*"Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the
prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him."*
—Ezekiel 38:2

Fifth, the most impressive evidence in favor of taking Rosh as a proper name is simply that this translation is the most accurate. G. A. Cooke, a Hebrew scholar, translates Ezekiel 38:2, "the chief of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal." He calls this "the most natural way of rendering the Hebrew."[1] Why is it the most natural way of rendering the Hebrew? *Rosh* appears in construct form in the Hebrew with Meshech and Tubal meaning that the grammar forms a list of three nouns. Some want to say that *rosh* is a noun functioning as an adjective since there should be an "and" if it were intended to be a list of three nouns. The same exact Hebrew construction appears in Ezekiel 38:5, as well as 27:13 and these are clearly recognized as a list of three nouns by grammarians even though "and" does not appear in either list. Normal Hebrew and Arabic grammar supports *rosh* as a noun (see also 38:3 and 39:1). Actually, Hebrew grammar demands that *rosh* be taken as a noun. No example of Hebrew grammar has ever been cited that would support taking *rosh* as an adjective. Instead, in Hebrew grammar one cannot break up the construct chain of the three nouns that have this kind of grammatical arrangement.[2] Hebrew scholar Randall Price says, "on linguistic and historical grounds, the case for taking *Rosh* as a proper noun rather than a noun-adjective is substantial and persuasive."[3]

In light of such overwhelming evidence, it is not surprising that Hebrew scholar James Price concludes the following:

> It has been demonstrated that *Rosh* was a well-known place in antiquity as evidenced by numerous and varied references in the ancient literature. It has also been demonstrated that an adjective intervening between a construct noun and its *nomen rectum* is highly improbable, there being no unambiguous example of such in the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that regarding *Rosh* as a name is in harmony with normal Hebrew grammar and syntax. It is concluded that *Rosh* cannot be an adjective in Ezekiel 38–39, but must be a name. Therefore, the only appropriate translation of the phrase in Ezek 38:2, 3, and 39:1 is "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal."[4]

Clyde Billington says, "the features of Hebrew grammar . . . dictate that Rosh be translated as a proper noun and not as an adjective, . . . It should, however, be noted that the grammatical arguments for the translation of 'Rosh' as a proper noun in Ezekiel 38–39 are conclusive and not really open for serious debate."[5] What would Gary DeMar say about such evidence? I do not know, since I have never seen him address these arguments. DeMar is merely prone to making dogmatic statements to the contrary based upon no real evidence for his position.

Therefore, having established that *Rosh* should be taken as a proper name of a geographical area, the next task is to determine what geographical location is in view.

HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL SUPPORT FOR ROSH AS RUSSIA

Clyde Billington has written a series of three scholarly articles in a theological journal presenting extensive historical, geographical and toponymic[6] evidence for why Rosh should be and is traced to the Russian people of today.[7] He interacts with the leading commentaries and authorities of the day in his research and presentation. Billington notes, "it is also clear that Jerome, in deciding to translate Rosh as an adjective rather than a proper noun, based his decision on a nongrammatical argument, i.e. that a people called the Rosh are not mentioned either in the Bible or by Josephus."[8] However, there is considerable historical evidence that a place known as Rosh was very familiar in the ancient world. While the word appears in a multitude of various languages, which have a variety of forms and spellings, it is clear that the same people are in view.

It is very likely that the name Rosh is actually derived from the name Tiras in Genesis 10:2 in the Table of Nations. Billington notes the Akkadian tendency to drop or to change an initial "t" sound in a name especially if the initial "t" was followed by an "r" sound. If you drop the initial "T" from Tiras you are left with "ras."[9] It makes sense for Ras or Rosh to be listed in Genesis 10 since all the other nations in Ezekiel 38:1-6 are also listed there. This means Jerome's claim that Rosh did not appear in the Bible or in Josephus is erroneous. Since Tiras and his descendants apparently are the same as the later Rosh people, then Rosh does appear in both the Table of Nations and Josephus.

Rosh (Rash) is identified as a place that existed as early as 2600 B.C. in Egyptian inscriptions. There is a later Egyptian inscription from about 1500 B.C. that refers to a land called Reshu that was located to the north of Egypt.[10] The place name Rosh (or its equivalent in the respective languages) is found at least twenty times in other ancient documents. It is found three times in the Septuagint (LXX), ten times in Sargon's inscriptions, once in Assurbanipal's cylinder, once in Sennacherib's annals, and five times in Ugaritic tablets.[11] Billington traces the Rosh people from the earliest times in recorded history up to the days of Ezekiel, as they appear multiple times throughout this historical period.[12]

