

SEFER ZERUBBABEL

Sefer Zerubbabel, or the ‘Book of Zerubbabel,’ is the rubric most commonly applied to an influential post-talmudic assemblage of Jewish apocalyptic traditions depicting the elusive postexilic biblical leader Zerubbabel as the recipient of a set of revelatory visions which outline a succession of personages and events that are to be associated with the restoration of Israel at the End of Days. Extant in a number of manuscript and print editions, almost all of which vary from one another in significant ways, the textual cluster(s) signaled by this title are a prime example of what has been termed the ‘anthological model’ of documentary composition, an authorial process whereby smaller relatively integral thematic units ‘were viewed by their literary handlers as elements in a larger kaleidoscope of tradition perceived as an authentic communal possession ... a kind of freeze-frame of that tradition, temporarily stilled by the intervention of the compilational activity itself.’¹ There are in fact a multitude of *Sefer Zerubbabels*, each one of which reflects the time, place, and concerns of its compilers.² Those who work with the materials comprising this text must recognize that its various extant forms weave together traditions which emanate from a variety of textual environments: given the present state of the witnesses, the preparation of a critical edition or even the editorial attainment of an *Urtext* or ‘original edition’ of *Sefer Zerubbabel* would appear to be an impossible task.

Sefer Zerubbabel’s importance for the history of medieval apocalypticism cannot be overstated. It repeatedly demonstrates how a written text—in its case, the Jewish Bible—has achieved an almost unsurpassed authority in the invention and construction of a special kind of discourse that thanks to the

¹ Martin S. Jaffee, “Rabbinic Authorship as a Collective Enterprise,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17-37, at p. 33. See especially the discussions found in David Stern, ed., *The Anthology in Jewish Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

² With regard to the way texts like *Sefer Zerubbabel* were ‘authored’ and transmitted, see Malachi Beit-Arié, “Publication and Reproduction of Literary Texts in Medieval Jewish Civilization: Jewish Scribality and its Impact on the Texts Transmitted,” in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion* (ed. Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 225-47.

political and social turbulence of the times was enjoying widespread popularity among a variety of religious communities in the Near East during the second half of the first Christian millennium. Many of the structural elements in *Sefer Zerubbabel* possess intriguing reflections or echoes within a number of roughly contemporary Christian, Muslim, Zoroastrian, and gnostic apocalypses that were produced within the Islamicate world. It either initiates or significantly enhances several motifs that attain popularity in certain strands of medieval Jewish literature, such as an eschatological role for the figure of Zerubbabel,³ a linear redemptive scheme that involves the participation of two named messianic heroes (the messiah of the lineage of Joseph [Nehemiah ben Hushiel] and the messiah of the lineage of David [Menaḥem b. ‘Amiel]), the performance of marvels through the recovery of wonder-working prophetic relics (e.g., the rod of Moses/Aaron), and the ominous advent, hubristic tyranny, and eventual suppression of the monstrous supernaturally-sired opponent known as Armilos, a name which also occurs in two seventh-century Christian texts.⁴ *Sefer Zerubbabel* also has curious features which are employed in no other Jewish work, such as the martial exploits associated with the mother of the Davidic messiah, a heroine who bears the curious name Hephṣibah.⁵

Befitting its influence in the continuing development of Jewish apocalyptic thought, *Sefer Zerubbabel* is extant in a number of manuscript and print recensions.⁶ The first printed edition of *Sefer Zerubbabel* appeared in Constantinople in 1519⁷ within an anthology of similarly revelatory and didactic

³ For details, see below.

⁴ N. Bonwetsch, ed., *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati* (Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil.-hist. klass., n.f., bd. 12, nr. 3; Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1910), 60, 74, 86; G. J. Reinink (ed.), *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (CSCO 540, script. syri 220; Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 18. The designation ‘Armilos’ is most often compared to that of the founder of Rome ‘Romulus,’ but it probably derives instead from the Greek *Erēmolaos* ‘destroyer of a people’ which is consonant with the folk etymology for the name ‘Balaam’ supplied in *b. Sanh.* 105a (‘destroyer of a people’). See Israel Lévi, “L’Apocalypse de Zorobabel et le roi de Perse Siroès,” *REJ* 68 (1914): 152 n. 6; John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postbiblical Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 19-20; and especially the persuasive arguments of David Berger, “Three Typological Themes in Early Jewish Messianism: Messiah son of Joseph, Rabbinic Calculations, and the Figure of Armilus,” *AJSR* 10 (1985): 158-62.

⁵ According to 2 Kgs 21:1, this was the name of the mother of Manasseh. However, the same name is used figuratively (meaning ‘my delight is in her’) for Zion in Isa 62:4. Many scholars view her as a Jewish foil to the Christian image of the Virgin Mary as mother of Jesus.

⁶ The best discussion of *Sefer Zerubbabel* and its subsequent influence remains that of Joseph Dan, *Ha-Sippur ha-‘ivri be-yemey ha-beyanim: ‘Iyyunim be-toldotav* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 35-46.

⁷ Leopold Zunz and Hanokh Albeck, *Haderashot be-Yisrael* (2d ed.; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1954), 311 n. 89; Yehudah Even-Shmuel, *Midreshet Ge’ullah* (2d ed.; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1954), 67-70. Heinrich Graetz identified the anthology as a volume entitled *Liqqūṭim Shonim* (idem, *Geschichte der Juden von ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart* (3d ed.; 11 vols. in 13; Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1890-1908),

midrashim.⁸ This edition of the work was reprinted together with brief annotations in 1807 as ספר זרובבל ונחמת ציון (*Sefer Zerubbabel and the Consolation of Zion*). This annotated edition was reprinted again, together with a so-called (*Sefer*) *Malkiel*, in Vilna in 1819,⁹ and then reprinted once more by S. A. Wertheimer in his *Leqet Midrashim* in 1903 in Jerusalem.¹⁰ Wertheimer had previously uncovered and published two manuscript fragments of the work stemming from the Cairo Genizah and Oxford Ms. Heb. f. 27 (2642) respectively, the latter of which he placed under the artificial rubric “Aggadat yemot ha-mašiah” (“Narrative about the Messianic Age”).¹¹ The revised and enlarged edition of Wertheimer’s separate midrash anthologies prepared by his grandson presents a lightly annotated version of the Constantinople *editio princeps* together with five brief fragments culled from the aforementioned “Aggadat yemot ha-mašiah.”¹² Another shorter recension of the work based on two manuscripts contained in the municipal library at Leipzig was published by Adolph Jellinek in the mid-nineteenth century.¹³ The fullest edition of the work, prepared by Israel Lévi, is based on a lengthy rendition that was incorporated within Oxford Ms. Heb. d. 11 (2797), the *Sefer ha-Zikronot* or the so-called *Chronicles of Yerahmeel*.¹⁴ Lévi also drew attention to Oxford Ms. Opp. 236a, a version in an Ashkenazi cursive script which varies

6:53 n. 4), an identification that was repeated by Moses Buttenwieser, *Outline of the Neo-Hebraic Apocalyptic Literature* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye, 1901), 23, 33. Contrast however Marvin J. Heller, *The Sixteenth Century Hebrew Book: An Abridged Thesaurus* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:127, who places its first printing within a collection called *Ha-liqquṭim we-ha-ḥibburim* (Constantinople: Astruc de Toulon, 1519), 60a-62b; also see Lévi (“L’apocalypse,” 130), who claims that its first printing was in a volume now ‘introuvable’ bearing the title *Sefer Ben Sira*. These latter two works are in fact the same; see Eli Yassif, *Sippurey Ben Sira be-yemey ha-benayim* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984), 196.

⁸ *Ma’asiyōt* (Constantinople: Astruc de Toulon, 1519), 74a-76b. For its contents and a listing of the various editions of *Sefer Zerubbabel*, see Moritz Steinschneider, *Catalogus librorum hebraeorum in bibliotheca Bodleiana* (3 vols.; Berolini: Ad. Friedlaender, 1852-60), 203, 208.

⁹ Hezekiah (Chiskia) ben Abraham, מלכיאל (Vilna and Grodno: [Romm?], 1819), 25a-28a (the latter leaf misprinted as 27), to which are appended the Sabbatian chapters from *Hekhalot Rabbati* (28a-29a) and excerpts from *Pesiqta Rabbati* (29a-29b) and *Yalqut Šimoni* (29b-30b).

¹⁰ For these details, see Buttenwieser, *Outline*, 33; Lévi, “L’apocalypse,” 130; Zunz-Albeck, *Haderashot*, 311 n.89; Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 67-70.

¹¹ S. A. Wertheimer, *Batey Midrashot* (4 vols. in 3; Jerusalem: M. Lilyenthal, 1893-97), 2:29.

¹² S. A. Wertheimer, *Batey Midrashot* (ed. A. J. Wertheimer; 2 vols.; 2d ed.; Jerusalem, 1948-53; repr., Jerusalem: Ktav wa-Sefer, 1980), 2:497-505.

¹³ Adolph Jellinek, ed., *Bet ha-Midrash: Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der jüdischen Literatur* (6 vols.; Leipzig, 1853-77; repr., Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrman, 1938), 2:xxi-xxii, 54-57.

¹⁴ Lévi, “L’apocalypse,” 131-44. That manuscript has recently been transcribed and published by Eli Yassif, ed., *Sefer ha-Zikronot hu’ Divrey ha-Yamim le-Yerahme’el* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2001); see pp. 427-35 for *Sefer Zerubbabel*.

from both the *editio princeps* and the briefer recension published by Jellinek,¹⁵ and Paris Ms. 326, a compilation which “contient une paraphrase partielle de notre libelle.”¹⁶ Lévi’s edition also features a critical apparatus wherein he reproduces a number (although not all) of the variant readings found in the aforementioned manuscript and print editions. Even-Shmuel’s *Midreshey Ge’ullah* presents that editor’s highly idiosyncratic conflate version of the work. It contains many speculative emendations and questionable reconstructions, but also is accompanied by a comprehensive discussion which includes many valuable annotations. He also separately reproduces the printed editions of Constantinople, Jellinek, and Lévi.¹⁷ Finally, there are some manuscript fragments which have not been employed in the standard printed editions of the work. Oxford Ms. Opp. 603 contains a brief version of *Sefer Zerubbabel* (fols. 32b-34b).¹⁸ Alexander Marx called attention to some further examples of *Zerubbabel* materials.¹⁹ Simon Hopkins in his published anthology of literary texts has reproduced the photographs of several fragments of *Sefer Zerubbabel* which have been recovered from the Cairo Genizah.²⁰

Sefer Zerubbabel, or the ‘Book of Zerubbabel,’ depicts the enigmatic postexilic biblical leader Zerubbabel as the recipient of a revelatory vision outlining the personalities and events associated with the restoration of Israel at the End of Days. Literary traditions stemming from the Second Temple period exhibit some confusion regarding the precise period during which Zerubbabel was active, although all invariably identify him as a prominent authority among the initial generations of returnees from the Babylonian exile. Some sources associate Zerubbabel with the time of the Persian ruler Cyrus (prior to 530 BCE): his name appears at the head of the register of families and moveable property that emigrated from

¹⁵ Fols. 13a-15b. Cf. Adolf Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library ...* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1886), 26-27; also Malachi Beit-Arié, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library: Supplement of Addenda and Corrigenda to Volume I (A. Neubauer’s Catalogue)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 22.

