THIS WORLD

Persia, Iran, and the War of Gog and Magog

This spiritual war is older and more complex than you think.

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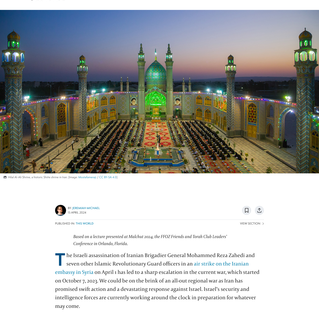

Photo 46.49: Shiraz, in Fars, Iran. Photo shot in Iran. (Image: Mesaboomaj / CC BY SA 4.0)

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The Israeli assassination of Iranian Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and seven other Islamic Revolutionary Guard officers in an air strike on the Iranian embassy in Syria and Aleppo's Iran hotel is a sharp escalation in the current war, which started on October 2, 2023. We could be on the brink of an all-out regional war as Iran has promised swift action and a devastating response against Israel. Israel's security and intelligence forces are currently working around the clock in preparation for whatever may come.

The current round of tensions between Iran and Israel started only six months ago on the holiday of Simchat Torah when the Iranian proxy in Gaza, Hamas, attacked Israel, killed over 1,200 people, and took hundreds into captivity. However, the war between Iran and Israel is only part of a millennia-old conflict. Gog and Magog have declared war on Israel, and Iran is currently leading the charge.

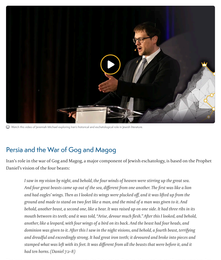

Photo 46.50: Pastor Jeremiah Michael speaks at Michael and Jewish Leaders Conference

Persia and the War of Gog and Magog

Iran's role in the war of Gog and Magog, a major component of Jewish eschatology, is based on the Prophet Daniel's vision of the four Beasts:

> *I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings. But as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth, and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh!' After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. (Daniel 7:2–7)*

The four beasts in Daniel's vision represent the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman empires. But of all these empires, the Persian Empire gets special attention in the book of Daniel. Daniel's vision of the ram that was between Persia and Israel is a spiritual one taking place between the archangel Michael and the demonic princes of Persia:

> *The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia. (Daniel 10:13)*

The sages named this demonic entity that rules Persia (Sofer), meaning "My god is a bear."

> *Daniel goes on to prophesy about four future kingdoms of Persia: "Behold, other more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them" (Daniel 11:2).*

Jewish tradition sees the first three kings in this vision as Cyrus, Darius, and Ahasuerus. However, the identity of the fourth king is a matter of disagreement. This interpretation means verse 2's a good literal interpretation of Daniel's prophecy based on a careful analysis of the historical events following his vision. However, I think we can also approach Daniel's vision from a broader viewpoint that interprets his vision as pertaining not to four Persian kings but to four Persian kingdoms.

The Four Kingdoms of Persia

The first three Persian empires, the Achaemenid, the Parthian, and the Sasanian Empires, have come and gone. I believe that the current Islamic Republic of Iran and its host of military proxies in the Middle East is the manifestation of the fourth Persian empire. While the geographical territory of the modern Kingdom of Persia is small compared to its predecessors, its influence, power, and wealth are felt all over the Middle East in ways its predecessors could only have dreamed of.

A Brief History of Iran and Israel

Labeling Iran and Israel as eternal mortal enemies because of the current tensions between the two countries would be a mistake, as history is filled with moments when Iran was a great friend to the Jewish people.

The birth of the Persian Empire was good for the Jewish people because it meant the end of the Babylonian exile, as Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian empire, was used by God to bring an end to the Babylonian Empire, which destroyed the Temple and exiled the Jewish people. Not only did the Persians destroy the enemies of the Jewish people, but they actively encouraged them to return to the land of Israel and to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

Cyrus was so integral to the return of the exiles to Zion from the Babylonian captivity that he is called the LORD's anointed in Isaiah:

> *Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed. (Isaiah 45:1)*

Hakhsara gave Cyrus dominion over the world, and by the time of his death in 530 BCE, he had established one of the greatest empires in ancient history.

