



## The Book of Revelation: A Glimpse into Rabbinic Eschatology

### Jewish Eschatology<sup>1</sup>

There is no single book on eschatology in Judaism. It's not systematic like Christian eschatology.

- There are many places Jewish people have to go in Jewish literature to form an idea of what Jewish eschatology is.
- Eschatology in Judaism begins with the Tanak/OT and flows into Talmudic and Kabbalistic Literature.

### **3 Major Eschatological Concepts:**

1. עולם הבא - *The World to Come/Olam Haba* (Torah is mostly silent on the issue of the afterlife)
2. תחיית המתים - *Resurrection of the Dead/Techiyat HaMeitim* (Tanak is more explicit about the Resurrection of the Dead than any other eschatological doctrine) Is a core belief of the Mishnah.
3. משיח - *Messiah/Mashiach* (Tanak offers easier speculation than the previous doctrines)

### **Everyday Eschatology:**

- Jews pray daily, 3x a day for certain eschatological realities to come to pass. This is found recitation of the central prayer in Judaism- *The Amidah/Shemoneh Esreih*

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> ἔσχατος λογος: study of last things

**10 Basic components of Eschatology in Judaism** (#'s indicate in order found in the Amidah):

1. Resurrection of the Dead (#2)
2. Ingathering of Exiles(#11).
3. Elijah the Prophet(#12, Eliyahu must come to restore Sanhedrin and other components of Judaism/ #6 teshuvah/repentance)
4. The Last Day of Judgment (#13-14, Musaf Y"K, reward of righteous and wicked). Emphasis on "Last" since every Rosh HaShanah is a Day of Judgment.
5. Rebuilding of Jerusalem(#15).
6. Messiah (#16)
7. Rebuilding of the Temple (#18) 3<sup>rd</sup> Temple
8. *Nations recognizing the God of Israel* - Not mass conversion to Judaism but mass recognition of Israel's God.
9. *Gog and Magog* - Battle of Gog the Prince of the Land of Magog, Nations align against Israel.
10. The World to Come

***The Template of Exile:***

- Exile is always the structure i.e. interpretive key from which Jewish eschatology springs from. Exile is a tool of revelation.
- גלות - Exile/Galut is the root of הַתְּגָלוּת Revelation/Hitgalut

Biblical/Historical Ex. - **Gen.3:15- Proto-Evangelion**

- **Gen. 37-49; Joseph exiled in Egypt, brothers go down due to famine, Joseph revealed; Gen.49, Ya'akov's End of Days Blessing on 12 sons**
- **Deut.30**
- **Prophetic Books of Tanak**
- **Holocaust**

***2 Main Stages of Messiah's Coming:***

(In Judaism Messiah's revealing is a *process* unlike the *suddenness* of it in Christianity at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming)

1. עקב משיח - The Heels of Messiah/Eikev Mashiach:

“Suggests the last generation of the *galut*, thus *the last stage of Jewish history of the pre-Messianic era*. That generation is last not only in terms of time, but also in terms of stature-spiritually and morally the lowest and hindmost, analogous to the heel of man. On the other hand, being the last generation of the *galut*, it is also the one that feels and hears the footsteps of Moshiach and will experience his coming.”<sup>2</sup>

2. חבלי של משיח - Birthpangs of Messiah/ Chevlei Shel Mashiach:  
“Jacob’s Trouble” (Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, 7 years)<sup>3</sup>

- Timeline of Holocaust follows a timeline of a seven year tribulation:

Nov.9/10, 1938- Kristallnacht

Jan. 1942- Mass killings w/Zyklon B begin in Concentration Camps

Jan.6, 1945- Red Army liberates Budapest, 80,000 Jews freed

Sept.2, 1945- WWII officially Ends

Nov. 20, 1945- Nuremberg Int. Military Tribunal opens

Hitler wanted a regime that would last a Millennium and made alliances with the Arabs as well as the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.

***Gog, Magog, and the Islamic World***

There are four exiles the Midrash Rabba speaks of: Babylonian, Media-Persia, Greek, and Rome.<sup>4</sup> The Zohar speaks of a fifth exile which involves Ishmael as an extension of the Roman exile.

