

Israel's dwelling safely

I would like to make some comments regarding the article, "Another look at Ezekiel 38" ([Jul. 2001, p. 295](#)), in particular Israel's dwelling safely (Ezek. 38:8,11,14) and the timing of the Gogian invasion. There seems to have been a lot of confusion over the matter of when Israel dwells safely, especially when ex-president Bill Clinton's attempts at getting a peace agreement gave much false hope for this happening.

The word 'safely' in these verses is *betach*, and according to *Strong's Concordance* (983) it means 'a place of refuge', 'safety', 'confidence', 'hope', 'secure'. It is worth considering all the places where *betach* is used and how it is rendered. For example, in Leviticus 25:18,19; 26:5, dwelling safely is conditional on behaviour, and in Psalm 78:53 it refers to an historic occasion.

There are a lot of passages where the word is used of the situation when Christ is King, and Judah and Israel, having been converted, are dwelling safely in the land (Jer. 23:6; 32:37; 33:16; Ezek. 28:26; 34:25-28; 39:26; Hos. 2:18; Zech. 14:11). Ezekiel 38:8,11,14 does not fit this pattern, and, whatever we like to think about Ezekiel 38, our interpretation must not contradict what is written in the above references.

However, we also have a number of verses where *betach*, or its related verb *batach*, are rendered 'careless', 'carelessly' or 'secure':

Judges 18:7,10,27. In Laish the people dwelt carelessly or securely and were attacked by Dan without provocation.

Isaiah 47:8. "The lady of kingdoms" (v. 5) was living carelessly, but in "one day" (v. 9) she suffered loss of children and widowhood.

Jeremiah 49:31. Hazor was dwelling "without care" until it was attacked by Nebuchadnezzar. Compare the wording here with Ezekiel 38:11,12.

Ezekiel 30:9. The Ethiopians are careless, then great pain comes upon them.

Ezekiel 39:6. Those who "dwell carelessly in the isles" are punished by fire.

Zephaniah 2:15. Nineveh dwelt carelessly and was destroyed.

In every instance where the people dwelt carelessly it was followed by destruction or calamity. So, from the foregoing, *betach* in Ezekiel 38 could be translated 'carelessly', thus eliminating much of the uncertainty as to the timing of the Gogian invasion in relation to the Lord's return.

Keith Worthington
Pinetown, South Africa