¹⁶ Lévi, “L’apocalypse,” 130. See Alexander Marx, “Studies in Gaonic History and Literature,” *JQR* n.s. 1 (1910-11): 61-104, at p. 77, where a lengthy passage from this manuscript is transcribed. Marx dates the manuscript ‘between 1160 and 1180.’

¹⁷ Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 71-88. Cf. *ibid.*, 379-82 (Constantinople); 383-85 (Jellinek); 385-89 (Lévi).

¹⁸ Beit-Arié, *Catalogue*, 440: ‘with variations from the printed editions and shorter towards the end.’ This is followed (35a-36b) by a piece entitled מלך המשיח ‘The King Messiah,’ and fols. 41b-42a of the same manuscript features a short presentation entitled ענין נהר סמבטיון ‘(On) the Subject of the River Sambatyon,’ a work related to the Eldad ha-Dani legends.

¹⁹ See Marx, “Studies,” 77-78 n.35; *idem*, “Additions et rectifications,” *REJ* 71 (1920): 222.

²⁰ T-S A45.5, 45.7, 45.19, and 45.22; published in Simon Hopkins, *A Miscellany of Literary Pieces from the Cambridge Genizah Collections: A Catalogue and Selection of Texts in the Taylor-Schechter Collection, Old Series, Box A45* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Library, 1978).

Babylonia to Eretz Israel as a result of Cyrus's decree permitting their return (Ezra 2:1-2 = Neh 7:6-7 = 1 Esd 5:7-8).²¹ Other sources place Zerubbabel later, during the early years of the reign of Darius (521-485 BCE),²² or even during the reign of Artaxerxes (464-424 BCE).²³ According to the apocryphal narrative of 1 Esd 3:1-4:63, Zerubbabel served as a royal bodyguard in the court of Darius and by virtue of his rhetorical skills won that monarch's support for the return of the Judaeen exiles and the captured Temple vessels.²⁴ Complicating matters further is one strand of rabbinic tradition that identifies Zerubbabel with Nehemiah.²⁵ All of these variant contextualizations represent him as closely involved in the restoration and regulation of sacrificial worship in Jerusalem (Ezra 3:2, 8; 4:2-3; 5:2; Neh 12:1, 47; Hag 1:14; Zech 4:9; Ben Sira 49:11-12; 1 Esd 6:2). An extremely intriguing testimony contained in the early Muslim historian Ya'qūbī attributes the postexilic recovery and promulgation of the Jewish scriptures not to Ezra,²⁶ but to Zerubbabel, who is described as unearthing them from a pit where Nebuchadnezzar had previously attempted to dispose of them:

Zerubbabel was the one who recovered the Torah and the books of the Prophets from the pit wherein Bukht-Naşşar (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar) had buried them. He discovered that they had not burned at all.²⁷ Hence he restored (and) transcribed (copies of) the Torah, the books of the Prophets, their

²¹ See Ezra 3:2, 8; 4:2-5; 1 Esd 5:47-73; Josephus, *Ant.* 11.13-14, 92. According to the Syriac *Cave of Treasures* (oriental recension §42.17; occidental recension §42.11-12), Cyrus marries Zerubbabel's sister and is thus his brother-in-law. See Su-Min Ri, ed., *La Caverne des Trésors: Les deux recensions syriaques* (CSCO 486, scrip. syri 207; Louvain: E. Peeters, 1987), 321-23.

²² See Ezra 5:2; all the Haggai and Zechariah references; 1 Esd 6:1-2; Josephus, *Ant.* 11.116-19.

²³ Note Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.21.124, wherein it states that Zerubbabel and Ezra were contemporaries.

²⁴ See also Josephus, *Ant.* 11.31-67, who harmonizes the divergent Cyrus and Darius traditions by stating that Zerubbabel was already serving as 'governor' of Judah and had returned to Babylon only at the accession of Darius, described as an 'old friend.'

²⁵ *B. Sanh.* 38a. 2 Macc 1:18-36, which attributes the rebuilding of the Temple and its dedicatory sacrifices to Nehemiah, would appear to vouchsafe the antiquity of this assimilation.

²⁶ Ezra's reputation as restorer of the Torah after the Exile was well known among Muslim scholars thanks to first-century A.H. Judaeo-Muslim tradents of *Isrā'īliyyāt*, or 'Jewish scriptural lore,' like 'Abd Allāh b. Salām, Ka'b al-Aḥbār, and Wāḥb b. Munabbih. For a convenient translation of Wāḥb's testimony about Ezra, see Brannon M. Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 287-89. Muslim access to later Christian Arabic translations of the apocryphal book of *4 Ezra* (regarding which see Adriana Drint, ed., *The Mount Sinai Arabic Version of IV Ezra* [2 vols.; CSCO 563-564, scrip. arabici 48-49; Louvain: Peeters, 1997]) would reinforce Ezra's role in the history of Jewish scripturalism.

²⁷ In his earlier account of the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem, Ya'qūbī had described how the impious Nebuchadnezzar had taken the Jewish scriptures, dumped them in a hole, tossed flaming torches on top of them, and filled the pit with dirt.

customary practices (*sunna*), and their religious laws (*ṣarī'a*). He was the first to record these scriptures.²⁸

Several prophetic oracles dating from the reign of Darius exhort Zerubbabel to maintain confidence and strength in the face of an otherwise unspecified adversity (Hag 1:1; 2:2, 4, 21; Zech 4:6-7; Ezra 5:1-2). As son of Shealtiel²⁹ and lineal descendant of Jeconiah,³⁰ Zerubbabel in fact embodies the contemporary link with the pre-exilic Davidide line of succession, and he thus receives prophetic endorsement as a 'messianic' candidate.³¹ The prophet Haggai terms him 'governor of Judah' (Hag 1:1, 14; 2:2, 21), and it seems possible that the mysterious Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8) to whom Cyrus hands over the looted Temple vessels and who bears the epithet 'prince of Judah' (הנשיא ליהודה) is none other than Zerubbabel.³² The historical fate of Zerubbabel, assuming he was such, remains shrouded in mystery. It is unlikely that the imperial authorities would have tolerated the revival of dynastic forms of discourse in the province of Yehud, and it is possible that he was either recalled or simply liquidated. According to the late rabbinic chronographic source *Seder 'Olam Zuta*, Zerubbabel returned permanently to Babylonia in order to assume the office of exilarch (Aramaic *resh galuta*; Arabic *ra's al-jālūt*).³³

²⁸ Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh* (2 vols.; Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1960), 1:66.4-6; cf. M. T. Houtsma, ed., *Ibn Wadīh qui dicitur al-Ja'qūbī historiae ...* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1883), 1:71.12-15; R. Y. Ebied and L. R. Wickham, "Al-Yaqūbī's Account of the Israelite Prophets and Kings," *JNES* 29 (1970): 97; Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 226-27.

²⁹ Zerubbabel is identified as the son of Shealtiel (בן שאלתיאל) in Hag 1:1; 2:23; Ezra 3:2, 8; 5:2; Neh 12:1, and with the slightly variant spelling בן שלתיאל in Hag 1:12, 14; 2:2. Contrast 1 Chr 3:17-19, but note Radaq *ad loc.*, who points out that the naming of Pedaiah as Zerubbabel's father in verse 19 does not necessarily contradict the other sources' ascription of the role of forebear to Shealtiel (see also Ibn Ezra *ad Exod* 2:10)—note however LXX 1 Chr 3:19 for a different resolution of the difficulty. 4 Ezra 3:1 curiously effects an identification between Shealtiel and Ezra (one Arabic version makes Ezra the 'son of Shealtiel!'); for a discussion of the problems this amalgam engenders, see Michael E. Stone, "The Metamorphosis of Ezra: Jewish Apocalypse and Medieval Vision," *JTS* n.s. 33 (1982): 2-3; idem, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 55-56.

³⁰ 1 Chr 3:17-19; *b. Sanh.* 37b-38a; *Lev. Rab.* 10.5 (Margulies, 1:208-209).

³¹ Cf. Zech 3:8 and the traditional commentaries; also Hag 2:23; 1 Esd 5:5; Josephus, *Ant.* 11.73. According to *Liv. Pro.* 15.3 (see *OTP* 2:394), it was the prophet Zechariah who named Shealtiel's son 'Zerubbabel.'

³² Ibn Ezra *ad* Ezra 1:8 says of Sheshbazzar that 'he is Zerubbabel, but he was called so (i.e., Sheshbazzar) in the language of the Chaldeans.' See also Ibn Ezra *ad* Dan 6:29, where he supplies two reasons why Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel must be the same figure. 1 Esd 6:17 has the Persian monarch transfer the Temple vessels to both Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar. Other traditional sources identify Sheshbazzar with Daniel.

³³ וחזר זרובבל לבבל ומת שם. Text cited from Adolf Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles and Chronological Notes* (2 vols.; Oxford, 1887-95; repr., Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1970), 2:71.3. Compare Yassif, *Sefer ha-Zikronot*, 372, which envisions two separate journeys by Zerubbabel from Babylon to Jerusalem. After the successful rebuilding of the Temple, he returns to Babylon as above. For

The figure of Zerubbabel attracted its share of messianic associations. The fourth-century Christian commentator Ephrem Syrus expounds the infamous ‘star from Jacob’ imagery of Num 24:17 as referring to Zerubbabel.³⁴ Late antique and geonic Jewish traditions occasionally portray Zerubbabel as intimately involved in a series of events coordinated with the advent of the Messiah.³⁵ The liturgical poet Eleazar ha-Qallir in his popular lament *Be-yamim ha-hem* (‘In Those Days’) depicts Zerubbabel as the one who alerts the angels Michael and Gabriel to begin the final battle against Israel’s oppressors.³⁶ The *Otiyyot de R. Aqiva* (‘Alphabet of R. Akiva’) states that after God expounds the ‘new Torah’ which the Messiah will promulgate, Zerubbabel will arise and recite the *qaddish de-rabbanan*, provoking a response of affirmation from all beings including even those suffering in Gehenna.³⁷ An analogous tradition occurs in the pseudo-*Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, where instead of God it is Zerubbabel himself who expounds the Torah ‘like a *meturgeman*.’³⁸ Yet another closely related tradition is found in *Hekhalot Rabbati*, wherein Zerubbabel is depicted as the mediator and authoritative interpreter of a divine theophany witnessed by the builders of the Second Temple.³⁹ In a midrashic fragment preserved in the early geonic code *Halakhot Gedolot*,⁴⁰ it is

Zerubbabel’s exilarchate, see Moshe Gil, “The Exilarchate,” in *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity* (ed. Daniel Frank; Études sur le judaïsme medieval 16; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 33.

³⁴ J. S. Assemani, ed., *Sancti patris nostri Ephraem Syri opera omnia* (6 vols.; Rome: Typographia Vaticana, 1737-43), 1:153E; cited by Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909-38), 6:133 n.782.

³⁵ The following references are taken from Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:438 n.25.

³⁶ בימים ההם ובעת ההיא בחדש הששי הוא חדש אלול כשירו יכריזו בן שאלתיאל וירדו מיכאל וגבריאל לערוך מלחמת נקמת אל ולא ישאירו אחד מאיבי אל ‘In those days and at that time, in the sixth month which is the month Ellul, when the son of Shealtiel beholds it (i.e., the splitting apart of the Mount of Olives and the Messiah’s approach) he will cry out, and Michael and Gabriel will descend in order to wage the war of God’s vengeance. None of God’s enemies will remain (alive).’ Text cited from the edition of the *piyyut* contained in Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 114.

