

HAR MAGEDON: THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM

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Some sixty years ago C. C. Torrey published a study of Har Magedon that has not received the attention it deserves.¹ His explanation of the Hebrew terms transliterated into Greek as *har magedōn* (Rev 16:16) is accepted in the present article and additional evidence for it adduced. Further, it will be shown how this interpretation leads to the recognition that Har Magedon is Mount Zaphon/Zion and that the Har Magedon battle is the Gog-Magog crisis of Ezekiel 38–39. This in turn proves to be of critical significance in the millennium debate. For it adds a final, decisive point to the traditional amillennial argument for the identification of the conflict marking the end of the millennium (Rev 20:7–10) with the climactic battle of the great day of the Lord to which the Apocalypse repeatedly returns, as in the Rev 16:12–16 account of the Har Magedon encounter itself and the Rev 19:11–21 prophecy of the war waged by the messianic judge.²

I. HAR MAGEDON, THE MOUNT OF ASSEMBLY

1. *Derivation from har mō'ēd.* *Har* is the Hebrew word for mountain. The meaning of *magedōn* is disputed. The most common view, following the variant reading *mageddōn* in Rev 16:16, identifies it as Megiddo, site of notable battles in Israel's history (Judges 5; 2 Chr 35:22–25) and thus an apt designation for the place where "the battle of the great day" occurs. In addition to the frequent objection that there is no mountain of Megiddo, the area being rather a vast plain, Torrey stressed the fact that the vicinity of Jerusalem is where Biblical prophecies uniformly locate the eschatological crisis in which the armies of the nations assemble against God and his people.³ He cited passages like Zechariah 12 and 14, Joel 3(4), Isa 29:1–7 and, of particular relevance, Rev 14:14 ff. (esp. v. 20) and 20:7 ff. (esp. v. 9), which parallel 16:14–16 in the structure of the Apocalypse.⁴

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¹ C. C. Torrey, "Armageddon," *HTR* 31 (1938) 237–248.

² See also Rev 6:12–17; 11:7–13, 18; 13:7; 14:17–20; 17:11–14. Cf. M. G. Kline, "A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John" (unpublished). A full exposition of the recapitulatory structure of Revelation will be found in the forthcoming commentary on this book by G. Beale in *NIGTC*.

³ The prophetic idiom is typo-symbolical, not literal, but that is a separate issue.

⁴ Cf. Ps 48:1–8(2–9); Isa 24:21–23; Mic 4:11–13; Zeph 3:8.

Torrey's own solution, developing an earlier conjecture by F. Hommel, was to trace *har magedōn* to the Hebrew *har mō^cēd* (cf. Isa 14:13), "Mount of Assembly." He noted the appropriate association of *har mō^cēd* with Jerusalem and dealt with the question of transcriptional equivalence. The apparent differences between the Hebrew *har mō^cēd* and the *har magedōn* rendering can be readily accounted for. Representation of the consonant *ayin* by Greek *gamma* is well attested. Also, in Hebrew *-ōn* is an affirmative to nouns, including place names.⁵

2. *Antipodal to the Abyss.* Supportive of the derivation of *har magedōn* from *har mō^cēd* is the fact that each of these expressions in its single Biblical appearance is paired with Hades as its polar opposite on the cosmic axis. In the Isa 14:13 context the contrast is drawn between the heights to which the king of Babylon aspires as the site of his throne and the depths to which he is actually to descend. He will not ascend to the *har mō^cēd*, above the stars of God, to the *yarkētē šāpōn*, "heights of heaven," as he boasts (vv. 13–14), but will be brought down to the *yarkētē bōr*, "depths of the Pit" (v. 15).⁶ Correspondingly, in the book of Revelation *har magedōn* (16:16) is contrastively paired with *Abaddōn* (9:11), another Hebrew term, here the name of the angel of the Abyss, and in its OT appearances a synonym of Sheol (Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Ps 88:12; Prov 15:11; 27:20). The Abaddon of Rev 9:11 is then the equivalent of the Sheol and Pit of Isa 14:15. And the *har* (mountain) element in *har magedōn* (Rev 16:16) of course contrasts with the Pit of Abaddon, as does the *har* in *har mō^cēd* (Isa 14:13).

That *har magedōn* is to be perceived as paired with *Abaddōn* even though they do not appear in the same immediate context is indicated by certain factors besides their antipodal semantic relationship. One is that in the book of Revelation these two terms, and these alone, are described as *Hebraisti*, "in Hebrew."⁷ Another factor is their parallel placement in the literary structure of the Apocalypse: Within an overall chiasmic arrangement they appear in the corresponding series of the trumpets and the bowls of wrath, in each case at the climax.

In short, then, we find that in Isaiah 14 and the book of Revelation there are matching antonymic pairings of *har mō^cēd* and *har magedōn* with the pit of Hades. Within the framework of this parallelism the *har mō^cēd* of Isa 14:13 is the equivalent of the *har magedōn* of Rev 16:16 and as such is to be understood as its proper derivation and explanation. Accordingly, *har magedōn* signifies "Mount of Assembly/Gathering" and is a designation for the supernal realm.

As an appendix to this point we would note that the term *mō^cēd*, if seen as the Hebrew behind *magedōn*, provides a further point of linkage for the

⁵ Examples especially pertinent in the present context are *šāpōn*, *ʾābaddōn*, and the spelling of Megiddo as *mēgiddōn* in Zech 12:11.

⁶ For further discussion of the terms *yarkētē* and *šāpōn* see below.

