere in the Old Testament, at Gen. x. 2, among the sons of Japheth; and according to the principles on which the genealogical tables are there constructed, it must be regarded as the name of a land and people, belonging to a branch of Japheth's posterity. The syllable *Ma*, which in Coptic bears the meaning of *place* (in the Sauscrit, also, *Mahá* signifies earth or land), was probably regarded as having respect to the territory; so that Gog would naturally denote the people, or the head who represented both land and people. Gog is clearly a name formed by the prophet from Magog—a representative name, intended to designate the political head of the region. With a like freedom, Gog and Magog are in Rev. xx. used as the names of two separate people.

² The two words $\text{רֹשׁ} \text{ מֶשֶׁח}$ are, with various ancient and some modern authorities, connected together in our common version, and rendered *chief prince*. Ewald adheres to this view, on the ground that no people are known in the Bible by the name of Rosh; so also does Ilengstenberg on Rev. xx. 7—he regards Gog as having Magog for his original kingdom, though he had also acquired the mastery over Meshech and Tubal, and so might be called their “chief prince.” It is certainly possible. But Hitzig justly objects, on the other side, that an epithet formed by the junction of these two words is nowhere else known in the Bible; and that the full title, if it were simply a compound title, should be so formally repeated three several times (ver. 2, 3, xxxix. 1) is rather improbable. Besides, traces have been found of a northern people anciently bearing such a name. The passage especially of Tzetzes, in Gallæus ad Orac. Sibyl. p. 391, quoted by Haver-nick, in which the Tauri are expressly called $\text{Ῥῶς} \text{ ἑδὴλασσα} \text{ Ταύρους} \text{ τοῦς} \text{ Ρῶς} \text{ ἀναίτθαι}$, is a strong proof. Bochart, also (Paleg. iii. 13), has shown that the Araxes had the name of Rhos, rendering it probable that the people in the neighbourhood were called by the same name. There is hence great probability in the opinion, that the people referred to were the Russi, from whom the modern Russians derive their name. The other two names connected with them, Meshech and Tubal, are the Moschi and Tibareni, inhabitants of the regions about Caucasus. The Moschi seem to have formed the chief population in Cappadocia down to classical times, and gave it much of its well-known rough and semi-barbarous character. The Tibareni were their neighbours, and in profane history also are often joined with them; but their territory is not well ascertained (see Rawlinson's Herod. iv. p. 222-24). So that the people mentioned are northern tribes; and Jerome gives it as the opinion of the Jews in his day, that Magog was a general name for the numberless Scythian tribes.

³ The usual meaning of the verb suits well enough here, if only it is understood that the aspect under which Gog is contemplated by the prophet

put hooks into thy jaws, and lead thee forth, and all thy host, horses and horsemen, clothed in complete armour all of them, a great multitude, with buckler and shield, all of them handling swords: 5. Persia, Ethiopia, and Phut, with them—all with shield and helmet: 6. Gomer, and all his hordes; the house of Togarmah in the extreme north, and all his hordes; many nations with thee.¹ 7. Be prepared and hold thyself ready, thou and all thy multitude that are gathered around thee, and be thou a guard (or commander) to them. 8. After many days thou gettest the command; at the end of the years thou dost come to a land withdrawn from the sword (a people), gathered out of many nations, upon the mountains of Israel which were perpetually desolate; and they were brought forth from the heathen, and dwelt all securely.² 9. And thou dost go up, as a tempest wilt thou come, as a cloud to cover the land shalt thou be, thou and all thy hordes, and many people with thee. 10. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, And it shall come to pass in that day, that words come up into thy heart, and thou dost imagine an evil device: 11. And thou shalt say, "I will go up into the land of villages; I will come upon the people at rest, who are dwelling securely, who dwell without walls, and have neither bars nor gates." 12. To make booty, and to carry off prey, to turn thine hand upon the now inhabited ruins, and on a people gathered from the nations, that

is that of an untamed, fractious wild beast, which thought only of taking its own way and pursuing its lawless career at pleasure, while God was going to direct events into such a channel as would draw it where destruction was sure to overtake it. He would turn it back, bend its lawless and ferocious energies into this one course, in which it must inevitably perish. In the parallel passage (Rev. xx.) the directing impulse is ascribed to the deceptive power of Satan, but to him, of course, as the mere instrumental agent: precisely as in 1 Chron. xxi. 1, where the temptation is ascribed to Satan, which in 2 Sam. xxiv. 1 is represented as coming from God in the exercise of his just displeasure.