³⁷ Jellinek, *BHM* 3:27-28: עתיד הקב"ה להיות יושב בגן עדן ודורש ... והקב"ה דורש להם טעמי תורה חדשה שעתידי הקב"ה ליתן להם על ידי משיח וכיון שמגיע לאגדה עומד זרובבל בן שאלתיאל על רגליו ואומ' יתגדל ויתקדש וקולו הולך מסוף העולם עד סופו וכל באי עולם עוננין אמנו ואף רשעי ישראל וצדיקי אומות העולם שנשתיירו בגיהנם ‘The Holy One, blessed be He, will sit in Paradise and expound ... and the Holy One, blessed be He, will expound to them the presuppositions of the new Torah which he will reveal to them in the future via the agency of the Messiah. When He reaches (completes?) the exposition, Zerubbabel b. Shealtiel will stand up and recite “May He be magnified and sanctified, etc.” His voice will reach from one end of the universe to the other. All the inhabitants of the world will answer “Amen!” Even the wicked ones from Israel and those righteous Gentiles who remain in Gehenna will respond and say “Amen!” See also Jellinek, *BHM* 6:63; Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 347; Yassif, *Sefer ha-Zikronot*, 448-49.

³⁸ Meir Friedmann, *Pseudo-Seder Eliahu Zuta* (Wien: [s.n.], 1904), 32: ועולה הקב"ה ויושב בפמליא שלו: Note also Jellinek, *BHM* 3:75, a text which combines elements of the preceding *Otiyyot de R. Aqiva* tradition with the present one.

³⁹ Schäfer §298 (except for Ms. V228 where it is §297); pericope references are to Peter Schäfer, ed., *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (TSAJ 2; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981). See Michael D. Swartz, “Hekhalot Rabbati #297-306: A Ritual for the Cultivation of the Prince of the Torah,” in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (ed. Vincent L. Wimbush; SAC; Minneapolis: Fortress Press,

stated that both Elijah and Zerubbabel will be responsible for resolving judicial conundrums at the dawn of the coming age.⁴¹ Finally, a Persian Danielic apocalypse, rendered in medieval Hebrew as *Ma'aseh Daniel*, states that the Davidic Messiah, Elijah, and Zerubbabel will together ascend the Mount of Olives, whereupon the Messiah will command Elijah to sound the *shofar*.⁴² While Zerubbabel's precise role in these latter eschatological proceedings remains unexplicated by *Ma'aseh Daniel*, a tradition found in R. Hai Gaon's influential responsum concerning the eschaton avers that 'Zerubbabel is the one who blows this *shofar*.'⁴³

It should also be noted that Zerubbabel attracted attention from at least one Muslim scholar who was interested in rehearsing or recovering passages from pre-qur'ānic scriptures which in his view prefigured the coming of Muhammad and the religion of Islam. In one manuscript version of the *Kitāb al-nubuwwa* of Māwardī, who was a prominent eleventh-century Iraqi scholar of religious law, there occurs a singular Arabic translation of Zech 4:1-6 wherein the biblical annunciation and mission of 'Zerubbabel' are deciphered as a prediction of the advent of Muhammad.⁴⁴

But perhaps the most intriguing messianic reading of the figure of Zerubbabel appears within a garbled summary of obscure prophetic and eschatological lore that was reportedly taught among a Syro-Mesopotamian gnostic sect known as the Hewyāyē (i.e., Naassenes).⁴⁵ According to Theodore bar Konai, an eighth-century Nestorian bishop whose Syriac treatise the *Scholion* provides us with an

1990), 227-34; idem, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 92-108; Joseph Dan, "The Memory of the Future and the Utopia of the Past," in idem, *Jewish Mysticism* (4 vols.; Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1998-99), 1:124.

⁴⁰ Compiled in the ninth century by R. Simeon Qayyara. For a recent discussion of this work's provenance, see Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 223-32.

⁴¹ Ezriel Hildesheimer, ed., *Halakhot Gedolot 'al pi ketav yad Romi* (Berlin: Hevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1888-92), 223: ... ולתלות כל תיקו עד שיבא זרובבל ואליהו ויפרשו וידרשו כל סתרי תורה ... '... and to suspend every insoluble case until the advent of Zerubbabel and Elijah: they will interpret and expound all the mysteries of the Torah ...' Text cited from Israel Lévi, "L'apocalypse de Zorobabel et le roi de Perse Siroès (Suite et fin)," *REJ* 71 (1920): 58 n.1.

⁴² Jellinek, *BHM* 5:128: משיח בן דוד אליהו וזרובבל יעלו על ראש הר הזיתים ומשיח יצוה את אליהו לתקוע בשופר. See also Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge'ullah*, 225.

⁴³ Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge'ullah*, 138: ואומרים כי זרובבל תוקע בשופר הזה.

⁴⁴ The Arabic text is transcribed in Martin Schreiner, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bibel in der arabischen Literatur," in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Rev. Dr. Alexander-Kohut* (ed. George Alexander Kohut; Berlin: S. Calvary & Co., 1897), 509-10.

⁴⁵ The earlier heresiological compilations of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius offer no sources or parallels for the information supplied about the Syro-Mesopotamian Hewyāyē. See Stephen Gerö, "Ophite Gnosticism According to Theodore bar Koni's Liber Scholiorum," in *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984: Literary Genres in Syriac Literature (Groningen-Oosterhesselen 10-12 September)* (ed. H. J. W. Drijvers et al.; OrChrAn 229; Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), 265-74.

invaluable description of a number of pre-Christian and post-Christian religious sects,⁴⁶ the Ḥewyāyē promulgate among other things the following set of doctrines:

With regard to Christ, they claim that his father's name was N'wr (ܢܘܪ) and that he had a wife named Miriam, and that Christ was born from them. They designate Christ with many names—Abel, Manasseh, Per'ūn,⁴⁷ Zerubbabel—and assert that he is associated with the androgyne named Babel.⁴⁸ This is why they call him 'Zerubbabel,' for he sows seed in Babel.⁴⁹ They also claim there is a church at the ends of the earth wherein Christ is, along with his father N'wr and his mother Miriam, and that he will come after the Antichrist (ܘܨܘܦܘܨܘܦܘܨ) comes and kills the Jews and all of humankind.⁵⁰

Embedded within these lines are a number of tantalizing items which echo the *dramatis personae* as well as the configuring scenes of the Jewish *Sefer Zerubbabel*. First and foremost is their common exploitation and realization of the messianic dimensions of the biblical character Zerubbabel. The gnostic 'apocalypse,' assuming such a work existed, apparently connected the office and perhaps even effected the essential identity of its Messiah with several scriptural or angelic worthies, among whom is registered Zerubbabel. The Naassene Christ's sequestration in an unnamed church situated 'at the ends of the earth' eerily mirrors *Sefer Zerubbabel's* analogous incarceration of the Davidic Messiah within a 'church' in distant Rome (given the prominence of 'Babel' in the gnostic fragment, one must also take into account the possible

⁴⁶ Theodore bar Konai, *Liber Scholiorum* (ed. Addai Scher; 2 vols.; CSCO, scrip. syri series II, t. 65-66; Paris: Carolus Poussielgue, 1910-12). For an excellent introduction to Theodore and his book, see Sidney H. Griffith, "Theodore bar Kōnī's *Scholion*: A Nestorian *Summa contra Gentiles* from the First Abbasid Century," in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (ed. Nina G. Garsoïan et al.; Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 53-72.

⁴⁷ Certainly not the identically spelled 'Pharaoh' (ܦܪܘܗܘܬ), an appellation devoid of messianic significance. As Gerō has perceptively suggested ("Ophite Gnosticism," 271 n.30), this enigmatic entity should be viewed as a forerunner of the Mandaean 'uthra Pirūn (*pyrwn*). If Lidzbarski is correct in deriving the name from the Syriac stem ܦܪܘܗ (meaning 'to bud, flower, send out shoots'), an appropriately messianic semantic field emerges; namely, that of the 'shoot' or 'branch' of David (Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12; cf. Isa 11:1). See Mark Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer* (2 vols.; Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1905-15), 2:7 n.1.

⁴⁸ The 'androgyne named Babel' (ܘܨܘܦܘܨܘܦܘܨ) was previously identified by Theodore as an angelic archon in the shape of a weasel (!) who patrolled the fifth heaven of the Naassene cosmos.

⁴⁹ Compare *b. Sanh.* 38a: זורובבל שנורע בבבל ומה שמו נחמיה בן חכליה שמו ' (Why was he called Zerubbabel? Because he was sown in Babel. And what was his (actual) name? Nehemiah ben Ḥakaliah was his (actual) name.' An identical word-play thus underlies both the amoraic and gnostic 'explanations' for this figure's name.

⁵⁰ Theodore bar Konai, *Liber Scholiorum* (ed. Scher), 2:336.13-23.

relevance for both texts of earlier Jewish apocalyptic's common exegetical equation of 'Rome' with 'Babylon'). The redemptive advent of both messianic figures is identically triggered by the murderous depredations of the 'Antichrist.' Interestingly both 'apocalypses' script roles for the 'mother' of the Messiah although their respective activities differ: Hephṣibah is at the forefront of the military resistance to the forces of chaos, whereas Miriam remains in seclusion with her son (and husband!) during the period of his occultation. More speculatively, the peculiar name of Christ's father—N'wr (ܢܘܪ)—exhibits at least an audible similarity to one of the most common designations for the angelic prince Metatron who functions as the medium of revelation in the *Sefer Zerubbabel*; namely, 'Youth' (נער).⁵¹

Issues pertaining to the date and provenance of *Sefer Zerubbabel* are problematic. Allusions to Islam or the suzerainty of Arab rulers are minimal at best.⁵² The repetitious calculations pertaining to a lapsed number of years or dynastic successions of kings probably reflect later attempts to update the book's information in the light of more recent history. Although Jellinek termed the work 'sehr alt,'⁵³ a number of late nineteenth-century interpreters followed the influential historian Heinrich Graetz in placing the work in the middle of the eleventh century.⁵⁴ Most modern scholars have accepted the persuasive arguments advanced by Israel Lévi for locating the work during the first quarter of the seventh century in Palestine within the context of the fierce struggles of Persia and Rome for control of the Holy Land.⁵⁵ Joseph Dan has recently argued against a seventh-century setting, preferring instead to place it indeterminately 'within

⁵¹ For the general weakening of the guttural consonants in the various dialects of eastern Aramaic, see J. N. Epstein, *Diqduq Aramit Bavlit* (ed. E. Z. Melamed; Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Magnes and Devir, 1960), 17-18, and note the responsum of R. Hai Gaon quoted there. It does not seem far-fetched to posit a possible philological connection between these words.

⁵² Cairo Geniza fragments 2 and 4 published in Wertheimer, *Batey Midrashot* (ed. 1980), 2:497-505, at 503-505; also in various fragments from the Geniza recently identified and published by Moshe Gil, "The Apocalypse of Zerubbabel in Judaeo-Arabic," *REJ* 165 (2006): 1-98.

⁵³ Jellinek, *BHM* 2:xxii.

⁵⁴ Graetz, *Geschichte*³, 6:53-55. For references to other scholars who followed Graetz, see Israel Lévi, "L'apocalypse de Zorobabel et le roi de Perse Siroès: (Suite)," *REJ* 69 (1914): 108-111. Graetz also opined that it was composed in Italy and was probably unknown in Palestine, neither of which conclusions seems likely now. Renewed support for Graetz's dating has been recently voiced by Gil, "Apocalypse of Zerubbabel," 9-10.