⁷ Perhaps a desire to flag the correspondence with *Abaddōn* prompted the addition of *-ōn* to *magedōn*.

pairing of *har magedōn* and *Abaddōn*. For in Job 30:23 the Death/Sheol realm denoted by *Abaddōn* is called the *bêt mō'ēd*, "house of gathering." Though Job longs to come to God's place of judgment, the heavenly council gathered on the *har mō'ēd*, he is sure only of being brought down with all who live to their common appointed gathering, their house of gathering (*bêt mō'ēd*) in Sheol. The association with *mō'ēd*, "gathering," thus shared by *Abaddon* and *Har Magedon* intensifies the irony of those Biblical passages where someone finds himself in *Abaddon/Sheol* who had laid claim to *Har Magedon* or gathered forces against it.⁸

3. *Hebraisti*. There is another overlooked clue to the meaning of *har magedōn* in Rev 16:16 itself. As noted in the discussion of the relationship between *Har Magedōn* and *Abaddōn*, each term is identified as *Hebraisti* (which can refer to Aramaic as well as Hebrew). Our clue has to do with a stylistic feature characterizing the appearance of such transliterated words in the Greek text of the NT: These words are regularly accompanied by an explanation of some sort, even by a translation sometimes. The *Abaddōn* counterpart to *Har Magedōn* in Rev 9:11 is a good example: "They had a king over them, the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is *Abaddon*, and who has in Greek the name *Apollyon* (Destroyer)."

By way of further illustration it will suffice to mention those instances where the transliterated word is specifically identified as *Hebraisti*. These turn out to be all the more apropos in that this use of *Hebraisti* is an exclusively Johannine trait within the NT, with four instances in John's gospel besides the two in Revelation.⁹ In three of the cases in the gospel the word in question is the name of a place. In each case the context furnishes at least an identification of the place thus denoted, even if not a translation. In John 5:2 Bethesda (with variants Bethsaida, Bethzatha, Belzetha) is identified as a particular pool in Jerusalem having five porches or colonnades. Similarly, in John 19:13 the Aramaic *Gabbatha* (of uncertain meaning) is identified by the Greek term *Lithostrōton* ("stone pavement or mosaic"), the designation of Pilate's judgment seat to which *Gabbatha* is appended. In the case of the reference to the site of the crucifixion in John 19:17 the Greek name *Kraniou* ("of the skull") affords a translation of the Aramaic name *Golgotha*, which is added to it.¹⁰ In John's resurrection narrative the Aramaic *rab-bouni* is at once explained by the Greek *didaskale*, "teacher" (John 20:16).

This consistent pattern creates a strong presumption that an accompanying explanation will be found in Rev 16:16 for *Har Magedōn*, the place name there with the *Hebraisti* label. Such an explanation can be shown to be present once it is recognized that *Har Magedōn* is based on *har mō'ēd*. The

⁸ For a similar situation involving the *ʿōhel mō'ēd*, the tent of gathering, compare the experience of Korah in Numbers 16.

⁹ Cf. *nai, amēn* (Rev 1:7).

¹⁰ The explanatory role of the Greek is clear in the Aramaic-Greek sequence found in Matt 27:33; Mark 15:22.

semantic connection is between *Magedōn* and the main verb in the statement: “And he gathered (*synēgagen*) them into the place called in Hebrew Har Magedon.” The verb *synagō* interpretively echoes the noun *magedōn*—he gathered them to the Mount of Gathering. In effect it translates *magedōn*, establishing its derivation from *mō^cēd*, “gathering.” *Synagō* is indeed the verb used in the LXX to render *yā^cad* (“appoint”; niphal “assemble by appointment”), the root of *mō^cēd* (an appointed time or place of assembly).

An instructive parallel is found in Numbers 10, where an interpretive wordplay affords an explanation of *ʔōhel mō^cēd*, “tent of meeting/gathering,” which symbolically points to the same heavenly reality that the *har mō^cēd* represents.¹¹ Directions are given to Moses that at the sounding of a certain trumpet signal “the whole assembly (*ēdâ*, from the root *yā^cad*) shall gather (*yā^cad*) unto you at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting (*ʔōhel mō^cēd*)” (v. 3). The verb of gathering that brings out the significance of *ʔōhel mō^cēd* is rendered in the LXX of Num 10:3 by the same *synagō* that explains *har magedōn* in Rev 16:16.¹² Num 10:3 thus corroborates our view of how *synagō* functions in Rev 16:16.

We conclude that the evidence of the *Hebraisti* clue in Rev 16:16 clinches the case for the *har mō^cēd* derivation of *har magedōn*.

II. HAR MAGEDON, MOUNT ZAPHON/ZION

Appositional to *har mō^cēd* in Isa 14:13 is the phrase *yarkētē šāpôn* (Zaphon). Accordingly, what is disclosed about *šāpôn*, and particularly *yarkētē šāpôn*, in this and other contexts will contribute to our picture of the *har mō^cēd* and thus of Har Magedon. The data that emerge through the Zaphon connection will also be found to confirm further the derivation of *har magedōn* from *har mō^cēd*.

1. *Zaphon, realm of deity.* In texts from Ugarit on the north Syrian coast, Zaphon is the name of a mountain about thirty miles north of Ugarit that was regarded as the residence of Baal.¹³ As a localized representation of the cosmic abode of the gods, Mount Zaphon shared its designation with the celestial realm. In the OT, *šāpôn* means “north.”¹⁴ But it may also denote Zaphon, the terrestrial mountain;¹⁵ or Zaphon, the mythological realm of the gods; or, as a demythologized figure, the heaven of the Lord God; or the holy mountain of God, Zion, as the visible earthly projection of God’s heaven.

The phrase *yarkētē šāpôn* appears in Ps 48:2(3); Isa 14:13; Ezek 38:6, 15; 39:2. Its meaning is clearly seen in Isaiah 14, where it stands in apposition

¹¹ On this see further below.

¹² For other examples of *yā^cad* translated by *synagō* in the LXX cf. Neh 6:2, 10; Ps 48:4(5).

¹³ “Zaphon” has been traced to *špw/y*, “to look out” (used e.g. in Ps 66:7 for God’s surveillance of the nations from the heights of heaven), or to *špn*, “to hide.” Opinions differ on whether its application to Mount Zaphon was direct or secondary, with a (storm)wind as the primary designee.

¹⁴ Most now explain this as another instance of naming quarters of the globe after prominent topographical features, in this case after Mount Zaphon to the north of Israel.

