

GOG AND MAGOG

Whereas Christian Theology centers upon the return of the Lord at Armageddon, Jewish Theology centers on the climatic war of Gog and Magog. The end result of this war is that Israel will be collectively redeemed or “saved” in Christian understanding:

Ezekiel 39:22 So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward.

“Gog and Magog” is a term that represents the Gentile nations coming against Israel. “Gog and Magog” of Ezekiel 38 & 39 does not represent the False Messiah and his armies; for he is the ultimate deception to lead the Gentile kingdoms into a kingdom based upon haSatan (The Satan) replacing God and the False Messiah replacing Yeshua as the Messiah. The battle of Gog and Magog is the climatic battle that leads Israel back to her God and His Messiah. Therefore, during the Birth Pangs of the Messiah, the battle of Gog and Magog precedes the time when the False Messiah enters Israel and the Temple. The False Messiah, however, will also come against the Jewish people, because they will have already been “redeemed” from the “Gog and Magog” war by accepting Yeshua as Messiah. The False Messiah desires to be Israel’s Savior.

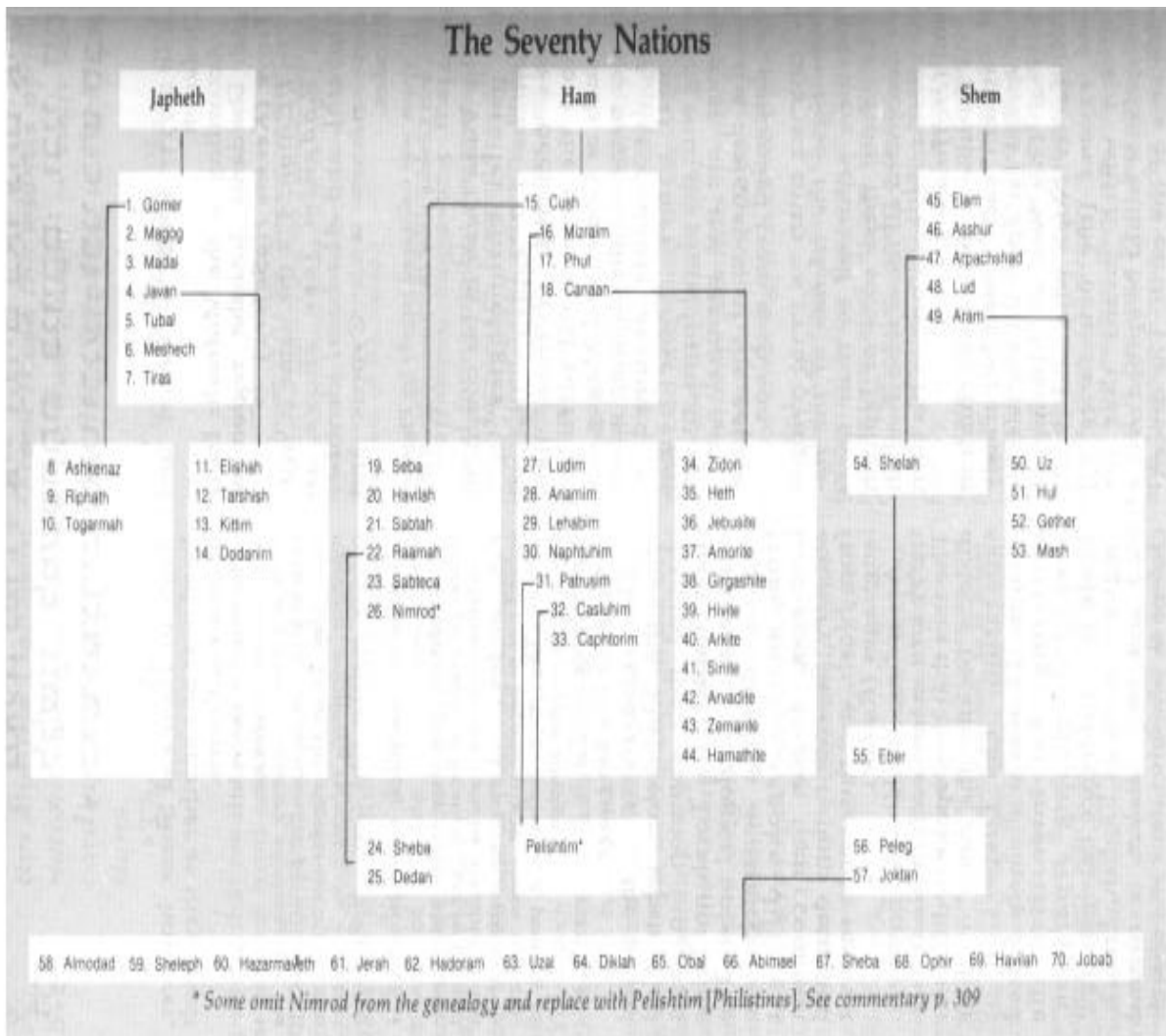
Jewish literature mentions Abraham’s war with the four Kings in Genesis as a type of “Gog and Magog” war. The same sources also mention Assyria with King Sennacherib as a type of “Gog and Magog”. Then we have the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel 38 and 39. Then in the book of Revelation (20:8), John describes the final battle at the end of the thousand year Day of the Lord as a “Gog and Magog” war where the nations of the world come against Jerusalem and King Messiah one last time, but in defeat again. Our focus at this time will be turned to the Gog and Magog in Ezekiel.