¹ We must note respecting the nations that are mentioned as in league with Gog, and under his influence, their great distance from each other, as well as from Canaan. Not only have we the Scythian hordes, but the Persians also; the Ethiopians and Libyans of Africa; Gomer, or the Cimmerians of Crim Tartary; Togarmah, or the Armenians, and the multitudes beyond them that peopled the regions of the far north.

² The first clause in this verse has been very differently understood; most commonly, as in our version, made to express the destiny of Gog to punishment: thou art visited or chastised. But to make this sense the preposition לְ , with the person, would have been necessary: to visit upon one, to punish. Havernick supposes a reference to Isa. xxiv. 22, and renders: for a long time thou art missed; that is, regarded as a lost people, not heard of—a very unnatural idea, and founded on a very unusual sense. I greatly prefer the rendering of De Wette, Rosen., Hitzig: after a long time thou art made leader, or gettest the command. The verb certainly has this sense in Jer. xv. 3, Neh. vii. 1, xii. 44. It was not to be immediately; a long period was to elapse before the assault, headed by Gog, was to take place; but when the time came, he should have the leadership, and everything would seem favourable—the land against which they came apparently an

prophecy in the Apocalypse has exactly the same compass as in Ezekiel. It plainly, indeed, has not. Ezekiel contemplates the great conflict in a more general light, as what was certainly to be connected with the times of Messiah, and should come then to its last decisive issues. John, on the other hand, writing from the commencement of the Messiah's times, breaks up these into distinct portions (how far successive or contemporaneous, we pretend not to say), and giving the vision respecting Gog and his forces the same relative place that it had in the visions of Ezekiel, he describes under it the last struggles and victories of the cause of Christ. In each case alike the vision is appropriated to describe the final workings of the world's evil, and its results in connection with the kingdom of God: only, the starting-point is placed farther in advance in the one case than in the other. Therefore, as found in Ezekiel, it can throw no light on the chronological arrangement of the Apocalypse.

ceeding since Christ, the new David, came to lay the everlasting foundations of his kingdom, and asserted his claim to the dominion of the earth as his purchased possession. Every stroke that has been dealt since against the idolatry and corruption of the world, is a part of that great conflict which the prophet in vision saw collected as into a single locality and accomplished in a moment of time. He would thus more clearly assure us of the certainty of the result. And though, from the vast extent of the field and the many imperfections that still cleave to the Church, there may be much delay and many partial reverses experienced in the process,—though there may, too, at particular times be more desperate struggles than usual between the powers of evil in the world and the confessors of the truth, when the controversy assumes a gigantic aspect,—yet the prophecy is at all times proceeding onwards in its accomplishment. Let the Church, therefore, do her part, and be faithful to her calling; let her grasp with a firm hand the banner of truth, and in all lands display it in the name of her risen Lord. And whichever way he may choose to finish and consummate the process,—whether by giving fresh impulses to the hearts of his people, and more signally blessing the work of their hands, or by shining forth in visible manifestations of his power and glory, such as may at once and for ever shame into confusion the adversaries of his cause and kingdom,—leaving this to himself, to whom it properly belongs, let the blessed hope of a triumphant issue animate every Christian bosom and nerve every Christian arm to maintain the conflict, and do all that zeal and love can accomplish to hasten forward the final result.

In the preceding remarks we have deemed it unnecessary to take any special notice of such interpretations as seek the accomplishment of the prophecy in particular and partial occurrences of the past: for example, the conflicts of the Maccabees with Antiochus (Grotius, Dathe, Jahn), the invasion and overthrow of the Chaldeans (Ewald), the temporary successes and destined overthrow of the Turks (Luther). All such interpretations are obviously unsatisfactory and inadequate. And we simply add, further, in case of misapprehension, that while we have no hesitation in regarding the vision respecting Gog and Magog in the Apocalypse to be in substance a re-announcement of the prophecy before us, it does not therefore follow that the

have gotten cattle and goods, who dwell in the heart (literally, navel) of the earth.¹ 13. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, and all her young lions, shall say to thee, "Art thou come to take spoil? to carry off booty hast thou gathered thy multitude? to bear away silver and gold? to take cattle and goods? to seize great spoil?"²

Ver. 14. Therefore prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Shalt thou not know in that day when my people Israel dwell securely? 15. And thou comest out of thy place from the extreme north, thou and many nations with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great assemblage, and a mighty force: 16. And thou comest up upon my people Israel like a cloud to cover the land: in the latter days shall it be; and I bring thee upon my land, that the nations may know me, when I sanctify myself on thee, Gog, before their eyes. 17. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Art thou he of whom I have spoken in the days of old, by the hand of my servants the prophets of Israel, that prophesied in those days—years, to bring thee upon them?³ 18. And it shall come to pass in that day, in the day that Gog comes upon the land of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah, mine anger shall rise up in my nose; 19. And in my zeal, in the fire of my

easy prey to their combined and numerous forces, unfortified, and its people dwelling in outward security, without any thought of the sword. The eye of flesh looked only to the want of visible defences, and perceived not the grand security—the invisible shield of Jehovah.

