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### **THE MEANING OF EZEKIEL 39:2**

There is considerable confusion regarding what is the correct translation for Ezekiel 39:2. Here are a number of different translations for this verse, including from some very old translations.

The **King James Version** for this verse reads:

And I will turn you back, and **leave but the sixth part of you**, and will cause you to come up from the north parts, and will bring you upon the mountains of Israel: (Ezekiel 39:2 AV)

The **American Standard Version** for this verse reads:

and I will turn thee about, and **will lead thee on**, and will cause thee to come up from the uttermost parts of the north; and I will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel; (Ezekiel 39:2 ASV)

The **New Revised Standard Version** for this verse reads:

I will turn you around and **drive you forward**, and bring you up from the remotest parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. (Ezekiel 39:2 NRSV)

The **2000 Jubilee Bible** for this verse reads:

and I will break thee, and **leave but the sixth part of thee** and will cause thee to come up from the north parts and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: (Ezekiel 39:2 JB2000)

**Coverdale Bible of 1535 reads:**

I will upon thee, **and turn thee about**, and **carry thee forth**, and lead thee from the north parts, and bring thee up to the mountains of Israel. (Ezekiel 39:2, Coverdale Bible)

**Bishops Bible of 1568 reads:**

And I will turn thee about, and **I will provoke thee forward**, and cause thee to come up from the north parts, and bring thee up to the mountains of Israel. (Ezekiel 39:2, Bishops)

**Geneva Bible of 1587 reads:**

And **I will destroy thee and leave but the sixth part of thee**, and will cause thee to come up from the North parts and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: (Ezekiel 39:2, Geneva Bible)

**Jewish Publication Society of 1916 reads:**

and **I will turn thee about and lead thee on**, and will cause thee to come up from the uttermost parts of the north; and I will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel; (Ezekiel 39:2, Jewish Publication Society, 1916)

**Webster Bible of 1833 reads:**

And **I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee**, and will cause thee to come from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: (Ezekiel 39:2, Webster)

The issue with this verse revolves around either having an expression like "**leave but the sixth part of you**" or having an expression like "**will lead you on**" or "**drive you forward**". Which option is correct? What does the Hebrew text say? Does a sixth part of this army survive or not? And if so, why would a sixth part survive? How can we know what is correct for this verse?

While we can find examples of translations for both options, the majority of the more modern translations lean towards the "will lead you on" option. The majority of today's translations reject the "leave the sixth part of you" option. Now the majority isn't necessarily right. But then it isn't necessarily wrong either. The evidence itself needs to be examined before a decision is reached.

Many people have fairly strong opinions as to what they believe the correct translation here should be. Typically those people do not understand **why** we have these vastly different translations for this verse. They simply look at their favorite translation and then go with that.

**My primary purpose in writing this article is to help you understand why we have these two very different translations for this verse.**

Personally I don't have an iron in this fire. I am just as happy to accept that this rebellious army is destroyed in its entirety, as to accept that one sixth of that army will be spared and kept alive. It really makes no difference to me personally. I simply want to understand what is true. But I have no vested interests in the outcome of this debate.

Now once you understand the reason for these two different ways of translating the Hebrew text, then you will be in a better position to form your own opinion for this verse.

Once the facts have been established, then I will present to you my reasons for why I believe that the option represented by the King James Version is more likely to be the correct one, that it is more likely that one sixth of that army will be spared for a very specific purpose, than that 100% of that army will be destroyed. That is not the outcome "I wished to reach"; that is simply the outcome to which the evidence has led me. But it makes no difference to me personally if you continue to believe that the entire rebel army is destroyed in that situation.

To start with, let's try to understand why we have this problem with the translation of this verse.

This explanation is going to involve **technicalities of the biblical Hebrew language**. Specifically, it involves a few letters of the Hebrew alphabet. To keep things simple, I will not present the actual Hebrew letters themselves, because they wouldn't mean anything to the great majority of the readers of this article. Instead of printing the Hebrew characters, I will only present transliterations for the names of those letters.

Also, while the Hebrew text is written from right-to-left, in my transliterations in this article I will present the transliterations in the left-to-right format we are used to in reading the English language.

It is my hope that a reader who has no background whatsoever in Hebrew will be able to follow the explanation I will now present, because this explanation is something we should all understand when we refer to Ezekiel 39:2, and when we consider its ramifications.

## SOME GENERAL POINTS

The original Hebrew text did not contain any vowels. This means that words with completely different meanings could have the identical spelling in the written form.

If written English functioned this way, we might have the following situation:

1) We could have a word that reads "**shrt**" (taking the letters sh to represent the "sh" sound). Now shrt could mean "**SHIRT**", but it could equally well mean "**SHORT**". So if we looked up "shrt" in an English dictionary, then it would give us two distinct entries, to cover both of these meanings. And if we were to assign hypothetical "Strong's Numbers" to our English language dictionaries, then that dictionary would list two adjacent numbers for the word "shrt". One of these numbers for "shrt" would refer to the meaning "shirt", and the other number for "shrt" would refer to the meaning "short". And these two words are not at all related, even though they share the identical spelling (i.e. without vowels).

Can you follow, or have I confused you?

2) We would have the same type of situation for the word "**gn**". Our English dictionary with hypothetical Strong's Numbers for every English word would list "gn" under one number with the meaning "**gun**". And it would list "gn" under another number with the meaning "**gain**". And it would list the word "gn" under still another number with the meaning "**gin**".

