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ROSH: AN ANCIENT LAND KNOWN TO EZEKIEL

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Extensive evidence from ancient Near Eastern texts and from normal Hebrew syntax supports the view that ראש *is a toponym in Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1. The syntactical support involves a detailed examination of instances where some scholars posit a break in a construct chain. These hypothetical breaks are not convincing for several reasons. Therefore,* ראש *in Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1 should be translated as a proper noun ("the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal"* [NKJV*]), not an adjective ("the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal"* [KJV*]).*

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INTRODUCTION

AMONG Bible expositors, controversy continues over the translation of the phrase נְשִׂיא רֹאשׁ מֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל in Ezek 38:2, 3 and 39:1—should the translation be "the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" (*AV*), or "the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal" (*NASB*)? The controversy centers around the Hebrew word רֹאשׁ; is the word a place name (Rosh) or an adjective (chief)?

There are two principle arguments denying that רֹאשׁ is a place name: a philological argument and a grammatical argument. The philological argument states that the primary meaning of ראש is "head" as a noun, and "chief" as an adjective,[1] and that the word is unknown as a place name in the Bible, Josephus, and other ancient literature. J. Simons, a noted authority on ancient geography, wrote:

> That in one or more of these texts a people of that name whose home was in Asia Minor, is indeed mentioned, is not entirely disproved but it is at any rate rendered improbable by the fact that the same name can be discerned only very doubtfully in other (Assyrian) documents.[2]

[1]BDB, 910–11.

[2]J. Simons, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959) 81.

The grammatical argument states that the absence of a conjunction between רֹאשׁ and מֶשֶׁךְ precludes רֹאשׁ from being a noun. William Gesenius stated the applicable grammatical principle: "Contrary to English, which in lengthy enumerations uses *and* to connect only the last member of the series, in Hebrew *polysyndeton* is customary."[3] This means that Hebrew uses a conjunction between every word in a series. On the basis of this grammatical rule Simons concluded, "The reading מֶשֶׁךְ (not וּמֶשֶׁךְ) in both texts argues against a tripartite enumeration of peoples or countries."[4]

These arguments have been convincing to many scholars and have resulted in the retention of the *AV* reading in a number of modern versions (*RSV*, *NIV*, *NAB*). Ralph H. Alexander represented the typical response when he wrote, "The author does not consider the word *ros* [*sic*!] to be a proper name in light of the syntax of the Masoretic text and the usage of the term throughout the Old Testament and extra-biblical literature."[5]

But on the other hand, many authorities accept רֹאשׁ as a toponym, and regard the grammatical problem to be of no consequence. Among these are C. F. Keil,[6] C. L. Feinberg,[7] D. J. Wiseman,[8] T. G. Pinches,[9] and standard lexicons.[10] Also, several modern versions translate the phrase "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal" (*ASV*, *NASB*, *NEB*, *NKJV*, Harkavy); and some even recognize the land of Rosh in a reconstruction of the difficult Masoretic text of Isa 66:19, "Meshech, Rosh, Tubal, and Javan" (*NASB*, *JB*, *NEB*). Thus, the arguments against this translation may not be as convincing as some think.

Those who support the view that רֹאשׁ is a toponym observe that this use of *rôš* is not entirely unknown in the ancient literature. Pinches pointed out that the LXX translators must have known the place, because they transliterated the word as a place name. He also

[3]GKC, 154a.

[4]Simons, *Geographical and Topographical Texts*, 81.

[5]Ralph H. Alexander, "A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39," *JETS* 17 (1974) 161, n. 2.

[6]C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) 2:158–59.

[7]Charles L. Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody, 1969) 219–20.

[8]Donald J. Wiseman, "Rosh," *The New Bible Dictionary* (ed. J. Douglas; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 1107.

[9]T. G. Pinches, "Rosh," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ed. James Orr; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 4:2623.

[10]BDB, 912; William Gesenius, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Edward Robinson (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1849) 955; William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 329.

noted references to the land of Râshi (= Rosh) in the Annals of Sargon.[11] Opponents of the view discount these references as insignificant.

Also, those who support the place-name view point to a much more serious grammatical problem involved with regarding רֹאשׁ as an adjective—the adjective intervenes between the construct noun נְשִׂיא (prince of) and its genitive *nomen rectum* מֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל (Meshech and Tubal). This is a syntactic anomaly. Opponents of the view dismiss the problem by observing that broken construct chains do occur in Biblical Hebrew. Simons discounted the problem by stating, "The translation of Eze. xxxviii 2.3 and xxxix 1 by 'Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal' is grammatically difficult but cannot be said to be impossible."[12] But is is very doubtful that this problem can be brushed off so lightly and that the ancient references to the land of Rosh can be ignored.

This article demonstrates that Rosh was a well-known place in antiquity as evidenced by numerous and varied references in the ancient literature. The article also demonstrates that in Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1 the absence of the conjunction with מֶשֶׁךְ is inconsequential and it is syntactically improbable that רֹאשׁ is an adjective. A logical explanation is offered for the origin of the interpretation of רֹאשׁ as an adjective. The conclusion is drawn that the best translation of Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1 is "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal."

PHILOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS

Rosh was a Well-Known Place

Rosh has not been recognized among the place names of antiquity because scholars have failed to take into account the well known phonetic shifts that occur within the Semitic languages. When differences in pronunciation are taken into account, I found the name Rosh (or its phonetic equivalents) twenty times in five different ancient sources without an exhaustive search.

Variant Pronunciations of Rosh

The word that means "head" as a noun and "chief" as an adjective is common to most of the Semitic languages, but its pronunciation varies. Due to the phonetic phenomenon known as the Canaanite shift[13] the word is pronounced *rôš* in Hebrew and the Canaanite

[11]Pinches, "Rosh," 4:2623.

[12]Simons, *Geographical and Topographical Texts*, 81.

[13]William S. LaSor, *Handbook of Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 2:38. The Semitic /â/ shifted to /ô/ in the Canaanite dialects.

dialects,[14] but in the other Semitic languages it is pronounced as *râśu* (Arabic),[15] *rêš* (Aramaic),[16] *riš/rêšu* (Ugaritic),[17] and *rêšu/râšu* (Akkadian).[18] The final vowel (*u*) is the nominative case ending; alternative final vowels supply the genitive (*râši/rêši*) and the accusative (*râša/rêša*). Wherever the Semitic word for "head/chief" was used as a place name, it is expected that it would follow the pronunciation and orthography of the language in which it was used. That was true for most place names that were derived from the meaningful Semitic vocabulary.