¹ The peculiar expression, "the navel of the earth," is very much the same in meaning as that used in chap. v. 5, where Israel was said to have been set in the midst of the nations. It does not denote, as was shown there, that Jerusalem, or Judea generally, was placed physically in the centre of the world; but that it occupied morally a central position, and one also in every respect advantageously situated for exerting a happy influence on the world. The expression here may include the two points—of a prominent position, and of great fulness of blessing; on both accounts fitted to awaken the envy of others. It is the same idea, though differently expressed, in Rev. xx. 9, where the combined forces are said to "compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city"—the city which was the object of special favour, and held the pre-eminent place.

² The people here represented as speaking thus to Gog and his company, were on his side rather than with the covenant-people. They are representatives of that portion of the world who, though they are not disposed to take any active part against the cause of God, are well pleased to see others do it. Their worldly feeling makes them disrelish the truth; and they are ready to cheer on those who would make a spoil of its defenders.

³ Gog and his warlike force are here identified with the enemies of whom former prophets have spoken, when they spake of the conflicts and troubles of the last days. Thinking of those prophecies—prophecies uttered long ago, and spread over many years—such, for example, as those recorded in Num. xxiv. 17-24, Isa. xiv. 28-32, xviii., etc., Joel iii., Dan. ii. 44, 45, etc.,—and seeing now in vision this last grand gathering of the powers of evil under Gog, the prophet asks whether it was not the same that had already so often been announced. It appeared now only in a new form, but the thing itself had been many times described by God's servants.

humanity. It is, as we showed, a *historical* parable, in which every feature is admirably chosen and pregnant with meaning, but all of an ideal and not a literal or prosaic kind. And what is the present vision, as now explained, but a *prophetic* parable, in which, again, every trait in the delineation is full of important meaning, only couched in the language of a symbolical representation? Surely we must concede to the prophet what we would never think of withholding from a mere literary author, that he has a right to employ his own method; and that the surest way of ascertaining this is to compare one part of his writings with another, so as to make the better known reflect light upon the less known—the delineations of the past upon the visions of the future.

At the same time let us not be understood as declaring for certain, that the delineation in this prophecy must have nothing to do with any particular crisis, or decisive moment, in the Church's history. It is perfectly possible that in this case, as in most others, there may be a culminating point, at which the spiritual controversy is to rise to a gigantic magnitude, and virtually range on either side all that is good and all that is evil in the world. It may be so; I see nothing against such a supposition in the nature of the prophecy, but, I must add, I see nothing conclusively for it. For when we look back to the other prophecy just referred to, we find the work of judgment represented as taking effect upon Tyre, precisely as if it were one individual that was concerned, and one brief period of his history; while still we know blow after blow was required, and even age after age, to carry forward and consummate the process. Perfectly similar, too, was the case of Babylon, as described in the 13th and 14th chapters of Isaiah; it seems as if almost one act were to do the whole, yet how many instruments had a hand in it! and over how many centuries was the work of destruction spread! We see no necessity in the form of the representation, or in the nature of things, why it should be otherwise here; none at least why a different mode of reaching the result should be expected as certain. We believe that as the judgment of Tyre began when the first breach was made in the walls by Nebuchadnezzar, and as the judgment of Babylon began when the Medes and Persians entered her two-leaved gates, so the controversy with Gog and his heathenish forces has been pro-

wrath I will speak. Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake over the land of Israel.¹ 20. So that before me the fishes of the sea quake, and the fowl of heaven, and the beasts of the field, and every creeping thing that creepeth on the ground, and all men that are upon the face of the ground; and the mountains are thrown down, and the craggy rocks fall, and every wall tumbles to the ground. 21. And I call for a sword against him to all my mountains, saith the Lord Jehovah; one sword shall be against another.² 22. And I will judge him through pestilence and blood; and a torrent of rain, and hailstones, fire, and brimstone, will I pour down on him and on his hordes, and on the many peoples that are with him. 23. And I will magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and make myself to be known before many nations; and they shall know that I am Jehovah. Chap. xxxix. 1. And thou, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I am against thee, Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal: 2. And I turn thee back, and guide thee,³ and lead thee up from the extreme north, and bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: 3. And I will dash thy bow out of thy left hand, and make thine arrows fall from thy right hand. 4. Upon the mountains of Israel shalt thou fall, and all thy hordes, and the nations that are with thee; to birds of prey of every kind, and beasts of the field I give thee for food. 5. Upon the open field shalt thou fall, for I have spoken, saith the Lord Jehovah. 6. And I send fire upon Magog, and upon the inhabitants of the sea-coasts in their security; and they shall know that I am Jehovah.⁴ 7. And my holy name I will manifest in the midst of my people Israel, and will not profane my holy name any more; and the heathen shall know that I Jehovah am the holy one in Israel. 8. Behold, it comes and is done,

