

Dr. Debra Kaplan and Dr. Aaron Koller

Haftarah for Shabbat Chol Ha-Mo'ed Sukkot: The Power of an Idea: Gog and Magog from Biblical Figures to Inter-religious Polemics

The book of *Yechezkel* tells one long story: it begins with God's abandonment of the land of Israel and of Jerusalem (chs. 1–11), and concludes with His permanent return and the establishment of a new Temple in which He would be enshrined, never to be dislocated again (chs. 40–48; see especially ch. 43). Prior to the description of the new Temple, Yechezkel explains how God can bring back the people: are they not, after all, like dry bones, cut off from God? They are indeed, the prophet answers, but God can bring dead bones back to life, and he can bring an exiled people back, too (37:1–14).

There is just one matter left for Yechezkel to address before moving on to tell of the future Temple. He speaks vividly of a terrifying war yet to come, led by Gog, the king of Magog. After the Jews return to their land, "On that day, when My people Israel are living secure, you will take note and you will come from your home in the farthest north, you and many people with you – all of them mounted on horses, a vast horde, a mighty army – and you will advance upon My people Israel, like a cloud covering the earth" (38:14–16). This will be no mundane war; the very fabric of creation will be threatened. But Gog would not have his way. Alluding to a reversal of *Bereishit* 1:20–26, Yechezkel prophesies:

אם לא ביום ההוא יהיה רעש גדול על אדמת ישראל, ורעשו מפני דגי הים ועוף השמים וחיית השדה וכל הרמש הרמש על האדמה וכל האדם אשר על פני האדמה.

On that day, a terrible earthquake shall befall the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the beast of the field, all creeping things that move on the ground, and every human being on earth shall quake before Me. (28:20)

Before the Magogian army even has a chance to encounter a single Israel soldier, God will unleash his fury at the invaders: "I will then summon the sword against him throughout My mountains...I will punish him with pestilence and bloodshed, and I will pour torrential rain, hailstones, and sulfurous fire upon him and his hordes and the many peoples with him" (38:21–22). The purpose of this exercise is clear: "I will be magnified, sanctified, and known in the eyes of many nations, and they will know that I am the Lord" (38:23).

Within the vision of Yechezkel, this is the penultimate act in the redemption of God. He voluntarily left Jerusalem and allowed the Babylonians to raze the Temple and destroy the city; prior to taking up residence there once again, He will demonstrate that when Jerusalem is under His protection, even the most powerful, most terrifying army in the world cannot hope to make inroads against it.¹⁵⁸

The identity of Magog (named also in *Bereishit* 10:2) is not clear. Many commentators take the name to be a reference to Babylon itself, but the more popular view is that it is a term for the Scythians.¹⁵⁹ These were peoples who lived in Central Asia, Russia, and the Ukraine. In Yechezkel's time, this area was beyond the frontier, and the people who lived there were deeply mysterious to residents of the Near East. One can imagine the terror massive waves of Scythians, sweeping over the mountains of Iran and Turkey, would have caused in Israel.

¹⁵⁸. For a good discussion of the role of Gog and Magog within *Yechezkel*, see Julie Galambush, "Necessary Enemies: Nebuchadnezzar, YHWH, and Gog in Ezekiel 38–39," in *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past* (ed. Brad E. Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 254–267.

¹⁵⁹. Michael C. Astour, "Ezekiel's Prophecy of Gog and the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin," *JBL* 95 (1976), 567–579. For discussion and more references, see Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Volume 2: Chapters 25–48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 432–438.

Terrifying and powerful as this vision may have been in its own time, the images of Gog and Magog took many interesting turns in the centuries after Yechezkel. Already in the earliest work of rabbinic literature, *Seder Olam* (ch. 17), the “coming of Gog” is mentioned as an event which will take place at some point after the coming of the *Mashiach*. Similarly, *Bereishit Rabbah* 88:5 tells of the two future salvations of the people of Israel: one in the days of *Mashiach*, and the second in the days of Gog. The *gemara* in *Shabbat* 118a says that anyone who eats three meals on *Shabbat* will be saved from three agonies: the agony of the Messianic Age, the agony of *Gehenom*, and the agony of the war of Gog and Magog.¹⁶⁰ Thus, in *Chazal*, Gog ceased being the king of a nation called Magog; instead, two figures, or two nations, called Gog and Magog, will be conducting joint operations together against Israel and the world.