Rosh was a Name

The word ראֹשׁ (*rôš* or its phonetic equivalent *râš/rêš*) was not used exclusively as a common noun or adjective in the Semitic languages. The word also was used as the name of persons and places, and in compound names of persons and places. The use of *rôš* as the name of a specific land is demonstrated in the next section. Rosh was the name of a son of Benjamin (Gen 46:21), and Rêsh was the name of an Akkadian temple.[19] Also, the word is found in compound place names such as Rêsh-eni,[20] and in modern Arabic place names such as Ras Shamra, Ras Naqura, Ras el-Ain, etc. Additionally, the word is found in many compound personal names of antiquity, such as Râshi-ili,[21] Rêsh-Adad king of Apishal,[22] Rêsh-beli father of Tubalît-Bini,[23] Rêsh-Dumuzi,[24] Rêsh-Ea,[25] Rêsh-ili son

[14]BDB, 910.

[15]Ibid., 910; the Semitic /š/ shifted to /ś/ in Arabic.

[16]Ibid., 1112.

[17]Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965) 31.

[18]Theo Bauer, *Akkadische Lesestucke* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1953) 3:29.

[19]"Resh Temple" is found 9 times in Akkadian ritual texts according to *ANET*, 338, 342, 344, 345.

[20]David D. Luckenbill, "Bavian Inscription of Sennacherib," *Historical Records of Assyria*, vol. 2 in *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylon* (reprint; New York: Greenwood, 1968) 2:149.

[21]Mentioned three times by David B. Weisberg, *Texts from the Time of Nebuchadnezzar*, vol. 17 in the Yale Oriental Series: Babylonian Texts (New Haven: Yale University, 1980) 17:63.

[22]"The Sargon Chronicle," *ANET*, 266.

[23]Stephen D. Simmons, *Early Old Babylonian Documents*, vol. 14 in the Yale Oriental Series: Babylonian Texts (New Haven: Yale University, 1978) 73.

[24]Samuel I. Feigin, *Legal and Administrative Texts of the Reign of Samsu-Iluna*, vol. 12 in the Yale Oriental Series: Babylonian Texts (New Haven: Yale University, 1979) 50.

[25]Ibid., 50.

of Sulalum,[26] Rêsh-Irra,[27] Rêsh-Marduk son of Ipqu-Amurru,[28] Rêsh-Nabium,[29] Rêsh-Shamash,[30] Rêsh-Shubula son of Ibn-Adad,[31] Rêsh-Sîn,[32] and Rêsh-Zababa.[33]

Rosh Mentioned Twenty Times as a Place Name

The place name Rosh (or its phonetic equivalents in the respective languages) was found three times in the LXX, ten times in Sargon's inscriptions, once on Assurbanipal's cylinder, once in Sennacherib's annals, and five times on Ugaritic tablets—a total of twenty references in five different sources. The following sections list the references.

Rosh in the LXX. The LXX translates Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1 as ἄρχοντα Ρως, Μοσοχ καὶ θοβελ. The Greek obviously transliterated the Hebrew pronunciation.

Rosh in Sargon's Inscriptions. Various inscriptions of Sargon mention the land of Râshu. The inscriptions noted in this study are as follows.

(1) The Annals of Sargon (year 12, ll. 228–316):

> Til-Hamba, Dunni-Shamshu, Bubê, Hamanu, strong cities in the land of Râshi, became frightened at the onset of my mighty battle-(array) and entered Bît-Imbî.[34]

(2) Sargon's Display Inscription:

> In the might and power of the great gods, my lords, . . . I cut down all my foes . . . the lands of Ellipî and Râshi which are on the Elamite border on the banks of the Tigris.[35]

(3) Sargon's Display Inscription of Salon XIV:

> In the might of Assur, Nabû and Mardu, the great gods, my lords, who sent forth my weapons, I cut down all my enemies . . . the lands of

[26]Simmons, *Early Old Babylonian Documents*, 73.
[27]Ibid., 73.
[28]Feigin, *Legal and Administrative Texts*, 50.
[29]Simmons, *Early Old Babylonian Documents*, 73.
[30]A popular name, listed 3 times by Feigin, *Legal and Administrative Texts*, 50, and 3 times by Simmons, *Early Old Babylonian Documents*, 73.
[31]Feigin, *Legal and Administrative Texts*, 50.
[32]Simmons, *Early Old Babylonian Documents*, 73.
[33]Ibid., 73.
[34]Luckenbill, *Historical Records of Assyria*, 17.
[35]Ibid., 26.

> Râshi and Ellipi which are on the Elamite frontier, the Arameans who dwell on the banks of the Tigris. . . .[36]

Râshu is also mentioned as a place name in the following additional inscriptions of Sargon: (a) Sargon's Bull Inscription,[37] (b) Sargon's Pavement Inscription (mentioned 5 times),[38] and (c) Sargon's Cylinder Inscription.[39]

Rosh in Assurbanipal's Texts. The land of Râshu is mentioned in Assurbanipal's Texts on the Rassam cylinder, the eighth campaign against Elam (col. IV, ll. 63ff.):

> In my eighth campaign, at the command of Assur and Ishtar, I mustered my troops, (and) made straight for Ummanaldasi, king of Elam, Bît-Imbî, which I had captured in my former campaign,—this time I captured (together with) the land of Râshi, (and) the city of Manamu with its (surrounding) district.[40]

Rôsh in Sennacherib's Annals. The land of Rêshu is mentioned in the annals of Sennacherib:

> First year of Nergalushezib: . . . One year and 6 months was Nergalushezib king in Babylon. In the month of Tashritu, the 26th day, his people made a rebellion against Hallashu, king of Elan, . . . and killed him . . . Afterward Sennacherib marched down to Elam and destroyed . . . (the country) from the land of Rishi as far as Bît-Burnaki.[41]

(*Rishi* is the equivalent of *Rêshu.*)

Rôsh in Ugaritic Literature. The Ugaritic literature mentions people of the land of Rêshu in the following texts:

(Text 1337)[42]

(1) *mit.ṯlṯ.mḫsrm*	(1) One-hundred (and) three deficit
(2) *ᶜl nsk. kṯṯǵlm*	(2) against the metalsmith of Kṯṯǵlm.
(3) *arbᶜm.ṯlṯ mḫsrm*	(3) Forty-three deficit
(4) *mtbᶜl.rišy*	(4) (against) Motbaal the Rêshite
. . . . .	. . . . .