If written English did not contain any vowels, then identically spelled words could have vastly different and totally unrelated meanings, as the two above examples illustrate. And when reading a given English text we might feel strongly that the writer talked about bringing "a gun" with him, when in fact the writer said that he would bring "some gin" with him.

And obviously, you would make totally different preparations if you are expecting someone to come to you with "a gun", when compared to expecting that person to come with "a bottle of gin".

Now certainly, in very many cases of a written text the actual context in which a word is used indicates the intended meaning. So if the text reads: "pls pr m gls f gn", then you would fairly easily figure out that this means "please pour me (a) glass of gin", and not "... a glass of gun" or "... a glass of gain". But there will also be other occasions when more than one meaning would reasonably fit into the context that you are reading.

This is something you commonly find in certain English language crossword puzzles, which provide as possible answers two words that are identical, except for one letter. In those cases determining the correct choice depends on our understanding of the greater context addressed by the question. And people easily choose a wrong answer in such situations.

Now **this is the type of challenge we face when we read biblical Hebrew** that does not contain any vowel points, and where our minds are not prejudiced to reading a specific meaning into our vowel-less word, at the expense of rejecting all other possible meanings.

Next, for our purposes here we need to know four letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Those letters are:

1) The letter "**shin**", which is commonly transliterated as "**sh**".

2) The letter "**aleph**", which is commonly transliterated in a word as "**an apostrophe**", because **it is a silent letter**. To indicate the presence of "aleph" in a word, in a transliteration of a Hebrew word it may sometimes be "represented" as an "a", but without such representation being intended to imply that it

should be pronounced as an "a", because that is not the case. It is a silent letter, and mostly it is represented as an apostrophe.

3) The letter "**hey**", which is commonly transliterated as "**h**". When the letter "hey" is used at the end of a word, then it is also a silent letter (unless it has a mappiq in it, in which case it is pronounced like an "h"). So when a Hebrew word ends with either an "aleph" or a "hey" then these two letters by themselves don't influence how the word should be pronounced.

4) The letter "**yod**", which is commonly transliterated as "**i**".

To minimize the risk of confusing you, I will always provide the spelling of a word by giving the names of each letter in a word. But I realize that this section is going to be a bit technical.

## **THE TECHNICAL DETAILS**

I don't usually include Strong's Numbers in my articles. But to enable you to look up some of these things for yourself, I will in this case include the Strong's Numbers for the Hebrew words we'll be examining. So if you have a Bible program with Strong's Numbers embedded in the text of the Bible, then you should consider checking for yourself the information I will present here.

Let's get started.

1) There are two two-letter Hebrew words that are spelled "**shin shin**", or in the transliterated form "**shsh**". Think of our vowel-less English word "gn" as a parallel.

2) The first of these two "shsh" words has the Strong's Number **8336**. And it is transliterated as "**shesh**", or even as "**shaysh**". The meanings of this word include: linen, fine linen, marble, silk. It apparently implies "something bleached white", thus bleached linen, or even white alabaster stone may be indicated.

This word does not feature at all in our discussion. I present it only because it has the identical spelling and pronunciation as has a word that is important in our context.

3) The second of these two "shsh" words has the Strong's Number **8337**. And it is also transliterated as "**shesh**", or even as "**shaysh**". This word means "**six**". It is also used to mean the ordinal number "**sixth**". These meanings are very clearly established, and not in dispute.

4) Next, we have the three-letter word that is spelled "**shin shin aleph**". The Strong's Number for this word is **8338**. This word is transliterated as "**shawshaw**".

### **This is the word that appears in Ezekiel 39:2.**

Some authorities claim that this word means "**leading on**", or even "**driving forward**". Ezekiel 39:2 is the only place in the entire Old Testament where this word is used. So we have no other references to help us identify or confirm the meaning of this word.

Rather than lead it back to the word that means "six", most reference works claim that this three-letter word is "a primitive root". They have no references anywhere to support this claim, simply because this word is never used anywhere else in any other context.

For example, they never lead it back to, or in some way tie it to a word that means "to lead", which would substantiate the meaning "to lead on". It is precisely because they are not able to link this word to any other word, that they claim that this word is "a primitive root word".

And so even The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT) has **no comments whatsoever** for this word. This is one of the shortest entries in TWOT, if not the shortest entry for any three-letter word. All TWOT says for this word is "lead on (Eze 39:2)". No explanatory comments at all.

Now normally TWOT explains how they have arrived at the meaning of words. For "shin shin aleph" they provide nothing at all! This is a tacit acknowledgment that **they do not have anything to substantiate the meaning** they have attached to "shin shin aleph". The only reason that this three-letter word supposedly means "lead on" is "**because they say so!**"

That is why the New American Standard Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon (**NAS Hebrew Lexicon**) for this word has the super brief entry: "a prim. root; **prob. to lead on**". Their "**probably** to lead on" meaning is nothing more than a wishful guess! This is one of the weakest meanings attached to any biblical Hebrew word! And thanks be to the honesty of NAS Hebrew Lexicon for including the word "probably" in their comments. NAS Hebrew Lexicon happens to express the views of very highly qualified scholars. The asserted meaning for this Hebrew word is based on bias! Can you see that? The experts who claim a "lead on" meaning don't actually know what this word is supposed to mean.

Getting back to TWOT: it is glaringly obvious that TWOT very deliberately rejected any effort or attempt to link this word to the word "shin shin", the word meaning "six" and "sixth". Linking it to the meaning "six" was simply not an option that TWOT was prepared to entertain, even though they otherwise don't know what this word really means.