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<sup>2</sup> Shochet, J. Immanuel. *Living With Moshiach: Eikev I*. Brooklyn, NY; Kehot Publication Society. 1999

<sup>3</sup> Dan.9:24-27

<sup>4</sup> Bereishit Rabba.2:4, Midrash Rabba.

*"The descendants of Ishmael will go up at that time [End of Days] with the nations of the world against Jerusalem..."<sup>5</sup>*

Traditionally Rome was typified as Edom and the Christian West was identified as Edom. Some modern Rabbinic commentators believe America is an extension of Israel as a political-alliance suggests an extension of unity others identify the Christian West as Edom still. Esau made an alliance with the Ishmaelites through marriage.<sup>6</sup>

- ***Gog is the prince of the land of Magog***
- ***The war of Gog and Magog is three wars in Rabbinic texts***
- ***Those of the nations who join themselves to Israel apostasize when they see the onset of this war.***

*"R.Yose said: "In the future to come, the nations of the world will come and become proselytes," Will they be accepted? Is it not taught that in the days of the Messiah no proselytes will be accepted?...[However,] they will become self-made proselytes, not formally admitted. They will put tefillin on their foreheads and arms, and tzitzit (fringes) on their garments, and mezuzot (doorposts) on their doors. [But] when they see the war of Gog and Magog, they will ask them against whom are they coming, and they [Gog] will answer, "Against the LORD and His Messiah...." Thereupon the proselytes will tear off the commandments from themselves, and will go away....But the Holy One, blessed be He, will sit and laugh at them."<sup>7</sup>*

- ***All nations at this time lay claim to Jerusalem***
- ***Gog in the LXX (1<sup>st</sup> Century BCE) is the King of the locusts i.e. Abaddon of Rev.9:11***

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<sup>5</sup> Zohar.1:119A

<sup>6</sup> Genesis.28:9

<sup>7</sup> B. 'Avodah Zarah.3b

- *“Thus has the LORD God shewed me; and, behold, a swarm of locusts coming from the east; and, behold, one caterpillar, king Gog.”*<sup>8</sup>

### ***The Messianic Secret***

- Prevalent in Jewish eschatology
- As all redemptive and prophetic dates are past, repentance, good deeds, dissemination of mystical element of Judaism can bring Messiah out of hiding.<sup>9</sup>
- “Messianic Secret” is found threaded throughout the Gospels. Mk.9:32, 10:34-39, 14:20, Lke.24
- Found throughout other 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Judaism Literature e.g. The Book of Enoch<sup>10</sup>, Ezra Apocalypse (4<sup>th</sup> Ezra)<sup>11</sup>, Apocalypse of Baruch.<sup>12</sup>
- Hidden and the revealed comes from the story of Joseph and his brothers as they didn’t recognize him while he was testing them.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Take-Away Points:***

1. Our eschatology doesn’t have to be neatly packaged doctrinally or be completely ironed out. We can know and understand certain elements but for the most part we are called to endure whatever

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<sup>8</sup>Amos.7:1, LXX. See also Rev.9:11.

<sup>9</sup> Sanhedrin.97b

<sup>10</sup> 1 Enoch.62:7

<sup>11</sup> 4 Ezra.7:28, 12:32

<sup>12</sup> 2 Baruch.39:5

<sup>13</sup> Gen.42:7-8

happens despite what happens even if we don't know what will happen or when it will happen.

2. Supernatural insights and experiences don't prove anything in and of themselves. Many of the Rabbis and individuals in other religions can attest to spiritual experiences. Balaam had spiritual experiences that were of God and even Caiaphas prophesied but these instances were times when God's sovereignty intervened of His own will and reasons for which we may not entirely assume to know why. Its important to remember the enemy lives in the spirit realm and can often see things even believers can't e.g. Job. 2 Pet.1:3-4
3. What we learn from Israel's Exilic experiences is that the greatest development of faith and God's promises is that they don't develop or come into fulfillment when all the variables line up in favor with our faith but rather when there are variables and odds stacked against our faith.

*“The survival of a lived faith is not so much determined by how it can build on the advantages provided by the events flowing in a supportive direction; rather, the survival depends more upon whether faith can endure the worst reversals imaginable.”<sup>14</sup>*

– Thomas M. Raitt “A Theology of Exile”

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<sup>14</sup> Raitt, Thomas M. *A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel*. Philadelphia, PA; Fortress Press. 1977. 2.