[36]Ibid., 41.

[37]Ibid., 45–47; the Akkadian text spells the name *ra-a-ši.* See D. G. Lyon, *Keilschrifttexte Sargon's Konig von Assyirien* (reprint; Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat Der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1977) 14, 42, 93.

[38]Luckenbill, *Historical Records of Assyria*, 48–55.

[39]Ibid., 60–62; Lyon, *Keilschrifttexte*, 2.

[40]Luckenbill, *Historical Records of Assyria*, 307–8.

[41]*ANET*, 302.

[42]Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, 240.

(9) *ḫmš.mnt.ṯlṯ*	(9) five minas. Three
(10) *ᶜl mtn.rišy*	(10) against Motan the Rêshite.[43]

(Text 2078)[44]

(1) *rišm.qnum*	(1) The Rêshites: Qanum
(2) *bn ilrš*	(2) the son of Ilrash
(3) etc.	(3) etc.

(Text 2027) also a list of Rêshites.[45]

(Text 2079) also a list of Rêshites.[46]

(Text 2095)[47]

(1) *ṯṯ.mat.ṯṯm.kbd šmn*	(1) Six hundred sixty kubdas of oil
(2) *l.abrm.alṯyy*	(2) for Abram the Cypriote.
(3) *mit.ṯlṯm.kbd.šmn*	(3) One hundred thirty kubdas of oil
(4) *l.abrm mṣrm*	(4) for Abram of Egypt.
(5) *mitm.arbᶜm.ṯmn.kbd*	(5) Two hundred forty-eight kubdas
(6) *l.sbrdnm*	(6) for the men of Sardis.
(7) *mit.l.bn.ᶜẓmt.rišy*	(7) One hundred for Ben Azmot the Rêshite.
(8) etc.	(8) etc.

These references to Rosh (Râshu/Rêshu) demonstrate that it was a well-known land in antiquity on the banks of the Tigris River, bordering on Elam and Ellipi.

George C. Cameron, the noted historian of early Iran, identified the land as "the Râshi tribe of Arameans, well known to the Assyrians from Sargon onward and located in the mountains east of Der, where was its capital, Bit Imbi."[48] Other of its prominent cities were Hamanu, Bube, Bit Bunakki, and Bit Arrabi.[49]

The cumulative effect of the preceding is that Rosh was a well known place. The next section demonstrates that the word ראש is most probably not an adjective in Ezek 38:2, 3 and 39:1.

[43]Translations of the Ugaritic materials are my own.

[44]Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, 22*.

[45]Ibid., 10*.

[46]Ibid., 23*.

[47]Ibid., 25*.

[48]George C. Cameron, *History of Early Iran* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1936) 116.

[49]Ibid., 200.

SYNTACTICAL ARGUMENTS

Contrary to the objection of Simons, the absence of a conjunction between רֹאשׁ and מֶשֶׁךְ does not make it impossible for רֹאשׁ to be a place name. On the other hand, the fact that the word נָשִׂיא (prince) is a construct noun does make it extremely doubtful that רֹאשׁ is an adjective (chief).

Missing Conjunction is Inconsequential

Although it is customary for Hebrew to use conjunctions between all the words in a series, it is not mandatory. Many exceptions to the rule are found. After giving the previously noted rule of *polysyndeton* in Hebrew, Gesenius cited the exception, "Sometimes, however, only the last two words are joined."[50] Examples are found in Gen 5:32 (וַיּוֹלֶד נֹחַ אֶת־שֵׁם אֶת־חָם וְאֶת־יָפֶת / 'And Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth'), Gen 11:26 (וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־נָחוֹר וְאֶת הָרָן / 'And he begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran'), and Gen 13:2 (בַּמִּקְנֶה בַּכֶּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב / 'in livestock, in silver, and in gold'). This exception corresponds exactly to the syntax of Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1; consequently רֹאשׁ can be a noun in a series without violating normal conventions of Hebrew grammar.

Hebrew Syntax Expects רֹאשׁ *to Be a Name*

If רֹאשׁ is regarded as a name, then the syntax of the passage is in keeping with the normal conventions of Hebrew grammar. In this case, the construct noun נָשִׂיא ('prince of') is followed by a compound *nomen rectum* consisting of a series of three names (Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal). Although Hebrew avoids lengthy series of coordinate genitives depending on one *nomen regens*, numerous examples are found in the Bible of short series of closely related words.[51] Examples are found in Gen 14:19 ("Possessor of heaven and earth"), Gen 28:5 ("the mother of Jacob and Esau"), Exod 3:16 ("the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob"),[52] Num 20:5 ("a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates"), 1 Sam 23:7 ("a town of gates and bars"), Ps 8:2 ("the mouth of babes and infants"), and Isa 22:5 ("a day of trouble and treading down and perplexity").

These examples demonstrate that regarding רֹאשׁ as a name conforms with known conventions of biblical Hebrew. However, the next section demonstrates that regarding רֹאשׁ as an adjective does not so conform.

[50]GKC, 154a; note other examples at Gen 10:1, 14:1, 30:39; Jer 2:36; Ps 45:9.
[51]GKC, 128a.
[52]Note the absence of the conjunction between "Abraham" and "Isaac."

Syntax Rejects רֹאשׁ *as an Adjective*

If רֹאשׁ is regarded as an adjective, a syntactical anomaly results. One of the fundamental principles of Hebrew grammar is not observed—a word normally does not intervene between a construct noun and its *nomen rectum*. Joshua Blau stated the basic principle of this convention of nonintervention, "Nothing must intervene between the construct and the *nomen rectum*. Accordingly, even an adjective attribute of the construct has to come after the *nomen rectum*."[53]

As this convention applies to the words נְשִׂיא רֹאשׁ מֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל of Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1, it indicates that it is quite unlikely for the adjective attribute רֹאשׁ (chief) of the construct noun נְשִׂיא (prince) to intervene between the construct and the *nomen rectum* מֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל (Meshech and Tubal). Therefore, unless the principle of nonintervention permits exceptions of this type, it is extremely improbable that רֹאשׁ is an adjective. Rather, it is extremely probable that it is a name in accord with normal syntax. The following sections demonstrate that there are no undisputed exceptions to the principle of nonintervention.

Hebrew Syntax Uses Other Constructions for Adjectives

When Hebrew expresses an adjective attribute for a construct noun, it regularly uses other syntactic constructions. There are four possible syntactic structures which could be used to express the thought "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal."