They refuse to believe that it could be tied to the word meaning "six", the only possible word it could be led back to, because that would not fit into their ideas for Ezekiel 39. And that is because it does not fit in with **traditional Jewish beliefs**. It is the Jewish translation that pushes the "lead you on" translation for this Hebrew word, as we saw above for the 1916 JPS Translation. But then even the Jewish scholars themselves have no proof for this claimed meaning. That's clear from the honest NAS Hebrew Lexicon admission.

Look, the Hebrew word "shin shin aleph" can only be led back to the word "shin shin". That's how they typically reason for other words. But not here, because that would conflict with Jewish beliefs for Ezekiel 39:2.

I am telling you the facts. But let's move on to another Hebrew word.

5) Next, we have the three-letter word that is spelled "**shin shin hey**". The Strong's Number for this word is **8341**. This word is transliterated as "**shashah**", or even as "**shishshah**". All the reference works freely lead this word back to the word "shesh" (i.e. "shin shin"), the one with Strong's Number 8337, and meaning "six". And therefore the meaning for this word "shashah" is correctly given as "the sixth part".

This word "shin shin hey" is also only used one single time in the Old Testament, and that is in Ezekiel 45:13. That verse reads:

This *is* the oblation that you shall offer; **the sixth part** (#8345) of an ephah of an homer of wheat, and you shall give **the sixth part** (#8341) of an ephah of an homer of barley: (Ezekiel 45:13)

This verse is interesting because it uses **two different Hebrew words**, which are both correctly translated as "the sixth part". They are both led back to the word that means "six". This is quite clear

from the whole context of this verse.

So note! The Hebrew word "shashah" (shin shin hey) is only used this one time, in the second expression in Ezekiel 45:13. Its meaning is clear from the context, and thus its connection to the word for "six" is also clear.

6) Lastly, we have the three-letter Hebrew word that is spelled "**shin shin yod**". The Strong's Number for this word is **8345**. This word is transliterated as "**shishshi**". All the reference works also freely lead this word back to the word "shesh", the one with Strong's Number 8337, and meaning "six". And the correct meaning for "shishshi" is "the sixth part".

This word is used in the first part of Ezekiel 45:13. But it is in fact **used 28 times** throughout the Old Testament, and always correctly translated as "sixth" or as "sixth part". For example, in **Genesis 1:31** it is used in the expression "the **sixth** day". The meaning for this word is also beyond doubt.

7) So we have the following four words:

- #8337 = "**shin shin**" ( or "shesh") means: **six**, or sometimes even sixth.
- #8338 = "**shin shin aleph**" (or "shawshaw") claimed meaning = **lead on**.
- #8341 = "**shin shin hey**" (or "shashah") means: **sixth**; a verb.
- #8345 = "**shin shin yod**" (or "shishshi") means: **sixth**; a noun and adj.

Recall that "aleph" and "hey" at the end of a word are silent letters, and depending on which vowels may be attached to them, their pronunciations may vary. And at times no vowels are attached to these silent letters.

Sometimes a Hebrew scribe may have mistaken one Hebrew letter for a different letter, and in that way introduced a spelling mistake into the Hebrew text. But with our words here similarity in appearance is not involved. The actual written forms for the letters "aleph" and "hey" and "yod" are quite different. So it is not really a case where the letters "hey" or "yod" would have been mistaken for an "aleph". The "aleph" is really quite distinct from the other two letters. So we should not try to establish some supposed **similarity** between these letters in an attempt to explain the letter "aleph" in the word in Ezekiel 39:2. There is no such similarity involved.

However, it is also known that there are a number of **variant spelling forms** for certain words. For example, it is well-known that this applies to the letters "aleph" and "hey". Thus, certain words may mostly be spelled with an "aleph", but occasionally with a "hey" instead of an "aleph". And likewise, certain words may mostly be spelled with a "hey", but occasionally with an "aleph" instead of a "hey".

In our two words (i.e. "shin shin aleph" and "shin shin hey") the end letters "aleph" and "hey" are both silent, and so these two words "shin shin aleph" and "shin shin hey" are basically pronounced the same way. Here "aleph" and "hey" are simply used to end these two words.

Now even without any malicious intent, and without a letter being mistaken for another letter which is similar in appearance, **there are many places in the written Hebrew manuscripts** where a scribe wrote the wrong letter. That is why there are thousands of marginal comments in the manuscripts. And in many cases such wrong letters inserted into the text have no similarity at all to the letters that were accidentally dropped. But the wrong letters got into the text anyway.

That's something that can easily happen when everything is handwritten. Even afterwards counting all the letters in every Old Testament book would not catch such errors, because the number of letters would be correct. It is just that in those situations some of the letters themselves would be wrong.

Now both, "shin shin aleph" and "shin shin hey", appear only one single time each in the whole Old Testament, and these two words are pronounced the same.

When we look at the sequence of the four Hebrew words that are of concern to us, we see the following:

The words with numbers #8337 and #8341 and #8345 all refer to "six" (or "sixth"). And right in the middle of that sequence is #8338. And the word with this number supposedly has a completely different and unrelated meaning. But there is not one shred of evidence available for that asserted different meaning, nothing at all.

The claimed meaning of "to lead on" is not supported by anything anywhere ... not in the Bible and not outside of the Bible. **Nobody is able to provide any kind of explanation for how and why "shawshaw" (shin shin aleph) supposedly means "to lead on"**. This meaning is simply asserted without any proof.