Please allow the author to quote extensively from the Artsroll Ezekiel commentary preceding Ezekiel 38: “Yechezkel (Ezekiel) is to address a prophecy to Gog of the land Magog. He is to describe three things: Gog’s plan to thrust his military might against a defenseless Israel, the utter annihilation which God will inflict upon Gog in the Holy Land...Among the many mysteries which surround the advent of the Messianic era, the War of Gog and Magog, plays a major role. Following Rambam’s directive, we shall not attempt an exact delineation of the events which are to happen. Rather we will offer a very general outline and a short analysis of the meaning of these wars. Dark days are to precede the coming of the Messiah. Sanhedrin 98b (Talmud) quotes a number of our Sages who prayed that they might be spared the terrible experience of the time. Rashi (Sanhedrin 98b) explains the very term **חַבְלֵי מַשִּׁיַּח** (Chevlei Shel Mashiach-Birthpains of the Messiah) the pain of the pre-Messianic period, as describing the fear which these armies will inspire. Who is this Gog around whom history’s climatic events are to occur? Which is the land of Magog? Who are Gog’s allies? Above all, what motive will he have to wage the war which will prove to be his undoing? Why does the nation of Israel, dwelling peacefully within its boundaries, inspire the hatred which drags Gog inexorably to his doom? In attempting some answers to these questions, we will resist the temptation to relate the prophecies concerning Gog and Magog to contemporary events...”

Artscroll Ezekiel commentary:

“...Midrash Tanchuma to Korach points out that the numerical value of גוֹג וּמַגּוּג, Gog and Magog, is 70, which alludes to the seventy nations of the world [In Jewish literature when Israel became a nation there were only 70 Gentile nations in the world at that time]...”

“...Yechezkel (Ezekiel) portrays Israel at the time of Gog’s attack as a people recently gathered from exile, living peacefully within their boundaries, following agricultural and commercial pursuits, and prospering (vs. 8, 11-12). It is an economically viable community, wealthy enough to be an attractive target for Gog and his cohorts who are interested in spoils (vs. 12) of silver, gold, and livestock (vs. 13)...”



Artscroll Ezekiel commentary:

“...Such a description seems to assume Messianic times (Day of the Lord-Birth Pangs) and, indeed, according to most sources the wars of Gog and Magog will take place after the first steps of the redemption – which are to be initiated by Mashiach ben Yosef, the Messiah descended from Ephraim, who is to precede the Davidic Messiah – will already have taken place [According to tradition, Mashiach ben Yosef will be killed during the wars of Gog and Magog – See Talmud Succah 52a].

Authors Note: When “Gog and Magog” is destroyed during the Birth Pangs of the Messiah, Israel will receive their Messiah. It is at this time that Jews will accept Yeshua as Messiah. They must first see Him as the slain Messiah ben Joseph before receiving Him as Messiah ben David. Because the ancient rabbis did not recognize that the two Messiahs were the same entity they perceived that Messiah ben Joseph would be slain when Gog and Magog was defeated. Although Yeshua was slain some two thousand years earlier, to the Jewish nation during the Birth Pangs, when they receive Him into their hearts, it will be like He was just slain to them.