¹ We find mention made of the earthquake also, though more briefly, in the parallel prophecy of Joel iii. 16; also Isa. xxix. 6. In Rev. xx. 9, the external form differs; there is no earthquake, but fire is said to come down from heaven to consume the adversaries, as here also in ver. 22.

² There can be no doubt that this is the proper rendering of the original in this clause; and the translation in the Authorized Version—every man's sword shall be against his brother—suggests a wrong idea, as if the enemies were to turn and fight against each other. The meaning simply is, that God would meet sword with sword; for the sword of the adversary he would provide a brother sword, a fellow, in the hand of his people.

³ In this rendering of גִּיּוּרֶיךָ, we have the substantial agreement of the ancient translators, who concur in ascribing to it the sense of leading or guiding in some respect; occasionally of leading wrong, decoying. The connection plainly requires some such meaning, and though there is no direct confirmation, there are not wanting analogies to support it, as Hävernack has shown. The rendering, "I will leave but the sixth part of thee," and some others of a like nature, are justly exploded.

⁴ From the mention of Magog here, we are not to identify it with Gog; it refers, as before, to the Scythian territory, including the people who occupy it. The anger of God first flames out against the Scythian host, who came against the covenant-people; but it does not stop there, it goes forth in judgment against all belonging to them, and consumes the adversaries out of the earth, wherever they may be found: the Scythians at home, and all of like mind and temper with them.

saith the Lord Jehovah; this is the day of which I have spoken. 9. And the inhabitants of the cities of Israel shall go forth and kindle a flame, and make a fire with the armour, both the shields and the bucklers, bows and arrows, handstaves and spears, and keep a fire burning with them seven years.¹ 10. And they shall take no wood from the field, nor cut it in the forests; for with armour they will make the fire burn, and spoil their spoilers, and plunder their plunderers, saith the Lord Jehovah. 11. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give to Gog a place there for a grave in Israel,—the valley of the passers-through eastward of the sea,² and it shall stop the passers-through; and they shall bury there Gog and all his multitude, and they shall call it the Valley of Hamon-gog (Gog's multitude). 12. And the house of Israel will be burying them seven months, that the land may be purified. 13. And all the people of the land shall bury, and it shall be to them for a renown, at the time I glorify myself, saith the Lord Jehovah. 14. And they shall choose out set men, journeyers through the land, who may bury the passers-through, those that were left upon the face of the land, to purify it; at the end of seven weeks they shall make search. 15. When the journeyers through the land pass on, and see a man's skeleton, then one shall set up a mark beside it,

¹ The burning of the armour here mentioned has nothing to do with any ancient custom, but was evidently introduced for the purpose of conveying the idea that no remnant should be left of the great conflict to pollute the land; the very weapons of the enemy should be utterly consumed. The *seven years* points to the sacredness and completeness of the number *seven*. It was a great work getting the land thoroughly cleansed from all the implements of heathenism, and the people would not rest till the whole was accomplished. How different from the ancient Israelites, who, because they were themselves so imperfectly purified, were content to let, not the implements merely, but the persons of the heathen remain among them! The action here, therefore, is a sign of the people's zeal for purity.

² The idea of Hitzig respecting this valley scarcely deserves being mentioned, except as a specimen of the ridiculous. He thinks it should be understood to be the valley of the opposite heights, and supposes it to refer to the valley in Zech. xiv. 4, formed by the cleaving asunder of Mount Olivet, a burying-ground for Gog's army! That the prophet thought of a valley for such a purpose, arose, we should fancy, from the vast numbers it was to receive; nothing but a deep valley would be sufficient to contain such a mass of dead bodies. He lays it to the east of the sea, by which we naturally understand the Dead Sea, the memorial of one of God's earliest and greatest judgments; so that the final resting-place of those last sinners would be close beside that of their ancient prototypes, the guilty inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. And he calls it first, more generally, the valley of the passers-through, ironically, because the persons buried in it had only intended to pass through the land and return again after they had made all their own, though here they found an effectual stop put to their proceedings; and then, more definitely, the valley of Hamon-gog. The *stopping* is to be taken in reference, not to the noses, but to the persons of the enemies. So Cocceus, in his *Lex.*: *Et ea (detinet) frænat transeuntes; habenam injicit transeuntibus.*