⁵⁵ See Lévi, "L'apocalypse (Suite)," 108-15. Note also Dan, *Sippur*, 36-37, 43; Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (18 vols.; 2d ed.; Philadelphia and New York: Jewish Publication Society and Columbia University Press, 1952-83), 5:354 n. 3; Brannon M. Wheeler, "Imagining the Sasanian Capture of Jerusalem," *OCP* 57 (1991): 73; Walter E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 207; David Biale, "Counter-History and Jewish Polemics Against Christianity: The *Sefer toldot yeshu* and the *Sefer zerubavel*," *Jewish Social Studies* n.s. 6 (1999): 137; Hagith Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 241-42, 351-52. Wheeler departs from a general consensus that the work is Palestinian in provenance by suggesting that *Sefer Zerubbabel* was authored in Edessa after the arrival of Heraclius in Jerusalem in 630.

the range of the third to the sixth centuries.⁵⁶ A number of scholars, however, have sought to use the enigmatic references to the passage of ‘990 years’ after the destruction of the Temple as a clue for dating *Sefer Zerubbabel* later than the seventh century.⁵⁷ Moshe Gil has for example stated: ‘It is quite likely that the hardship and stress of these years [the mid-eleventh century] were the major factors contributing to predictions of the imminent end of the world in 1058 (“when 990 years from the destruction of Jerusalem are completed”).’⁵⁸ Yet it is also observable that the number ‘990’ possesses millenarian and even astronomical/astrological significance within multiple apocalyptic contexts.⁵⁹ Even-Shmuel has suggested that the book’s reference to the passage of ‘990 years’ need not begin its count with the destruction of the Temple in 68 CE, but may be keyed to its reconstruction in the sixth century BCE. If so, then by using the rabbinic calculation of the duration of the Second Temple as 420 years and subtracting that sum from 990, the work may aim at 570 + 68 or 638 CE as the anticipated time of the End.⁶⁰

References to or explicit acknowledgement of *Sefer Zerubbabel* among medieval Jewish sources do not clarify these questions to any great extent. The Zohar (3.173b) is cognizant of the legend of Hephşibah, the mother of the Davidic messiah: her name and role are unique to *Sefer Zerubbabel* and its derivative literature.⁶¹ R. Eleazar b. Judah of Worms (1165-1230) refers to the book in his *Sefer Roqeah* under the rubric ‘Baraita de-Zerubbabel’ (ברייתא דזרובבל).⁶² In his commentary to Exod 2:22, Abraham Ibn Ezra

⁵⁶ Joseph Dan, “Armilus: The Jewish Antichrist and the Origins and Dating of the *Sefer Zerubbavel*,” in *Toward the Millennium: Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco* (ed. Peter Schäfer and Mark Cohen; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 73-104, at 98.

⁵⁷ See Lévi, “L’apocalypse (Suite),” 109 n. 1.

⁵⁸ Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634-1099* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 401-402.

⁵⁹ See Manetho, frag. 64 (*apud* W. G. Waddell, *Manetho with an English Translation* [LCL 350; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940], 164-65), together with the comments of Ludwig Koenen, “Manichaean Apocalypticism at the Crossroads of Iranian, Egyptian, Jewish and Christian Thought,” in *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis: Atti del Simposio Internazionale (Rende-Amantea 3-7 settembre 1984)* (ed. Luigi Cirillo and Amneris Roselli; Cosenza: Marra Editore, 1986), 315-16 nn. 90-91; and especially Moritz Steinschneider, “Apokalypsen mit polemischer Tendenz,” *ZDMG* 28 (1874): 629-34. The ‘revelation of Akatriel to R. Ishmael’ mentioned by the latter scholar (p. 631) refers to the so-called ‘*Aggadat R. Ishmael*’; see Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 144-52, 399-400.

⁶⁰ Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, lix-ix; 61-63.

⁶¹ For some recent discussions of this figure, see Biale, “Counter-History,” 139-42; Peter Schäfer, *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 213-16; Martha Himmelfarb, “The Mother of the Messiah in the Talmud Yerushalmi and *Sefer Zerubbabel*,” in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture, III* (ed. Peter Schäfer; TSAJ 93; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 369-89.

⁶² Marx, “Studies,” 76.

(1089-1164) criticizes *Sefer Zerubbabel* as ‘unreliable.’⁶³ Some editions of the commentary to *’Abot* contained in *Mahzor Vitry*, supposedly the work of Rashi (1040-1105), refer to *Sefer Zerubbabel* for the identification of Aaron’s rod (*m. ’Abot* 5.6).⁶⁴ It seems likely that both R. Saadya Gaon (882-942) and R. Hai b. Sherira Gaon (939-1038) knew it, although neither refers to it by name.⁶⁵ Yet firm evidence for the existence of *Sefer Zerubbabel* prior to the tenth century remains elusive. The partial inclusion and expansion of some sections of *Sefer Zerubbabel* found in the final portion of some editions of *Hekhalot Rabbati* are not indigenous to that work, but stem from the seventeenth-century messianic movement of Shabbatai Ševi.⁶⁶ Some have pointed to the eschatological poetry of Eleazar ha-Qallir as evidence for the work’s existence, especially a *piyyut* known by the title *’Oto ha-yom* prepared for recitation on Tish’a be-Av, the fast-day commemorating the destruction of the First and Second Temples.⁶⁷ J. Yahalom has published a more complete version of this *piyyut* based upon at least seven recensions that have been recovered from the Cairo Genizah,⁶⁸ all of which (he argues) should be dated prior to the extant ‘prose versions’ of *Sefer Zerubbabel*.⁶⁹ It is of course possible that *Sefer Zerubbabel* takes its inspiration from the *payyetan*,⁷⁰ whose precise *floruit* at any rate is much disputed. One might cite as an analogy the biblical examples embodied in the ‘Song at the Sea’ (Exod 15:1-18) and the ‘Song of Deborah’ (Judg 5:1-31a), each of which is paired with a companion prose rendering of the redemptive events celebrated therein. However, these two biblical songs transmit ancient tribal legends extolling the martial triumphs of ancestral

⁶³ כל ספר שלא כתבוהו נביאים או חכמים מפי הקבלה אין לסמוך עליו ... וככה ספר זרובבל ‘any book not authored by a prophet or a Sage reliant upon tradition is unreliable ... such as *Sefer Zerubbabel*’ Text cited from Asher Weiser, ed., *Perushey ha-Torah le-Rabbenu Abraham Ibn Ezra* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1977), 2:20. See also Zunz-Albeck, *Haderashot*, 311 n.88.

⁶⁴ Other editions however read ‘Chronicles of Moses’ instead.

⁶⁵ Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 66. Jellinek (*BHM* 2:xxii) points out that Saadya already knows the Armilos legend.

⁶⁶ See Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 352-70; Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Ševi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 738 n.135; Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (AGJU 14; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 150 n.2.

⁶⁷ For an edition of the *piyyut* and bibliographical notices, see Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 154-60. Note also Bernard Lewis, “On That Day: A Jewish Apocalyptic Poem on the Arab Conquests,” in *Mélanges d’Islamologie: Volume dédié à la mémoire de Armand Abel* (ed. Pierre Salmon; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 197-200; Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It* (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 13; Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 319-20.

⁶⁸ Joseph Yahalom, “‘Al toqpan shel yetsirot sifrut ke-maqor le-berur she’elot historiyot,” *Cathedra* 11 (1979): 125-33 (Hebrew).

⁶⁹ Joseph Yahalom, “The Temple and the City in Liturgical Hebrew Poetry,” in *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period, 638-1099* (ed. Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammai; Jerusalem and New York: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and New York University Press, 1996), 278-80.

⁷⁰ E.g., Baron, *History*, 5:152.

worthies, whereas the *piyyut* points to the future and ‘plays with eschatological motifs, conjuring up a vision of the march of armies and the proliferation of supernatural events.’⁷¹ Further study would seem to be required before more definitive results in their comparative dating can be achieved.

Several targumic passages are reminiscent of the book’s distinctive contents. *Tg. Cant* 7:13-8:14 weaves a lengthy eschatological tapestry which intersects at key points with motifs from *Sefer Zerubbabel*.⁷² Some manuscripts and printed editions of *Tg. Isa* 11:4 render that messianically charged verse as follows: ‘he (i.e., the Messiah) will judge the poor fairly and provide reliable evidence for the less fortunate among the people; he will smite the wicked of the earth with the word of his mouth, and with the utterance of his lips he will slay Armilos the evil one (ארמילוס רשיעא).’⁷³ *Tg. Ps.-J. Deut* 34:1-3 exploits the toponyms found in those verses to depict the following visionary scene:

Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, a high peak above Jericho, and the *Memra* of the Lord showed him all the mighty protectors of the Land. (He showed him) the martial feats destined to be performed by Jephthah of Gilead and the victories which would be won by Samson b. Manoah of the tribe of Dan. (He was also shown) the thousand commanders from the tribe of Naphtali who allied themselves with Barak; the kings whom Joshua b. Nun the Ephraimite would slay; the martial exploits of Gideon b. Joash of the tribe of Manasseh; and all the kings of Israel and the kingdom of Judah who would rule in the Land until the final destruction of the Temple. (He was also shown) the king of the south who would ally himself to the king of the north in order to destroy the inhabitants of the Land;⁷⁴ the Ammonite and Moabite inhabitants of the plain who would oppress them; that is, Israel; the exile of the disciples of Elijah who would depart from the valley of Jericho

⁷¹ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 320.

⁷² I am indebted to Philip S. Alexander for calling my attention to this passage. One edition of *Tg. Cant* 7:13-8:5 is available in Gustav Dalman, *Aramäische Dialektproben* (2d ed.; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1927; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960), 12-14.

⁷³ Alexander Sperber, ed., *The Bible in Aramaic: Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts* (5 vols.; Leiden, 1959-73; repr., Leiden: Brill, 1992), 3:25 and the critical apparatus. See also Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 92; Graetz, *Geschichte*³, 5:413. Many scholars consider this a later addition to the targumic text; see Zunz-Albeck, *Haderashot*, 252 n.9; 430 n.31.

⁷⁴ See Dan 11:5ff.

along with the exile of the 2,200 disciples of Elisha⁷⁵ who would depart from the 'City of Palms' (i.e., Jericho) at the hands of their Israelite brethren;⁷⁶ the oppression of each and every generation; the punishment of Armalgos (*sic*) the evil one (ארמלגוס רשיעא);⁷⁷ the wars fought with Gog; and how Michael would arise with strength to deliver (Israel) at the time of (her) greatest peril.⁷⁸

Finally, *Tg. Tos. Zech* 12:10 expands that biblical verse to read as follows:

I will place a spirit of true prophecy and prayerfulness upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Judah. Afterwards the Messiah of the lineage of Ephraim (משיח בר אפרים) will emerge and fight a battle with Gog, but Gog will slay him in front of the gate of Jerusalem. Then they (i.e., Israel) will look to Me and seek from Me the reason why the nations have stabbed the Messiah of the lineage of Ephraim, and they will mourn him as a father and mother would mourn their only child, and they will grieve for him the way they would grieve for (the death of) a firstborn.⁷⁹

The present translation relies primarily on the text of the Oxford manuscript first published by Lévi and which I have lately compared with the new transcription of Yassif. In addition, I have also consulted the printed editions of Jellinek, Wertheimer, and Even-Shmuel, and have made occasional use of the Genizah fragments published in Hopkins. Other manuscript versions of this work which I have consulted include Oxford Ms. Opp. 236a fols. 13a-15b; Oxford Ms. Opp. 603 fols. 32b-34; and Oxford Ms. Heb. f. 27 (2642) fols. 42-43.⁸⁰ Of the extant translations of this work, the best to date is that of Martha Himmelfarb,

⁷⁵ See *b. Ketub.* 106a and Rashi *ad loc.*; also Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:348 n.23.