¹⁵ Ezekiel 32:30; Ps 89:12(13) are possible instances of this usage.

with phrases (including *har mō'ēd*) that refer to the heavens to which the king of Babylon aspires and in opposition to the *yarkētê bôr* into which the king will actually be cast. Some commentators, especially those who see a reference not to Zaphon the mountain of Baal but to a mountain of El farther north, would translate "the distant north." It is evident, however, from the contrastive pairing with *yarkētê bôr*, the Pit of Sheol, that *yarkētê šāpôn* concerns a vertical, not horizontal, dimension. It refers not to a quarter of the earth but to a level of the cosmos, denoting the supernal realm, the celestial zenith, while its antipodal opposite, *yarkētê bôr*, denotes the infernal region, the netherworld nadir. In these phrases *yarkētê*, which in the singular means "side" and in the dual "recesses, extreme parts," signifies the remotest reaches, the utmost height or depth.¹⁶

There are other passages where *šāpôn* has been understood as referring to the celestial realm. One is Ps 89:12(13). Above, it was cited as a possible instance of *šāpôn* as Mount Zaphon. Favoring that is the conjoined mention of mounts Tabor, Hermon and Amanus (taking *ymn* as an alternative for ²*mn*), the mountain of El. Another view is that *šāpôn* here signifies "clouds," an appropriate pairing being produced by emending *yāmîn* to *yammîm*, "seas." Problematic for the rendering "the north and south" is the absence of a concept parallel to this in the context. What does parallel God's creating of *šāpôn* and the south (v. 12[13]) is God's founding of the heaven and earth (v. 11[12]). This favors understanding *šāpôn* as the heavens, with its lower cosmic counterpart designated "south" as a play on the meaning of *šāpôn* as "north." Note also this psalm's emphasis on God's heavenly throne site (vv. 5–8, 13–14[6–9, 14–15]).

Job 26:7 is one of two passages in Job that contain a similar use of *šāpôn*.¹⁷ Here again the perspective is cosmic with references to the upper and lower extremes of creation in illustration of the universal scope of God's providential control. Sheol and Abaddon appear in v. 6 representing the lower region, and v. 7 then adds: "He spreads out *šāpôn* over emptiness; he suspends the earth on nothing." Clearly, a vertical rather than horizontal dimension is in view. The *šāpôn* is the sky above the earth.¹⁸ But beyond that, as the preceding mention of Sheol/Abaddon suggests, the visible heavens point to the invisible heaven of God's abode.

The Zaphon with which *har mō'ēd* (and thus *har magedôn*) is equated in Isaiah 14 is the celestial realm of deity. It should also be noted that through the tying in of the heaven-defying king with the *yarkētê šāpôn* in

¹⁶ The semantic equivalent of *yarkētê šāpôn* is found in the Ugaritic *šrrt špn*, apparently meaning "insides/heart of Zaphon." Interestingly, one text in which this expression appears deals with a pretender to the divine throne—namely, with Ashtar the Rebel's futile attempt to ascend to Zaphon and occupy the throne of Baal.

¹⁷ The other is Job 37:22; on this see below under the discussion of Ezek 1:4, another such passage.

¹⁸ The astronomical reference in v. 7a is to the pole of the ecliptic, devoid of stars (so M. M. Kline in unpublished address). Another view is that *šāpôn* refers to the clouds suspended in the sky. Cf. J. De Savignac, "Le sens du terme *Šāphôn*," *UF* 16 (1984) 273–278.

this passage, the antichrist associations of Har Magedon in the Rev 16:16 episode begin to come into focus here.

2. *Zaphon/Zion*. In Psalm 48 the *yarkêtê šāpôn* connection yields the identification of Har Magedon with Zion, the earthly counterpart of the heavenly dwelling of Israel's God-King. The opening verses of this psalm introduce its celebration of the supremacy of Yahweh, the Suzerain, and his mountain-city: "Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God (v. 1[2]a, b, c); the mountain of his sanctuary, paragon of peaks, joy of all the earth (vv. 1[2]d, 2[3]a, b); Mount Zion, the heights of Zaphon,¹⁹ city of the Great King (v. 2[3]c, d, e)."²⁰ Linking the city and mountain of God, this passage declares Zion/Jerusalem to be the *yarkêtê šāpôn*. This establishes that *har mō'ed* (appositional to *yarkêtê šāpôn* in Isa 14:13) is Mount Zion, and thereby that *har magedōn* is related to the city of Jerusalem (and not to be explained by Megiddo).

This identification of *har mō'ed* is also attested by passages (like Ps 74:4; Lam 2:6) that speak of Zion as the place of God's *mō'ed* and the assembled congregation (*'edâ*) of his people, and most graphically by the locating of the *'ōhel mō'ed*, "tent of meeting," and its temple continuation on Zion.²¹ In the *'ōhel mō'ed* God met (*yā'ad*) and spoke with his people (Exod 25:22; 29:42–43; Num 17:4[19]), his presence being mediated through the Glory theophany enthroned amid the cherubim. The tent was thus an earthly replica of the divine council in heaven, where the Most High sits as King surrounded by his assembled hosts.²²

The relevance of Psalm 48 for Har Magedon extends beyond its identification of *yarkêtê šāpôn*, the *har mō'ed* equivalent, with Zion/Jerusalem. This psalm also relates how the rebellious kings gather (*yā'ad*) there against Yahweh (v. 4[5]), who shatters their advancing forces and secures the eschatological peace of his city (vv. 5 ff.[6 ff.]). All the key elements of the Har Magedon event of Rev 16:16 are united here in connection with the *har mō'ed* (Zaphon) site, a signal corroboration of the explanation of *har magedōn* as *har mō'ed*.²³

Har mō'ed/magedōn is then the place of God's royal presence, whether heavenly archetype or earthly ectype, where he engages in judicial surveillance of the world (Lookout Mountain); where he gathers the gods (cf. Ps 82:1) for deliberation (Council Mountain); where he musters his armies for

¹⁹ There is no comparative preposition before *yarkêtê šāpôn* and no need to take this as *comparatio decurtata* (cf. GKC 118r).