play on either side, victory must inevitably have been with those whose numbers were so overwhelmingly great. But these being only flesh, and not spirit, they must fall before the omnipotent energy of the living God, who can make his people more than conquerors over all that is against them. And so in this mighty conflict, in which all that the powers of darkness could muster from the world was to stand, as it were, front to front with the people of God, there were to be found remaining only, on the part of the adversaries, the signs of defeat and ruin. 4. Lastly, as all originated in the claim of Messiah and his truth to the entire possession of the world, so the whole is represented as ending in the complete establishment of the claim. The kingdom through every region of the earth becomes the Lord's. He is now universally known and sanctified as the God of truth and holiness. It is understood at last that it was his zeal for the interests of righteousness which led him to chastise in former times his own professing people; and that the same now has induced him to render them triumphant over every form and agency of evil. And now, all counter rule and authority being put down, all disturbing elements finally hushed to rest, the prospect stretches out before the Church of eternal peace and blessedness, in what have at length become the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

It may still, perhaps, seem strange to some, if this be the real meaning and import of the vision, that the prophet should have presented it under the aspect of a single individual, gathering immense forces from particular regions, and at the head of these fighting in single conflict, and falling on the land of Israel. They may feel it difficult to believe that a form so concrete and fully developed should have been adopted, if nothing more local and specific had been intended. But let such persons look back to other portions of this Book, especially to what is written of the king of Tyre in chap. xxviii. (which in form, perhaps, most nearly resembles the prophecy before us), and judge from the shape and aspect there given to the past, whether it is not in perfect accordance with the ascertained characteristics of Ezekiel's style, to find him giving here such a detailed and fleshly appearance to the future. There Tyre is not only viewed as personified in her political head, but that head is represented as passing through all the experiences of the best and highest of

Such is the general course and issue of things as marked out in this prophecy, under the form and aspect of what belonged to the old covenant, and its relation to the world as then existing. But, stripping the vision of this merely temporary and imperfect exterior, since now the higher objects and relations of the new covenant have come, we find in the prophecy the following series of important and salutary truths. 1. In the first place, while the appearance of the new David to take the rule and presidency over God's heritage would have the effect of setting his people free from the old troubles and dangers which had hitherto assailed them, and laying sure and broad the foundations of their peace, it should be very far from securing them against all future conflicts with evil; it would rather tend to call up other adversaries, and enlarge the field of conflict, so as to make it embrace the most distant and barbarous regions of the earth. For the whole earth is Christ's heritage, and sooner or later it must come to an issue between the adherents of his cause and the children of error and corruption. Though the latter might have no thought of interfering with the affairs of Christ's kingdom, and would rather wish to pursue their own courses undisturbed (see on xxxviii. 4), yet the Lord will not permit them to do so. He must bring the light of heaven into contact with their darkness; so as to necessitate a trial of strength between the powers of evil working in them, and the truth and grace of God as displayed in the kingdom of Christ. 2. From the very nature of the case, this trial would fall to be made on a very large scale, and with most gigantic resources; for the battlefield now is the world to its farthest extremities; and the question to be practically determined is, whether God's truth or man's sin is to have possession of the field? So that all preceding contests should appear small, and vanish out of sight, in comparison of this last great struggle, in which the world's destiny was to be decided for good or evil. Hence it seemed in the distance as if not thousands, as formerly, but myriads upon myriads, numbers without number, were to stand here in battle array. 3. Though the odds in this conflict could not but appear beforehand very great against the people and cause of Christ, yet the result should be entirely on their side; and simply because with them is the truth and the might of Jehovah. Had it been only carnal resources that were to be brought into

until the buriers bury it in the valley of Hamon-gog.¹ 16. And also there shall be the name of a city, Hamonah,² and they shall purify the land.