(1) The absolute adjective may follow the *nomen rectum*, as Blau's statement suggested. This construction is used most often. Examples are found in 2 Sam 13:18 (בְּנוֹת־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַבְּתוּלֹת / 'the king's virgin daughters') and Isa 55:3 (חֲסָדֵי דָוִד הַנֶּאֱמָנִים / 'the sure mercies of David'). When the statement becomes ambiguous or too complex, alternate constructions are used. The use of this construction in Ezek 38:2 would produce the ambiguous phrase נְשִׂיא מֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל הָרֹאשׁ where הָרֹאשׁ may modify תֻבָל or נְשִׂיא. Therefore, the construction would be inappropriate here.

(2) The construct adjective may be placed before the noun phrase it modifies. In this case the Hebrew would read רֹאשׁ נְשִׂיא מֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל. Some examples of this are בְּתוּלַת בַּת צִיּוֹן / 'virgin daughter of Zion' (Isa 37:22), רֹאשֵׁי הַנְּשִׂיאִים / 'chief princes' (1 Chr 7:40), רֹאשֵׁי בְשָׂמִים / 'chief spices' (Cant 4:14), and רֹאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת / 'chief fathers' (1 Chr 9:34).

[53]Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976) 96; see also August Müller, *Hebrew Syntax* (Glasgow: James Maclehouse & Sons, 1882) 54.

(3) The absolute adjective may precede the noun phrase it modifies. In this case the Hebrew would read הָרֹאשׁ נְשִׂיא מֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל. Examples of this combination are found in Ezek 21:25 (אַתָּה חָלָל רָשָׁע נְשִׂיא יִשְׂרָאֵל 'You, O profane wicked prince of Israel'), Isa 23:12 (הַמְּעֻשָּׁקָה בְּתוּלַת בַּת צִידוֹן / 'You oppressed virgin daughter of Zidon'), and Isa 52:2 (שְׁבִיָּה בַּת צִיּוֹן / 'captive daughter of Zion').

(4) When a complex *nomen regens* prevents the attachment of a genitive *nomen rectum* by means of a construct form, the genitive may be attached by means of the preposition לְ.[54] This occurs when the *nomen regens* is a proper name, or has unmoveable modifiers. Judg 3:28 (מַעִבְרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן לְמוֹאָב / 'the Jordan fords of Moab') and Hag 1:1 (בִּשְׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם לְדָרְיָוֶשׁ / 'in the second year of Darius') have examples of this construction. Although no example was found using an attributive adjective, it seems probable that the construction הַנָּשִׂיא הָרֹאשׁ לְמֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל would accurately express "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal."

These examples demonstrate that Hebrew has regular syntactic conventions for accommodating an adjective attribute of a construct noun without violating the principle of nonintervention. Ezekiel used these conventions in statements similar to 38:2, 3; 39:1 (see, e.g., Ezek 21:25). It is highly unlikely that Ezekiel would violate such a widely used principle of Hebrew grammar. The next section demonstrates that alleged broken construct chains do not correspond to the syntax at Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1 and do not justify regarding רֹאשׁ as an adjective.

Ajective Modifying a Construct Does Not Apply

Some argue that, although it is unusual, there are certain cases where attributive adjectives follow construct nouns, such as כֹּהֵן הָרֹאשׁ—"chief priest" (2 Kgs 25:18, Jer 52:24, etc.). However, the Ezekiel problem involves the possibility of an adjective intervening between a construct noun and its *nomen rectum*, not merely following the construct. Consequently such cases have no bearing on the Ezekiel problem.

Broken Construct Chains Do Not Apply

Based on the evidences given by Gesenius,[55] and supplemented by M. Dahood[56] and D. N. Freedman,[57] some have concluded that

[54]GKC, 129.
[55]GKC, 130a–f.
[56]M. Dahood, *Psalms* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) 3:81–83.
[57]David Noel Freedman, "The Broken Construct Chain," *Bib* 53 (1972) 534–36.

Hebrew grammar admits exceptions to the principle of nonintervention called broken construct chains. Evidence was given by these scholars citing several examples from the Hebrew Bible where a construct noun is not followed immediately by a genitive *nomen rectum*. These alleged broken construct chains are considered by some as justification for regarding ראש as an adjective that legitimately breaks the construct chain in Ezek 38:2.

Constructs are Created by Rhythm. The existence of alleged broken construct chains in biblical Hebrew should not be accepted hastily as justification for a broken chain in Ezek 38:2, 3, and 39:1. Most syntactic constructions classified by Dahood and Freedman as broken construct chains were previously noted by Gesenius, but were not regarded by him as broken chains. The problem is that not every construct form is a *nomen regens* that anticipates a genitive *nomen rectum*. A construct form comes about when the language places two words in such close rhythmical relationship that they receive only one major accent. The first word of the pair loses its accent and its form becomes a construct; the second word receives the major accent and retains its standard (absolute) form. Gesenius said,

> It is sufficiently evident . . . that the *construct state* is not strictly to be regarded as a *syntactical* and *logical* phenomenon, but rather as simply *phonetic* and *rhythmical*, depending on the circumstances of the tone.[58]

The genitive relationship between nouns regularly produces this condition; the *nomen regens* has the construct form and the *nomen rectum* has the absolute form. This construction is commonly known as a construct chain. Because it is so common in Hebrew, it may mistakenly be regarded as the only use of the construct form. Actually, since the construct state is phonetic and rhythmical, not strictly syntactical, Hebrew frequently exhibits other cases of the construct state not associated with the genitive relationship between nouns. Gesenius noted several such constructions: "The construct state . . . is frequently employed in rapid narrative as a connective form, even apart from the genitive relation."[59] The following constructions were listed by Gesenius. (1) The construct state frequently governs prepositional phrases, particularly in prophecy and poetry, especially when the construct word is a participle. (2) The construct state frequently governs a relative pronoun clause. (3) The construct state sometimes governs an independent clause. This construction may be understood as a case

[58]GKC, 89a.
[59]GKC, 130a–c.

where the relative pronoun is elided. (4) The construct state is sometimes followed by *waw* conjunctive where the connection is strong. Müller[60] noted a few cases where a construct participle precedes an accusative. An example is מְשָׁרְתֵי אֹתִי / 'those who serve me' (Jer 33:22). None of the above should be mistaken for a construct chain: no genitive relationships were indicated. They represent the purely phonetic and rhythmical cases.

