

## Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot: Ezekiel 38:18-39:16

This dramatic Haftarah describes the final, apocalyptic stages of God’s redemption of His people at the End of Days. This is similar to the Haftarah for the First Day of Sukkot, Zechariah’s apocalyptic prophecy of the End of Days.

In the verses before the Haftarah’s opening, Ezekiel prophesies that God will return the exiles from around the world to the formerly desolate Land. They will live there tranquilly as pastoral people, relying solely upon God for protection. Ezekiel further prophesies that Gog, ruler of the nation of Magog, and its neighbors, will assemble a vast, heavily armed coalition of peoples, primarily from areas north of the Land. They will seek to conquer “defenseless” Israel, taking captives and loot.

The Haftarah begins with Gog’s arrival in the Land of Israel. God’s fury will shake the Land, terrifying its people and animals. God alone will slaughter Gog’s armies by deploying various deadly natural forces; animals will feast on their corpses. God will also punish Gog and his allies by sending fire to their homelands. The people will spend months purifying the Land by burying the remaining bones in “The Valley of Gog’s Multitudes.” The people will also collect their enemies’ vast number of weapons. With God’s direct protection during the Redemption, however, the people will use them not as weapons but as firewood.

The Haftarah emphasizes that this divine defeat of Israel’s enemies in the Land will sanctify and make God’s name known among the Israelites and the nations of the world. In the prophecy’s conclusion following the Haftarah, Ezekiel foresees that humanity and Israel will, after these events, finally properly understand Israel’s covenant with God, God’s power, and the meaning of God’s hiding His face during Israel’s exile for its sins.

### Haftarah Breakdown

**Verses 38:18-20:** The arrival of Gog’s coalition in the Land will anger God. His fury will shake the Land, terrifying its human and animal inhabitants, and causing mountains and buildings to tumble.

Ezekiel 38:20	יחזקאל ל"ח:כ
The fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all people who are upon the face of the earth— shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.	וְרָעִשׂוּ מִפְּנֵי דְגֵי הַיָּם וְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתַיִת הַשָּׂדֶה וְכָל־הַרְמֵשׁ הַרְמֵשׁ עַל־הָאֲדָמָה וְכָל־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וְנִהְרָסוּ הַהָרִים וְנִפְּלוּ הַמְצֻרָאוֹת וְכָל־חֹמָה לְאַרְצָא תִפֹּל:

**Verses 38:21-23:** God will defeat Gog and his coalition, battling them by sword and overpowering natural forces. God’s complete victory will make Him known as great and holy among many nations.

Ezekiel 38:22	יחזקאל ל"ח:כ"ב
I will punish him with pestilence and blood. I will rain down upon him, his bands, and the many peoples that are with him, torrential rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.	וְנִשְׁפָּטֵתִי אֵתוֹ בְּדָבָר וּבְדָם וּגְשָׁם שׁוֹטֵף וְאַבְנֵי אֶלְגָבִישׁ אֵשׁ וּגְפָרִית אֲמָטִיר עָלָיו וְעַל־אֲגָפָיו וְעַל־עַמִּים רַבִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ:

**Verses 39:1-5:** God tells Ezekiel to prophesy against Gog. God will goad Gog to attack Israel in its mountains, where he and his coalition will be defeated. Exposed to the elements, their corpses will be food for animals.

Ezekiel 39:4	יחזקאל ל"ט:ד
You shall fall on the mountains of Israel- you, all your bands, and the peoples with you. I will give you to ravenous birds of every sort and to the beasts of the field, to be eaten.	עַל־הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּפֹּל אַתָּה וְכָל־אֲגָפָיִךָ וְעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתָּךָ לְעֵיט צְפוּר כָּל־כְּנָף וְתַיִת הַשָּׂדֶה וְנִתְּנוּ לְאֲכֻלָּה:

Verses 39:6-8: God will also send fire to destroy the territories of Gog and his allies. This will make the name of the God of Israel great among His people and other nations. This promised day of the Lord will surely happen.