**Such an unsupported claim is not only suspicious; it is downright dishonest!**

On a Jewish website named "Chabad.org" I looked up **Rashi's commentary** on Ezekiel. Rashi is considered to be one of the most important authorities in the Jewish religion. And Rashi does indeed have a brief comment for Ezekiel 39:2. The Jewish translation for Ezekiel 39:2 at that website is implied to be a translation of the version Rashi used, and it reads:

**"And I will unbridle and entice you and lead you up** from the utmost parts of the north and bring you upon the mountains of Israel."

Note that the first part of the above translation is quite different from the Jewish 1916 JPS translation.

Rashi's comments for this verse are:

"I will entice you upon My people: as in (Psalm 89:23) 'no enemy will entice him'". (Comment: this is verse 22 in our translations.)

Notice that the Jewish translation of Ezekiel 39:2 here has the words "I will entice you **and lead you up**". That is how they translated "shawshaw" (shin shin aleph). And notice that **they have totally changed the first part of this verse**. "I will unbridle and entice you" has nothing at all to do with "I will turn you back". The first part of this Jewish translation is a blatant distortion of the actual Hebrew text, and that has been corrected in the 1916 JPS Translation.

Now Rashi was born around 1040 A.D. in France, not far from Paris. So Rashi predates all the English translations. And Rashi is one of the highest authorities in the Jewish religion. And before 1100 A.D. Rashi already accepted that distorted focus of "I will entice you" instead of the correct focus on "I will turn you back". This wrong focus is needed to justify the second expression in this verse.

At any rate, Jewish religious teachers had already established **a false translation** for this verse long before the Coverdale Bible and the Bishops Bible with their wrong translations came along.

**Now look at the biblical facts:**

God says to Gog: **I will turn you back!** "Back" is not "forward". The statement "I will turn you back" raises the expectation that some part of Gog will indeed "go back"! Can you understand that?

The ASV statement "**I will turn you about and will lead you on**" is a **clear contradiction** of terms, an impossibility. God will **either "turn them about"**, meaning lead them back to where they have come from; **or** God will "**lead them on**", meaning they continue in the direction they have been going thus far. But it cannot be both. That's like saying: "come here go away". It has to be the one or the other.

Similarly, the NRSV presents an impossible statement. The statement "**I will turn you around**" means that I'll make you go back to where you came from. And the statement "**I will drive you forward**" is in the opposite direction. It can only be the one or the other.

**It is plain stupid to say "I will turn you around and I will drive you forward"!**

Make up your mind as to which of these two things you want to do, because you cannot do both at the same time. And God would never make such a conflicting statement.

The first part of verse 2 is not in dispute. It means "I will turn you back", and this is even acknowledged by the 1916 JPS Version. Now this statement raises an expectation. If no part of Gog goes back to where they came from, then the statement "I will turn you back" has no meaning at all. When God says "I will turn you back", then God does not mean "all of you will die and not have the opportunity to ever go back".

God means what He says!

The point is: the opening statement "I will turn you back" in verse 2 already raises **the expectation** that all or at least some part of this army will go back to where it came from. Every "I will do" statement produces an expectation for that something to be done. This principle also applies here to verse 2.

Now let's consider some things about the translations that have translated this verse correctly. Consider again the three Hebrew words of concern to us:

- 1) "Shin shin hey" ("shashah") means "**sixth**", and that is not disputed.
- 2) "Shin shin yod" ("shishshi") also very clearly means "**sixth**".
- 3) "Shin shin aleph" ("shawshaw") is pronounced the same as "shin shin hey", but it is asserted to mean "**lead on**".

The correct translations have rejected the claim that "shawshaw" supposedly means "lead on". Instead, the correct translations have accepted that "shawshaw" comes from the root word "shin shin" ("shesh"), which means "six". And so they have accepted that "shin shin hey", must be led back to the word "shin shin", which means "sixth".

The correct translations tacitly acknowledge that God's opening statement "I will turn you back" really does require some of the people in this huge army "to go back".

As far as the pronunciation of these words is concerned:

Should the Hebrew word for "sixth" be pronounced "shashah" or "shishshi" or "shawshaw"? As it is, these three forms of pronunciation are only defined for us because more than 500 years after the ministry of Jesus Christ some Jewish scribes invented a system of vowel pointings to fix the

pronunciation of all Hebrew words.

Before the vowel pointings were fixed to all words in the Old Testament, the pronunciation had undoubtedly been somewhat fluid over time. That is true for all spoken languages. That's why the Masoretes invented the vowel pointings in the first place, to prevent the pronunciations of all words from changing any more, as well as a desire to remove some potential ambiguities. All spoken languages change, even when they have an accepted correct form for spelling every word in the language. And Hebrew is no exception to this process.

The much later added vowel pointings fixed the pronunciations of the Old Testament Hebrew words as "shashah" and "shawshaw" and "shishshi". Now could it be that in biblical times different people just pronounced "sixth" slightly differently than some other people, and that this word "sixth" then received a few forms of spelling that featured different silent letters at the end of the word?

Let's keep in mind that when "aleph" and "hey" are used at the end of a word, they are silent letters, meaning that their presence at the end of the word is not reflected in any way in the spoken word. Hearing those words spoken out aloud you would have no way of knowing that the words ended with either an "aleph" or with a "hey".

So attaching either an "aleph" or a "hey" to the letters "shin shin" does not affect how that word should be pronounced. Rather, the accepted way for pronouncing these two words today ("shin shin aleph" and "shin shin hey") was only fixed when the vowel pointings were attached to these words centuries after Jesus Christ's ministry.