A further development was that at least one other Biblical passage was read as a reference to Gog and Magog: *Zechariah* 14:1–3 foretells that “a day is coming for the Lord...I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem for war...and the Lord will go out and fight against all those nations.” According to texts such as *Vayikra Rabbah* 27:11, this is a reference to the war against Gog and Magog, which will take place at the beginning of the Messianic Age. The conclusion of the prophecy in *Zechariah* explains that as a result of the war, *“הַיְהוָה יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא”* “the Lord will become king of the whole world; on that day the Lord will be one and His name one” (*Zechariah* 14:9).

Some *midrashim* give an idea of what would make Gog and Magog different from all other enemies:

ואף גוג ומגוג לעתיד לבא עתיד לומר שוטים היו ראשונים שהיו מתעסקין בעצות עם מלכיהם על ישראל ולא היו יודעין שיש להם פטרון בשמים, אני איני עושה כן אלא הריני מזדווג עם פטרון תחלה ואח"כ אני מזדווג להם.

Gog and Magog, too, in the future, will say, “The earlier enemies were fools, because they concocted plans, together with their kings, against Israel, and they did not know that they have a protector in heaven (*patron*). I will not do so, but I will first attack their protector and then attack them.”¹⁶¹

In other texts, it is clear that *Chazal* understand that Gog and Magog will be a type of anti-Messiah. There will be a messianic figure, and he will have a nemesis that he will have to overcome. For example, the *gemara* in *Sanhedrin* 94a tells that “the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to make Chizkiyahu the messiah and Sancheriv Gog and Magog.” This idea foundered on the fact that Chizkiyahu hadn’t sung a song when Jerusalem was saved from the Assyrians.

Thus, *Chazal* consistently see the war of Gog and Magog as part of the complex of events that will mark the end-time, although the specifics, such as whether it will precede or follow the arrival of the *Mashiach*, seem to have been debated.

Gog and Magog in Other Religious Traditions

The idea of Gog and Magog made its way from *Yechezkel* into other religious traditions. The New Testament refers to Gog and Magog as being gathered into battle by Satan at the End of Days (*Revelations* 20:7–9). The story of Gog and Magog took on greater significance in the fifth century, at about the same time that the *Bavli* was being produced and not too far from Babylonia. Apocalyptic stories about Alexander the Great, based on earlier legends about the king, proliferated, first in Greek, and then in twenty-four other languages.¹⁶² One specific story about Alexander, which had been reported by Josephus and early Greek texts, related that Alexander had constructed a wall in the mountains of the Caucasus in order to lock up and enclose local tribes.¹⁶³ In the fifth century texts, the most complete of which was composed by the famous Syriac writer Jacob of Serugh (451–521), the tribes that Alexander locked up were reputed to be Gog and Magog. The gate that Alexander had constructed was to be sealed until the End of Days:

This great gate which thou hast made in this land
Shall be closed until the End of Times cometh.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰. The different views in *Chazal* regarding the Messianic Age, the Resurrection, Gog and Magog, and Eliyahu, are catalogued by Chaim Milikowsky, “Trajectories of Return, Restoration and Redemption in Rabbinic Judaism: Elijah, the Messiah, the War of Gog and the World to Come,” in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives* (ed. James M. Scott; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 265–280.

¹⁶¹. *Esther Rabbah* 7:23.

¹⁶². Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 56.

¹⁶³. Andrew R. Anderson, *Alexander’s Gate: Gog and Magog and the Enclosed Nations*. Monographs of the Mediaeval Academy of America, no. 5 (Cambridge: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1932).

¹⁶⁴. “The Discourse of Jacob of Serugh,” in *Visions of the End*, 57.