Ezekiel 39:6	יחזקאל ל"ט:ו
I will send fire in Magog and among those who dwell securely in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord.	וְשִׁלַחְתִּי אֵשׁ בְּמָגוּגַי וּבְיַשְׁבְּנֵי הָאֲיִלִּים לְבַטַח וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי ה':

Verses 39:9-10: Turning the tables on their enemies, the residents of Israel's towns will collect their dead enemies' weapons to use as firewood. These weapons will be so numerous that they will provide fuel for seven years, during which the people will not need to harvest wood from forests and fields.

Ezekiel 39:10	יחזקאל ל"ט:י
"They will not gather firewood from fields or cut any in the forests, but will burn the weapons in fires. They will despoil those who despoiled them, and plunder those who plundered them," declares the Lord God.	וְלֹא־יִשְׂאוּ עֲצִים מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה וְלֹא יִחַטְּבוּ מִן־הַיַּעֲרִים כִּי בַנֶּשֶׁק יִבְעֲרוּ־אֵשׁ וְשָׁלְלוּ אֶת־שִׁלְלֵיהֶם וּבְזָזוּ אֶת־בְּזוּזֵיהֶם נְאֻם אֱלֹהֵי ה':

Verses 39:11-16: The people will bury their dead enemies for seven months, gaining fame for their kindness. Others will complete the Land's purification by systematically scouring it, marking locations of human bones until burial. The vast number of corpses will be buried in a place named, "The Valley of Gog's Multitudes."

Ezekiel 39:12	יחזקאל ל"ט:י"ב
The House of Israel will bury them for seven months in order to purify the land.	וַיִּקְרוּם בַּיַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַעַן טַהַר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ שִׁבְעָה חֳדָשִׁים:

## Connections

The Talmud asserts that one who fulfills the precept of **eating three meals on the Sabbath** will be saved during the events described in the Haftarah.

Shabbat 118a	שבת קי"ח א
Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said in the name of bar Kappara: Anyone who fulfills the obligation to eat three meals on the Sabbath is rescued from three punishments: From the pangs of the Messiah, from the judgment of Gehinnom, and from the war of Gog and Magog... [The final teaching is learned from the shared use of the word, "day," in Exodus 16:25, which refers to the Sabbath as] a "day," and [in Ezekiel 38:18, which describes the onset of the war of Gog and Magog with the phrase] "On the day that Gog arrives [in the land of Israel.]"	אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן לֵוִי מִשׁוֹם בַּר כַּפָּרָא: כָּל הַמְקַיֵּם שְׁלֹשׁ סְעוּדוֹת בְּשַׁבָּת נִיּוּצוֹל מִשְׁלֹשׁ פּוּרְעָנִיּוֹת: מִחֶבְלוֹ שֶׁל מְשִׁיחַ, וּמִדִּינַת שֶׁל גֵּיהִנּוֹם, וּמִמְלַחְמַת גּוֹג וּמָגוּג... מִמְלַחְמַת גּוֹג וּמָגוּג — כְּתִיב הֲבָא יוֹם, וְכִתִּיב הַתֵּם: "בְּיוֹם בֹּא גּוֹג."

The Haftarah's apocalyptic vision is the source for the **first two words of the Kaddish prayer**. These words are widely recited in Aramaic, *yitgadal ve'yitkadash*, along with the rest of the prayer. Some, however, follow Machzor Vitry (11th C, France) and recite them in their original language, Hebrew, *yitgadeil ve'yitkadeish*.

Ezekiel 38:23	יחזקאל ל"ח:כ"ג
I will manifest My greatness and My holiness, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.	וְהִתְגַּדַּלְתִּי וְהִתְקַדַּשְׁתִּי וְנִודַעְתִּי לְעֵינֵי גוֹיִם רַבִּים וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי ה' {ס}

With emendations, all translations are from Sefaria.org. To dedicate, comment, or subscribe, email [haftarahhelper@gmail.com](mailto:haftarahhelper@gmail.com).