17. And thou, son of man, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Say to birds of every kind, and to all the beasts of the field, Assemble yourselves and come, gather yourselves from every side for my sacrifice, which I sacrifice for you, a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel; and ye shall eat flesh and drink blood. 18. The flesh of heroes shall ye eat, and the blood of princes of the earth ye shall drink, of rams, lambs, and he-goats, bullocks, all of them fattings of Bashan. 19. And ye shall eat fat to the full, and drink blood till ye are drunken of my sacrifice which I sacrifice to you.³ 20. And ye shall be filled at my table with horses and riders,⁴ with heroes and all men of war, saith the Lord Jehovah. 21. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment which I execute, and my hand which I lay on them. 22. And the house of Israel shall know that I am Jehovah their God from that day and henceforth. 23. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel were carried captive for their iniquities, because they transgressed against me, and I hid my face from them, and gave them up into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. 24. According to their impurities and their transgressions I did to them, and hid my face from them. 25. Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Now will I turn again the captivity of Jacob,

¹ The process described in vers. 12-15, is the following:—The whole people of the land are engaged burying the corpses in the grave-valley for seven months (the *seven*, as before, the symbol of sacredness and completeness); then, at the end of the seven months, persons are selected to the special and regular work (for such is the force of *תְּקַיֵּן*) of going through the land to search everywhere for the skeletons of those who might still have been left—the stragglers of the great host. And when they found any such skeletons, they were to set up a mark, that the buriers might go and fetch them to the proper burying-ground. The whole denotes the minute care and business-like alacrity with which the work of purification should be gone about, that every remnant of heathenish impurity might be extirpated.

² The thought here is, that an additional memorial of the transaction was to be found in the erection of a city near, called Hamonah (multitude). Pointing *עַם*; and so rendering: "And also there is a city Hamonah," makes fully a better sentence, but leaves the meaning essentially the same.

³ The representation of a great sacrifice of slain victims lying exposed on the face of the earth, and ready to afford a repast for the beasts of the field and birds of prey, is found also elsewhere: in Isa. xviii. 6 (in chap. xxxiv. 6, there is the representation of a great sacrifice in Idumea, though nothing is said of an invitation to the wild beasts and birds of prey), Zeph. i. 7, Rev. xix. 17, 18. Here it occupies only a secondary place, and hence it is mentioned last, though in point of order it rather belonged to the immediate results of the battle.

⁴ The ordinary sense of *רַכָּב* will manifestly not suit here, as *chariots* are entirely out of place in a feast. But the word is used in the sense of horse-men, or cavalry, in Isa. xxi. 7, also in 2 Kings ix. 17, though the Masorites have there used a different pointing. Ewald accordingly translates: riders; as did also the Sept., Vulgate, Syriac, Capellus, etc.

and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and am zealous for my holy name. 26. And they shall forget their shame,¹ and all their transgressions wherein they transgressed against me, when they dwell upon their land securely, and there is none to make them afraid. 27. When I bring them back from the peoples, and gather them from the lands of their enemies, and am sanctified in them before many nations. 28. And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, in that I banished them to the heathen, and gather them to their own land, and no longer desert them there. 29. And I shall not hide my face any more from them, I who have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.

Now, with this remarkable prophecy fully before us, let us ask how it is as a whole to be explained and understood. Are we to regard it as simply an anticipated history of transactions that were to take place precisely in the form and manner here described; or rather as an ideal delineation of what, as to the substance, might certainly be expected to happen, though possibly under aspects and relations widely different from those to be found in the prophet's description? For a satisfactory answer to this question we must look especially to the leading features of the description itself.

1. And the first thing that strikes us there is the name given to the leader of the hostile party—Gog. From the very mode of its formation this discovers itself at once as an ideal name; it is simply the root of Magog, the only related name known to history. And this Magog is itself the name of a very indefinite territory and people, as appears not only from the want of any express landmarks connected with them here or elsewhere, but also from the parties most closely associated with Gog, as his natural and proper subjects. Of the land of Magog, he is also the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal—tribes that seem to have been contiguous in territory, as they were probably also related in their origin, but which were never, that we know of, actually

¹ קָשׁוּ אֶת־רַגְלֵיהֶם, but pointing קָשׁוּ, so as to obtain the sense of forgetting. The expression of bearing one's iniquity is always used (as was shown on chap. iv.) of suffering the punishment due to it. But that is quite out of place here, where the people are expressly said to have escaped from all the consequences of their sins. Nor will it do, with Ewald and Hävernick, to point to such passages as chap. xx. 43, xxxvi. 31, where, after their conversion, the people are said to remember their iniquities. These passages refer to the nearer results of their conversion; this here to the more remote. They would at first be deeply conscious of their sins, and bear the shame of them; but this could with no propriety be said after they were fully settled in the Divine favour and blessing.