²⁰ This arrangement (contrary to the numbered verses) into three triplets (A.B.C.) brings out some artful poetic features: the correspondence of the three cola (a.b.c.) of B and C (on the equivalence of Bc and Cc, cf. Isa 24:10–11); the summary inclusio provided by Cc with Aa-c. In Biblical and mythological texts reference to the exalted throne-city of deity tends to prompt clusters of descriptive phrases in apposition.

²¹ Cf. Ps 15:1. Similarly in Canaanite mythology the tent of the deity and his mountain are conjoined.

²² Cf. Ps 78:69. On the replication of the heavenly archetype in the tabernacle see M. G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) 39–42.

²³ The same situation obtains in Ezekiel 38–39, to be examined presently.

battle (Marshal Mountain); where he assembles the company of his holy ones, spirits of just men made perfect with myriads of angels (Ecclesia Mountain).²⁴ Echoing Psalm 48, Heb 12:18–29 displays these varied facets of Har Magedon, Mount of Gathering, and identifies it as Zion, heavenly Jerusalem, city of the living God, the Great King.

The story of the earthly Har Magedon goes back to the beginnings of human history when this mountain of God rose up as a cosmic axis in Eden. There the battle of Har Magedon was joined as Satan challenged the God of the mountain and overcame the first Adam, the appointed guardian of the garden-sanctuary.²⁵ In redemptive history Zion was a typological renewal of Har Magedon, the setting at the dawning of the new covenant age for another momentous encounter in the continuing warfare, this time resulting in a decisive victory of Jesus, the second Adam, over the evil one. The typological Zion/Jerusalem provides the symbolic scenery for prophecies of the climactic conflict in the war of the ages. Through his antichrist beast and his allied kings gathered to Gathering Mountain, Satan will make his last attempt to usurp Har Magedon. But the Lamb, the Lord of the mountain, and his assembled armies will triumph in this final battle of Har Magedon, the battle of the great day of God Almighty (Rev 16:14–16; 19:11–21; 20:7–10).

III. HAR MAGEDON AND MAGOG

Following the trail of *har magedōn* back to *har mō^cēd* has led us to examine a set of OT passages containing the phrase *yarkētē šāpōn*. From the first two (Isaiah 14; Psalm 48) it has appeared that *har mō^cēd/magedōn* is identifiable with Mount Zaphon/Zion. Ezekiel 38–39 is a third such passage, and here we discover a fundamental correspondence between the Zaphon/Magedon and Gog-Magog concepts. That means that the Har Magedon crisis of Rev 16:14–16 (and the series of parallel passages in Revelation) is to be identified with the millennium-ending Gog-Magog event of 20:7–10. For the Revelation 20 passage is replete with allusions to Ezekiel 38–39, including, along with the explicit mention of Gog and Magog, the distinctive central theme of Ezekiel 38–39, the universal gathering of the world forces to destroy God's people and their catastrophic overthrow by the descent of fiery judgment from heaven.²⁶ Accordingly it is generally acknowledged that Ezekiel's prophecy and the vision of the loosing of Satan after the thousand years in Revelation 20 describe the same eschatological event.

A main consideration in establishing the identity of the Revelation 16 Har Magedon crisis and the Ezekiel 38–39 Gog crisis (and thus the Revelation 20 Gog crisis) is the antichrist element common to both.²⁷ The antichrist

²⁴ In secular texts both the Greek *ekklēsia* and equivalents of *mō^cēd* are used for a civil assembly. An example of the latter is the designation of the Byblos assembly in the Wen-Amun text.

²⁵ See M. G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (privately published, 1993) 76.

²⁶ For further details see below.

²⁷ "Antichrist" is used here in the popular sense, as a designation for the man of sin figure referred to in 2 Thess 2:3–10.

identity of the dragon-like beast in the Har Magedon episode would be acknowledged by most, irrespective of their millennial preferences. For the continuity of this beast of Revelation 16 with the fourth beast of Daniel 7 (in the final phase of its little-horn expression) is obvious, and in Daniel an alternative representation of this bestial eschatological foe is the self-deifying king of Dan 11:36, the figure interpreted by Paul as the antichrist (2 Thess 2:4). It remains now to show that the antichrist element is also conspicuously present in Ezekiel 38–39 among the other major features of this Gog-Magog prophecy that appear again in the Apocalyptic accounts of Har Magedon.²⁸ Gog's antichrist characteristics may best be elicited through an examination of his provenance and his destination.

1. *Provenance of Gog.* A description of Gog's place of origin is included in the opening account of his hostile advance with his military forces against the community of God's people (Ezek 38:1–13). A condensed recapitulation of this portrayal of Gog appears as an introduction (38:14–16) to the next section, which presents God's judgment on Gog (38:17–23), and once again by way of introduction (39:1–2) to the final section, which contains a double elaboration of the divine judgment (39:3–8; 39:9–29).²⁹

Whatever details are omitted from the two abbreviated recapitulations of the opening section, one feature included each time is Gog's provenance, the *yarkêṭê šāpôn* (Ezek 38:6, 15; 39:2). It is from the heights of Zaphon that God brings Gog with all his armies to overthrow them on the mountains of Israel. Gog is characterized by the antichrist syndrome: He is a pretender to the throne of heaven. The correspondence of his experience to the king of Babylon typology in Isaiah 14 is seen in the ironic motif of the polar contrast between his pretensions and his actual fate. Challenging Yahweh's sovereignty on Zion, Gog would take possession of the mountain heights of Israel. But he ends up with his vast military array in the depths of a valley. He lunged for a heavenly throne but plunged into a netherworld grave. Not the lofty polis (city) of the divine Suzerain but a necropolis was his destiny.

