

will be handed over to Russia and joint ventures set up between the two countries, as repayment for some 100 million US dollars worth of loans dating back to 1991".<sup>4</sup>

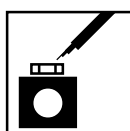
The report goes on to quote the Armenia newspaper *Aykakan Zhamanak* on 31 October 2001, which said: "Despite the Armenian authorities' claims that Russia is our strategic partner, it has become obvious that it is necessary to redefine Armenian-Russian relations in quite different terms. Russia is demanding the wholesale give-away of our assets instead of Armenia's debts. Except for Kocharian and Putin's handshakes and smiles, it is difficult to find evidence of anything 'strategic' in Armenian-Russian relations".

This assessment provides another aspect to the Russian influence in Armenia. We should not be surprised if such an assessment turns out to be right, for this exploitative characteristic of the latter-day Chaldean is spoken of by Habak-

kuk: "Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!" (2:5,6).

The relationship between Russia and countries such as Armenia is complex and changeable. However it is exciting to see that amidst all the ebb and flow of international affairs there are signs that the nations are developing in line with the expectations of Bible prophecy.

4. [http://iwpr.vs4.cerbertnet.co.uk/index.pl?archive/cau/cau\\_200110\\_104\\_1\\_eng.txt](http://iwpr.vs4.cerbertnet.co.uk/index.pl?archive/cau/cau_200110_104_1_eng.txt)



## Correspondence

Comments on articles appearing in the magazine are always welcome, and should be addressed to the editor in whose section the article appears.

### Israel's dwelling safely

The issue of whether or not Israel's 'dwelling safely' in Ezekiel 38 is true safety or misplaced confidence has been discussed in recent articles and correspondence ([Jul. 2001, p. 295](#); [Oct. 2001, p. 398](#)). As one correspondent pointed out, the Scriptures give occasions where the Hebrew word *betach* means the true security that comes from relying upon God, whilst at other times it means the self-confidence typical of humanity, which usually precedes disaster.

So how are we to determine which of these is the case for Israel in Ezekiel 38?—because the answer to this seems to be one of the keys to the debate as to whether the chapter is pre- or post-Christ's return. The apparently random use of the word *betach* in Scripture, upon closer examination (though with no more than a concordance) turns out to be anything but random.

The word *betach*, translated in the AV 'safe', 'safely', 'safety', 'security', 'careless', etc., is used twenty-four times of the nation of Israel, three of which are in Ezekiel 38. In every single instance

### Uses of *betach*

**Of Israel:** Leviticus 25:18,19; 26:5; Deuteronomy 12:10; 33:12,28; 1 Samuel 12:11; 1 Kings 4:25; Psalm 78:53; Isaiah 32:17; Jeremiah 23:6; 32:37; 33:16; Ezekiel 28:26 (twice); 34:25,27,28; 38:8,11,14; 39:26; Hosea 2:18; Zechariah 14:11. *All these instances refer to a true security.*

**Of Gentile nations:** Judges 8:11 (Midianites); 18:7 (Laish); Isaiah 47:8 (Babylon); Jeremiah 49:31 (Hazor); Ezekiel 30:9 (Ethiopians); 39:6 (the isles); Zephaniah 2:15 (Nineveh). *All these are instances of false security.*

**Of individuals:** Genesis 34:25; Job 11:18; 24:23; Psalm 4:8; 16:9; Proverbs 1:33; 3:23,29; 10:9; Isaiah 14:30; 32:9,11; Micah 2:8. *These are varied; some refer to a true, others to a false, sense of safety.*

outside of Ezekiel 38 it denotes the condition of Israel when they are serving God, either during the time of the Law or in the time of the Kingdom; that is, when used of Israel, *betach* exclusively indicates the true security and confidence that comes from serving and trusting in God.

In contrast to this, on the seven times when this word is used of Gentile nations it is exclusively used on occasions when the security is false, and disaster is about to come.

Finally, *betach* is used of individuals on about twelve occasions, and in these instances it is the attitude of the individual to God that determines whether or not the security is genuine or false.

I do not believe that God uses words randomly in Scripture, nor that this clear division between how the word is used of Israel and of the Gentiles is a coincidence, because the inspiration of the Scriptures does not leave room for coincidence. The clarity of the split in the usage of *betach* leads me to believe that the 'safety' in which Israel are said to live in Ezekiel 38 (mentioned three times for absolute emphasis) must be the same safety that we find them in on the other twenty-one occasions; that is, the security and confidence that comes from serving and trusting in their God.

I believe that we should also pay more attention to the surrounding context of Ezekiel 38 and 39, because the description of Israel's condition in 38:8-12 is one that has several clear links back to chapters 34, 36 and 37. For example, the idea of Israel dwelling safely is also used three times in chapter 34 (vv. 25,27,28), all in the context of the security which Israel will eventually enjoy in the Kingdom when "My servant David" is their shepherd (v. 23).

Similarly, the phrases "the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste" in 38:8 and "the desolate places that are now inhabited" in verse 12 find their parallel in chapter 36. In that chapter God comforts the "mountains of Israel" which are desolate, and tells Israel that their "cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded" (vv. 4,10,33). Again, this prophecy finds its complete fulfilment in the final return of Israel to their land and the blessings of the Kingdom—see verses 32-38 especially to confirm this.

And finally, Ezekiel 38 uses the language of a people returned to their land; in verse 8 the land is "gathered out of many people" and in verse 12 the people are "gathered out of the nations". This language comes straight out of chapter 37, where, after the dry bones vision and the two

sticks joining, God says in verse 21: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen [nations], whither they be gone, and will gather them . . . into their own land". This verse again comes in a passage which is clearly looking at the final regathering of Israel when Jesus has returned (see verses 21-28).

The phrases used to describe Israel in Ezekiel 38, therefore—their regathering out of the nations, their habitation of the wastes and the desolate cities, their prosperity and safety—come straight out of the preceding chapters in Ezekiel. And in every case, the image in those preceding chapters is one which finds its fulfilment at the return of Christ.

In summary, then, I have looked at how *betach* is used in Scripture and seen a very clear division between how it is used of Israel and how it is used of Gentile nations—surely not a coincidence. I have also considered the other phrases used in Ezekiel 38 to describe Israel, and how they are used in the preceding chapters of Ezekiel. Both these lines of investigation lead me to see Ezekiel 38 as describing an Israel that is truly safe, and enjoying blessings which it will only have when "My servant David" rules over the nation.

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## Jesus Christ and A.D. 70

With reference to Brother Russell Ebbs's response to my letter (Oct. 2001, p. 394), I am not arguing against the Lord God's judgement on unrepentant Israel, but I am opposing the notion that the Lord Jesus returned *invisibly* in A.D. 70 to lead the Roman armies against Jerusalem. May I comment on the scriptures he quotes?

**Daniel 9:25,26.** ". . . from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the *Messiah the Prince* shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks . . . And after threescore and two weeks shall *Messiah* be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of *the prince* that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary". Our brother assumes that "the prince" of verse 26 refers to "Messiah the Prince" of verse 25, but this may not be so. The 'anointed one' is Jesus Christ, who is cut off by his death upon the cross, but, in consequence of the cutting