

Preface

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The present volume of the annual edition *Slavic & Jewish Cultures: Dialogue, Similarities, Differences* entitled “*End Times*” in the *Slavic and Jewish Cultural Traditions* includes materials from the international conference of the same name, which took place in Moscow on December 7–9, 2022. The book continues a series of publications of the conferences run by the Slavic-Judaic Studies Center at the Institute of Slavic Studies (RAS) on annual basis since 1995 as part of the work on a fundamental project.

The conference “*End Times*” in the *Slavic and Jewish Cultural Traditions* became the twenty-sixth in a series of regular meetings of scholars whose research interests are focused on Judeo-Christian cultural contacts, ethno-confessional dialogue, as well as on the mutual interaction of Jewish and Slavic traditions. Our latest conference was held in the framework of the international project *Slavic & Jewish Cultures: Dialogue, Similarities, Differences*, implemented by the Slavic-Judaic Studies Center at the Institute of Slavic Studies (RAS) in collaboration with the Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization “Sefer” (since December 14, 2022, ANO Center “Sefer”) with the support of the Department of Religious Studies, the Department of Theology of Judaism, Biblical Studies and Jewish Studies at Russian State University of the Humanities. The conference was attended by 45 speakers from Belarus, Germany, Israel, Latvia, and Russia.

The conference was dedicated to eschatology as a significant part of cosmogony, literary and folk beliefs on the “End times”, the end of the world and its signs, the coming of the Messiah and the Final Judgment, and the future fate of humanity. Eschatological themes are reflected in ancient and medieval texts, literature, folklore, and iconography. The plots and images of the Apocalypse, interpreted through historical

events, social upheavals, military conflicts, natural and man-made disasters, form an integral part of the oral history of the modern era. Supported by the various sources (historical, literary, folkloric and visual ones), the speakers not only discussed the semantics and symbolism of eschatological plots and motifs but also analyzed the mechanisms employed by elite and traditional culture to protect universal values in the future world while preparing for the “End times”

The book, based on the materials of the 2022 conference, became the 25th volume of a series that has already gained its own readership and recognition within the scientific community in Russia and worldwide. To date, the series includes 24 volumes published since 1998 and devoted to the comprehensive analysis (historical, philosophical, linguistic, folklore-ethnographic, cultural) of the mechanisms of interaction between Slavic and Jewish cultural traditions. Since 2017, the series *Slavic & Jewish Cultures: Dialogue, Similarities, Differences* has reached a new level and has become a peer-reviewed ongoing publication (annual). In June 2023, the annual edition got listed in Scopus international abstract and citation database.

The volume “*End Times*” in *Slavic and Jewish Cultural Traditions* presents 13 articles by scholars from Russia and Israel who devoted their researches to studying book and folk eschatology, apocalyptic plots and images reflected in written and oral monuments of different historical periods, in visual arts, philosophical and ideological constructs, and collective consciousness. Supported by a wide range of diverse sources, the authors explore the mechanisms of adaptation of eschatological ideas in Jewish and Christian traditions, the transformation of individual images associated with the Apocalypse into cultural symbols, the development and transformation of the idea of the “End times” in contemporary culture largely affected by globalization processes.

The book opens with the article that explores the transformations of theological and political concepts of the Antichrist, the last emperor, the *Katekhon* (restrainer), and “satanic forces” in the history of ideas, historiography, and journalism, with a particular emphasis on Russian material.

The next section consists of articles dedicated to the eschatological theme in ancient Jewish and Slavic literary culture in the Middle Ages and the Modern Times. These articles examine changes in the interpre-

tation of verses about the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked from an eschatological perspective in the Aramaic Targum of the Book of Isaiah (1st century and subsequent redactions in the 4th–5th centuries) compared to the Hebrew original. They also analyze different trends in eschatological expectations that united medieval society in Western and Eastern Europe and were reflected in Old Russian literature. Additionally, the articles discuss differences in terms used to refer to the Jewish Messiah (*Mashyakh*, *Mashika*, *Mashlyakh*, *Mashiakh*, etc.) in medieval East Slavic literature, possible sources of this Hebraism, and its role in the eschatological beliefs of medieval Russia. Lastly, they examine manuscript marginalia on the miniatures of the Old Believer edition of the *Apocalypse with Three Interpretations* from 1910, which reflect the interpretation of Christian eschatology by a reader who was an Old Believer at the beginning of the 20th century.

Next comes a large block of articles related to the eschatological theme in Jewish and Slavic traditions based on oral history and folklore materials. In particular, the changing status of the legend of the healing discipline is traced (using the example of the legend of Rabbi Salanter, who abolished Yom Kippur fasting during a cholera epidemic), which dates back to the Enlightenment idea of imagination as the cause of epidemics. The ambivalent nature of Jewish holidays, which always conceal the potential for fasting and repentance, is illustrated by the example of the Karaite local holiday on Purim. The other paper addresses the issue of structural isomorphism between eschatological motifs of “saved on a single plank/stone” and etiological motifs of “born from a tree/body of a stone giant”. Next article overviews Greek popular eschatological legends traced back to the ancient Greek myth of the five human ages (golden, silver, bronze, heroic, and iron) and examines the mechanism of creating new folklore texts within the existing framework. Vernacular forms of memory about war and the Holocaust on the basis of interviews recorded in former Jewish towns between 2009 and 2017 are the focus of the other paper. The former narratives vividly demonstrate the tendency to project individual eschatological experiences onto the “big history”.

The final section of the publications consists of a block of articles that elaborate on the theme of the “End times” and eschatological expectations in journalism, literature, and drama. The authors examine the apocalypticism of Russian conservatism in the 19th century, primari-

ly through the works of Konstantin Leontiev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Bishop Moisey (Bogdanov-Platonov-Antipov). They also analyze the perception of David Pinski's dramatic cycle "Messiah" (1906–1940) in Jewish theatrical criticism during the first half of the 20th century, which explores philosophical themes related to hope for overcoming historical crises. Additionally, they explore the complex mosaic system of characters and narrators in Olga Tokarczuk's work *The Books of Jacob*, dedicated to Jacob Frank and his messianic movement.

Like previous volumes in the series, this book is distinguished by a large amount of field and archival materials that are introduced into the scientific discourse for the first time.

The editorial board hopes that the present volume in the series, which has already become popular among specialists and gained its readership, will arouse the interest of all humanitarians working in the field of Slavic and Jewish studies.

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