The ironic reversal is underscored by puns. Instead of the glory of *šiyyôn* (Zion), Gog's hallmark will be *šiyyûn* (Ezek 39:15), the marker that flagged for burial the corpses of his forces. The valley where his armies were buried is called the valley of the *ôbêrîm* (Ezek 39:11), "those passing through or across," a term used for the dead, those who cross over from this world to the next.³⁰ In that sense will they turn out to be *ôbêrîm* who set out to be *ôbêrîm* in the sense of invaders traversing the land of Israel as conquer-

²⁸ It may be recalled that such Har Magedon features were observed in the other *yarkêṭê šāpôn* passages. Psalm 48 relates the marshaling of enemy forces against Zaphon/Zion, and in Isaiah 14 the antichrist aspect of the Rev 16:16 episode is articulated in the aspirations of the king of Babylon, a prototypical antichrist who claims for himself supremacy on *har mô'êd*.

²⁹ The two elaborations on the destruction of Gog are arranged in thematic parallel, each treating in turn (1) the destruction of Gog's weaponry (vv. 3, 9–10), (2) death-burial (vv. 4a, 11–16), (3) banquet (vv. 4b–5, 17–20), and (4) devastation of the nations (vv. 6a, 21).

³⁰ Cf. Job 34:20; Ps 144:4. See M. S. Odell, "The City of Hamonah in Ezekiel 39:11–16: The Tumultuous City of Jerusalem," *CBQ* 56 (1994) 479–489.

ors.³¹ Another name given to the burial valley is *gê^ʔ hāmôn gôg* (Ezek 39:11),³² “valley of the multitude of Gog.” It recalls God’s wordplay interpretation of the new name, Abraham, he gave to Abram as a gift of grace: *ʔab hāmôn gôyîm* (Gen 17:4–5), “father of a multitude of nations.” In quest of such name-fame Gog mustered his multitudes, but his *hāmôn*-name proclaimed his shame. Whereas *ʔab hāmôn gôyîm* prophesied of Abraham’s innumerable descendants out of all nations, elect in Jesus Christ and co-heirs with him of the kingdom of eternal life, the similar sounding *gê^ʔ hāmôn gôg* signified the mountains of skeletons of Gog’s hordes, cleared from God’s kingdom land and cast into *gê^ʔ hinnôm*, the Gehenna valley of the dead, where the fire is never quenched.

The antichrist character of both the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14 and Gog in Ezekiel 38–39 is brought out by their connection with the *yarkêtê šāpôn*. Gog, however, is not just an OT prefiguration but the antichrist of the final crisis. In Rev 20:7–10 the Gog-Magog assault on Zion marks the end of the millennium. Within Ezekiel 38–39 indications also abound of the eschatological finality of the Gog crisis. As in Revelation 20, it comes after a long age of secure preservation for God’s people (Ezek 38:8)—in NT terms, after the age in which the Church, though sorely persecuted, is preserved by the Lord to complete the great commission task (cf. e.g. Rev 11:7). And as the judgment on Gog in Revelation 20 merges with the resurrection of the dead for final judgment (20:11–15), so God’s judicial deliverance of his people from Gog in Ezekiel 38–39 institutes for them the eternal state of unending, never-again-disturbed felicity (39:21–29).

“Your [Gog’s] place” (*mêqômêkā*) stands in Ezek 38:15 (within the first recapitulation section) as a substitute for the previous “land of Magog” (Ezek 38:2; cf. 39:6). Indeed, the term is probably an etymological play on Magog. *Māqôm* would interpret the *mā-* in Magog (explained either by the Akkadian *māt*, “land of,” or as the Hebrew noun prefix signifying “place”).³³ The second syllable would then be taken as the name Gog, a name borne by an earlier Anatolian king (Gugu or Gyges) and here created out of Magog to serve as a symbolic pseudonym for the future antichrist foe. Even if “your [Gog’s] place” is not intended as an etymological explanation of Magog, it certainly functions in this context as an equivalent of Magog. And since “your place” is identified as *yarkêtê šāpôn* in Ezek 38:15,³⁴ its equivalent, Magog, is likewise identified as *yarkêtê šāpôn*—and thus as *har mô^céd/magedôn*.

In fact *māqôm* could by itself, like *yarkêtê šāpôn*, carry the idea of divine dwelling site. In Deuteronomy *māqôm* is used repeatedly for the place God would choose for his throne and residence—namely, Jerusalem (e.g. Deut 12:5, 14; 14:22–23; 15:20). In 2 Chr 36:15 it is used by itself as the designation of God’s temple. It is equated with the mountain of Yahweh (Ps 24:3)

³¹ Cf. Ezek 14:17; Zech 9:8.

³² Cf. *hāmônâ* (Ezek 39:16).

³³ As in *māqôm* itself.

³⁴ Cf. Ezek 38:2–6, where Magog (v. 2) and *yarkêtê šāpôn* (v. 6) form an inclusio for the survey of nations gathered by Gog.

and refers to God's royal abode in heaven (Isa 26:21; Mic 1:3). In the light of this usage, "your [Gog's] place" in Ezek 38:15 would by itself seem to signify the position of supreme divine authority that Gog claimed. Along with *yarkêtê šāpôn* it would be an expression of Gog's antichrist pretensions. The theme that thus emerges in Ezekiel 38–39 is that of Gog's coming from his place to challenge God at his place.

The Ezekiel 38–39 account of Gog's Zaphon provenance harks back to the Noahic chapter in the story of the mountain of God. The list of nations gathered by Gog begins and ends with northern nations near Gog's land of Magog (Ezek 38:2–6). Also, in the basic passage identifying Gog (38:2–3) and in the second recapitulation of it (39:1) Gog is titled Prince-Head of (Anatolian) Meshech and Tubal. Included in the mountainous territory of these northern nations was the Ararat region where Noah's ark came to rest.

Noah's ark was designed as a replica of the three-story universe, the cosmic city-temple of God (cf. Isa 66:1).³⁵ Established in sabbatical rest on the Ararat mountaintop, the ark was a redemptive restoration of the mountain of God in Eden, itself a replica of the heavenly Zaphon.