⁷⁶ Cf. 2 Chr 28:8-15.

⁷⁷ A marginal note in the manuscript states: 'Armilos (ארמילוס) the evil one whom the nations of the world call Antichrist (אנטכריסט).'

⁷⁸ Translated from David Rieder, ed., *Targum Yonatan ben 'Uziel on the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Salomon, 1974), 308. See also Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge'ullah*, 91-92.

⁷⁹ A marginal note in Codex Reuchlinianus, cited from the critical apparatus of Sperber, *Bible in Aramaic*, 3:495. See also Dalman, *Aramäische Dialektproben*, 12; Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge'ullah*, 92 n.16.

⁸⁰ With regard to this last manuscript, see Adolf Neubauer and A. E. Cowley, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Volume Two* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), 37.

“Sefer Zerubbabel,” in *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature* (ed. David Stern and Mark Jay Mirsky; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 67-90.⁸¹

THE PROPHETIC VISION OF ZERUBBABEL BEN SHEALTIEL⁸²

(This is) the word which came to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, (future) governor of Judah.⁸³ On the twenty-fourth day of the seventh month,⁸⁴ the Lord showed me this spectacle there while I was prostrate in prayer before the Lord my God, experiencing a visionary spectacle which I saw by the river Kebar.⁸⁵ And as I was reciting⁸⁶ (the passage of the ‘*Amidah* which ends) ‘Blessed are You, O Lord, the One Who resuscitates the dead!’ my heart groaned within me, thinking ‘[How will]⁸⁷ the form of the Temple⁸⁸ come into existence?’ He answered me from the doors of heaven and said to me, ‘Are you Zerubbabel ben Shealtiel, governor of Judah?’ I responded, ‘I am your servant.’ He answered me and conversed with me just as a person would speak to their friend.⁸⁹ I could hear His voice, but I could not see

⁸¹ Another English translation, inexplicably based upon the inferior text found in Jellinek and which appears unaware of Himmelfarb’s work, is offered by David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* (JSOTSup 252; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 315-20; 340-43 (text).

⁸² Oxford Ms. Opp. 236a reads: *בְּעִזְרַת הָאֵל אֶתְחִיל סֵפֶר זְרוּבָבֶל בֶּן שְׂאֵלְתִּיאֵל* ‘With God’s help I will begin the Book of Zerubbabel ben Shealtiel.’

⁸³ For this precise prophetic formula (... *הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר הִיָּה אֵל*), see Jer 7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 30:1; 32:1; 34:1, 8; 35:1; 40:1; 44:1. The character Zerubbabel is not simply ‘prophetized’ (so Even-Shmuel); he is a deliberate fusion of the exilic prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The choice of Zerubbabel as agent is probably based upon Zech 4:9.

⁸⁴ Note Neh 9:1: *וּבַיּוֹם עֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבַּעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה נִאֲסְפוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּצוֹם וּבִשְׂקִים וְאָדָמָה עֲלֵיהֶם* ‘and on the twenty-fourth day of this month (according to 8:14, the seventh) the children of Israel assembled for a fast wearing sackcloth and dirt.’ Even-Shmuel emends *הַשְּׁבִיעִי* to *שֶׁבֶט* on the basis of Zech 1:7, 16, but there is no textual support for this change.

⁸⁵ Following Jellinek (*עַל נֶהַר כְּבַר*); the manuscript reads an unintelligible *בְּכַבְרָה*. The structure of the final clause is indebted to Ezek 43:3; cf. also 3:23 and 10:22.

⁸⁶ Manuscript reads *וּבְאֹמְרִים*; Lévi follows the other recensions and printed editions in emending to *וּבְאֹמְרִי*.

⁸⁷ Supplied from Jellinek.

⁸⁸ Literally *בֵּית עוֹלָמִים* ‘eternal House.’ Early rabbinic sources employ this phrase as a circumlocution for the Temple; see, e.g., *t. Zebah*. 13.6-8; *Mek. Bo*’, Pisha §1 (Horovitz-Rabin, 2.14). Chronologically later sources sometimes use it to refer to Jerusalem; note Rashi to *b. Sanh.* 94a and especially *Hul.* 24a (*ירוּשָׁלַיִם* *בֵּית עוֹלָמִים* (נקראת בית עולמים). See also Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 56-57 n.5.

⁸⁹ Based on Exod 33:11.

His appearance. I continued to lie prostrate as before, and I completed my prayer. Then I went to my house.

On the eleventh day of the month 'Adar He was speaking with me (again) there, and he said to me, 'Are you my servant Zerubbabel?' I responded, 'I am your servant.' He said to me, 'Come to me! Ask (anything) and I will tell you!' I answered and said, 'What might I ask? That my appointed lifespan be short and my destiny fulfilled?' He said to me: 'I will make you live (a long life).' He repeated, 'May you live (a long time)!'⁹⁰

A wind lifted me up between heaven and earth⁹¹ and carried me to the great city Nineveh,⁹² city of blood,⁹³ and I thought 'Woe is me, for my attitude has been contentious⁹⁴ and (now) my life is at great risk!' So I arose in distress in order to pray and entreat the favor of the name⁹⁵ of the Lord God of Israel. I confessed all my transgressions and my sins, for my attitude had been contentious, and I said: 'Ah Lord! I have acted wrongly, I have transgressed, I have sinned, for my attitude has been contentious. You are the Lord God, the One Who made everything by a command⁹⁶ from Your mouth, and (Who) with a word from Your lips will revivify the dead!' He said to me, 'Go to the "house of filth"⁹⁷ near the market-district,'⁹⁸ and I went just as he had commanded me. He said to me, 'Turn this way,' and so I turned. He touched me, and then I saw a man (who was) despicable, broken down and in pain.⁹⁹

⁹⁰ Counteracting Zerubbabel's sarcastic wish to die prematurely?

⁹¹ Compare Ezek 8:3.

⁹² Jonah 1:2; 3:2; 4:11; and cf. Gen 10:12 through the lens of *b. Yoma* 10a. We learn below that the name 'Nineveh' encodes 'Rome.'

⁹³ Based on Nah 3:1; cf. Ezek 22:2; 24:6, 9 where this same epithet is applied to Jerusalem.

⁹⁴ Both Lévi and Yassif emend to נחלה, but T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 64.3) confirms that נחלק is correct. For the idiom, see Hos 10:2 and its interpretation in early rabbinic sources.

⁹⁵ Jellinek's text reads פני in place of שם; cf. Zech 7:2; 8:21-22.

⁹⁶ במאמר פיד; T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 64.5) and Jellinek are closer to Ps 33:6 with ברוח פיד.

⁹⁷ Jellinek has the correct reading (בית התורה) in place of the manuscript's בית החורף 'winter-palace.' As Yassif points out, the former is a term in medieval Jewish literature for a Christian church or cathedral. See also Dan, *Sippur*, 38; Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 347 n.9; Biale, "Counter-History," 139. One might note the comparable disparaging Muslim substitution of *qumāma* ('garbage, refuse') for *qiyāma* ('resurrection') in the Arabic name for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem; see Oleg Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 53; also F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 600 n.9.

⁹⁸ There is no need to posit a corruption here as Lévi has suggested. Rome/Constantinople contained more than one Christian sanctuary.

⁹⁹ See Isa 53:3; *b. Sanh.* 98a. An exemplary discussion of the motif of the 'suffering Messiah' ensconced in Rome is provided by Abraham Berger, "Captive at the Gate of Rome: The Story of a Messianic Motif,"

That despicable man said to me: ‘Zerubbabel!? What business do you have here? Who has brought you here?’ I responded and said: ‘A wind from the Lord lifted me up and carried me to this place.’ He said to me: ‘Do not be afraid, for you have been brought here in order that He might show you (and then you in turn might inform the people of Israel about everything which you see).’¹⁰⁰ When I heard his words, I was consoled and regained my self-composure.¹⁰¹ I asked him, ‘Sir, what is the name of this place?’ He said to me, ‘This is mighty Rome, wherein I am imprisoned.’ I said to him, ‘Who then are you? What is your name? What do you seek here? What are you doing in this place?’ He said to me, ‘I am the Messiah of the Lord, the son of Hezekiah,¹⁰² confined in prison until the time of the End.’¹⁰³ When I heard this, I was silent, and I hid my face from him. His anger burned within him,¹⁰⁴ and when I looked at him (again), I became frightened.

He said to me, ‘Come nearer to me,’ and as he spoke to me my limbs quaked, and he reached out his hand and steadied me. ‘Don’t be frightened,’ he said, ‘and let your mind show no fear.’ He encouraged me, and said: ‘Why did you become silent and hide your face from me?’ I said to him: ‘Because you said, “I am the servant of the Lord, His Messiah, and ‘the light of Israel’ (2 Sam 21:17).”’ Suddenly he appeared like a strong young man, handsome and adorned.

PAAJR 44 (1977): 1-17. Biale (“Counter-History,” 139) suggests that the figure mimics Christian concepts of messianic office.

¹⁰⁰ Ezek 40:4.

¹⁰¹ T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 64.8) reads instead: **וידבר עמי דברים נכונים וכשמעי תמהתי ואשנאל** ‘and he spoke with me clearly, and when I heard (this) I was astonished and as[ked ...].’ Cf. Lévi, “L’apocalypse,” 132 n.19.

¹⁰² According to Lévi, these words have been erased. They do not occur in any of the other extant manuscripts or printed editions probably because the different name ‘Menaḥem b. ‘Amiel’ is provided below for this figure. The effaced ‘ben Hezekiah’ fragment was probably based upon *b. Sanh.* 98b: **ויש וידבר עמי דברים נכונים וכשמעי תמהתי ואשנאל** ‘and some say that his name (i.e., the Messiah’s) is Menaḥem b. Hezekiah.’ See Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel: From its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 463-65. Himmelfarb plausibly suggests that the patronym ‘Amiel is a cipher for Hezekiah; see her “Mother of the Messiah,” 383-87.

¹⁰³ For **עַת קָץ** as a *terminus technicus* for the eschatological age, see Dan 8:17; 11:25, 40; 12:4, 9. *Midr. Teh.* 21.1 echoes *Sefer Zerubbabel* when it states: **זֶה מְשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד הַנְּחֻבָּא עַד עַת קָץ** ‘this is the Messiah of the lineage of David who has been concealed until the time of the End.’ Note also *Tg. Mic* 4:8: **וְאֵת מְשִׁיחָא** ‘and you, o Messiah of Israel, who has been concealed due to the sins of the congregation of Zion ...’

¹⁰⁴ Manuscript reads **בִּי חֲמָתִי** ‘and my anger burned within me.’ I have followed the reading in T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 64.10) which continues **וַיֵּאדָמוּ פָנָיו וַיִּשְׁתַּנוּ שׁ** ‘his face reddened and [his garmen]ts changed [...]’; cf. Lévi, “L’apocalypse,” 132 n.26.