Now it is known and not disputed that "shin shin **yod**" and "shin shin **hey**" mean exactly the same thing. The one word is a noun and other word is a verb, but they mean the same thing. Both of these words mean "sixth". Could "shin shin **aleph**" be **one more variant spelling for "sixth"**? That possibility seems reasonably likely to me, though there is no way to prove this.

At any rate, there is also no evidence anywhere that would suggest the meaning of "to lead on" for the word "shin shin **aleph**". That meaning was pulled out of thin air by Jewish religious leaders as far back as 1000 A.D. There isn't even an attempt to provide any proof for this alleged meaning. And the obvious connection to the word "shin shin" (i.e. six) is deliberately ignored.

Now let's look at something else. Let's consider the different consequences between either one sixth of that army being turned back, or that entire army being killed by God. What is likely to happen in each of these two scenarios?

### **WHY ONE-SIXTH OF THAT ARMY IS "TURNED BACK"**

The rebellious army in Ezekiel 39 is going up to "the land of unwalled villages" (see Ezekiel 38:11). It is a perfect picture of peace and tranquility. This is not a picture of the world after Jesus Christ has only ruled for 10 or 20 years. 20 years after World War II the memories of that war were still very raw for very many people in Europe. I know that from personal experience, because back in the 60's I met people like that, people who still had very strong emotional responses to the war that had ended 20 years earlier.

The same will be true for Jesus Christ's rule during the millennium. The horrendous events that will take place before Jesus Christ starts to rule, including at that time Satan being bound for 1000 years, will be far, far more horrifying than anything that happened during World War II. And for the first 50-100 years of Jesus Christ's rule those events will very likely still be very raw and vivid in the minds of all the people

who lived over into the millennium.

And so the picture that is drawn in Ezekiel 38 in the lead-up to the army in chapter 39 is one of a society living perhaps 100 or 200 years after the return of Jesus Christ. Christ will have been ruling this earth for well over a century when these prophesied events in the Book of Ezekiel will take place.

This is important to understand.

It means that the presence of Jesus Christ and of the 144000 individuals in the first resurrection **is not enough to deter** some rebellious individuals in distant lands from rejecting Jesus Christ's rule and then starting an open rebellion. They will rebel even though they will know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will be ruling this earth from Jerusalem.

So there will be **a need to teach all human beings during the millennium** the lesson that they will never get away with openly rebelling against the government of Jesus Christ. The carnal human mind is always under the control of each individual person. And carnal minds don't just change because God tells them to change. Each carnal mind has to reach the decision to change with its own free will. **And some carnal minds will never accept God's outgoing way of thinking.**

Now it seems that God is prepared to let carnal minds use their own free will to remain hostile towards God in how they use their minds, provided that those people never in any way openly display their hostility towards God's way of thinking and reasoning. God will allow such minds **"to think an evil thought"** (see Ezekiel 38:10). But God will not allow such minds to act on their evil thoughts, with one exception.

So in order to teach all people during the millennium that acting on evil thoughts has devastating consequences, God will actually allow rebellious evil thoughts to be voiced and acted on **one single time!** Some people will voice grumbling, griping, greedy and selfish thoughts ... and God will not intervene. Those people in that one occasion will not "hear a voice behind them saying "this is the way ..." (see Isaiah 30:21).

No, for the purpose of teaching a lesson that will last for the rest of the millennium, Jesus Christ will let that rebellion grow and develop. Christ will allow all those who think these "evil thoughts" to gather into an army, and to collect any number of weapons with the intent of fighting and killing other human beings, and stealing their possessions.

Jesus Christ will in effect be saying: okay, you rebels, come up here; I am waiting for you. And those rebels will indeed come up "upon the mountains of Israel" (Ezekiel 39:2). And when they do come up, what will Jesus Christ do? Let's consider two options.

**Option #1 is to destroy all of them. Just obliterate all the rebels. What will be the consequence of that approach? Why, it is likely to be the same as what happened after the horrendous destruction that took place at Jesus Christ's second coming. The effect lasts for a little while, and then people once again begin to rebel. And eventually another rebellion takes place.**

Thus, if Jesus Christ kills all of those rebels, there is the likelihood that another 100 or 200 or 300 years later all the people who at that future time then think "evil thoughts" will once again try to form an army in order to attack Jesus Christ in the land of Israel. Such open rebellions could take place repeatedly after suitable intervals between rebellions. But that is not a very desirable state of affairs.

**Option #2 is to allow a portion of rebels to stay alive and to go back to** where they came from. What will be the consequence of that approach? Keep in mind that during the millennium people will not die

(except for five-sixths of this one army in Ezekiel 39). So any rebels who are allowed to escape with their lives from that rebellion, will then continue to live for the rest of the millennium.

The army in Ezekiel 39 is huge; it will be like "a cloud to cover the land" (see Ezekiel 38:16). It will probably run into the tens of millions of people, if not even over 100 million people. The point is that one-sixth of that army will still amount to **many millions of people**.

Now when that one-sixth is spared, then they don't just spontaneously repent and become deeply converted individuals. No, not at all! They will continue to harbor hostility towards God in their minds. Their rebellion was motivated by an enmity against God (see Romans 8:7). And every single one of them actually deserves the death penalty, even though their lives will be spared for the time being.

Understand something about the human mind.

During the millennium Satan is bound and unable to deceive even a single human being. So the people in that rebellious army will not be deceived in any way. They will **know** that they are fighting against God, in the same way that all the angels that rebelled with Satan **knew** that they were attacking their own Creator.