Now continuing with the Artscroll Ezekiel: “...Sanhedrin 95b (Talmud) describes the exact numbers of Sennacherib’s troops when he moved against the Northern Kingdom. This, the Talmud states, was the same number of soldiers who fought against Abraham (in the war against the four kings – Rashi) and who were destined to accompany Gog in his campaign against Israel...It was Abraham with whom the singularization of Israel began. Immediately, the nations of the world [the Sages teach that the four kings who fought against Abraham symbolized the Four Kingdoms, who were destined to subjugate Israel] gathered together for an attack designed to frustrate that choice. In the waning years of the Northern Kingdom, Israel reached the nadir of its existence. Ten of the twelve tribes were to be lost to their people. This seemed the ideal moment for an all out war which would strike Israel when it was weakest. Once more the nations, led by Sennacherib, gathered for attack...”

Authors Note: The reader should take notice that the ancient rabbis saw a link with the future War of Gog and Magog with the war between Assyria under Sennacherib and Judah under Hezekiah. This will be very important later, but it needs to be kept in focus at this time.

Artscroll Ezekiel:

“...[Ezekiel 37:18 –39:16] is the Haftarah [reading] of the Intermediate Sabbath of Succot. According to Rashi, the reason is that the wars of Gog and Magog are also the subject of Zechariah 12, which is the Haftarah of the first day of Succot (Tishri 15) and which, in Rashi’s view, was chosen because of the prediction contained in it that those nations who would survive the wars would join Israel every year in celebrating the Succot festival...Nimukei Yosef to Migillah quotes a tradition from Rabbi Hai Gaon that the victory over Gog and Magog will take place in the month of Tishri, the same month within which Succot occurs...”

“...[Rabbi Hirsch deals with the inner connection between Gog and Magog and Succot]: In the name גוג, Gog, one recognizes the word גג, roof, and thereby at once sees the contrast to succah, the weak, unstable covering of foliage. Actually, the whole history of mankind consists of this contrast. Just as people have the power to make themselves safe and secure against their earthly contemporaries by גגות, strongly built walls, so do they imagine that they have power to make themselves safe and sure against that which comes from above – against God and...His power to direct matters. They think that they can find security in the protection of their own might, take their fate in their own hands, and crown the building up of human greatness with gabled roofs, rendering them independent of God...The war of Gog and Magog is the battle of גג, roof, against סוכה, succah, the ‘fight of the roof’ illusion of human greatness which never allows...rest, against the succah truth of cheerful confidence and serenity which comes of placing one’s trust in God’s protection...”

Ezekiel 38

Ezek 38:1-3 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: (KJV)

Artscroll: “The identity of Gog, a personality who will live at a far-off time defined by the prophet as ‘the end of years’ [Ezekiel 38:8 – KJV ‘Latter Years’ – understood to be the ‘Day of the Lord’ in Jewish literature], must remain shrouded in mystery...It would seem that Magog was a known place in Yechezkel’s [Ezekiel’s] time, and, therefore, we should be able to identify it with reasonable accuracy. Our chapter [later] offers a hint by telling that Gog will come from ‘the farthest north’ [Ezekiel 38:15]. In Torah symbolism the ‘north’ is viewed as the seat of the forces of evil...the ‘farthest north’ is...also meant to define a geographic location. Thus, Magog must lie in what was the northernmost extremity of the then civilized world.”

“The various traditions concerning the identity of Magog, who in Genesis 10:2 is listed among the sons of Noah’s son Japheth, tend to place the land of Magog in what today is southeastern Russia – the Caucasian region, which lies between the Black and Caspian seas. Josephus (Antiquities 1:6) identifies the descendants of Magog, as the Scythians, who, some centuries before the common era, branched out eastward and western from the region somewhat north of the Black Sea. This is in agreement with Yerushalmi Megillah 3:9, which renders Magog as the Goths, a group of nomadic tribes who destroyed the Scythians and made their homes in Scythian territory.”

“One may understand an oral tradition passed down from the Vilna Gaon (1700’s), that when the Russian navy passes through the Bosphorus (that is, on the way to the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles) it will be time to put on Sabbath clothes [in anticipation of the coming of Mashiach.]”