I asked him: ‘When will the light of Israel¹⁰⁵ come?’ And as I was speaking to him, behold, a man with two wings approached me and said to me, ‘Zerubbabel! What are you asking the Messiah of the Lord?’ I answered him and said, ‘I asked when the appointed time for deliverance is supposed to come.’ ‘Ask me,’ he replied, ‘and I will tell you.’ I said to him, ‘Sir, who are you?’ He answered and said, ‘I am Michael,¹⁰⁶ the one who delivered good news to Sarah.¹⁰⁷ I am the leader of the host of the Lord God of Israel, the one who battled with Sennacherib and smote 180,000 men.¹⁰⁸ I am the prince of Israel, the one who fought battles against the kings of Canaan. In the time to come, I will fight the battles of the Lord alongside the Messiah of the Lord—he who sits before you—with the king ‘strong of face’ (עז פנים)¹⁰⁹ and with Armilos, the son of Satan, the spawn of the stone statue.¹¹⁰ The Lord has appointed me to be the commanding officer over his people and over those who love Him in order to do battle against the leaders of the nations.’

Michael, who is (also) Metatron, answered me¹¹¹ saying: ‘I am the angel who guided Abraham throughout all the land of Canaan. I blessed him in the name of the Lord. I am the one who redeemed Isaac¹¹² and [wept]¹¹³ for him. I am the one who wrestled with Jacob at the crossing of the Jabbok.¹¹⁴ I am the one who guided Israel in the wilderness for forty years in the name of the Lord. I am the one who appeared to Joshua at Gilgal,¹¹⁵ and I am the one who rained down brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah.¹¹⁶ He placed His name within me:¹¹⁷ Metatron in *gematria* is the equivalent of Shadday.¹¹⁸ As

¹⁰⁵ See Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 56 n.2 for a brief discussion of the use of this epithet for the Messiah.

¹⁰⁶ T-S A45 19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 64.17): אני מיטטרון מיכאל שר צבא ייי ‘I am Metatron Michael, leader of the host of the Lord.’ For the epithet, see Josh 5:14-15.

¹⁰⁷ Gen 18:10. See *b. B. Meši’a* 86b: מיכאל שבא לבשר את שרה ‘Michael (is) the one who delivered good news to Sarah.’

¹⁰⁸ Cf. 2 Kgs 19:35-36; Isa 37:36-37; 2 Chr 32:21-22. According to the first two sources, the number of the slain totaled 185,000. *Exod. Rab.* 18.5 identifies the anonymous biblical angel as Michael.

¹⁰⁹ Deut 28:50; Dan 8:23; *Tg. Ket.* Qoh 8:1.

¹¹⁰ This conjunctive pairing suggests that ‘the king strong of face’ and ‘Armilos’ are two separate entities, as in, e.g., the later *Secrets of R. Šim’ōn ben Yoḥai*. By contrast, the still later *Midrash Wa-yosha* ‘conflates them into one figure.

¹¹¹ The manuscript literally reads ויען מיכאל למטטרון ויאמר אלי ‘Michael answered Metatron and said to me.’ I have followed the reading suggested by Lévi, “L’apocalypse,” 133 n.17.

¹¹² Gen 22:11-13.

¹¹³ Read ובכיתי עליו instead of וביתי. Cf. Lévi, “L’apocalypse,” 133 n.19; now confirmed by T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 64.19): ובכיתי עליו.

¹¹⁴ Gen 32:25-31.

¹¹⁵ Josh 5:13-15.

¹¹⁶ Lévi points out that *b. B. Meši’a* 86b accords this role to Gabriel, not Michael.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Exod 23:21.

for you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, whose name is Jeconiah, ask me and I will tell you what will happen at the End of Days.’

Then he said to me: ‘This is the Messiah of the Lord: (he has) been hidden in this place until the appointed time (for his manifestation). This is the Messiah of the lineage of David, and his name is Menaḥem ben ‘Amiel.¹¹⁹ He was born during the reign of David, king of Israel,¹²⁰ and a wind bore him up and concealed him in this place, waiting for the time of the end.’ Then I, Zerubbabel, posed a question to Metatron, the leader of the host of the Lord.¹²¹ He said to me: ‘The Lord will give a rod (for accomplishing) these salvific acts to Hephṣibah, the mother of Menaḥem ben ‘Amiel.¹²² A great star will shine¹²³ before her, and all the stars will wander aimlessly from their paths.

Hephṣibah, the mother of Menaḥem ben ‘Amiel, will go forth and kill two kings, both of whom are determined to do evil. The name(s) of the two rulers (whom she will slay): Noph (נוף), king of Teman, (so named) because he will shake (הניף) his hand toward Jerusalem, (is the first one), and the name of the

¹¹⁸ The proper names ‘Metatron’ (מטטרון) and ‘Shadday’ (שדי) both have the numerical value 314. For the role of Metatron in eschatological literature, see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 46-47 and the excursus in Reeves, *Trajectories*, 179-86.

¹¹⁹ The name ‘Menaḥem’ for the Messiah derives from Lam 1:16: *כי רחוק ממני מנחם משיב נפשי*. The numerical value of that name’s letters (138) is also equal to that of the letters of the ancient messianic epithet ‘Branch’ (צמח); see Jer 23:5, 33:15; Zech 3:8 and Ibn Ezra *ad loc.*, 6:12; *y. Ber.* 2.4, 5a; *Lam. Rab.* 1.51; *Midr. Tanḥ.* Qorah §12; *Pirque R. El.* §48 (Luria, 116a). The name Menaḥem b. ‘Amiel for the future Davidic messiah is also used in uncensored versions of *Pirque R. El.* §19 (e.g., HUC Ms. 75 fol. 25b: note too that this manuscript inverts the order of §§18 and 19!), whereas standard printed editions attest an anomalous form ‘Menaḥem b. ‘Amiel b. Joseph (!)’ (cf. Luria, 45b). For ‘Amiel see n.91 above.

¹²⁰ According to the text published by Wertheimer, he was born ‘at the time Nebuchadnezzar entered Jerusalem.’ Cf. *y. Ber.* 2.4, 5a: *בית מוקדשא דבינמא דאיתיליד איחרוב בית מוקדשא* ‘for on the day he (i.e., the Messiah) was born the Temple was destroyed.’

¹²¹ The question is lacking in the manuscript edition. Wertheimer’s edition supplies here ‘What are the signs which this Menaḥem ben ‘Amiel will realize?’ See Yassif, *Sefer ha-Zikronot*, 429 n.18; also T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 65.5): *ומה אותות שעשה מנחם עמיאל* ‘what are the signs which Menaḥem ‘Amiel will realize?’

¹²² According to 2 Kgs 21:1, this was the name of the mother of Manasseh. The same name is used figuratively for Zion in Isa 62:4. Most scholars view her as a Jewish foil to the Christian image of the Virgin Mary as mother of Jesus; see, e.g., Himmelfarb, “Sefer Zerubbabel,” 69; Biale, “Counter-History,” 140-41; Schäfer, *Mirror*, 213-15. In an earlier publication, Joseph Dan had suggested that the image of the mother of the Messiah and her prominent role in the messianic drama was almost certainly due to Christian influence; see his *Sippur*, 39; note also Robert L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 210-11. But Dan has lately modified his suggestion; note his “Armilus,” 85-86.

¹²³ Read with T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 65.7) *נוגה* in place of the base manuscript’s *יגיה*.

second is 'Isrinan (איסריני), king of Antioch. This conflict and these signs will take place during the festival of Shavu'ot in the third month.¹²⁴

The word is true.¹²⁵ Four hundred and twenty years after the city and Temple have been rebuilt, they will be destroyed a second time.¹²⁶ Twenty years after the building of the city of Rome, after seventy kings corresponding to the seventy nations have ruled in it, when ten kings have finished their reigns, the tenth king will come.¹²⁷ He will destroy the sanctuary, stop the daily offering, the 'saintly people'¹²⁸ will be dispersed, and he will hand them over to destruction, despoiling, and panic. Many of them will perish due to their faithfulness to Torah, but (others) will abandon the Torah of the Lord and worship their (i.e., Rome's) idols. "When they stumble, a little help will provide assistance" (Dan 11:34). From the time that the daily offering ceases and the wicked ones install the one whose name is 'abomination' (שיקוץ) in the Temple, at the end of nine hundred and ninety years, the deliverance of the Lord will take place—"when the power of the holy people is shattered" (Dan 12:7)—to redeem them and to gather them by means of the Lord's Messiah.¹²⁹

The rod which the Lord will give to Hephṣibah, the mother of Menaḥem [ben] 'Amiel, is made of almond-wood; it is hidden in Raqqat, a city in (the territory of) Naphtali.¹³⁰ It is the same rod which the Lord previously gave to Adam, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and King David.¹³¹ It is the same rod which

¹²⁴ Manuscript lacks the year. See T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 65.10-11): בשנה הששית בחדש השלישי אשר [...] חג שבועות in the sixth year during the third month which [...] the festival of Shavu'ot.' Presumably this is the penultimate year of a final sabbatical period of years.

¹²⁵ Cf. Dan 10:1; 2 Chr 9:5.

¹²⁶ According to rabbinic chronography, 420 years was the duration of the Second Temple. See *b. Yoma* 9a.

¹²⁷ Titus.

¹²⁸ Literally עם קדושים; based on Dan 8:24 where it signifies Israel. Cf. Deut 7:6; 14:2, 21; Ps 34:10; IQM 10:10 for analogous locutions referring to Israel. According to Rashi and Ibn Ezra, the ambiguous designation קדישין in Dan 7:18, 21-22, 25, 27 also encodes 'Israel.'

¹²⁹ A number of scholars have sought to use this number in order to posit a late date for *Sefer Zerubbabel*. See Lévi, "L'apocalypse (Suite)," 109 n.1. Note also Gil, *History of Palestine*, 401-402: 'It is quite likely that the hardship and stress of these years [the mid-eleventh century] were the major factors contributing to predictions of the imminent end of the world in 1058 ("when 990 years from the destruction of Jerusalem are completed").' The number '990' does possess millenarian and even astronomical/astrological significance within multiple apocalyptic contexts; see the references cited in my introductory remarks above.

¹³⁰ Josh 19:35. For the identification of Raqqat with Tiberias, see *y. Meg.* 1.1, 70a; *b. Meg.* 5b-6a. For an illuminating discussion of Tiberias as a center of Jewish life during the latter half of the first millennium CE, see Gil, *History of Palestine*, 174-85.

¹³¹ T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 65.14-15) provides an expanded list of worthies: אשר נתן ייי לשת 'which the Lord gave to Seth, לנח ולאברהם וליצחק) ... וליהודה ולפרץ ולמשה עבד ייי וליהושע ולדויד ולאליהו

sprouted buds and flowered in the Tent (of Meeting) for the sake of Aaron.¹³² Elijah ben Eleazar¹³³ concealed it in Raqqat, a city of Naphtali, which is Tiberias. Concealed there as well is a man whose name is Nehemiah b. Hushiel b. Ephraim b. Joseph.¹³⁴ Zerubbabel spoke up and said to Metatron and to Michael (*sic*) the prince: ‘My lord, I want you to tell me when the Messiah of the Lord will come and what will happen after all this!’ He said to me, ‘The Lord’s Messiah—Nehemiah ben Hushiel—will come five years after¹³⁵ Hephṣibah. He will collect all Israel together as one entity and they will remain for <four>¹³⁶ years in Jerusalem, (where) the children of Israel will offer sacrifice, and it will be pleasing to the Lord.¹³⁷ He will inscribe Israel in the genealogical lists according to their families. But in the fifth year of Nehemiah and the gathering together of the ‘holy ones,’¹³⁸ Šērōy the king of Persia¹³⁹ will attack

Noah, Abraham, Is[aac ...], Judah, Peretz, Moses the servant of the Lord, Joshua, David, and Elijah.’ See also Wertheimer, *Batey Midrashot*, 2:499 for a slightly variant roster.