The same phonetic and rhythmical conditions occasionally produce construct-like forms in other parts of speech, such as particles, adverbs, prepositions, pronouns and verbs. When such words are closely related to the following words by *maqqeph*, the accent is drawn away from the word, resulting in a construct-like reduction of the vowel. Examples of particles are יֵשׁ versus יֶשׁ־, אֵת versus אֶת־, and הֵן versus הֶן־. An example of an adverb is כֵּן versus כֵּן־הוּא which is found in Gen 44:10; Josh 2:21; and 1 Sam 25:25. Examples of prepositions are אֵת versus אֶת־ (with) and בַּעַד (Cant 4:1) versus בְּעַד־הַחַלּוֹן (Josh 2:15). An example of a pronoun is מָה versus מַה־ (what?). Several examples of verbs are found: הִפָּרֶד versus הִפָּרֶד־נָא ('please separate yourself'; Gen 13:9), הַבֶּט versus הַבֶּט־נָא ('please look'; Gen 15:5), שֶׁב versus שֶׁב־שָׁם ('dwell there'; Gen 35:1), לֵךְ versus לֵךְ־נָא ('please go'; Gen 37:14), יִכְתֹּב versus יִכְתֹּב־שָׁם ('he wrote there'; Josh 8:32), מְשֹׁל versus מְשֹׁל־בָּנוּ ('rule over us'; Judg 8:22), יִמְשֹׁל versus יִמְשֹׁל־בָּם ('he will rule over them'; Isa 19:4, Joel 2:17), יַעֲבֹר versus יַעֲבָר־זַעַם ('the indignation is past'; Isa 26:20), הִתְקַדֵּשׁ versus הִתְקַדֵּשׁ־חָג ('a festival is kept'; Isa 30:29), יִמְלֹךְ versus יִמְלֹךְ־מֶלֶךְ ('a king will reign'; Isa 32:1), יִרְמֹס versus יִרְמָס־טִיט ('he treads clay'; Isa 41:25), אֶתְמָךְ versus אֶתְמָךְ־בּוֹ ('I uphold him'; Isa 42:1), אָצֹק versus אָצֹק־מַיִם ('I will pour water'; Isa 44:3), דַּבֵּר versus דַּבֵּר־עֹשֶׁק ('to speak oppression'; Isa 59:13), and יִשְׁמֹר versus יִשְׁמֹר־לָנוּ ('he keeps for us'; Jer 5:24).

All these examples demonstrate the role that rhythm plays in creating construct and construct-like forms. But none of these are equivalent to true construct chains governed by the principle of nonintervention.

True Construct Chains Involve a Genitive

The true construct chain, particularly as it relates to the problem in Ezekiel 38, is limited to the genitive relationship between nouns. It is in this particular case that the principle of nonintervention applies, and it is this particular case that must be tested for exceptions, not whether a construct form may be succeeded by something other than an absolute *nomen rectum*.

There are several commonly known modifications of the principle of nonintervention that must not be regarded as violations.

(1) A construct may follow another construct when there is a series of genitives.[61] This forms a construct chain of more than two links, the last of which is an absolute. The principle of nonintervention then applies to the entire series.

(2) The definite article may precede the absolute *nomen rectum*. Since it is a prepositive, it is regarded as part of the *nomen rectum*.

(3) The locative *He* may follow the first construct as a postpositive case marker.[62] It is regarded as part of the *nomen regens*.

(4) Although it is not common, the construct may receive a pronoun suffix.[63] Usually the pronoun is attached to the *nomen rectum* even though it modifies the construct;[64] but where sense or style requires, the construct may receive the suffix. Since it is a suffix, it must be regarded as part of the *nomen regens* not as an intervening word.

(5) Although it is not common, a negative may precede the *nomen rectum*. The negative is usually connected to the *nomen rectum* by a *maqqeph*, making it the equivalent of another construct, or a part of the *nomen rectum*. The negative must precede the word it negates and, like another construct, it is a legitimate modification to the principle of nonintervention. Examples of this construction are found in Isa 31:8 (חֶרֶב לוֹא־אִישׁ / 'a sword not of man'), Isa 31:8 (חֶרֶב לוֹא־אָדָם / 'a sword not of mankind'), 2 Sam 23:4 (בֹּקֶר לֹא־עָבוֹת / 'a morning of no clouds'), and Isa 14:6 (מַכַּת בְּלִתִּי סָרָה / 'a stroke of non-withdrawal').

None of these modifications of the principle of nonintervention corresponds to the grammar of Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1. None accounts for an attributive adjective intervening between a construct noun and its genitive *nomen rectum*.

True Construct Chains are Seldom if Ever Broken

Now the question to be answered is this: have any clear examples been found of a departure from the principle of nonintervention? If so, are the exceptions sufficient to justify considering נְשִׂיא רֹאשׁ מֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל to be a broken construct chain? The Ezekiel case would consist of an adjective attribute of the *nomen regens* interposed between the *nomen regens* and the *nomen rectum*.

[61]GKC, 128a.
[62]GKC, 90c.
[63]GKC, 128d.
[64]Müller, *Hebrew Syntax*, 54.

In general the syntax of biblical Hebrew is structurally consistent; there are relatively few structural discontinuities. Where the syntax exhibits discontinuity, it is for emphasis, clarification, the avoidance of ambiguity, or due to an author's style. Occasionally a discontinuity is created by ellipsis. But legitimate discontinuities are purposeful and meaningful, not accidental and enigmatic.

If there is proof that the principle of nonintervention may not always be followed (as some believe to be true in Ezek 38:2), the proof must consist of clear, unambiguous examples from biblical Hebrew. The examples cannot be created by speculative emendation; they must have interventions similar to Ezek 38:2; and they cannot be examples of the admissible modifications of the principle previously mentioned. It should be expected that an example would exhibit a case where the discontinuity provides clarification, emphasis, the avoidance of ambiguity, or evidence of stylistic purpose. It is not expected that the discontinuity should be explained as a grammatical blunder that contributes to confusion.

Numerous examples of possible broken construct chains have been listed by Gesenius, Dahood, and Freedman. Yet none of them qualify as an unambiguous precedent that proves that true construct chains may be broken.