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However, a mere forty-seven years after Cyrus's death, the Jewish people were faced with annihilation in Persia at the hands of King Ahasuerus' royal advisor, Haman. Haman's plot against the Jews in the Persian Empire and the several battles that ensued between the Jews and their enemies were battles in the war of Gog and Magog. The Jews of Persia were victorious over their enemies, and they had light, gladness, joy and honor—at least, until another battle took place between the Sasanian Persian Empire and the Byzantine Empire over Jerusalem in 614 CE.

During this battle, the Persians used the Jewish populations of Byzantine Palestine to fight Byzantine armies to take control of Jerusalem. The commander of the Jewish forces, Nehemiah Ben Hushiel, gathered an army of around 20,000 men and, together with the Sasanian troops, took control of Jerusalem. The seventeen-century apocalyptic Jewish text Sefer Zerubbabel viewed this battle for Jerusalem as the battle of Gog and Magog, and again, Persia was central in this great war. However, the Sasanians' alliance with the Jews of Byzantine Palestine was poorly political. It did not carry with it any acknowledgment of the Jewish people as the rightful inheritors of the land of Israel. A few years after the battle, the Sasanians forced all Jews out of Jerusalem and barred their access to the city. Only a few decades later, in 632 CE, the Sasanian empire fell to the Arabian caliphate. The Jewish community also underwent this at the time to be another battle in the war of Gog and Magog.

Modern Iran: Friend Turned Foe of the Jewish State.

The rebirth of the modern State of Israel in 1947 was welcomed by then-Iranian dictator Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who saw Israel as a natural ally against the three communist strongholds of Egypt and Syria.

Iranian recognition of Israel was made official on March 6, 1950, when the Iranian ambassador to the U.N., Nasrollah Entezam, informed the Israeli U.N. ambassador, Abba Eban, that Iran saw Israel as a legitimate nation and a partner in the Middle East.

By 1953, an Israeli-Iranian trading company was set up to encourage strong economic ties between the two countries. This partnership, however, was not welcomed by all in Iran. Islamic fundamentalism in Iran capitalized on anti-Shah political movements to stir up the people against the Shah by casting themselves as members of the global Islamic movement against oppressive regimes, of which Zionism was declared the most egregious in its desire for world control. This conspiracy theory garnered the support of religious Islamic fundamentalists against the Shah and any alliance with Israel. By 1963, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini would declare in his speeches, "[Israel] wishes to seize your economy, to destroy your trade and agriculture . . . It does not seek the rights of Iran—it is only learned Iran to exist in this country."

These ideas secured their way into the psyche of the Iranian people and helped foster anger against Israel as the bogeyman behind the Shah's totalitarian policies. This anger toward Israel fueled the Islamic revolution of 1979 when Khomeini and his allies overthrew the Shah. Once Iran became an Islamic Republic, it took on a new role on the world stage as the leader of the Islamic Ummah and the primary antagonist in the war of Gog and Magog.

Iran-Palestine Terrorism Connection

The current Iranian-Palestinian terrorism connection did not start on October 1, 2023. It began as soon as Iran became an Islamic Republic in 1979, when Yasser Arafat's terrorist organization, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), came to Iran to forge a new alliance. He was the first foreign leader to establish diplomatic relations with Iran.

Arafat visited Iran on February 13, 1979, 15min meeting the Iranian delegation at the Mehrabad airport in Tehran, he declared, "The Iranian revolution was a major turnabout and an important victory for the Palestine." This declaration caused the Iranian to take over the embassy of Israel, "Today Iran, Tomorrow Palestine!" Two days later, Arafat arrived in the Iranian Israeli consulate in Tehran and declared it the new Palestinian consulate. Arafat saw this as his first victory over Israel and the first piece of Israeli real estate he took back for the Palestinians.