This was then linked to a passage in *Yirmiyahu* in which the prophet spoke of a gate in the north which would be opened and unleash the wicked (*Yirmiyahu* 1:14). Interpreting this passage eschatologically, the apocalyptic legends of Alexander predicted that in a moment of apocalyptic terror, Gog and Magog would be unleashed at the End of Days from the wall that had kept them excluded from the rest of the world:

Then the hosts of Agog and of the house of Magog shall go forth,
And man shall fall upon his fellow, and nation upon nation,
And the quaking of the earth and the sword of answer shall be there.
On the skirts of Zion shall the dead lay in heaps.
And after these things the earth shall be desolated of mankind,
Villages shall be destroyed and all towns and cities.¹⁶⁵

The merging of the Gog and Magog characters with the Legend of Alexander amplified the verses in *Yechezkel* and the passages in *Revelations* to provide more a more detailed version of these barbaric tribes that would unleash violence in the days preceding the coming of the Antichrist.

In the seventh century, *The Revelations of the Pseudo-Methodius*, one of the most influential Christian apocalyptic texts, was composed, most likely in Syria. This text was written in a political as well as a religious context, meant to explain the emerging Muslim empire and its part in history and eschatology.¹⁶⁶ As will also be seen below, apocalyptic traditions often dealt with opposing religious groups, in order to interpret what role they would play at the End of Days. The role of the *Pseudo-Methodius* in Christian apocalypticism was particularly significant because it introduced a new figure, the Last World Emperor, into the Christian apocalyptic narrative. This emperor was to defeat the enemies of Christianity (who, in the seventh century, were deemed to be the Muslims), after which the Emperor would reign, eventually crown the Antichrist, and thereby usher in the End of Days. In the *Pseudo-Methodius*, the Last World Emperor was linked to the Alexander legend and to the figures of Gog and Magog. Describing Alexander's conquest, the text relates that "he beheld unclean races of horrible appearance."¹⁶⁷ As in the earlier Alexander legends, he proceeded to lock up these tribes, here in an even more detailed narrative:

He gave orders and gathered them all together with their women and children and all their villages. Leading them away from the East, he restrained them with threats until they entered the northern lands where there is no way in or out from East to West to visit them. Alexander prayed to God without interruption and He heard his prayer. The Lord God gave a command to the two mountains...and they came together within twelve cubits. Alexander built bronze gates, and covered them with unmixed bitumen, so that if anyone wished to force them open by steel or to melt them with fire, he would be able to do neither, but immediately, every fire would be extinguished.¹⁶⁸

The text goes on to list twenty-two "nations and kings" that were locked in those mountains by Alexander, the first of which were Gog and Magog.¹⁶⁹ *Pseudo-Methodius* goes on to describe the rise of Islam, and then introduces the figure of the Last World Emperor, who would defeat the Muslims. After this victory, though, the horrifying figures locked up by Gog and Magog were to break out of the constraints placed upon them by Alexander, beginning the period of apocalyptic terror:

Then the "Gates of North" will be opened and the strength of those nations which Alexander shut up there will go forth. The whole earth will be terrified at the sight of them; men will be afraid and flee in terror to hide themselves in mountains and caves and graves. They will die of fright, and very many will be wasted with fear. There will be no one to bury the bodies. The tribes which will go forth from the North will eat the flesh of men and will drink the blood of beasts like water. They will eat unclean serpents, scorpions, and every kind of filthy and abominable beast and reptile which crawls the earth. They will consume the dead bodies of beasts and

¹⁶⁵. Ibid., 59.

¹⁶⁶. McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 70–73.

¹⁶⁷. "Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius," in *Visions of the End*, 73.

¹⁶⁸. Ibid.

¹⁶⁹. Ibid.

burden and every woman's abortions. They will slay the young and take them away from their mothers and eat them. They will corrupt the earth and contaminate it. No one will be able to stand against them.¹⁷⁰

The *Pseudo-Methodius*, building on the imagery from the earlier Alexander legends, was innovative in both its construction of a role for Islam in the apocalyptic drama, and in its enhancement of the figures of Gog and Magog as terrifying figures of the End of Days. These originally Biblical figures were now not only the fearsome tribes locked up by Alexander, but they were to afflict the world with almost every imaginable horror. The violent, terrorizing, and repulsive actions attributed to them provided detailed images of the Christian apocalyptic drama. The *Pseudo-Methodius* was widely read, and was translated into Greek, Russian, Armenian, Arabic, Old Slavonic, and Latin. With these translations, the apocalyptic imagery and the expanded role that Gog and Magog were to play in the Christian tradition of the End of Days entered both Eastern and Western Christianity.¹⁷¹