Supportive of the allusive relation of Ezekiel 38–39 to the flood event is the fact that the list of the seven military nations gathered by Gog, along with the three mercantile peoples introduced in 38:13, is patently based on the Genesis 10 list of nations that developed in the postdiluvian movement of the Noahic families out from Ararat. Indeed, the northern nations more closely associated with Gog, and Magog itself, appear at the head of the Genesis 10 list (vv. 2–3).

Understood against this Ararat background, Gog's pretensions are again exposed as nothing less than claiming for himself the headship over the traditional mount of deity in his ancestral land in the north. Genesis 11 reports that the Babel-builders attempted a rebellious restitution of the lost Eden/Ararat mountain of God. Gog takes the challenge against the God of Zaphon to the ultimate, antichrist stage.

2. *Destination of Gog.* As related in Ezekiel 38–39, Gog's antichrist challenge takes place according to God's preannounced purpose and his sovereign orchestration of the event. Lured by the Lord to this final confrontation, Gog advances against "the mountains of Israel" (39:2, 17). It is God's chosen Mount Zion in the heart of those mountains that is his central point of attack. As in the case of the mustering of the bestial armies in Revelation 16, the destination and intended target for Gog and his hosts is Har Magdon, where the Lord's Anointed is enthroned at his right hand.

The indications for this are clear, even though Zion is not mentioned by name in Ezekiel 38–39. God does speak of the mountains of Israel as "my mountains" (38:21) and of the land of Israel as "my land" (38:16). Implicit in that is the royal mountain-city where Yahweh dwells and rules over the mountainous domain he claims as his own. Also, such a capital city on the cosmic mountain was regarded as the center of the earth, and in 38:12

³⁵ See Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* 139–140.

Gog is described as scheming to assault the people of God dwelling at “the center (lit. navel) of the earth.”³⁶ In that concept Gog’s real objective is exposed—Yahweh’s Mount of Assembly, rival to Gog’s pseudo-Zaphon. In the Revelation 20 version of Ezekiel 38–39, Gog’s armies are explicitly said to compass “the beloved city” (v. 9), which is Jerusalem/Zion.

Though the term *šāpôn* is not applied to the mountain of God’s Presence in Ezekiel 38–39, it is so used at the beginning of the book to denote the divine source of the prophet’s visions. In Ezek 1:4 the storm-wind (*rûah šē‘ārâ*),³⁷ the fiery cloud (*‘ānān*) that is the theophanic chariot, is said to come from Zaphon.³⁸ The same term for storm, *šē‘ārâ*, is used for God’s golden whirlwind confrontation of Job (Job 38:1; 40:6), for the theophanic chariot in Elijah’s translation into heaven (2 Kgs 2:1, 11), and for the storm chariot of the divine warrior advancing above his people as their defender (Zech 9:14). Ezekiel saw the theophany “coming” not as a storm moving across the earth from the geographical north³⁹ but as a *parousia* advent out of heaven. Ezekiel 1:4 is an expansion of the introductory statement (v. 1) that heaven was opened and Ezekiel saw visions of God. The storm-cloud theophany of v. 4 corresponds to the visions of God in v. 1, and the *šāpôn* of v. 4 is the heavens of v. 1. Divine appearances are comings, advents. Anticipatively setting the scene for Yahweh’s revelation to Job out of the theophanic storm (*šē‘ārâ*, Job 38:1), Elihu announced that God’s awesome golden majesty was “coming.” Indeed, it was “coming from *šāpôn*” (Job 37:22).⁴⁰ The *šāpôn* of Ezek 1:4 is then the heavenly site of God’s Glory, the celestial place of God’s enthronement,⁴¹ here opened up to be accessed by Ezekiel, as was characteristic of the call experience of OT prophets. It is therefore in keeping with an attested concept and terminology of Ezekiel if we interpret the Ezekiel 38–39 scenario as a coming of antichrist Gog from his pseudo-Zaphon to challenge Yahweh on his true Zaphon. Agreeably, Gog’s coming is portrayed in 38:9, 16 as a coming like a storm-cloud over the land and thus as a counterfeiting of the storm-cloud *parousia* of God’s Glory by a pseudo-*parousia*.

The antichrist identity of the Gog figure of Ezekiel 38–39 is evidenced by the identification of this archenemy with the pseudo-Zaphon in the north and by his gathering of his universal hordes against Mount Zion, the authentic Zaphon/Har Magedon.

³⁶ Cf. Ezek 5:5.

³⁷ The combination of *rûah* with *šē‘ārâ* involves a play on *rûah* as both wind/breath and Spirit, frequent in references to the Glory-Spirit theophany.

³⁸ *Haššāpôn* exhibits the use of the definite article for unique objects, like the sun; cf. GKC 126, 2(c).

³⁹ This is the common interpretation of *haššāpôn*. Confusingly it identifies *šē‘ārâ* as the stormy approach of enemies from the north (a recurring theme in Ezekiel, to be sure) after first recognizing that it is the Glory theophany of Yahweh.

⁴⁰ See the comments above on the use of *šāpôn* in Job 26:7 for the cosmic north, heaven, the polar antithesis of Sheol/Abaddon.

⁴¹ In Ezek 3:12 this locus of God’s Glory is called “his place,” another term for the seat of divine sovereignty. The vision of the Glory-Spirit in Ezekiel 43 (explicitly linked, v. 3, to the prophet’s opening vision) describes it as “the place of my throne” (v. 7).

Some detect in this motif the influence of the myth of the conflict between the gods of order and the chaos powers. In Ugaritic texts, for example, it is in connection with Baal's sovereign station at Zaphon that he must do battle against such rival divine beings. And with respect to Ezekiel 38–39 in particular, M. C. Astour suggests a more specific inspiration in the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin, which relates the ordeal of that king against northern hordes that are the embodiment of chaos demons.⁴² But whatever imagery of the chaos myth has been taken up into the Scriptures, it appears there as demythologized figures of speech. In the Bible the conflict is not cosmological-existential but redemptive-eschatological.