Gesenius' Broken Construct Chains

Because Gesenius felt so strongly about the principle of nonintervention, he was very reluctant to recognize any possible exception. He said:

> As the fundamental rules are the necessary consequence not merely of *logical* but more especially of *rhythmical* relations, . . . we must feel the more hesitation in admitting examples in which genitives are supposed to be loosely attached to forms other than the construct state.[65]

Others have been more willing to accept broken construct chains, but Gesenius' reluctance should serve as a warning against hastily discovering supposed discontinuities in Hebrew syntax. Although he did not regard these passages in Ezekiel as broken construct chains, he did discuss certain problems related to the principle of nonintervention.[66]

Intervening Pronoun Suffix. Gesenius listed several examples of a pronoun suffix intervening between a construct and its *nomen*

[65]GKC, 128b.
[66]GKC, 130a–f.

rectum. He tried to explain away the noted cases as textual corruptions or by emendations. Actually, according to previous discussion, such pronoun suffixes are to be regarded as part of the *nomen regens* and not a violation of the principle of nonintervention. The use of a pronoun suffix with the *nomen regens* is uncommon, but required at times to avoid ambiguity.

Special Case for the Construct of כֹּל. Gesenius[67] recorded a special problem with the word כֹּל (also noted in BDB). Three times its construct seems to have a word interposed between it and its genitive, a structure which BDB marks as very anomalous:

2 Sam 1:9	כִּי כָל־עוֹד נַפְשִׁי בִּי
Job 27:3	כִּי כָל־עוֹד נִשְׁמָתִי בִּי
Hos 14:3	כָּל־תִּשָּׂא עָוֹן

Gesenius suggests that כֹּל must be regarded as adverbial in these cases in the sense of "wholly." That is a good suggestion; however, the possibility remains that they may be broken construct chains. In any case, כֹּל is a quantifier, not a noun, and as such it has unique rules of syntax that vary somewhat from those of nouns. It is doubtful that this special case can be used to justify an intervening adjective in Ezekiel.

Intervening Adjectives. Gesenius listed several other examples of possible broken construct chains.[68] He listed Isa 28:1 as a possible case of an intervening adjective. The text reads גֵּיא שְׁמָנִים חֲלוּמֵי יָיִן 'the rich valley of those overcome with wine' (*RSV*). It is understood by some that שְׁמָנִים is an adjective attribute of the *nomen regens* גֵּיא intervening between it and חֲלוּמֵי. This seems to be the way it was understood by *KJV*, *ASV*, *RSV*, and *NASB*. However, שְׁמָנִים is not an adjective but a noun;[69] and it is not in grammatical concord with גֵּיא as expected for an adjective. The form may be the abstract plural with the meaning "fatness," "richness," in which case "the valley of richness" is a proper way of expressing "rich valley." Thus, it is proper to understand "the valley of the richness of those overcome with wine" as the equivalent of "the rich valley of those. . . ." However, to express this equivalent construction would require שְׁמָנִים to be in the construct state (and thus not violate the principle of nonintervention).

[67]GKC, 128e.
[68]GKC, 128c.
[69]BDB, 1032.

Because שְׂמָנִים is not construct, and because of the disjunctive accent separating the two halves of the expression, many translators regard the halves as not syntactically related (*NIV*, *NAB*, *TEV*, *NKJV*). This seems to be the better choice since it follows conventional grammar. Although it is possible to regard the example as a broken chain, the grammar and accents are against it. Thus, it cannot be used as an unambiguous precedent.

Gesenius also listed Isa 32:13 as a possible case of an intervening adjective. The text reads כָּל בָּתֵּי מָשׂוֹשׂ קִרְיָה עַלִּיזָה / 'all the joyous houses of the jubilant city.' It is possible to regard מָשׂוֹשׂ as an adjective attribute of בָּתֵּי interposed between it and its *nomen rectum* קִרְיָה. But, as in the previous example, מָשׂוֹשׂ is a noun meaning "exultation,"[70] and a disjunctive accent separates the halves of the expression. Nearly all translators understand the halves to be syntactically unrelated, and to have an elided words between them (*KJV*, *RSV*, *ASV*, *NASB*, *NIV*, *TEV*, *NKJV*), or to be appositives (*NAB*). It seems to be wholly rejected as a broken construct chain.

Gesenius also listed Isa 28:16 as a possible case of an intervening adjective. The text reads פִּנַּת יִקַּרַת מוּסָד / 'a costly cornerstone of a foundation.' It is possible to regard יִקַּרַת as an adjective attribute of פִּנַּת interposed between it and its *nomen rectum* מוּסָד. Although Gesenius asserted that יִקַּרַת is a construct noun not an adjective,[71] it is classified as an adjective in his lexicon, in BDB and others. Yet it is unusual for an attributive adjective to be in the construct state. The text is problematical and cannot serve as an unambiguous precedent.

Gesenius also listed Ezek 6:11 as a possible case of an intervening adjective. The text reads כָּל תּוֹעֲבוֹת רָעוֹת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל / 'all the evil abominations of the house of Israel.' It is possible to regard רָעוֹת as an adjective attribute of תּוֹעֲבוֹת interposed between it and its *nomen rectum* בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. Although Gesenius asserted that רָעוֹת must be a construct noun (evils) not an adjective, the form could be either an adjective or a construct noun. However, since the construct noun follows normal grammar and makes good sense, Gesenius should be given the benefit of the doubt. Since the key word רָעוֹת is ambiguous, this example cannot serve as an unambiguous precedent.

In summary, Gesenius' examples are problematical and ambiguous. None can serve as proof that true construct chains may be broken in biblical Hebrew.

[70]BDB, 965.
[71]GKC, 130f, n. 4.

Dahood's Broken Construct Chains

Dahood listed several possible examples of broken construct chains in addition to those listed by Gesenius.[72]

Intervening prepositions. Dahood listed several examples of a construct chain broken by a preposition. He has mistakenly identified a construct governing a prepositional phrase as a construct chain. In each case the relationship of the construct with the absolute is defined by the preposition, not by the genitive. The meaning would be incomplete without the preposition. The reason for the construct form is *phonetic* and *rhythmical*, not *syntactical* and *logical*.

In addition, 3 of the 5 examples are ambiguous—the forms are not clearly constructs; they may properly be absolutes (Pss 9:10; 10:1; 92:13). In the remaining two examples, Dahood revocalized the Masoretic text to create the example (Pss 74:12; 84:7). The Masoretic text of Ps 84:7 does have a construct before a preposition, but it comes under the above comment.