It is not a matter of "having no excuse" for their rebellion. They don't have any excuses, but that's not the main point. The main point really is (and this should be scary for us!) that **once a human mind knowingly opposes God, then that human mind will never again be prepared to willingly submit to God. Such a mind can never change away from being hostile towards God's way of life.**

This is different from a deceived mind rebelling against God. The people who take part in the Ezekiel 38-39 rebellion will be just as accountable to God as were all the people who lived before the flood. That was also a time when Jesus Christ in person was present on earth.

The demons who rebelled against God can never change. And all those who will rebel against Jesus Christ during the millennium can likewise never change. Knowingly rebelling against God will firmly and irreversibly set the human mind in that rebellious way of thinking.

That's what it means when we say that "God isn't playing games"!

So Jesus Christ knows that the people comprising that one-sixth who survive that rebellion will continue to harbor enmity towards God for the rest of their lives, for the rest of the millennium. But they will have been taught in a very powerful and terrifying way that they must never again outwardly show that enmity towards God. What they have witnessed, the destruction of the other five-sixths of that army, will remain with them for the rest of their lives. And these people will be a powerful living deterrent to future rebellions.

For them life will be "**a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation**, which shall devour the adversaries" (see Hebrews 10:27). This is the mindset of people who know that they have knowingly rejected God and His way of life. This applies to the one-sixth from that army, whose lives will be spared for a period of time.

Let's understand that when Jesus Christ allows one-sixth of a group of rebellious and extremely hostile people to escape with their lives, then Jesus Christ must obviously have **a very specific purpose** in mind for that group of people. Christ knows that these people can never change away from their hostility towards God. Christ knows that all of the people comprising that one-sixth will have to die in the lake of fire. That's unavoidable.

So when Jesus Christ allows a group of people, whose fate to die in the lake of fire has already been sealed, to live amongst a human population that Jesus Christ is trying to lead to salvation, then Jesus Christ must surely have a very specific purpose in mind for why those particular "condemned to the second death" people should be allowed to be around those who are heading for eternal life in the Family of God.

Can you understand this?

In sparing one-sixth of that rebel army, Christ must surely have a very significant purpose for sparing them. Without an important reason for those people to be allowed to live amongst those who are heading for eternal life, it doesn't make any sense to let them live. Without an important reason they should all have died with the other five-sixths of their fellow-rebels.

So it is incumbent upon us to seek to understand what that reason is!

As I have already stated, that group comprising the one-sixth of the rebel army will be living with "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation". None of them will ever experience any real happiness for the rest of their lives, i.e. until the end of the millennium. If there was not an important reason, then the merciful thing would have been to have let them die with all the other people in that rebel army.

There simply must be a very specific purpose for why God lets these condemned people continue to live. They will obviously provide a negative and pessimistic influence for all the people with whom they come into contact. No God-fearing person would choose to be around any of these people. Their company will simply not be desirable for anyone who is deeply committed to living God's way of life.

## **A SPECULATION**

So let me present a speculation. I don't know that this speculation is correct, because there is no way of verifying it one way or the other. So it is not a problem to me if you disagree with this speculation. I believe that God wants us to try to understand the reason for why God spares the lives of some rebels, while at the same time killing other rebels of the same ilk.

During the millennium Satan will not be around to tempt people who are born during the millennium. There is no way that Jesus Christ would allow Satan to be present in any way when Jesus Christ rules this earth. Satan must be removed. Satan was around for the 1656 years before the flood, and Satan's influence during that period of time was devastating! Way in excess of 99% of all people before the flood have lost out on the opportunity for eternal life in the Family of God ... and overwhelmingly that is Satan's doing. And so Satan will not be around during the millennium.

But the people who are born during the millennium **do** need to be tested! They are not just all "good people" simply because Jesus Christ will be ruling. But Satan will not be around to be the agent who is involved in doing the testing.

To be quite clear:

Satan is not banished for 1000 years because people born during the millennium somehow don't need to be tested as to whether or not they would also embrace Satan's selfish attitudes. **The people who are born during the millennium most assuredly do need to be tested!** Satan will be banished for the whole 1000 years that Jesus Christ will rule, because Jesus Christ is not prepared to have Satan himself

around when He, Christ, is ruling! Jesus Christ will not have a perverted and depraved spirit being anywhere in the realm He is ruling. Satan's presence is simply not an option for the millennium.

But those human beings who are born during the millennium do need to be tested. Their natural minds will be just as carnal as any unconverted human mind in this present age. Romans 8:7 will apply to people born during the millennium just like it applies to all unrepentant people in this present age. And testing will be required to establish whether or not the people in the millennium will confront their own carnal natures, and then consciously reject that carnal, selfish way of thinking. Or will they remain carnal for their whole lives?

Those people do need to be tested by God.

Testing requires provocative situations, circumstances that challenge us to reject selfish responses. By itself, living in a perfect world does not provide the type of challenges that bring out into the open the secret thoughts and intentions and motivations of the heart. Those things are only exposed when we are faced with tempting or provocative or stressful situations.

Furthermore, enduring short-term testing, perhaps for a few weeks or a few months, is not totally reliable in exposing the inner workings of the mind. There are many examples in the Bible of people who obeyed God faithfully for a short period of time. But eventually in the long run they did not prove themselves to be faithful to God. And so Jesus Christ very deliberately said that "he that endures **to the end** shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

I mention this because when Satan is briefly loosed after the 1000 years have expired, that brief period when Satan tempts people to rebel against God will on its own not be long enough to prove an enduring commitment to God. That short period can only serve as the culmination for a lengthy period of testing.