3. *Millennial applications.* According to the premillennial position, the thousand-year era of Rev 20:1–6 with the Gog-Magog episode at its close (vv. 7–10) follows chronologically the judgment of the antichrist beast portrayed in Rev 19:11 ff. A common and telling criticism of this view calls attention to various points of identity between the Rev 20:7–10 crisis and the one referred to in 19:11 ff. (and the series of parallel Apocalyptic passages, including 16:14–16).

The war (*polemos*) of Rev 20:8 is certainly “the war of the great day of God, the Almighty,” the battle of Har Magedon described in 16:14–16. In each case it is the war to which Satan, the dragon, gathers the nations of the whole world. This universal gathering against the Lamb and the city beloved of the Lord is also referred to as Satan's deception of the whole world through the signs wrought by his agents, the beast from the sea and, particularly, the false prophet. Indeed, this theme of the deception-gathering appears in a series of five passages in the Apocalypse, concentrically arranged according to the subject(s) of the action, with 16:13–16 the centerpiece and 20:7–9 the concluding member. Satan as the ultimate deceiver is the subject in the first member of the chiasm (12:9) and in the last (20:7–9), where the deception is specified as the gathering. The false prophet, acting in association with the dragon-like beast, is the subject in the second member (13:14), which speaks of his world-deceiving signs, and in the fourth (19:17–20), where his deceptive signs are identified with the gathering of the kings of the earth against the messianic horseman and his armies. At the center of the chiasm (16:13–16) all three subjects appear together as the source of the demonic signs by which the kings of the whole earth are gathered to Har Magedon for the great war. This identification of Satan with his two agents in the disastrous enterprise is also brought out in the fifth member of the chiasm (20:10).⁴³

The identity of the war of 20:7–10 with the antichrist-Har Magedon battle is further indicated by other parallels between Satan and the beast. In

⁴² M. C. Astour, “Ezekiel's Prophecy of Gog and the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin,” *JBL* 95 (1976) 567–579.

⁴³ The NIV foists a pluperfect sense on the verbless clause that refers to the fate of the beast and false prophet.

Revelation 20 Satan emerges from his imprisonment in the Abyss, instigates his final challenge against the Lord and his city, and goes to his doom (vv. 7–10). The beast comes up out of the Abyss in the climactic stage of the eighth king, makes war against the witnesses of the Lamb in the true Jerusalem, and goes to his destruction (17:8–14; cf. 11:7–8; 19:20).

Our thesis at this point is that Ezekiel 38–39 proves to be the common source behind Rev 20:7–10 and the series of passages in Revelation referring to the antichrist-*parousia* event. Cataloguing the details that substantiate this will at the same time underscore and supplement the evidence cited above for the correspondence of Rev 20:7–10 and the other Apocalyptic passages with one another.

The relationship of Rev 20:7–10 to Ezekiel 38–39, obvious enough from the adoption of the Gog-Magog terminology in Revelation 20, is also evidenced by a set of basic similarities: the marshaling of hordes from the four quarters of the earth (Ezek 38:2–7, 15; 39:4; Rev 20:8); the march of the gathered armies to encompass the saints in the city of God, center of the world (Ezek 38:7–9, 12, 16; Rev 20:9); the orchestration of the event by God (Ezek 38:4, 16; 39:2, 19; Rev 20:3, 7); the timing of the event after a lengthy period in which God's people were kept secure from such a universal assault (Ezek 38:8, 11; Rev 20:3); the eschatological finality of the crisis (Ezek 39:22, 26, 29; Rev 20:10 ff.); and the fiery destruction of the evil forces (Ezek 38:22; 39:6; Rev 20:9–10).⁴⁴

Just as clearly, the Gog-Magog prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39 is a primary source drawn on by Rev 16:14–16; 19:17–21 and the other Apocalyptic prophecies of the final conflict. Prominent in these passages is the major feature that marked the dependence of Rev 20:7–10 on the Ezekiel prophecy—namely, the universal gathering of the enemy armies (Rev 16:14–16; 17:12–14; 19:19; and compare 6:15 with Ezek 39:18–20), including too the historical setting of that event at the close of this world-age (Rev 6:12–17; 11:7–13; 16:16–17 [cf. 17:10–14]; 19:15–21), following an era in which it is given to the Church to fulfill its mission of gospel witness (11:3–7; cf. 12:6, 14).

Further (and of central interest in this essay), the Har Magedon of Rev 16:16 is identifiable with Mount Zaphon, the provenance of Gog in Ezekiel 38–39. Particularly important is the significance of this location for the identity of Gog. His claimed lordship over the Zaphon site of the divine council, a challenge to the true Lord of Har Magedon, reveals the Gog of Ezekiel 38–39 to be the bestial antichrist agent of Satan in the Apocalyptic prophecies of the war of the great day. Such self-exaltation over all that is called God is the affront of this man of sin that provokes the *parousia* of the Lord Jesus to overthrow and destroy him (2 Thess 2:3–10). The pseudo-*parousia* attributed to this antichrist, a spectacle of satanic deception (2 Thess 2:9), is another feature found in Ezekiel's prophecy where, as we have noted, Gog's coming is portrayed as an advent in storm-cloud theophany (Ezek 38:9, 16).

⁴⁴ Some of these points were mentioned earlier by way of demonstrating that the Gog of Ezekiel 38–39 is the final antichrist.

Also, beast symbolism is used for the antichrist phenomenon in Revelation, and beast imagery is applied to Gog in Ezek 38:4; 39:2. Extensive evidence of the Ezekiel source is afforded by the Apocalyptic accounts of God's judgment on the beast. Instruments of judgment mentioned by both Ezekiel and John include earthquake (Ezek 38:19–20; Rev 6:12; 11:13; 16:18–20), sword (Ezek 38:21; Rev 19:15, 21) and destructive hail and fiery brimstone (Ezek 38:22; 39:6; Rev 16:21; 19:20). Most striking is the distinctive motif of God's summoning the birds and beasts to feed on the carcasses of the defeated armies Gog had gathered, the banquet theme elaborated in Ezek 39:4, 17–20 and incorporated into the account of Christ's victory over the beast and his assembled armies in Rev 19:17–18.