These texts share a number of elements with those of *Chazal*. First, Gog is no longer the king of Magog, but a people alongside Magog (or a single nation, "Gog and Magog"). Second, the attack of Gog and Magog is willed by a divine force – God himself in *Chazal*, of course, but Satan in the Christian apocalypses (as early as *Revelations* ch. 20). Third, Gog and Magog were linked to an anti-Messiah, represented by the Antichrist in Christian tradition. Finally, the attack of Gog and Magog signals the end of an era or the beginning of a new one, be it messianic times or the eschaton itself.

The motif of Gog and Magog also found its way into the *Qur'ān* (seventh century Arabia). In *Sūrat al-Kahf* ("the chapter of the cave," *Sūra* ch. 18), a strange character is introduced: "the One of the Two Horns" (*Dhu l-Qarnayn*). This figure can seemingly be traced back to *Daniel* chapter 8, where there is a ram with two horns, but in the *Qur'ān*, he has a life of his own. The passage of interest to us reads:

They said, "Oh, Dhu l-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog (*Yājūj* and *Mājūj*) are creating disorder in the earth; shall we then pay you tribute on condition so that you set up a barrier between us and them?" He replied, "The power with which my Lord has endowed me about this is better than the resources of my enemies, but you may help me with strength of workers, and I will set up a rampart between you and them. Bring me blocks of iron." They did so.... So they (Gog and Magog) were not able to scale it, nor were they able to dig through it. Then he said, "This is a mercy from my Lord. But when the promise of my Lord shall come to pass, He will break it into pieces. And the promise of my Lord is certainly true. And on that day, we will leave some of them to surge against others, and the trumpet will be blown. Then shall we gather them all together, and on that day we shall present Hell, face to face, to the disbelievers whose eyes were under a veil, not heeding my reminder and they could not even afford to hear" (18:95–102).

R. Saadia Gaon (and many others) pointed out that Dhu l-Qarnayn is a cipher for Alexander the Great.¹⁷² Thus the *Qur'ān*, too, attests to the merging of the themes of Gog and Magog together with the story of the wall built by Alexander.¹⁷³ Together these yield a terrifying tale of hordes of people, currently trapped behind a massive wall but later to be released.¹⁷⁴ That the association between Alexander and Gog and Magog was known by Jewish, Muslim, and Christian thinkers demonstrates the ways that the Biblical prophecy in *Yechezkel* had developed and been enhanced to provide details about the much-anticipated End of Days.

In the same seventh century which produced the *Qur'ān*, a Jewish apocalyptic text called *Sefer Zerubavel* was written. This is a remarkable text, which tells of a messianic figure who will die in battle – *Mashiach ben Yosef* – to be followed by a *Mashiach* who will redeem the world – *Mashiach ben David* – and then will resurrect the *Mashiach ben Yosef*, who will join him in ushering in the new world. Also striking is that the mother of the Davidic *Mashiach*,

¹⁷⁰. Ibid., 75–76.

¹⁷¹. McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 72–73.

¹⁷². R. Saadia Gaon, in his introduction to *Megillat Esther*, available in Hebrew translation in תורת חיים: מגילת אסתר (ed. Mordechai Breuer and Mordechai Leib Katzenelenbogen; Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 2006), 319, writes that "Alexander, who is called Dhu l-Qarnayn, ruled over the whole world."

¹⁷³. See John Kaltner, "The Gog-Magog Tradition in the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an: Points of Similarity and Dissimilarity," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 49 (1995), 35–48.

¹⁷⁴. Many identify the walls of Derbent, Russia (close to the border with Azerbaijan), as the walls which are behind these legends. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derbent> (accessed June, 2011).