Clearly, Rosh or Tiras was a well-known place in Ezekiel's day. In the sixth century B.C., the time Ezekiel wrote his prophecy, several bands of the Rosh people lived in an area to the north of the Black Sea. As we approach the eighth century, Billington cites a number of historical references showing that "there is solid evidence linking one group of Rosh People to the Caucasus Mountains."[13] From the same general period of time, Billington notes: "There is even one cuneiform document from the reign of the Assyrian King Sargon II (ruled 722-705 B.C.) which actually names all three peoples [Rosh, Meshech, Tubal] mentioned by Ezekiel 38–39."[14] Billington concludes this section of his historical studies as follows:

> Therefore, there is irrefutable historical evidence for the existence of a people named Rosh/Rashu in 9th-7th century B.C. Assyrian sources. These same Assyrian sources also mention Meshech and Tubal whose names appear in conjunction with the name Rosh in Ezekiel 38–39. Clearly the Assyrians knew of the Rosh people, and so also did the prophet Ezekiel. It should be noted that Ezekiel wrote the Book of Ezekiel only about a 100 years later than extant Assyrian texts which mention the Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal peoples.[15]

DOES THE NAME RUSSIA COME FROM ROSH?

The ancient Rosh people, who have been traced back to Tiras, a son of Japheth (Gen. 10:2), who migrated to the Caucasus Mountains in Southern Russia, are one of the genetic sources of the modern Russians of today. However, does the name for Russia come from the Biblical word Rosh as used in Ezekiel 38:2? We have seen that Marvin Pate and Daniel Hays have said categorically, "The biblical term rosh has nothing to do with Russia."[16] Their statement is typical of the sentiment of many critics today. But is such a conclusion where the evidence leads? I do not think so! Here's why.

First, we need to know that the Hebrew Old Testament was translated some time in the third century B.C. and it is known as the Septuagint (LXX is the abbreviation). The Septuagint translates the Hebrew word Rosh in all its uses by the Greek word "Ros" or "Rhos." The early church more often than not used the Septuagint as their primary Old Testament. It is still used in the Greek speaking world today as their translation of the Old Testament. Billington tells us: "early Greek Orthodox writers, using the LXX's spelling [Ros] of the name Rosh, identified the Rosh people of Ezekiel chs. 38–39 with the northern Rus people of Russia and the Ukraine."[17] These people would be ones that lived near, but north of the Greek speaking peoples. Such close proximity would mean that they would have been clear in whom they were identifying and they identified them with the Rosh people. Maranatha!

(To Be Continued . . .)

ENDNOTES

[1] G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, The International Critical Commentary, ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936), pp. 408-09. John B. Taylor agrees. He says, "If a place-name *Rosh* could be vouched for, RV's *prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal* would be the best translation" John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction & Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, gen. ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-varsity Press, 1969), p, 244. Therefore, this is the superior translation. For an extensive, thorough presentation of the grammatical and philological support for taking Rosh as a place name, see, James D. Price, "Rosh: An Ancient Land Known to Ezekiel," *Grace Theological Journal* 6:1 (1985), pp. 67-89.

[2] Grammatical summary derived from Jon Mark Ruthven, *The Prophecy That Is Shaping History: New Research on Ezekiel's Vision of the End* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2003), pp. 21–23.

[3] Randall Price, "Ezekiel" in Tim LaHaye & Ed Hindson, editors, *The Popular Bible Prophecy Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007), p. 190.

[4] Price, "Rosh: An Ancient Land," pp. 88–89.

[5] Clyde E. Billington, Jr. "The Rosh People in History and Prophecy," (Part One), *Michigan Theological Journal 3*:1 (Spring 1992), p. 56.

[6] Toponymic means the study of place names.

[7] Billington, "The Rosh People," (Part One), pp. 55–65; Clyde E. Billington, Jr., "The Rosh People in History and Prophecy (Part Two)," *Michigan Theological Journal 3*:2 (Fall 1992), pp. 144–75; Clyde E. Billington, Jr., "The Rosh People in History and Prophecy (Part Three)," *Michigan Theological Journal 4:1* (Spring 1993), pp. 36–63.

[8] Billington, "The Rosh People," (Part One), p. 56.

[9] Billington, "The Rosh People," (Part Two), pp. 166-67.

[10] Billington, "The Rosh People," (Part Two), pp. 145-46.

[11] Price, "Rosh: An Ancient Land," pp. 71-73.

[12] Billington, "The Rosh People," (Part Two), pp. 143-59.

[13] Billington, "The Rosh People," (Part Two), p. 170.

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[14] Billington, "The Rosh People," (Part Two), p. 170.

[15] Billington, "The Rosh People," (Part Two), p. 172.

[16] C. Marvin Pate and J. Daniel Hays, *Iraq—Babylon of the End Times?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), p. 69.

[17] Billington, "The Rosh People," (Part Three), p. 39.