¹³² Num 17:16-26. T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 65.16) reads: ויצא פרח ויצץ ציץ וגי ואען ואומר אני: “it had budded and flowered and etc. (Num 17:23).” I spoke up and said—I Zerubbabel—to Met[atron ...].’

¹³³ I.e., Phineas ben Eleazar, grandson of Aaron (cf. Num 25:7). This text attests the popular exegetical assimilation of Phineas with the prophet Elijah; see *L.A.B.* 48.1; *Tg. Ps-J.* Num 25:12; *Pirqe R. El.* §8 and §47; Robert Hayward, “Phineas—the Same is Elijah: The Origins of a Rabbinic Tradition,” *JJS* 29 (1978): 22-34. His role here in the concealment of Aaron’s rod coheres with his final position in the list of the rod’s custodians in some other versions (see above) of the book. The identity of Phineas as the one who conceals the staff is also known to the thirteenth-century Christian *Book of the Bee*; see Ernest A. Wallis Budge, ed., *The Book of the Bee* (Anecdota Oxoniensia Semitic Series 1.2; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), 52.9-10: סְפִינְיָא פִּינְיָא לְמַטְרֹן מִן בְּתוּבָא דְכַפֵּרָא בְּזוּלָא דְאַרְיֵלָא סִמְלָךְ חִמָּא בְּזוּלָא דְאַרְיֵלָא מִן מַטְרֹן. ‘Phineas hid the staff in the desert, beneath the dirt at the gate of Jerusalem, and it remained there until Our Lord the Messiah was born.’

¹³⁴ The messiah of the lineage of Joseph. For his Galilean association, see also *’Aggadat ha-Mašīah* (Jellinek, *BHM* 3:141); Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 49.

¹³⁵ *Sic* in the base text and Jellinek. Wertheimer and T-S A45.19 (Hopkins, *Miscellany*, 65.18) have לפני ‘before,’ a reading which in context makes better sense.

¹³⁶ In spite of the unanimous extant textual evidence, read ‘four’ in place of ‘forty.’ See also Lévi, “L’apocalypse,” 151 n.3: ‘Mais le contexte semble exiger que «quarante» soit ici pour «quatre».’

¹³⁷ ויערב ליי. A play on the wording and context of Mal 3:4: יהודה וירושלם מנחת יהוה וירושלם. ‘the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord.’ Some historians read this notice as evidence for the brief restoration of a Jewish sacrificial cultus on the Temple Mount following the Persian capture of Jerusalem in 614. See Peters, *Jerusalem*, 172-73; Gilbert Dagron, “Introduction historique: Entre histoire et apocalypse,” *Travaux et mémoires* 11 (1991): 26-28; Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 212-13; Averil Cameron, “The Jews in Seventh-Century Palestine,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 13 (1994): 80; idem, “Byzantines and Jews: Some Recent Work on Early Byzantium,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 254-55; Hagith Sivan, “From Byzantine to Persian Jerusalem: Jewish Perspectives and Jewish/Christian Polemics,” *GRBS* 41 (2000): 291-92. This interpretation is dismissed by Peter Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in Antiquity: The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (n.p.: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 191.

¹³⁸ The ‘holy ones’ or ‘saints’ are Israel; see Deut 33:3 and *Tg. Onk.* to that verse. Sivan suggests that the reference to Nehemiah’s ‘fifth year’ represents the end of Jewish-Sasanian collaboration in the conquest and administration of Palestine, roughly 614-619 CE (“From Byzantine to Persian Jerusalem,” 302-304).

¹³⁹ Šērōy (שירוי), who used the regnal name Kavād II, assumed the Sasanian throne in 628 CE and reigned for less than one year, falling victim to illness rather than military debacle. For a detailed account of his

Nehemiah b. Hushiel and Israel,¹⁴⁰ and there will be great suffering in Israel. Hephṣibah—the wife of Nathan the prophet¹⁴¹ (and) mother of Menahem ben ‘Amiel—will go out with the rod which the Lord God of Israel will give to her, and the Lord will place “a spirit of dizziness”¹⁴² upon them (i.e., the Persian army), and they will kill one another, each (slaying) his companion or his countryman. There the wicked one (Šērōy) will die.’

When I heard (this), I fell upon my face and said, ‘O Lord! Tell me what Isaiah the prophet (meant) when he said: “There the calf will graze, and there it will crouch down and finish its branches” (27:10)?’ He answered me, ‘This calf is Nineveh, the city of blood, which represents mighty Rome.’

I continued asking there about the prince of the holy covenant. He held me close and they (*sic*) brought me to the ‘house of filth’ [and scorn].¹⁴³ There he showed me a marble stone in the shape of a maiden:¹⁴⁴ her features and form were lovely and indeed very beautiful to behold. Then he said to me, ‘This statue is the [wife]¹⁴⁵ of Belial. Satan will come and have intercourse with it, and a son named Armilos will emerge from it, [whose name in Greek means] “he will destroy a nation.”¹⁴⁶ He will rule over all (peoples), and his dominion will extend from one end of the earth to the other, and ten letters will be in

reign, see Theodor Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Leiden, 1879; repr., Leiden: Brill, 1973), 361-85; *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Volume V: The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakmids, and Yemen* (trans. C. E. Bosworth; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 381-99.

¹⁴⁰ Oxford Ms. Heb. f. 27 (2642) fols. 42-43 adds at this point: כל וידקור את נחמיה בירושלים וספדו אותו כל ישראל ויתמרמרו עליו במרירות הבכיות and he will kill Nehemiah in Jerusalem, and all Israel will mourn him and complain about this with embittered grief.’

¹⁴¹ A curious designation, since it cannot refer to David’s prophet or to David’s son. Perhaps it is an interpolation referring to Nathan of Gaza, a major theorist and the prophetic voice announcing the seventeenth-century messianic movement of Shabbatai Ševi. The latest study of Nathan of Gaza, although without reference to this passage in *Sefer Zerubbabel*, is Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹⁴² Isa 19:14.

¹⁴³ Correcting בית התורף והלצות to בית החורף הלאות in accordance with the varying manuscript evidence assembled by Lévi, “L’apocalypse,” 136 n.4.

¹⁴⁴ A statue of the Virgin Mary? See Lévi, “L’apocalypse (Suite et fin),” 59-60; Himmelfarb, “Sefer Zerubbabel,” 69; Schäfer, *Mirror*, 213.

¹⁴⁵ Read אשת in place of איש; היא in place of הוא. Note Wertheimer, *Batey Midrashot*, 2.500: האבן הזאת היא אשת הבליעל.

¹⁴⁶ ושמו ארמילוס ויחריב עם ולשון עברית. The phrase is corrupt in all witnesses, but it is clear that an etymology is offered here for the name ‘Armilos,’ one that is moreover dependent not upon Hebrew but upon Greek Ἐρημολῶσος ‘destroyer of a people’ (see the use of this same designation for ‘the little horn, Satan’ in *Doctrina Iacobi nuper baptizati* [ed. N. Bonwetsch; Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil.-hist. klass., n.f., bd. 12, nr. 3; Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1910], 60, 74, 86; cited by David M. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994], 170-71; 173-74) and which is furthermore consonant with the folk etymology for the name ‘Balaam’ (בלעם) supplied in *b. Sanh.* 105a (בלע עם ‘destroyer of a people’). See Lévi, “L’apocalypse,” 152 n.6, and especially the persuasive arguments of Berger, “Three Typological Themes,” 158-62.

his hand. He will engage in the worship of foreign gods and speak lies. No one will be able to withstand him, and anyone who does not believe in him he will kill with the sword: many among them will he kill. He will come against the holy people of the Most High, and with him there will be ten kings wielding great power and force, and he will do battle with the holy ones. He will prevail over them¹⁴⁷ and will kill the Messiah of the lineage of Joseph, Nehemiah b. Hushiel,¹⁴⁸ and will also kill sixteen righteous ones alongside him. Then they will banish Israel to the desert in three groups.¹⁴⁹

But Hephshibah, the mother of Menaḥem b. ‘Amiel, will remain stationed at the eastern gate, and that wicked one will not enter there, thereby confirming what was written: “but the remainder of the people will not be cut off from the city” (Zech 14:2). This battle will take place during the month of Av.¹⁵⁰ Israel will experience distress such as there never was before. They will flee into towers, among mountains, and into caves, but they will be unable to hide from him. All the nations of the earth will go astray after him except for Israel, who will not believe in him. All Israel shall mourn Nehemiah b. Hushiel for forty-one days. His thoroughly crushed¹⁵¹ corpse will be thrown down before the gates of Jerusalem, but no animal, bird, or beast will touch it. Due to the intensity of the oppression and the great distress, the children of Israel will then cry out to the Lord, and the Lord will answer them.’

As I listened to the content of the prophecy of the Lord to me, I became very agitated and got up and went to the canal. There I cried out to the Lord God of Israel, the God of all flesh, and He sent His angel to me while the prayer was still in my mouth before I had finished (it).¹⁵² The Lord sent His angel to me, and when I saw (him) I knew that he was the angel who had spoken with me regarding all the previous matters.

¹⁴⁷ Oxford Ms. Opp. 236a adds: ויפלו לרוב ‘and a multitude will fall.’

¹⁴⁸ Armilos is the usual slayer of the Messiah of the lineage of Joseph. Note, however, that according to the version of *Sefer Zerubbabel* found in Oxford Ms. Heb. f. 27 (2642) fols. 42-43 (cited above) and an intriguing seventh-century piyyut entitled לעור העת לגעור first published by Ezra Fleischer, it is the Persians who are responsible for executing the community leader who temporarily restored the sacrificial service in Jerusalem. See Sivan, “From Byzantine to Persian Jerusalem,” 288.

¹⁴⁹ A reference to the expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem by Heraclius upon its recapture from the Persians in 629; see Theophanes, *Chronographia* (ed. Carl de Boor; 2 vols.; Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1883-85), 1:328; Harry Turtledove, *The Chronicle of Theophanes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 30; Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 173.

¹⁵⁰ Oxford Ms. Opp. 236a states the war will last ‘the entire month’ (כל החודש).

¹⁵¹ Read מודככת in place of מודככת.

¹⁵² Read והספק לא הפסקתי in place of והספק לא הפסקתי.

I knelt and bowed before him, and he again touched me like he had the first time. He said to me, ‘What’s the matter with you, O Zerubbabel?’ I answered him, ‘Sir, my spirit remains depressed.’¹⁵³

Metatron responded by saying to me: ‘Ask me (questions) and I will provide you with answers before I depart from you.’ So I again asked him and said to him, ‘My lord Metatron, when will the light of Israel come?’ He answered and said to me, ‘By the Lord Who has sent me and Who has appointed me over Israel, I solemnly swear to reveal to you the Lord’s doing(s), for the Holy God previously commanded me, “Go to My servant Zerubbabel, and tell him (the answers to) whatever he may ask of you.”’ Then Michael, who is (also) Metatron, said to me, ‘Come closer and pay careful attention to everything which I shall tell you, for the word which I am speaking to you is true; it was one spoken by the Living God.’