Intervening pronoun suffix. Dahood listed 17 examples of a construct chain broken by a pronoun suffix. In six of the 17 examples, Dahood revocalized the Masoretic text to create the case (Pss 16:8; 18:18; 35:16; 88:16; 102:24–25; 140:10). In Ps 102:24–25 he made the chain bridge the end of a verse, and in Ps 140:10 he made it bridge an *athnach*—obvious departures from the Masoretic punctuation.

In three other cases his examples are construct participles governing an accusative pronoun suffix and an adverb: Ps 35:19 ("those who are my enemies wrongfully"), Ps 35:19 ("those who hate me without cause"), and Ps 38:20 ("those who hate me wrongfully"). These are not examples of a construct governing a genitive *nomen rectum*. The construct forms originated from rhythm and phoentics, not necessarily because of grammar.

In six other cases the construct has a genitive pronoun suffix, and the second word of the phrase is properly identified as an adverb not an absolute noun. Construct nouns do not govern adverbs. The noun takes the construct form because of the pronoun suffix. The examples are not broken construct chains:

Ps 38:20	"My enemies are lively"
Ps 48:15	"This God is our God forever and ever'
Ps 61:5	"I will abide in your tabernacle forever"
Ps 66:7	"He rules by his power forever"
Ps 71:6	"My praise shall be continually of you"
Ps 105:4	"Seek his face forever"

In one other case his example is actually a proper name, "Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4).

In all the above cases *AV*, *NASB*, *NKJV*, and *NIV* do not agree with Dahood, but view them according to more conventional grammatical theory. The *NIV* regards the second word of Ps 38:20 as an attributive adjective.

In only one case is there a possible broken construct chain: אַתָּה מַחֲסִי־עֹז / 'You are my strong refuge' (Ps 71:7). This example comes under the permissible variations of the principle of nonintervention, which is not properly a violation. The pronoun cannot be attached to the *nomen rectum* without changing the sense. The construct state of the *nomen regens* has been carefully preserved in the Masoretic text by the absence of a principle accent, and by the *maqqeph*, even though there is a pronoun suffix.

Intervening emphatic כִּי. Dahood listed six examples of construct chains allegedly broken by an emphatic כִּי. None of the examples were recognized by the Masoretes as the emphatic כִּי. In each case Dahood emended the Masoretic presentation of the text to create the example—always by adding a space between consonants and, in some cases, by changing the vowels. All of the alleged examples are properly identified as pronoun suffixes of direct address followed by a vocative, not a genitive. None are unambiguous examples of broken construct chains.

Intervening enclitic mem. Dahood listed 23 examples of construct chains with intervening enclitic *mem*. However all of these examples involved revocalizing the Masoretic text to create the examples. Such revocalization is not strong evidence to demonstrate that an enclitic *mem* actually breaks the construct chain in biblical Hebrew.

Intervening vocative. Dahood listed one example of a construct chain with an intervening vocative, Ps 145:7, which reads זֵכֶר רַב־טוּבְךָ / 'the record, O Master, of your goodness'. רַב is regarded as the intervening vocative. However, Dahood emended the Masoretic marking by omitting the *maqqeph* between רַב and טוּבְךָ, and by ignoring the lack of an accent on רַב, both of which identify רַב as a construct form. As a construct noun, רַב is a member of an unbroken construct chain that is grammatically and semantically correct. The phrase is literally translated "the memory of the greatness of Your goodness," or "the memory of Your great goodness" (*NKJV*). Dahood's revocalization does not convincingly demonstrate that vocatives actually break construct chains in Biblical Hebrew.

In summary, Dahood did not list one example of an unambiguous broken construct chain; all his examples involved revocalizations,

ambiguous forms, or construct forms originating because of phonetics and rhythm rather than from a grammatical genitive relationship. Not one involves an intervening adjective and not one qualifies as a precedent for regarding רֹאשׁ as an adjective in Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1. Furthermore, Dahood did not list these Ezekiel passages as examples of broken construct chains.

Freedman's Broken Construct Chains

David Noel Freedman attempted to add more examples of broken construct chains to those listed by Dahood and Gesenius.[73]

Intervening enclitic mem. Freedman listed several additional examples of an intervening enclitic *mem*. All involved revocalizing the Masoretic text; none convincingly demonstrates that an enclitic *mem* actually breaks a construct chain in Biblical Hebrew.

Intervening clause. Freedman proposed that there is a clause breaking a construct chain in Isa 10:5 which reads וּמַטֶּה־הוּא בְיָדָם זַעְמִי. In this rather difficult construction, he proposed that the clause הוּא בְיָדָם / 'he is in their hand' breaks the construct chain . . . מַטֶּה זַעְמִי / 'the staff of . . . my fury'. In doing so he emended the absolute noun מַטֶּה to its construct form מַטֵּה and emended the word בְיָדָם to בְּיָדִים ('in my hand') with an enclitic *mem*. His translation is "the staff of my fury is he in my hand." His emendations created the broken construct chain. The Hebrew is difficult, but it can be understood without emending the Masoretic text. The *KJV* has "and the staff in their hand is my indignation," the *NKJV* has "and the staff in whose hand is My indignation," and the *NASB* has "and the staff in whose hands is My indignation." All these make tolerable sense following the Masoretic vocalization. Freedman's speculative revocalization does not provide strong evidence to demonstrate that Isa 10:5 is an instance where a clause really breaks a construct chain.

Intervening pronoun suffix. Freedman listed Hab 3:8 as an example of an intervening pronoun suffix: מַרְכְּבֹתֶיךָ יְשׁוּעָה / 'your chariots of salvation.' This is a case that comes under the permissible variations of the principle of nonintervention previously mentioned. In this case the pronoun cannot be attached to "salvation" without creating ambiguity.

Intervening sign of the direct object. Freedman listed Hab 3:13b as an example of the sign of the direct object breaking a construct chain. In the phrase לְיֵשַׁע אֶת מְשִׁיחֶךָ / 'for salvation with Your

[73]Freedman, "The Broken Construct Chain," 534–36.

Anointed,' Freedman proposed that the construct chain is . . . יֵשַׁע מְשִׁיחֶךָ . 'the salvation of . . . your anointed' in parallel with the preceding line "for the salvation of your people." The אֶת would then break the construct chain. However the form of the word יֵשַׁע is ambiguous, either absolute or construct, and the word אֶת may be either the sign of the direct object or the preposition "with." The translation, following a more conventional grammar, would be "for salvation with Thy Anointed" (*NKJV*). The absolute noun governing a prepositional phrase makes sense. Though the line lacks poetic parallelism, such progressive structure is not uncommon. Freedman's ambiguous speculation does not convincingly demonstrate that the sign of the direct object really breaks a construct chain in Biblical Hebrew.

