

Little horn of the goat diplomacy in the Middle East

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This article considers the recent visit of President Putin to the Middle East. The Little Horn Prophecy of Daniel 8 and a passage in Daniel 11 relating to Antiochus IV Epiphanes are used to provide Scriptural insight to this visit.

IN DANIEL 8 it is written: “the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land” (vv. 8,9). The “little horn” represents the Roman power which was later to dominate the “pleasant land” of Israel.

Yet the little horn power will also be in existence when Christ returns, for “he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand” (v. 25). This power, operating to its “south” and “east”, will be a latter-day version of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. When Russia invades the Middle East, occupying *en route* what became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, Constantinople—modern Istanbul—it will then fully take on the mantle of the little horn.

In speaking of this power Daniel says: “And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many” (v. 25). This shows that the latter-day little horn power will use diplomacy as well as military might to achieve its ends. The visit in April 2005 by President Vladimir Putin to the Middle East has provided an example of the little horn power using diplomacy.

Russia and the Middle East

Mr Putin’s visit began in Egypt, where he held talks with President Hosni Mubarak. Topics covered included the Palestinian issue and the desire of Mr Putin to improve political and economic ties between Russia and Egypt, this being the first visit by a Russian president to Egypt for forty years. While in Egypt Mr Putin suggested that a



Russian President Vladimir Putin, who visited the Middle East in April 2005.

Photograph: NATO

Middle East peace conference should be held in Moscow later in the year. This was welcomed by the Palestinians, but was met with a cool response from Israel, the next country he visited.

There are already significant links between Russia and Israel. Most of the crude oil used by Israel is imported from Russia. Twenty per cent of Israelis are Russian speakers who emigrated from the former Soviet Union. Also, there have been joint ventures between the two countries with regard to the threat of international terrorism, including training. Indeed, one of the proposals to come out of this visit was that the two countries would set up a system to provide each other with instant notification of terrorist threats.

However, Israel is critical of Russia because of its intention to sell air-defence missiles to Syria. It is also concerned about the support Russia has given to Iran’s nuclear development. In addition to this, there are indications that anti-Semitism is increasing in Russia. Finally, for its part Russia would like to see certain Russian business tycoons, who are currently taking refuge in Israel, extradited to face criminal charges.

Mr Putin’s tour of the Middle East ended with a visit to the West Bank, where he met the Pales-

tinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas. Mr Putin made several specific and tangible proposals to the Palestinians. These included help to boost Gaza's economy. They also included help designed to aid the Palestinians fight terrorism. He stated: "We will give the Palestinian Authority technical help by sending equipment, and training people. We will give the Palestinian Authority helicopters and also communication equipment".¹

What can be concluded from Mr Putin's visit? From an Israeli perspective his visit was welcomed by some sections of the Israeli press. But perhaps a quotation of a security source in the Israeli newspaper *Maariv* captured the reality behind the visit: "Putin is playing a double game: he transmits sympathy on the one hand and helps Israel's enemies on the other".²

Certainly, the Palestinians felt that he was favouring them. The Palestinian newspaper *al-Ayyam* had the following statement: "Russia, dreamy Russia that always dreamt of access to warm waters, knows that its dream can materialize through a balance of interests with the United States and a Russian role in cooling down hot spots. Welcome to President Putin, a friend amongst Palestinian friends".³

As well as showing that the Palestinians are on the side of Russia, this quotation, in a quite startling way, almost reads as an invitation to Russia to move south into the Middle East. Prophecies such as Joel 3:5,6 and Obadiah vv. 11-14 show that Israel's neighbours will side with the Gogian invader. This newspaper quotation shows that the Palestinians will indeed welcome the Russians when they invade Israel.

If Mr Putin is in reality a friend of the Palestinians and is playing a "double game" with Israel then this would match some of the background to the words already quoted from Daniel 8.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes

The Hebrew words for "craft" and "peace" in Daniel 8:25 also occur in Daniel 11, where they are used of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This is helpful because we can therefore look at this historical character to learn about the latter-day Russian power.

In Daniel 11 we read:

"And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fa-

thers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time" (vv. 23,24).

These verses speak about Antiochus IV, the ruler of the northern Seleucid kingdom, when he invaded Egypt. This was something which his Seleucid predecessors had "not done". At that time Egypt was ruled by Ptolemy VI Philometor, who was in fact the nephew of Antiochus. The word "deceitfully" is the same Hebrew word translated "he shall cause craft" (8:25). Antiochus made a "league" with Philometor. But behind this lay crafty deceit. As one historian has written: "The young Ptolemy went to his uncle's camp where an agreement was reached, the contents of which are not known. Antiochus now posed as the protector of Philometor, all the while, as it is said, deceiving him in the most blatant fashion".⁴ Meanwhile he "peaceably" acquired spoils from Egypt.

Antiochus IV is an example of a king of the north who used deceit to achieve his end. This historical example helps us to understand what will happen in the latter days. When we see diplomatic moves being made by the latter-day little horn power we can expect him to "cause craft to prosper in his hand", just as Antiochus worked "deceitfully", deceiving Philometor in "the most blatant fashion".

Whilst it would be wrong, without supporting evidence, to say that the recent visit of Mr Putin was marked by such deceit, nevertheless Daniel 8 shows that this is how the little horn will operate at the time of the end. Furthermore, the fact that some are claiming he played a "double game" at least should make us mindful that the example of Antiochus IV may provide relevant insight into the way Russia is currently developing its influence in the Middle East.

Certainly, when Russia eventually invades Israel and Egypt, the talk of peace by President Putin when visiting these two countries will be seen in a new light.

1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4496273.stm.

2. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4493229.stm.

3. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4496745.stm.

4. Hölbl, G. (2001), *A history of the Ptolemaic Empire*, London, Routledge, p. 145.