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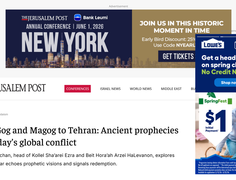
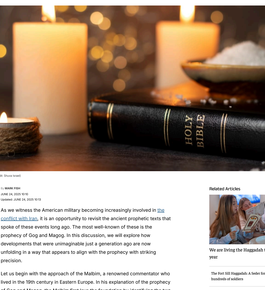


From Gog and Magog to Tehran: Ancient prophecies and today's global conflict

Rabbi Shai Tohan, head of Kollel Sharaei Ezra and Beit Hora'ah Arzei HaLevanon, explores how Iran's war echoes prophetic visions and signals redemption.



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By RABBI SHAI TOHAN
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As we witness the American military becoming increasingly involved in the conflict with Iran, it is an opportunity to revisit the ancient prophetic texts that spoke of these events long ago. The most well-known of these is the prophecy of Gog and Magog. In this discussion, we will explore how developments that were unimaginable just a generation ago are now unfolding in a way that appears to align with the prophecy with striking precision.

Let us begin with the approach of the Maßim, a renowned commentator who lived in the 19th century in Eastern Europe. In his explanation of the prophecy of Gog and Magog, the Maßim first lays the foundation by identifying the two opposing forces: Gog and Magog. He interprets them as representing two major civilizations—Christianity and Islam—and explains that the final war will be a religious one. This interpretation is particularly striking, as the major wars of the past century have largely been fought over territory, power, or political ideologies. A war driven by deep religious motivations has been largely absent from modern history—until now.

The Maßim states explicitly (Yechezkel chapter 38) that Persia—identified with modern-day Iran—will lead the Muslim coalition in the final war. He also writes (in chapter 32) about the events that will precede the war and the factors that will trigger it—an astonishing prediction that no one could have foreseen just a few generations ago. According to the Maßim, the timing of this war will be after the Jewish people have returned and settled in the Land of Israel—another prophecy that, a century ago, seemed far from reality. After all, there is no precedent in history of a nation being exiled and then returning to its ancestral homeland.

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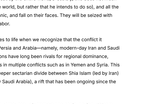

He further explains that the war's objective will be the conquest of Jerusalem, which in turn symbolizes the conquest of the entire Land of Israel. Strikingly, this too aligns with current reality, as the Arab openly describe their struggle as a war over Al-Aqsa—clearly framing the conflict as one centered on Jerusalem.

Interestingly, the outcome of the final war is mentioned in the current Daf Yomi, Avodah Zarah 2b, which states that Persia will rule until the coming of the Mashiach. However, Tosafot/Ketzitot/ha that this does not mean until, but rather close to that time—explaining that the West (representing America and its coalition) will defeat Persia nine months before the arrival of the Mashiach.

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אמר רבי שמעון בר יוחאי אם ראית מלך מלכי קדמון שראל מוקדם לגאולה, אל תגלה דבר, ע"ז

Another remarkable prophecy is the statement of the great Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, who said that when a horse is seen tied to the Land of Israel, one should expect the coming of the Mashiach. Though this may sound strange, anyone familiar with the Nazi-allied Mufti Amin al-Husseini *ימ"ש*, and the story of the flying horse named El- Buraq, will see the striking connection.

In 1929 (ה"תרפ"ט), violent riots broke out across Israel, sparked by tensions over Jewish access and rights to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Muslims, incited by false rumors that Jews planned to seize the site, responded with widespread attacks, especially in Hebron and Safed. The Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, played a central role in stirring unrest by promoting the claim that the wall was part of the al-Aqsa compound.

To reinforce Islamic claims to the Western Wall, the Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, popularized the legend of the Buraq—a flying horse with a peacock tail said to have carried Muhammad to Jerusalem and been tied to the Wall. This narrative, which has no source in the Quran, was promoted to challenge the Jewish connection to the site and became a foundation for ongoing religious and political tension over Jerusalem.

The Mufti invented this story in response to a visit by British officials who were investigating whether Islam had any theological link to the Western Wall. During the British Peel Commission, when asked to explain Islam's connection to the site, the Mufti claimed that Muhammad flew from Mecca to Jerusalem and tied the Buraq to the Wall—pointing to a specific spot on the Kotel as the place where it had been tied (see Chazon U'Faqion, p. 570).

This baseless claim became the foundation for the ongoing unrest surrounding the site of the Beit HaMikdash, which they refer to as Al-Aqsa. It represents a modern effort to undermine the Jewish connection to this holy place—one that every Jewish soul yearns for. All of this, just to bring to life the astonishing words of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

This Midrash also comes to life when we recognize that the conflict it describes is between Persia and Arabia—namely, modern-day Iran and Saudi Arabia. These two nations have long been rivals for regional dominance, backing opposing sides in multiple conflicts such as in Yemen and Syria. This struggle reflects the deeper sectarian divide between Shia Islam (led by Iran) and Sunni Islam (led by Saudi Arabia), a rift that has been ongoing since the death of Muhammad.

The Midrash concludes: Israel, too, will tremble and panic, saying: "Where shall we go, and where shall we turn?"

Hashem will say to them: "My children, do not fear. Everything I have done, I have done only for your sake.

Why are you afraid?

Do not fear—the time of your redemption has arrived. Unlike the first redemption, the final redemption will not be followed by suffering and subjugation to foreign powers. For the first redemption was followed by hardship and oppression, but the final redemption will come with no more pain and no more subjugation."

This article was written in cooperation with Shuva Israel

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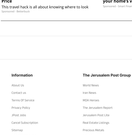

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