Intervening adverb. Freedman listed Hab 3:13c as an example of an adverb breaking a construct chain. In the clause מָחַצְתָּ רֹאשׁ מִבֵּית רָשָׁע / 'You struck the head from the house of the wicked,' Freedman proposed that the construct chain is רָשָׁע . . . רֹאשׁ / 'the head of the . . . wicked one' and that the word מִבֵּית should be emended to מִבַּיִת (inward), so that the clause is translated "You crushed the head of the wicked one inwards." But רֹאשׁ is an ambiguous form, either absolute or construct, and the revocalization is speculation based on poetic parallelism. The Masoretic pointing of the text makes sense. This revocalization does not convincingly demonstrate that an adverbial phrase really breaks construct chains in Biblical Hebrew.

He also listed Ezek 39:11 as an example of an intervening adverb. The text reads מְקוֹם־שָׁם קֶבֶר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל / 'a place there of graves in Israel.' He proposed that the construct chain is מְקוֹם . . . קֶבֶר / 'a place of . . . burial' with the adverb שָׁם ('there') intervening. The translation would be "a place of burial there in Israel." However, קֶבֶר has the concrete meaning "grave, sepulchre, burial place"[74] rather than the abstract sense of "burial" which is rendered by the Hebrew קְבוּרָה. Regarding קֶבֶר as a genitive results in an awkward, unnatural sense ("a place of a grave there"). The last two words, קֶבֶר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, function more naturally as an appositive ("a place there, a burial place in Israel"). The construct form מְקוֹם is explained by the phonetics created by the close rhythmical relationship between it and the following adverb שָׁם. Nevertheless, the example remains a possible broken construct chain; but, because it makes sense in the more conventional view (i.e., as an appositive), it remains ambiguous and does not provide a precedent for demonstrating that an adverb really breaks a construct chain in Biblical Hebrew.

[74]BDB, 868.

Intervening verb. Freedman listed Hos 14:3 as an example of a verb breaking a construct chain. This example was previously noted by Gesenius,[75] and was discussed in a previous section.

He also listed Hos 6:9 as an example which reads דֶּרֶךְ יִרְצְחוּ שְׁכֶמָה / 'they murder on the way to Shechem'. He proposed that the construct chain is שְׁכֶמָה . . . דֶּרֶךְ, and that the verb intervenes. There are two reasons why this is ambiguous: (1) the form of דֶּרֶךְ is ambiguous, being either absolute or construct; and (2) the word שְׁכֶמָה has the locative *he* and is the equivalent of לִשְׁכֶם. Thus the translation is "the way to Shechem," and is not to be confused with "the way of Shechem." Because the example is ambiguous, it does not provide clear precedent.

He also listed Hos 8:2 as an example which reads לִי יִזְעָקוּ אֱלֹהַי יְדַעֲנוּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל / 'Israel will cry to Me, "My God, we know You." ' He proposed that the word אֱלֹהַי be revocalized to אֱלֹהֵי to produce the broken chain אֱלֹהֵי . . . יִשְׂרָאֵל / 'the God of . . . Israel' with the verb intervening. The translation would be "O God of Israel, we know you." This again involves revocalization of the Masoretic text. Freedman seems to exaggerate the change in number (from "my" to "we"), a common phenomenon in poetry. This instance does not provide strong evidence for demonstrating that a verb really breaks a construct chain in biblical Hebrew.

In summary, Freedman did not list one example of an unambiguous broken construct chain; all his examples involved unnecessary revocalization, ambiguous forms, or construct forms originating because of phonetics and rhythm rather than from a strictly grammatical genitive relationship. None involved an intervening adjective, nor do any qualify as a precedent for regarding רֹאשׁ as an adjective in Ezek 38:2, 3 and 39:1. Furthermore, Freedman did not list these passages in Ezekiel as examples of broken construct chains.

No Proof Found for Broken Construct Chains

None of the examples furnished by Gesenius, Dahood, or Freedman are unambiguous broken construct chains; all the examples involve unnecessary revocalization, ambiguous forms, or construct forms originating because of phonetics and rhythm rather than from a grammatical genitive relationship. All the possible cases of intervening attributive adjectives are problematical. Not one example qualifies as an unambiguous precedent for regarding רֹאשׁ as an adjective in Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1. Furthermore, none of the three scholars listed

these Ezekiel passages as examples of a broken construct chain. Consequently, it must be concluded that the existence of broken construct chains is speculative apart from the previously mentioned normal modifications of the principle of nonintervention. Alleged broken construct chains provide no support for breaking the principle of nonintervention in Ezekiel.

HISTORICAL ARGUMENT

The origin of the translation "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" is traced to the Latin Vulgate. The early translators of the English Bible were quite dependent on the Latin Version for help in translating difficult passages. They evidently followed Jerome in Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1.

Some have supposed that the Aramaic Targum may have been the source for interpreting רֹאשׁ as an adjective. The Targum reads רַב רֵישׁ מֶשֶׁך וְתֻבָל, where רַב is the equivalent of Hebrew נְשִׂיא and רֵישׁ (= רֵאשׁ) is the equivalent of Hebrew רֹאשׁ. But Aramaic has the same syntactic conventions for construct chains as Hebrew, so the same arguments that favor רֹאשׁ as a name in Hebrew favor רֵאשׁ as a name in Aramaic. Therefore, the Aramaic does not support regarding רֹאשׁ as an adjective, although those who do not take into account the difference in pronunciation may erroneously think so (as Aquila and Jerome may have thought).

Evidently by the second century A.D. the knowledge of the ancient land of Rosh had diminished. And because the Hebrew word רֹאשׁ was in such common use as "head" or "chief," Aquila was influenced to interpret רֹאשׁ as an adjective, contrary to the LXX and normal grammatical conventions. Jerome followed the precedent set by Aquila, and so diminished the knowledge of ancient Rosh even further by removing the name from the Latin Bible.

By the sixteenth century A.D. ancient Rosh was completely unknown in the West, so the early English translators of the Bible were influenced by the Latin Vulgate to violate normal Hebrew grammar in their translation of Ezekiel 38–39. Once the precedent was set in English, it was perpetuated in all subsequent English Versions until this century when some modern versions have taken exception. This ancient erroneous precedent should not be perpetuated.

CONCLUSION

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 ראש as a name is in harmony with normal Hebrew grammar and syntax. It is concluded that ראש 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."