Like the painful factions in the early days of the Iranian Islamic revolution, Yasser Arafat was trained by the KGB to present himself as a noble statesman who cared about peace and diplomatic solutions to conflicts. This was part of an elaborate plan to hide his genocidal bloodlust against the State of Israel and the Jewish people worldwide. Arafat began a new alliance with the PLO and its psychopathic, anti-Semitic, barbaric leader against Israel. The Iranians were always ready to wage a propaganda war against Israel on the world stage thanks to the influence of Arafat and his KGB training. This propaganda war would quickly transform Israel's image on the world stage into that of an aggressor against the Palestinian people. Now, thanks to this propaganda, Palestinian terrorism was and continues to be justified as a means to end a "Neutral occupation." This alliance between Iran and the PLO was the seedbed for Hezbollah, Hamas, and numerous other Iranian proxies in the all-out war against Israel.[1]

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This war against the existence of the Jewish state manifested in near-daily Palestinian terrorist attacks encouraged by Iran, the shadowy effort were the suicide bombings of the Second Intifada, which took the lives of around 1,300 Israelis.

From the end of the Second Intifada in 2005 to the present, Iran has positioned dozens of military proxies in five major countries around Israel: Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in Gaza and Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, and several other terrorist organizations in Iraq and Bahrain—Kataeb Sayyad Al Shuhada and the Al Ashtar Brigades, just to name a few. At this point, Iranian influence in the Middle East is undeniable, and their military strength is a force to be reckoned with.

The Spiritual Battle

Whether the Iranian government realizes it or not, they are currently being used by the enemy in his fight against Israel in the great war of Gog and Magog. The Prophet Daniel foresaw the power of the great Persian bear; the Holy Spirit revealed to him that four manifestations of Persia would come into the world. The first three Persian kingdoms have come and gone, and now we are living in the time of the fourth kingdom. Iran's "holy war" against the State of Israel, their proxies that have dragged Israel into decades of warfare, their support of Palestinian terrorism, including the October 7 attack from which we are still reeling—none of this has escaped the eye of Hashem. We are witnessing the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Make no mistake—there are skirmishes in the great war of Gog and Magog; they are a modern-term used by Satan to distract away from his ultimate end goal in his war: the destruction of God's people and, if possible, God himself.

The devil is cruel and wicked, and the people of Iran mean nothing to him. He hates them as much as he hates any other people group, but because they are useful in his war against Israel, they hold value to him (for now). But history shows us that Satan does not have complete control over Iran; in fact, they have been a friend to the Jewish people. In times past, Iran has actively aided the Jewish people in building the Temple, fleeing with them to Jerusalem, and stood with them as a powerful modern ally in the Middle East. Yet, at the same time, Iran has also persecuted the Jewish people and even threatened them with annihilation. This will they never! Why dynamic shows us that the war of Gog and Magog, in addition to being a war of the nations against Israel, is also an internal struggle of the nations within themselves over whether they will side with the kingdom of God or fight against it to establish their own kingdom.

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The current relationship between Iran and Israel is bleak. Right now, at this stage of the war of Gog and Magog, Iran is not a friend of Israel. The spirit of Haman motivates Iran to destroy the Jewish people. Every terrorist attack on Israel from Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis is an outworking of the same wicked spirit that pressured Haman to annihilate the Jewish people in the days of Esther and Mordecai.

However, it does not have to be this way. While we cannot wage war in the physical realm against Iran, every one of us can fight in the spiritual realm. Our weapons is prayer, and the prayers of the righteous are a powerful weapon against the schemes of the enemy. Right now, our prayers for Israel during this critical time are like arrows in the hands of Michael in his fight against the prince of Persia, who is struggling a nation of 85.9 million people under an oppressive regime to conduct his plans against Israel.

As members of God's Kingdom, we can pray for the success of Israel and her victory in battle while also praying fervently for the freedom of the people of Iran, a nation with a deep and wonderful history. We can pray that God would strengthen the underground church in Iran and that the 4,000 Jews who still live there would be protected. We can pray that the seed of the Iranian people would awaken in strength and wisdom and come to know the Messiah Yeshua. We can pray that they would overthrow the Islamic regime and once more become a great friend of the Jewish people. Our prayers matter, and they are powerful. The war of Gog and Magog is not over; the time for the final battle, where the nations will rise against Israel, is quickly approaching. The enemy is gathering his forces against God's people. But there is hope, because we know that in the end, God will be victorious in the battle for Israel and the repentance of the nations, and Iran is no exception.

1. B.Hosaa 234.
2. For more, read the Sefer article "Arafat and the Ayatollahs" by Tony Badran.

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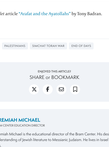

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