Rav Valoshinar in the 1800's said: "When you see the Russian army begin to move southward and enter Turkey, put on your Sabbath garments and get ready to welcome the Messiah."

In 1857 Reverend Pitts gave a speech to the U.S. Congress which included: "Russia, then, according to the Scriptures, is the headship or leading power around which the multitudinous armies of allied monarchy shall be gathered together. 'Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet' (Ezekiel 38:5). Persia here represents the swarming hosts from the Asiatic possessions; Ethiopia, Libya, and the armies of Africa. 'Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, and thou shall be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and thy bands, and many people with thee' (Ezekiel 38:9). The invasion is here announced by an armament such as the world never saw. For the millions that are to assemble under Gog or Russia embrace nearly all of Europe, as well as a large portion of Asia and Africa."

In Hal Lindsey's popular book *The Late Great Planet Earth*, he quotes Dr. John Cumming in 1864: "The king of the North I conceive to be the autocrat of Russia...that Russia occupies a place, and a very momentous place, in the prophetic word has been admitted by almost all expositors."

Continuing to quote from *The Late Great Planet Earth*: "Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century, says that the people of his day known as the Moschevi and Thobelites were founded by Meshech and Tubal respectively. He said, '...Magog is called the Scythians by the Greeks.' He continued by saying that these people lived in the northern regions above the Caucasus Mountains. Pliny, a noted Roman writer of early Christian times, said, 'Hierapolis, taken by the Scythians, was afterward called Magog.' In this he shows that the dreaded barbaric people called the Scythians were identified with their ancient tribal name. Any good history book of ancient times traces the Scythians to be a principal part of the people who make up modern Russia. Wilhelm Gesenius, a great Hebrew scholar of the early nineteenth century, discusses these words in his unsurpassed Hebrew Lexicon. 'Meshech', he says, 'was founder of the Moschi, a barbarous people, who dwelt in the Moschian mountains'...the Greek name, 'Moschi,' derived from the Hebrew name Meshech is the source of the name for the city of Moscow. In discussing Tubal he said, 'Tubal is the son of Rapheth, founder of the Tibereni, a people dwelling on the Black Sea to the west of the Moschi.' Gesenius concludes by saying that these people undoubtedly make up the modern Russian people.

There is one more name to consider in this line of evidence. It is the Hebrew word, 'Rosh,' translated 'chief' in Ezekiel 38:2,3 of the KJV and RSV. The word literally means in Hebrew the 'top' or 'head' of something. According to most scholars, the word is used in the sense of a proper name, not as a descriptive noun qualifying the word 'prince.' The German scholar, Dr. Keil, says after a careful grammatical analysis that it should be translated as a proper name, i.e., Rosh. He says, "The Byzantine and Arabic writers frequently mention a people called Ros and Rus, dwelling in the country of Taurus, and reckoned among the Scythian tribes." Dr. Gesenius in his Hebrew Lexicon says, '...Rosh was a designation for the

tribes then north of the Taurus Mountains, dwelling in the neighborhood of the Volga.' He concluded that in this name and tribe we have the first historical trace of the Russ or Russian nation."

Back to Artscroll Ezekiel: "Our identification of Magog as Caucasia, which was at one time inhabited by the Goths, is based on the assumption that the land of Magog is named after Japheth's son. Indeed this seems likely since some of Gog's allies have names identical to, or strikingly similar to, offspring of Japheth. Meshech and Tubal, are names of Japheth's son; Persia (Ezekiel 38:5) is identified with Japheth's son Teras, and Togarmah (Ezekiel 38:6) is the grandson of Japheth.

From this it seems that when, finally, the forces of evil are to be pitted against Israel, the Japhethic tribes will be in the forefront of the battle. A closer identification of some of Gog's other allies who are not of Japhethic descent will be attempted. Nevertheless the identification of the king as coming from the land of Magog and his title prince, leader of Meshech and Tubal, surely indicate that the Japhethic peoples are to be the main components of his army.

This forces us to consider the identity of Gog himself more closely. For, surely, it is not Japheth but Edom, who throughout the Torah, is identified as the epitome of evil and the one irreconcilable enemy of Israel...Tanchuma Bo constantly refers to Gog and Magog as Edom...Chevlei Mashaich BiZemaneinu brings much source material which indicates that although Gog's land is Japhethic, he himself is a descendent of Esau...So it was in Esther's time, when the Amalekite Haman (descended from Esau) was the instigating force on the Persian (Japhethic) court, and so it will be in the wars of Gog and Magog, when the Edomite king Gog will lead the Japhethic nations to war."

