

# Israeli gas find

## A nation at rest and dwelling safely?

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*Recent discoveries of large sources of gas off the coast of Israel are expected to make Israel an energy-independent country. It could herald the start of an increasing prosperity sufficient to interest a northern invader.*

**T**HE RECENT discovery of natural gas off the coast of Israel has been described as a “geopolitical game-changer” for the Jewish state.<sup>1</sup> These discoveries may indeed herald much greater economic wealth and national security for Israel in the near future. From prophecy we expect to see such prosperity and perceived security in Israel at the time when the northern invader descends into the Land.

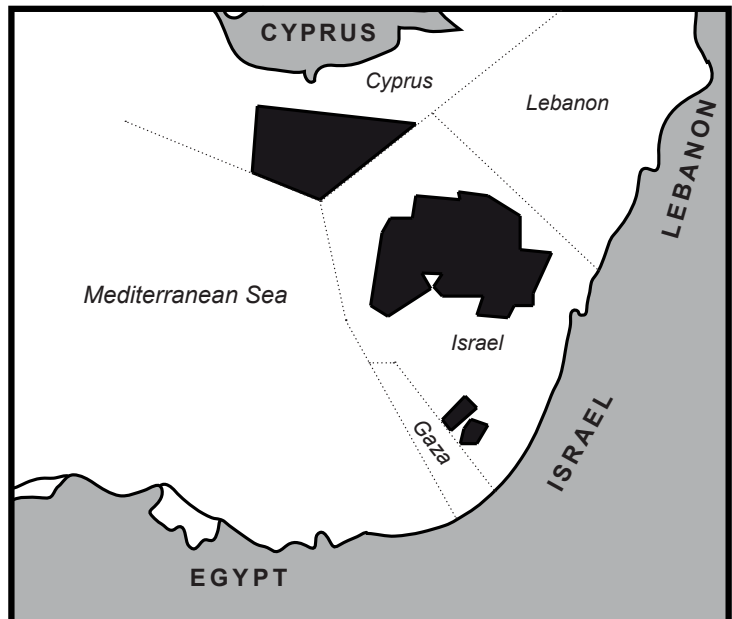
There have been two large offshore gas fields discovered so far, Tamar (which in 2009 was the world’s biggest gas discovery) and the larger Leviathan field announced in June of this year. Together these fields are estimated to hold around 690 billion cubic metres (bcm) of natural gas; and Israeli companies are continuing exploration in the eastern Mediterranean basin, expecting to find additional reserves.<sup>2</sup> In terms of global gas deposits these finds do not rival the reserves of the world’s great gas powers, but they are significant, especially to a small economy like Israel. To put it in perspective, the current estimated finds are more than twice the UK’s gas reserves, and could meet all the UK’s natural-gas demand for around seven years.<sup>3</sup>

The benefits to the Israeli economy are potentially huge, with the natural-gas reserves estimated to be worth around \$300 billion in revenue, or one-and-a-half times the gross domestic product of Israel. But perhaps most importantly, with the Tamar field reserves alone capable of supplying all of Israel’s

gas needs for the next three decades, the discoveries are likely to provide Israel with complete energy security and also turn it into an important natural-gas exporter through the development of the Leviathan field.

Upon confirmation of the gas reserves, Yitzhak Tshuva, who is the controlling shareholder of Delek Group, one of the Israeli companies involved in the gas exploration, said, “Today is a day of celebration for all of us. The State of Israel is an energy independent country”.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Haaretz*, 11 Jun. 2010.
2. Referring to initial interpretation of 2-D and 3-D seismic data, Noble Energy has estimated resource potential on its eastern Mediterranean sites to be in excess of 850 bcm of natural gas.
3. Total UK gas consumption is currently around 95 bcm per annum.
4. *Jerusalem Post*, 6 Apr. 2010, “Leviathan gas find spurts optimism”.



Natural gas fields so far known off the coast of Israel.

Only a few months ago, Israel looked set to remain heavily dependent on Egypt for its natural-gas supplies, having signed a twenty-year gas deal with Egypt in 2005. There had even been talk of Israel negotiating a deal to import natural gas from Russia and the Caspian Sea via Turkey, or perhaps importing liquefied gas from Qatar. But these options no longer need to be considered; instead, Israel is considering which foreign states would be viable consumers of its own gas, which could be on stream in only two or three years.

The manifold options available to an Israel that now has a cheap energy supply are demonstrated by some industry leaders suggesting that the natural gas could be used to power desalination plants that would provide a long-term solution to the increasingly desperate need for potable water in Israel.

These discoveries are already seen as so important to Israel's future that Israel's Minister of National Infrastructures, Uzi Landau, felt it necessary to state that Israel is willing to use force to protect the gas fields after the speaker of Lebanon's parliament said the fields extended into his nation's waters: "We will not hesitate to use our force and strength to protect not only the rule of law but the international maritime law", he said.<sup>5</sup>

A confident Israel feeling that it is secure and safe, able to flex its military muscle with impunity and independently develop an even stronger, even more prosperous economy, leads us to suggest that we may be witnessing the development of the prosperous state of affairs spoken of in Ezekiel 38. The northern invader is described as going up to those "that are at rest, that dwell safely" (v. 11) and seeking to take a spoil of those that "have gotten cattle and goods" (v. 12) and "silver and gold" (v. 13).

The unearthing of such critical natural resources is a reminder of how quickly the fortunes of a nation can change. Barely a year ago Israel was of necessity a long-term energy importer, dependent on its Arab neighbours, and now it has the potential to become a regional energy exporter for decades to come.

What other grand "geopolitical game-changers" might we observe in the little nation of Israel in the time remaining to us? Perhaps none. For we remind ourselves that we should not expect to see any further witness and signs among the nations before our Lord and Master returns. The household of faith has been blessed in great measure already with the clear and manifold witness of the hand of the Father directing the kingdom of men. Who can say if the Father, in expression of His longsuffering nature, will grant His servants more time?—but we should not and cannot expect it. Truly, we must consider that our Master is at the very doors.

"Where did the barbarians procure funds for the overthrow of the western empire in the fifth and sixth centuries? Did they not support themselves by the spoil? Let the Russian treasury be as empty as it is said to be, and its expenditure exceed its revenue by double the alleged deficit, it will only operate as a pressure from within, causing her Autocrat to 'enter into the countries and to overflow and pass over', and to enrich himself with the spoil of those he is destined to subdue".<sup>6</sup>

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5. Bloomberg, 24 Jun. 2010, "Landau says Israel could use force to shield gas find".
  6. Thomas, Dr. John, *Elpis Israel: An Exposition of the Kingdom of God*, electronic edition, Birmingham, UK, The Christadelphian, 1997.