Cheftzibah, is a major military force in the story, destroying two kings with her magical staff.¹⁷⁵ In describing the actions of the final *Mashiach*, the text says:

This will happen in the third war, for there will be three wars in the Land of Israel: one that Hephzibah will wage against Shiroi, king of Persia, another that the Lord, God of Israel and Menahem son of Amiel will wage against Armilos and the ten kings with him, and Gog and Magog, and a third at Zela ha-Eleph, which Nehemiah son of Hushiel and Zerubavel will wage. This third war will take place in the month of Av.¹⁷⁶

The apocalypse of *Sefer Zerubavel* also makes use of, and viciously inverts, Christian traditions about the Messianic Age. This, then, is another example of the use of Gog and Magog in the intellectual and religious battles waged by the Jews against other religions.¹⁷⁷

The relevance of Gog and Magog to ancient and medieval thinkers across religions can be seen in various materials that linked the apocalyptic figures to historical realities. In the twelfth century, for example, the Spanish Muslim cartographer al-Idrisi, who had been supported at the court of Roger II of Sicily for 18 years, produced a monumental atlas of the world. In the bottom left of the summary map that appeared on the front of the atlas there is a massive wall, containing *Yājūj* and *Mājūj*, Gog and Magog, waiting to be freed to overrun the infidels in the world.¹⁷⁸

Gog and Magog were also linked to the Crusades, and, in some Christian texts from the thirteenth century, they were identified with the Mongols.¹⁷⁹ Perhaps ironically, the text also claimed that the Mongols wrote in Hebrew, thereby linking the Jews to the Mongols and to Gog and Magog. Other thirteenth century Christian texts did the same. According to some chronicles, the Mongols were the descendants of the Ten Tribes, whom Jews had long claimed would return at the End of Days; one chronicle asserted that the Jews viewed Gengis Khan, leader of the Mongols, as the messiah.¹⁸⁰ These legends accused the Jews of helping the Mongols, casting both the Mongols and the Jews into the Christian apocalyptic narrative as enemies.

Gog and Magog as Counterhistory and Polemic

The Christian identification of the Ten Tribes with Gog and Magog had begun in the twelfth century, and made clear use of elements of Jewish eschatological traditions.¹⁸¹ Jewish tradition had long explained that the Ten Tribes resided beyond the Sambatyon River, a river that churned with rocks and which could not be crossed, other than when it rested on *Shabbat*.¹⁸² The Tribes were therefore inaccessible, given that traveling to see them was not halakhically permissible. Medieval Christian lore linked the inaccessible Ten Tribes to the Alexander myth and to the penned-up Gog and Magog, asserting that the Ten Tribes had been locked up with Gog and Magog by Alexander.¹⁸³ As this myth

¹⁷⁵. For one version of the text, see S.A. Wertheimer, *בתי מדרשות* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1954), 2.497–505. The text is available in translation by Martha Himmelfarb in *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature* (ed. David Stern and Mark J. Mirsky; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 67–90. Himmelfarb's introduction to the text is very valuable.

¹⁷⁶. Himmelfarb in *Rabbinic Fantasies*, 78–79, and see also 77.

¹⁷⁷. David Biale, "Counter-History and Jewish Polemics Against Christianity: The *Sefer toldot yeshu* and the *Sefer zerubavel*," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (1999), 130–145.

¹⁷⁸. The map can be accessed at: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000547t/f14.image.r=.langEN>.

¹⁷⁹. Israel J. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity Through the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 141, 285–286.

¹⁸⁰. On the Jewish tradition linking the ten tribes to the messianic era, see *Sanhedrin* 100b. On the Mongols, see Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 285.

¹⁸¹. The link between Gog and Magog with the Ten Tribes was first presented by Peter Comestor. See Andrew Colin Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age, 1200–1600*, (Leiden: Brill 1995), 42–45.

¹⁸². See for example *Bereishit Rabbah* §11.

¹⁸³. That Christians knew about this tradition is apparent from their own competing tradition of Prester John. According to medieval Christian texts, the kingdom of Prester John, which was heir to the apostle Thomas, was located in an inaccessible place beyond a river. This is another example of polemical counterhistory in the Jewish-Christian debates over apocalypticism. On Prester John, see Avraham Gross, "Aseret ha-Shevatim u-malhut Prester John: Shemuot ve-Hipusim lifnei Gerush Sefarad ve-Aharav," *Pe'amim* 48 (1991), 5–41; Gow, *The Red Jews*, 38–41. The medieval letters about Prester John mention both the Ten Tribes and Gog and Magog, but do not conflate the two as was done in the writings of Comestor. On the development of counterhistory, see Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