only must it be formed of the materials of existing relations, but it must also be formed into a perspective with manifold and intricate details; yet so constructed and arranged, that while nothing but the most superficial eye could look for a literal realization, the great truths and prospects embodied in it should be patent to the view of all. What, then, are these? Let it be remembered at what point it is in Ezekiel's prospective exhibitions that this prophecy is brought in. He has already represented the covenant-people as recovered from all their existing troubles, and made victorious over all their surrounding enemies. The best in the past has again revived in their experience, freed even from its former imperfections, and secured against its ever-recurring evils. For the new David, the all-perfect and continually-abiding Shepherd, presides over them, and at once prevents the outbreaks of internal disorders, and shields them from the attacks of hostile neighbours. All around, therefore, is peace and quietness; the old enemies vanish from the field; Israel dwells securely in his habitation. But let it not be supposed that the conflict is over, and that the victory is finally won; it is a world-wide dominion which this David is destined to wield, and the kingdom of righteousness and peace established at the centre must expand and grow till it embrace the entire circumference of the globe. But will Satan yield his empire without a struggle? Will he not rather, when he sees the kingdom of God taking firmer root and rising to a higher elevation, seek to effect its dismemberment or its downfall, by stirring up in hostile array against it the multitudinous and gigantic forces that lie scattered in the extremities of the earth? Assuredly he will do so; and God also will direct events into this channel, in order to break effectually the power of the adversary, and secure the diffusion of Jehovah's truth and the glory of his name to the remotest regions. A conflict, therefore, must ensue between the embattled forces of heathenism, gathered out of their far-distant territories, and the nation that holds the truth of God. But the issue is certain. For God's people being now holiness to him, he cannot but fight with them and give success to their endeavours. So that the arm of heathenism shall be completely broken. Its mightiest efforts only end in the more signal display of its own weakness, as compared with the truth and cause of God; and the name of God as the Holy One of Israel is magnified and feared to the utmost bounds of the earth.

united into one kingdom, and have long since disappeared as distinct races. When, therefore, we find the prophet giving to the head of the great movement an ideal name, derived from a sort of indefinite, obscurely known territory, it is scarcely possible to avoid the impression at the outset, that the description is intended to possess an ideal, not a real character. 2. Another thing that presently comes into consideration is the singular combination of the party which this Gog is represented as heading. The nations mentioned are all selected from the distance—remote, in the first instance, from the land of Israel, in the extremities of the earth, and also many of them far apart from one another, and consequently the most unlike naturally to act in concert for any particular purpose. Beside the Scythian tribes, with whom the head of the movement was more immediately connected, there are the Persians, Armenians, the other inhabitants of the far north in Asia and Europe; and then, passing to the opposite extreme, and overleaping all the intermediate regions, he names the Ethiopians and Libyans of Africa,—the people, in short, occupying the most distant and remote territories of the then known world. The principle of assortment and union is evidently the very reverse of the natural one—not nearness, but remoteness of position, as well to the land of Israel as to the associated parties themselves. But this entire omission of the near, and conjunction only of the remote and distant, is so very peculiar a characteristic, and so contrary to all *real* combinations, that it is impossible to avoid thinking that here also we have but the clothing of an idea—not a literal reality, but the pictorial delineation of one. 3. Then the huge numbers of this combined party are to be taken into account, in connection with the object for which it was avowedly formed. According to the description, it was to be a marauding host, breaking in like a mighty inundation upon the land of Israel, and again departing after it had enriched itself with the spoil and booty there obtained (chap. xxxviii. 12, 13). That is, myriads of people were to be gathered from the most distant regions of the earth, combining and acting together against all the known principles of human nature: and for what? To spoil and plunder a land which could not, had they got all it contained, have been a handful to a tithe of their number—could not have served to maintain the invaders for a single day! One would think it is impossible

instead of the nobler weapons of her spiritual armour, and so losing infinitely more than she would gain by such a method of achieving her conquests. The spirit of prophecy never could intend by such delineations of the far-distant future to indicate so humiliating a result, or give birth to anticipations so directly opposed to the teaching of Christ; the less so, as it was Christ's Spirit that guided the prophets of the Old Testament in their prospective delineations (1 Pet. i. 11). And therefore, in addition to all the other impossibilities standing in the way of the literal interpretation of this vision, there is that which arises from the false and degrading position in which it would put the Church, sending her back, after she has attained to the spiritual light and privileges of the Gospel, to her old fleshly weapons and worldly entanglements.