So here is my speculation.

While Jesus Christ during the millennium will not have Satan present under any circumstances, Jesus Christ is prepared to allow **human beings with rotten, selfish attitudes** to continue to live during the millennium. And when some people have a rotten attitude, then that is always a test for all the other people with whom these rotten attitude people come into contact: will they be influenced by those rotten attitudes, or will they resolutely reject all wrong attitudes to which they may be exposed?

Do you realize that every time you come into contact with someone who has a selfish, rebellious, stubborn, arrogant, proud, etc. attitude, that that is then a test for you? In every one of those situations our minds are forced to respond in some way. Either we let those wrong attitudes provoke us to also adopt a wrong attitude of our own, or we (hopefully!) don't allow the negative attitudes of the people we come into contact with to have any negative effect on us.

If we are with angry people, do we also embrace an angry attitude? If we are with proud people, do we also entertain proud thoughts? If we are with fearful people, do we also end up becoming fearful? If we are with rebellious people, do we also become rebellious? If we are with people who are chronic complainers, do we also start to complain? If we are with people who have no faith, do we also lose faith? If we are with people who are extremely selfish, do we also become more selfish? Or do we in all of these situations resist absorbing wrong attitudes from the people with whom we come into contact?

Every contact we have with other people has the potential to affect our minds in some way. And many of those situations are today used by Satan to tempt us to sin.

So during the millennium Satan is not around. But that one-sixth of the rebels will have the same selfish

attitudes that identify Satan. And these people will be around for a number of centuries. Now every person they come into contact with will be tested. Will they be influenced by the ungodly attitudes these people will have? Or will they reject those attitudes, and not allow those wrong attitudes to have any negative effects on their minds?

**My speculation is that Jesus Christ may allow that one-sixth of the rebels to fulfill the role that Satan would fulfill, if he were allowed to be present.**

Every time we are exposed to someone voicing a negative, critical, sarcastic, ungodly point of view, that has an effect on our minds. We may agree with that point of view, or perhaps be sympathetic towards it; or we may disagree with that point of view, and firmly reject it. But in either case our minds are forced to process some information, and then to reach a conclusion to either accept or to reject the views we were exposed to.

Because of the terrifying destruction of their companions, those one-sixth "rebellion survivors" will be careful to never openly suggest rebellion. But their hearts will be resentful, and other people may in subtle ways be exposed to the resentful attitude that will emanate from those "rebellion survivors".

These people can provide testing situations for all the people with whom they come into contact. Exposing people born during the millennium to the resentful attitudes of these "rebellion survivors" will be somewhat like exposing them to Satan, just on a slightly lower scale. People will be expected to reject the critical attitudes emanating from those "rebellion survivors", or they will be drawn into those "evil thoughts" themselves.

Consider what will happen after the 1000 years have expired. Satan is loosed for a brief period of time .... perhaps a month or two or three? But in that short period of time Satan is able to gather an absolutely staggering number of people who resent God's way of life. In numbers they will be like "the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:8). I believe that this group will number into the hundreds of millions!

So we should ask the question: **how is it possible for Satan to influence so many people around the world in such a short period of time?** My guess here may not be correct, but I suspect that the answer to this question is that the one-sixth of the rebels that were not killed in the early years of the millennium will have been instrumental in laying the groundwork for that huge number of people to be ready for, and to be receptive to Satan's influence, **the moment that Satan will be released** from his prison.

These "rebellion survivors" would have been displaying Satan's attitudes for several centuries, attitudes like cynicism, sarcasm, bitterness, resentment, selfishness, pride, arrogance, conceit, a couldn't-care-less attitude, a less-than-wholehearted attitude, a covetous attitude, being highly critical, etc.

Here is what we need to understand in this context.

If people absorb any of these negative attitudes, then it makes no difference whether or not they at the same time also actually break any of God's commandments. Breaking any of God's laws is most assuredly sin. But those negative attitudes are also sins, even when no laws are broken in the letter. When people absorb these wrong attitudes, then it is only a matter of presenting the right circumstances, and they will also break some of God's laws in the letter.

And after the 1000 years Satan is released for a short period for the purpose of presenting "the right circumstances". But also understand that for the people who rebel after the millennium (Revelation 20:8) **Satan is not the cause for their rebellion!**

No, Satan is not going to be the cause for their rebellion. **Satan will only be "the catalyst" in bringing that rebellion out into the open!** Satan will be "the facilitator" for that rebellion. But Satan doesn't really cause that rebellion.

The cause for that rebellion will be the hostile, resentful, bitter human minds that resent God and everything about God, hostile minds that will have been smoldering under the surface for centuries. And that one-sixth of "rebellion survivors" will likewise only be catalysts or facilitators for the natural human minds that have a spontaneous hostility towards their Creator.

Since Adam's creation **that has always been Satan's job**, to be the catalyst or the facilitator to bring the hidden thoughts and intentions of the human heart out into the open. God wants to know what we will do and how we will think, when we are pressured or tempted or provoked. And to expose our hidden thoughts and motivations, therefore God has provided Satan to be the catalyst, to bring out into the open what is hidden in our minds.

I believe that the one-sixth "rebellion survivors" will fulfill that same role during the millennium. By them having these wrong attitudes, every person who is exposed to them will be challenged to respond in some way to that exposure. They can respond the right way, and they can respond the wrong way.