Gen 36:8-12 Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom. And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir: These are the names of Esau's sons; Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Bashemath the wife of Esau. And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatam, and Kenaz. And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek: these were the sons of Adah Esau's wife. (KJV)

In Jewish literature Edom is a synonym for Esau. Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, had a son Eliphaz who bore him a grandson named Amalek. The JPS Torah Commentary says: "Deuteronomy 25:17-19...reports that the Amalekites made a surprise rear attack on the famished and exhausted Israelites not long after the escape from Egypt. They ruthlessly cut down the stragglers-the elderly, the weak, and the infirm. Israel was forced to fight its first defensive war for survival...The Amalekites interpreted the sudden appearance of the Israelites in this region as a menacing encroachment upon their territory and as a threat to their control of the oases and trading routes. The Amalekites thereupon savagely attacked the Israelites...This...occurred in Rephidim."

According to the preceding information it would appear that the Amalekites were the first nation that attacked the liberated “Israel” when they approached the Promised Land from the Wilderness coming from Egypt. It seems fitting that Jewish thought portrays Gog, the leader of Magog, as being a descendent of Esau-Edom. The Amalekites were the first Gentile group to attack Israel with the purpose of destroying them as a nation. Gog and Magog will be the last confederacy of Gentile nations to attack Israel during the Birth Pangs of the Messiah. Remember that the False Messiah comes against Israel after Gog and Magog’s destruction. The False Messiah’s purpose is not to annihilate Israel and God initially, but to replace them.

Exodus 17:8-16 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady (Hebrew Emunah-Faith) until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi: For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. (KJV)

Since our study has brought in the Amalekites, the author believes it is justified to take a little “rabbit-trail” and go a little deeper. The Torah Anthology comments: “Amalek was the first nation that dared to fight against Israel. The tribe of Amalek came and attacked Israel while they were camping in Rephidim. The reason for this attack was that the Israelites did not truly recognize God’s greatness, even after He had done so many miracles for them...the very name Rephidim indicates that the Israelites had become lax (raphah) in their faith. As a result of this shortcoming Amalek was able to attack...Since they [Israel] were lax in the Torah, they were vulnerable to attack.

Amalek lived to the south, some 400 parsangs (830 miles) to the south of where the Israelites were encamped. Still, they marched all the way, merely to attack the Israelites (Mekhilta: Targum Yonathan).

At first the Amalekite leaders had gone to Balaam and said, ‘You are a master occultist. Teach us how we must wage war against Israel. We know that your advice will be effective. We are very upset about what the Israelites did to Egypt. After Egypt benefited them so much, they virtually destroyed the land. Imagine what they will do to other nations.’ ‘You must take the initiative,’ replied Balaam. ‘No other nation will be able to defeat them. You have a chance, since you are also descendants of Abraham through Esau. Without a battle, you will not survive them. But if you fight them, you have a chance. Just as they have the merit of Abraham, so do you (Esther Rabbah; Etz HaChaim).’

The Amalekites then held a meeting of all the surrounding nations, asking them to join in the attack against Israel. The general consensus among these nations was expressed by one leader who said, 'How can we fight Israel? Pharaoh was the greatest king, and the leader of the most powerful army. You know what happened to them. The Israelite God drowned his entire army in the Red Sea! How can we hope to be victorious against them?'

'Cowards!' The Amalek leader was on his feet, berating the other kings. 'I will take the lead. If I am defeated, you can all run away. But if I am victorious, I will allow you to share my victory.' With that, the other nations agreed to join the battle (Mekhilta).

After the Israelites defeated the Amalekites in the Wilderness, Moses built an altar to the Lord and called it "The Lord My Banner (Hebrew-Nes)". What most scholars don't realize is that this Banner-Nes is directly related to "Faith." When Moses arms holding up the "Rod" became weary and began to drop Amalek prevailed in the battle. But when Moses hands were able to hold the "Rod" up above his head Israel prevailed.