developed further, another group, the Red Jews, were also listed among those nations who had been sealed behind the mountains by Alexander.¹⁸⁴ These ideas made their way into popular culture as well, as late medieval artwork and popular texts depicted Alexander locking up Gog, Magog, the Ten Tribes, and the Red Jews, and also displayed them as the violent hordes that would be unleashed at the End of Days.¹⁸⁵ These new assertions converged with the already extant medieval Christian belief that the Antichrist would be a Jew born from the tribe of Dan.¹⁸⁶ Just as the seventh-century *Pseudo Methodius* had inserted the Muslim empire into the Christian legends concerning the End of Days, so too did the association of the Jews with Gog and Magog reinforce the role of Jews as villains in the Christian apocalyptic drama.

One provocative popular German text from the fifteenth century depicts a conversation between a Jew and a friar, in which the Jew asks the friar to tell him about the Antichrist. Playing on the Christian assertion that the Jews rejected the true messiah, and that the messiah for whom the Jews waited was the Antichrist, the text linked the Antichrist, the Jewish messiah, the myth of Alexander, Gog and Magog, the Ten Tribes, and the Red Jews:

The Jew asks the friar:

Since you are such a good diviner,
Tell me when the Antichrist will come,
Or when he will be born...
We have waited for him now
More than fifteen hundred years
And seventeen, and many days besides...

The Friar:

You damnable Jew, I will tell you
It is quite obvious, and
Jacob made it clear
Where he tells us of the serpent
The Antichrist will be descended
From the tribe of Dan...
And three kings will follow him
Gog and Magog, whom Alexander enclosed,
Will be let loose:
They will cause much misery in Christendom
And create much pain and suffering...

The Jew:

O friar, Say no more;
I wish he would come tomorrow
Because we have been waiting for him for so long.¹⁸⁷

By the medieval and early modern periods, the apocalyptic interpretations of Gog and Magog, mixed as they were with legends of the Ten Tribes and Antichrist, became part of the emerging anti-Semitism that was part of popular culture in German lands. This is a further example of the twists and turns taken by apocalyptic legends and the inclusion of competing religious groups within a given tradition's apocalyptic lore. In addition, these later texts clearly demonstrate the often polemical intersections between the eschatological traditions of different religious traditions, seen vividly in the Christian interpretations of the figures of Gog and Magog and the Ten Tribes.

¹⁸⁴. The Red Jews were a legendary group, said to have been enclosed by Alexander along with Gog and Magog. This legend emerged in medieval German-speaking lands, and is primarily found in popular literature, pamphlets, and artwork. By the early 17th century, references to the Red Jews disappeared from popular Christian texts. See Gow, *The Red Jews*.

¹⁸⁵. For examples, see Gow, *The Red Jews*, Appendix D.

¹⁸⁶. This tradition was voiced in the Latin Tiburtine Sybils, as well as by various medieval authors. On the Sybils, see Gow, *The Red Jews*, 96–98. For development of these theme in the medieval period, see Adso of Montier-en-Dier, "Adso's Letter on the Antichrist," in *Visions of the End*, 84–85. The blessing given to Dan likening him to a snake was part of the interpretation, since snakes and the Antichrist were associated with Satan.

¹⁸⁷. Gow, *The Red Jews*, 127. For the German original, see Gow, 377–379.

These polemical exchanges were not one-way. In a striking example, early modern Yiddish writers adapted the Christian notion of Red Jews, ascribing to them a positive and completely different role and interpretation than did Christian apocalyptic and anti-Semitic texts. Whereas Christian writers adopted the Jewish traditions of the Ten Tribes and transformed them into polemical attacks against Judaism, Jews adopted the mythical figures of the Red Jews in their own popular writings, and countered the Christian claim that these Jews were the violent hordes of the End of Days by ascribing a positive role to them.¹⁸⁸ The myths that developed around and in response to Gog and Magog demonstrate the widespread interest in the End of Days in various religious traditions, and the ways that popular religious traditions on this topic intersected with one another, often in polemical and competing ways.

¹⁸⁸. See the forthcoming work of Rebekka Voss, who has looked at the Ten Tribes and the Red Jews as they appeared in early modern Jewish and Christian culture.