The conclusion is amply warranted that Ezekiel 38–39 is the common source of Rev 20:7–10 and the passages earlier in Revelation that deal with the eschatological battle. This confirms the standard amillennial contention that the Gog-Magog episode of Rev 20:7–10 is a recapitulation of the accounts of the Har Magedon crisis in these other passages. And the capstone for that argument is what we have discovered about the equation of Har Magedon (*mô'ēd*) with Gog's place, Magog, the equation established by the Zaphon connection in Isa 14:13; Psalm 48; Ezekiel 38–39. It now appears that the very term *har magedōn* itself identifies the Rev 16:14–16 event as the Gog-Magog event of 20:7–10.

Revelation 20:7–10 is not, as premillennialists would have it, an isolated, novel episode, not mentioned elsewhere in the book of Revelation. Rather, it belongs to a series of passages, including Rev 19:11–21, which premillennialists rightly regard as referring to the antichrist-Har Magedon crisis and the *parousia* of Christ. It therefore follows that the thousand years that precede the Gog-Magog crisis of Rev 20:7–10 precede the Har Magedon-*parousia* event related in the other passages. Har Magedon is not a prelude to the millennium, but a postlude. Har Magedon marks the end of the millennium. And that conclusion spells the end of premillennialism.

The conclusion that Har Magedon is the end of the millennium also contradicts the preterist approach to the Apocalypse. Preterists interpret the series of passages (except for Rev 20:7–10) that we have taken as prophecies of the final conflict as referring instead to past events, like the fall of Jerusalem or the collapse of the Roman empire. This approach with its drastic reductions of the Apocalyptic emphasis on the final global Gog crisis is understandably popular with postmillennialists, whose distinguishing notion is that the present age, the millennium, is—at least in its latter phase—a time not only of surpassing evangelistic success for the Church but one of outward prosperity and peace.⁴⁵ Indeed, postmillennialism of the theonomic reconstructionism variety, in keeping with the theonomic insistence that Torah legislation enforcing the theocratic order is definitive of the Church's

⁴⁵ The postmillennial label is often given to those whose optimism is limited to the evangelistic sphere. See below for a suggested revision of millennial terminology.

duty today, anticipates that the millennial success of the Church's mission will involve its worldwide political dominance and the forcible elimination of public practice of non-Christian religions. They expect a fulfillment in this Church age of the OT prophecies of the restoration of the kingdom in the dimension of external dominion to the ends of the earth.⁴⁶

For such postmillennial expectations, the Biblical forecast of a global surge of anti-Christian forces as the immediate precursor of the *parousia* is obviously a problem. The postmillennialists' strategy is to confine the problem to Rev 20:7–10 by adopting the preterist approach and then to try to minimize the enormity of the crisis described in that passage. But once the preterist option is removed, their exegesis loses all plausibility as they attempt to deal with the whole series of Har Magedon-Gog passages and the recurring, progressively elaborated theme of the worldwide suppression of the gospel witness in which the millennium issues. Actually, Rev 20:7–10 by itself refutes the postmillennial projections, for it is evident there that the nations of the world have not become officially "Christianized" institutions during the millennium.⁴⁷ That is in accord with the consistent eschatological pattern of Scripture. In the visions of Daniel 2 and 7, for example, the imperial power clearly retains its beast-character throughout history, ultimately prevailing against the saints. Not until the *parousia* of the Son of Man and the final, total elimination of the bestial empire do the people of the Most High receive the kingdom of glory and universal dominion.

Recognition of the identity of the Har Magedon and Gog-Magog events thus proves to be decisive for the rejection of any view, premillennialist or postmillennialist, that understands the millennium as an age that witnesses the fulfillment (at least in a provisional form) of the OT prophecies of the coming of God's kingdom in external earthly grandeur. The kingdom of glory does not come until final judgment is executed against antichrist/Gog, and therefore not before the end of the millennium. There is no transitional stage in its appearing between the first and second advents of Christ. The glory kingdom comes only as a consummation reality and as such it abides uninterrupted, unchallenged for ever and ever.

Here is the fundamental difference in the eschatology of the several millennial views, the difference that our names for them should reflect. Two of the views are pre-consummation. They hold that a (transitional) realization of the OT prophecies of the kingdom as an external imperial power occurs during the millennium and thus before the consummation. These two can be distinguished from each other in terms of how they relate the millennium

⁴⁶ Cf. D. Chilton: "All nations are absolutely required to be Christian, in their official capacity. . . . Any nation that does not submit to the all-embracing rule of King Jesus will perish; all nations *shall* be Christianized . . . in this world as well as in the next," *The Days of Vengeance* (Fort Worth: Dominion, 1987) 489, commenting on Rev 19:16.

⁴⁷ This problem drives some to the so-called consistent preterist position, which extends the preterist hermeneutics to Rev 20:7 ff. and so regards as past history what all others recognize as events that will usher in the world to come.

to the *parousia* as *pre-parousia* (the postmillennialists) and *post-parousia* (the premillennialists).⁴⁸ The amillennial position alone represents the post-consummation view of the coming of the kingdom of glory.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Their shared pre-consummation status signalizes a hermeneutical kinship between theonomic postmillennialists and (dispensational) premillennialists: Both fail to understand the typological nature of the Israelite theocracy.

⁴⁹ Within the post-consummation view there is room for differing expectations as to the extent of the Church's missionary success and of Christian influence on culture, as long as the latter is perceived within the limits imposed by the terms and guarantees of God's covenant for the common order (cf. esp. Gen 8:20–9:17). It is a basic theological flaw in all pre-consummation views that their millennial scenarios entail violations of those divine covenantal commitments.