To rectify the situation, Aaron and Hur placed a "Stone" under Moses to "Rest" upon. Then on each side of Moses they held up the "Rod" by holding up his arms. In this manner Israel was able to defeat Amalek. The Scripture says that they made "his hands...steady". The Hebrew word for "Steady" is "Emunah" which means "Faith-Confidence". In other words the place that Moses called "The Lord is My Banner-Nes" is the same place as "Emunah-Faith". In the same way that Israel had faith in their God in this battle, they also will come to have faith in Yeshua as Messiah, when the future Gentile nation leader, Gog and his cohorts are destroyed by God. The Banner-Nes is a symbol of the True Faith that believers have in God. Amalek is a picture of HaSatan whom the Lord will battle from generation to generation. Believers attain victory over the Enemy as long as they are "Steadied - Emunah - Faith".

The JPS Torah Commentary states regarding the Israelite war with Amalek: "A rabbinic comment on this verse reads as follows: Did the hands of Moses control the course of war? No! The text teaches that as long as the Israelites set their sights on High (God) and subjected themselves to the Father in Heaven, they prevailed; otherwise they failed."

The Torah Anthology continues with our subject of Amalek: " 'Write the account of how Amalek was the very first nation to attack the Israelites. Include it in the book of the Torah. Also repeat it in Joshua's ears, so that he will tell all Israel that they must repay Amalek's treachery in kind. My desire is that Amalek's memory be totally erased'...Moses built an altar, and he named it Adonoy Nissi which can be translated 'God is my banner,' or 'God is my miracle'...Moses...wanted to teach the Israelites that they did not defeat Amalek because of their merit [It was thus a miracle both in the physical and in the spiritual sense.]

In every generation, there are descendants of Amalek who wish to harm the Israelites, but God rescues us from their hand. The Torah thus says, 'God's battle against Amalek is for all generations.' In every generation there is a battle against Amalek...God later gave the Israelites a commandment, 'Obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens

(Deuteronomy 25:19).’ Nothing belonging to Amalek should survive. People should not even be able to say, ‘This camel belonged to Amalek,’ or ‘This sheep belonged to Amalek.’ Amalek’s memory should be obliterated so that the name is no longer even mentioned...

One might wonder why God has such great hatred for Amalek that He commanded that his name be totally obliterated. Although other nations also attacked Israel, God never gave such a commandment concerning them. At the time Amalek attacked, the memory of the miracle of the Red Sea was still fresh. All the nations in the world were terrified at the reports of this miracle, as it is written, ‘Nations heard and shuddered; terror gripped the people of Philistia; the chiefs of Edom panicked (Exodus 15:14,15).’ Amalek, on the other hand, came to attack Israel, as if to demonstrate that he had no fear of God and was totally oblivious to all the miracles that had happened. This was a deliberate attack on Israel’s reputation. If Amalek had not attacked Israel, no nation would ever have had power over the Israelites. The reports about the Egyptians would have made a permanent impression on the world. Amalek’s attacks opened the door for Israel’s enemies also to wage war against them...

God’s oath that He would ‘obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens’ is...somewhat difficult to understand...The genius of Amalek is Samael, the angel of evil. This is identical with Satan, the Evil Urge that causes man to sin. Thus, whenever a person sins, he gives strength to Samael, and this strengthens Amalek. Thus, while God Himself breaks the power of other geniuses, it is our responsibility to undermine the power of the genius of Amalek. As long as we sin, he becomes stronger and stronger...when we are lax in our service to God, Samael, who is the genius of Amalek, becomes all the stronger...But when we repent and correct our ways, then Amalek will automatically be obliterated from the world. This resolves an important contradiction. Here we see that God Himself swore that He would destroy Amalek. Later, however, He gave us a commandment to do so (Deuteronomy 25:19).”

Gog, the Amalekite of the Birth Pangs of the Messiah at the beginning of the Day of the Lord, will be able to attack Israel because of her lack of faith in the God of Israel. But as defeat is immanent, the Israelites will repent and accept Yeshua as Messiah ben Joseph on a future Tishri 10 (Yom Kippur). Because of this national repentance, God immediately destroys Gog and Magog. As mentioned earlier, John speaks of another Gog and Magog (Amalekite), later in the book of Revelation. When they are destroyed then the memory of Amalek will be obliterated.