Persons who in the face of all these considerations can still cling to the literal view of this prophecy, must be left to themselves; they must have principles of interpretation or grounds of conviction with which it is impossible to deal in the way of argument. Their views, also, respecting the position and calling of the Old Testament prophets, as to the revelation of the future, must be altogether erroneous. They must suppose that the object of these was to delineate beforehand, with historical exactness, the coming events of Providence; whereas it often consisted much more in disclosing how the great truths and principles of the Divine government should appear in the administration of the affairs of men. In doing this it was necessary for them to throw their delineations, even when referring to the last periods of time, into the form of existing relations and known circumstances—for such alone it was competent to them to use; but they could, and they did, sometimes use these in such strange assortments and grotesque combinations, as might in a sense compel thoughtful minds to look beyond the surface, and feel that in the things written they had but the form and drapery of what should be; that the reality itself lay deeper, and could meanwhile be but dimly apprehended. Such, certainly, is the manner in which the description of the prophet here ought from the first to have been understood. He was going, through the Spirit, to present a picture of what might be expected in the last scenes of the world's history; and according to the native bent and constitution of his mind, the picture must be lifelike. Not

one another; for the localities being different (as also many of the accompanying circumstances), they must either be ideal delineations under various aspects of what was to happen, or they are literal and contradictory descriptions. 6. Finally, pointing, as all these prophetic descriptions do, and the one before us in particular, to the latter ages of the world—to the times of the Messiah—the gross carnality of the representation in respect to God's dealing with the adversaries demands a non-literal interpretation. Under the old covenant, when the Church was still in its childhood, it was necessary to employ to a large extent the outward and material; carnal elements had a prominent place in the immediate service of God, and they could not fail to be much resorted to in the administration of the kingdom, so long as it had a political existence in the world. His people had then often to defend themselves with a carnal sword, and often in the successful exercise of this did God's power and goodness appear to his people. But the revelation of God in the person and work of Christ introduced an entire change in this respect. The *spiritual* element in the Divine character came thereby into fuller manifestation, and, as a necessary consequence, everything *carnal* fell into the background. Not that the Lord's people must therefore cease to operate upon the outward and material things around them, but that in doing so they must bring more into exercise the *higher* elements of power, and no longer lean upon the more gross and imperfect instruments of working. The carnal sword, in particular, must henceforth be sheathed, and weapons of violence for ever put aside. The glorious Head of the Church showed himself strong only in the truth of God, and conquered by suffering in its behalf. It was thus that he gained unspeakably the noblest victory recorded in the annals of time. And never would he permit his followers to entertain the thought of winning any triumphs over the ignorance and malice of the world, otherwise than by their standing like him in the truth of God, and holding it fast, even unto death. How, then, would such conflicts and victories as those described here, if literally understood, comport with this new and more elevated posture of affairs? Precisely as the imperfections of childhood with the higher developments of mature age. They would exhibit a Church again in bondage to the elements of the world, wielding the artillery of brute force

in such a case for the most aerial fancy to dream of literality; and when the prophet is spoken of as furnishing here a plain historical description, one is tempted to ask whether he is supposed to have written for the amusement of children or for the belief and instruction of persons of mature understanding? 4. This impression is still further increased when we look to the fruits of the victory. The wood of the adversaries' weapons was to serve for fuel to all Israel for seven years! and all Israel were to be employed for seven months in burying the dead! It would be but a very moderate allowance, on the literal supposition, to say that a million of men would thus be engaged, and that on an average each would consign two corpses to the tomb in one day; which, for the 180 working days of the seven months, would make an aggregate of 360,000,000 of corpses! Then the putrefaction, the pestilential vapours arising from such masses of slain victims before they were all buried! Who could live at such a time? It bids defiance to all the laws of nature, as well as the known principles of human action; and to insist on such a description being understood according to the letter, is to make it take rank with the most extravagant tales of romance, or the most absurd legends of Popery. 5. Further, on the ground of a literal description, there is the collateral consideration of its becoming utterly impossible to make out a prophetic harmony; the prophets in that case do not mutually confirm, but, on the contrary, oppose and contradict each other. Here the great controversy, which finally adjudges the cause of heathendom, is represented as taking issue on the mountains of Israel, and covering the whole land with the slain. In Isaiah xxxiv. we have, to all appearance, the same controversy—the controversy of the Lord's judgment upon Zion's adversaries, when his indignation was to be "upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies"—determined upon the mountains of Edom. In Joel, again, it takes place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, or the valley of decision (chap. iii. 12, 14); and in Zechariah (chap. xiv.) in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem, as also in the Apocalypse (chap. 20) around the camp of the saints and the beloved city. Thus we have three or four distinct localities, each represented as the scene of a last conflict, ending in a final triumph to the cause of God over the leagued hostility of the world. If held to be literal descriptions, they of course mutually destroy