The indication is that by the end of the 1000 years a vast multitude of people will all harbor some of these wrong attitudes in their minds. And it is people who at that point in time already harbor wrong attitudes in their minds, that will respond to Satan almost spontaneously.

Having the people who are born during the millennium exposed to the rotten attitudes of those "rebellion survivors" will start to separate people into those who are receptive to these wrong attitudes, and those who firmly reject these wrong attitudes.

However:

I suspect that those "rebellion survivors" will also have the effect of pouring ice-water on **any thoughts of open rebellion**, which thoughts some of those who are receptive to the wrong attitudes might perhaps present. The "rebellion survivors" will very likely say something like:

"Look, I feel the same way you do about Jesus Christ up there in Jerusalem. But trying to attack Jerusalem isn't going to work. **I am a survivor of those who tried that.** And what happened to us is too horrible for me to repeat to you. So if you at this time really want to fight against Jesus Christ up there in Jerusalem, then count me out. That just isn't worth trying."

Those survivors will not stop anyone from "thinking an evil thought", even as those survivors themselves will not stop thinking evil thoughts. But for the rest of the 1000 years they will stop all future attempts at putting those evil thoughts into action.

It will need a catalyst who can present "more persuasion" to get these survivors to openly rebel once again. And that "more persuasion" can only be provided when Satan himself is set free. Satan's actual presence will provide the tipping point for all those who think "evil thoughts".

It will take Satan himself, loosed for a brief period of time after the 1000 years have expired, to get **all the people with "evil thoughts"** to overcome their fear of openly defying Jesus Christ. Only then will all those people with "evil thoughts" be willing to throw all caution to the wind, and to adopt an **"I don't care what will happen" attitude.**

And the "rebellion survivors" will be the leaders on the human level for that rebellious army, "the number

of whom is as the sand of the sea" (see Revelation 20:8). Those "rebellion survivors" will be the only ones with any past "military experience" to lead that Satan-inspired army.

So I believe that there is indeed a purpose for allowing one-sixth of the rebels to stay alive for the rest of the millennium. On the one hand they will act as living deterrents to any future thoughts of open rebellion for the rest of the 1000 years. And my speculation is that on the other hand they will sow the seeds of discontent and envy and any number of bad attitudes, so that when Satan is eventually set free, then there is a vast multitude of people ready to follow Satan at a moment's notice.

So in conclusion:

There is no proof or evidence of any kind that the Hebrew word "shawshaw" (shin shin aleph) means "to lead on", or words to that effect. This meaning is asserted without any appeals to any etymological features. This meaning has been pulled out of thin air.

This supposed meaning for this Hebrew word has been accepted amongst the Jews at least since the time of Rashi in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. But after more than 900 years of asserting this meaning for "shawshaw", Jewish scholars are still not able to provide any logical support for this asserted meaning.

Translations that use the "lead on" meaning in their translations of Ezekiel 39:2 rely heavily on Jewish claims for this meaning, even though Jewish scholars are not able to provide anything at all to support this asserted meaning.

The scholars of the NAS Hebrew Lexicon admit as much in their comments for this Hebrew word.

All the other Hebrew words surrounding "shawshaw" have to do with "six" and "sixth" and "sixth part". And the pronunciation of "shawshaw" is essentially the same as the pronunciation of a word that does mean "sixth". Simply put, the word "shin shin + aleph" is pronounced just like the word "shin shin + hey". The supposed distinction between these two words that some scholars assert is very artificial and arbitrary.

And so there are a fair number of translations that recognize these problems, and they have correctly translated "shawshaw" as "the sixth part", and they have rejected the artificial meaning of "lead you on".

It is essential that we examine the potential consequences of both options. If 100% of that rebellious army in Ezekiel 39 is destroyed, then that amounts to "just another rebellion that God has put down". And when a completely new generation arises, one that had not witnessed this rebellion and how God dealt with it, then that new generation is likely to repeat the same thing again ... another rebellion that must once again be put down. The point is that with this approach there will not be any "living deterrents" to stop any future rebellions before they get started.

If one-sixth of that rebellious army is allowed to escape with their lives, on the other hand, then those people will act as "living deterrents" for any potential further open rebellions for the rest of the millennium. Those "living deterrents" will make powerful impressions on those people who might want to lead a rebellion against Jesus Christ's rule.

Those "rebellion survivors" will never change. And though they will prevent active open rebellions against God for the rest of the millennium, they will not encourage obedience to God. Rather, they will perform something like "a ministry for Satan" in preparing a vast number of people to be ready for the time when Satan will be released.

Jesus Christ is far more willing to put up with those "rebellion survivors" for the rest of the millennium as

"a ministry on Satan's behalf" than to actually have Satan himself around during the millennium. Somebody has to be the catalyst to bring the hidden thoughts of the heart out into the open. And for the millennium Jesus Christ will rather use these "rebellion survivors" to do that job than using Satan himself to do that job..

In living amongst the people who are born during the millennium these "rebellion survivors" will be helping God to weed out all those human beings whose minds are not unconditionally and totally committed to God. If any person during the millennium is **still capable** of being persuaded to rebel against God's way of life, at a time when nobody on earth is deceived by Satan, then God most assuredly wants such minds to be separated from all the people who are unconditionally committed to God. And therefore the "rebellion survivors" will play a significant part in that sifting-out process. Satan himself will provide the final tipping-point role in that process.

So rest assured, all things really do work together "for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28).

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