He said to me: ‘Menaḥem b. ‘Amiel will suddenly come¹⁵⁴ on the fourteenth day of the first month; i.e., of the month Nisan. He will wait by the Valley of ‘Arb’el¹⁵⁵ (at a tract) which belonged to Joshua b. Jehosadaq the priest,¹⁵⁶ and all the surviving sages of Israel—only a few will remain due to the attack and pillage of Gog and Armilos and the plunderers¹⁵⁷ who despoiled them—will come out to him. Menaḥem b. ‘Amiel will say to the elders and the sages: “I am the Lord’s Messiah: the Lord has sent me to encourage you and to deliver you from the power of these adversaries!” The elders will scrutinize him and will despise him, for they will see that despicable man garbed in rags, and they will despise him just as you previously did. But then his anger will burn within him, “and he will don garments of vengeance (as his) clothing and will put on¹⁵⁸ a cloak of zealousness” (Isa 59:17b), and he will journey to the gates of Jerusalem. Hephṣibah, the mother of the Messiah, will come and give him the rod by which the signs were performed. All the elders and children of Israel will come and see that Nehemiah (b. Ḥushiel) is alive and standing unassisted, (and) immediately they will believe in the Messiah.’ Thus did Metatron, the leader of

¹⁵³ See Job 32:18.

¹⁵⁴ Compare Mal 3:1.

¹⁵⁵ A locale in Galilee associated with the ‘dawning’ of eschatological redemption. See *y. Ber.* 1.1, 2c; *Yoma* 3.2, 40b; *Cant. Rab.* 6.16 (*ad Cant* 6:10). For a fascinating discussion of this location’s many significances, see Elchanan Reiner, “From Joshua to Jesus: The Transformation of a Biblical Story to a Local Myth: A Chapter in the Religious Life of the Galilean Jew,” in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land, First-Fifteenth Centuries CE* (ed. Arieh Kofsky and Guy G. Stroumsa; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1998), 223-71.

¹⁵⁶ Some manuscripts read this name as ‘Joshua b. Saraf (סרף) or Nisraf (נשרף),’ a priestly figure associated with this locale by *Seder ‘Olam Zuta* and the early roster of ‘priestly *mishmarot*’ published by Samuel Klein; see Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge’ullah*, 83 for the relevant citations. For a convincing explanation for this unusual epithet (‘the burned one’), see Reiner, “From Joshua to Jesus,” 244-46.

¹⁵⁷ Read השוטים in place of הסוטים.

¹⁵⁸ Read תיעט in place of יעט.

the host of the Lord, swear to me: ‘This matter will truly come to pass, for there will be full cooperation between them¹⁵⁹ in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah, “Ephraim will not envy Judah, nor will Judah antagonize Ephraim” (Isa 11:13).

On the twenty-first day of the first month, nine hundred and ninety years after the destruction of the Temple, the deliverance of the Lord will take place for Israel.¹⁶⁰ Menahem b. ‘Amiel, Nehemiah b. Hushiel, and Elijah the prophet will come and stand by the Mediterranean Sea and read the prophecy of the Lord. All the bodies of those Israelites who had thrown themselves into the sea while fleeing from their enemies will emerge: a sea-wave will rise up, spread them out, and deposit them alive within the valley of Jehoshaphat near the Wadi Shittim,¹⁶¹ for there judgment will transpire upon the nations.

In the second month; i.e., Iyyar, the congregation of Qorah will reemerge¹⁶² upon the plains of Jericho near the Wadi Shittim. They will come to Moses (!),¹⁶³ and the cohort of the Qorahites will assemble.

On the eighteenth day of it (the second month) the mountains and hills will quake, and the earth and everything on it will shake, as well as the sea and its contents.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ See Zech 6:13 and the commentary of Radaq *ad loc.*; note too the commentary of Rashi to Isa 11:13.

¹⁶⁰ Reiner directs attention to the similarity in timing between the messianic ‘events’ outlined in *Sefer Zerubbabel* up to this point and the relatively early largely Aramaic strata of the *Toledot Yeshu* legends, and intriguingly suggests that their resemblance is deliberate (“From Joshua to Jesus,” 255-62).

¹⁶¹ See Joel 4:2, 12, 18. According to Radaq *ad* Joel 4:18, Saadya Gaon interpreted the text’s ‘Wadi Shittim’ (נחל השטים) as a reference to the Jordan river.

¹⁶² Cf. Num 16:1-11, 16-24, 26-33 which recounts how the refractory congregation of Qorah were swallowed up by the earth ‘and descended ... alive to Sheol’ (וירדו ... חיים שאלה). In *m. Sanh.* 10.3, R. Akiva and R. Eliezer disagree as to whether the congregation of Qorah will play a role in the World to Come, with the latter Sage citing 1 Sam 2:6 (‘the Lord kills and revitalizes; He sends down to Sheol and brings back up ...’) in support of his opinion that they could potentially ‘reemerge’ at that time. Note also *Midrash Kohen* (Jellinek, *BHM* 2:29-30): ואף קרח וכל עדתו מתחננין כל יום רביעי ואומרים לו עד מתי קח הנפלאות מתי תשוב תחינו ומתהומות הארץ תשוב תעלנו והוא אומר להם לכו ושאלו לאבות העולם והם מתביישין וחוזרין למקומן ‘Moreover Qorah and all his congregation will offer supplications each Wednesday, saying to him (i.e., to the Davidic Messiah sequestered in Paradise, awaiting the time of the eschaton) “how long until the time of marvels? ‘When will you restore us to life and raise us up again from the depths of the earth’? (Ps 71:20, according to the *ketiv*).” He will say to them, “Go and ask the ancestral forefathers,” but they will be too embarrassed (to do so) and will return to their place.’

¹⁶³ Does this assume an eschatological reappearance of Moses himself (as opposed to the recovery of symbols, such as the staff or the Ark, associated with his authority)? Compare *Frg. Tg. Exod* 12:42; *Pirqe Mašiah* in Jellinek, *BHM* 3:72.6-7; also Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.38 which relates an anecdote about a messianic disturbance in fifth-century Crete occasioned by a charlatan pretending to be Moses. See Naphtali Wieder, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism* (London: East and West Library, 1962), 8 n.1; Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 177-78 n.65. On the other hand, the unexpected appearance of this name may be simply due to a scribal error of ‘Moses’ (משה) for ‘messiah’ (משיח).

On the first day of the third month those who died in the desert¹⁶⁵ will revive and will come with their families to the Wadi Shittim.¹⁶⁶ On the eighteenth day of the month of Sivan (i.e., the third month), there will be a mighty earthquake in Eretz Israel.¹⁶⁷

In Tammuz, the fourth month, the Lord God of Israel will descend upon the Mount of Olives, and the Mount of Olives will split open at His rebuke.¹⁶⁸ He will blow a great trumpet,¹⁶⁹ and every foreign deity and mosque¹⁷⁰ will crumple to the ground, and every wall and steep place will collapse.¹⁷¹ The Lord will kill all their plunderers,¹⁷² and He will battle those nations “like a warrior fired with zeal” (Isa 42:13). The Lord’s Messiah— Menahem b. ‘Amiel—will come and breathe in the face of Armilos and thereby slay him.¹⁷³ The Lord will place each man’s sword on the neck of his companion¹⁷⁴ and their dead bodies shall fall there. The “saintly people” (i.e., Israel; cf. Dan 8:24) will come out to witness the Lord’s deliverance: all of Israel will actually see Him (equipped) like a warrior with “the helmet of deliverance on His head” and clad in armor (cf. Isa 59:17). He will fight the battle of Gog ha-Magog and against the army of Armilos, and all of them will fall dead in the Valley of ‘Arb’el. All of Israel will then issue forth and

¹⁶⁴ A date traditionally associated with the death of Joshua b. Nun, which was reportedly marked by an earthquake. See the references accumulated by Reiner, “From Joshua to Jesus,” 229-30 n.13; 248-55.

¹⁶⁵ I.e., the generation who died during Israel’s forty-year wandering in the wilderness prior to the conquest of Canaan (Num 14:35). See again *m. Sanh.* 10.3 for a similar dispute about this group’s final fate.

¹⁶⁶ Wertheimer, *Batey Midrashot*, 2.500-501: באחד לחדש השלישי יבואו מתי מדבר ויעשו חברות וישובו עם אחיהם על נחל השיטים ‘On the first day of the third month, those who died in the desert will come and rejoin their brethren at the Wadi Shittim.’

¹⁶⁷ Wertheimer, *Batey Midrashot*, 2.501: יהיה רעש בבתים ובחומות ובמגדלים ותרגז הארץ וישוביה ומנחם בן עמיאל ונחמיה בן חושיאל ואליהו הנביא וכל ישראל הקרובים והרחוקים והחיים אשר יחיים ה’ יעלו לירושלם ‘an earthquake will shake the houses, walls, and towers, and the land and its inhabitants will quiver. Menahem b. ‘Amiel, Nehemiah b. Hushiel, Elijah the prophet, all Israel from both near and far, and those revived ones whom the Lord will resurrect will come up to Jerusalem.’

¹⁶⁸ See Zech 14:4.

¹⁶⁹ See Isa 27:13; Zech 9:14.

¹⁷⁰ Literally ‘decorated shrine’ (בית משכית). However, the Hebrew word *masqīt* (משכית) may here serve as an oral pun on Arabic *masjid* (مسجد) ‘mosque.’ Compare also *Tg. Onk.* Num 33:52 for another possible paronomasia where ותבדון ית כל בית סגדתהון ואבדתם את כל משכיתם is translated as בית השתחות. Note also the unusual expression בית השתחות in CD 11:22 and the discussions of S[olomon]. Schechter, *Documents of Jewish Sectaries, Volume I: Fragments of a Zadokite Work* (Cambridge, 1910; repr., New York: Ktav, 1970), L n.4; Louis Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1976), 71, 374-75; and Adolph Büchler, “Schechter’s ‘Jewish Sectaries,’” *Jewish Quarterly Review* n.s. 3 (1912-13): 469.

¹⁷¹ See Ezek 38:20. Yassif (*Sefer ha-Zikronot*, 432 n.40) suggests that this line refers specifically to the churches built on the Mount of Olives and the mosques installed on the Temple Mount.

¹⁷² As above, read שוסייהם in place of סוסייהם.

¹⁷³ See Isa 11:4; 4 Ezra 13:9-11; 1QSb 5.24-25. There is no need to presume a reliance upon Christian sources (e.g., 2 Thess 2:8) for this particular motif (*contra* Biale, “Counter-History,” 138).

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Ezek 38:21: חרב איש באחי תהיה ‘the sword of each (warrior) will be on his brother’ and the commentary of Rashi *ad loc.*

“[despoil]¹⁷⁵ their despoilers, looting those who previously plundered them” (Ezek 39:10) for seven months.¹⁷⁶ However, some survivors will escape and they will all regroup at Zela‘ ha-Elef:¹⁷⁷ five hundred men, and (another) one hundred thousand wearing armor. (Opposing them will be) five hundred from Israel with Nehemiah and Elijah, and you, O Zerubbabel, will be their leader. They (*sic*) will kill all of them: one man will pursue a thousand.

This will be the third battle, for three battles will take place in the land of Israel. One will be waged by Hephṣibah with Šērōy the king of Persia,¹⁷⁸ one will be fought by the Lord God of Israel and Menaḥem b. ‘Amiel with Armilos, the ten kings who are with him, and Gog and Magog, and the third will be at Zela‘ ha-Elef, where Nehemiah b. Ḥushiel and Zerubbabel will see action. The third battle will take place in the month of Av.

After all this (has taken place), Menaḥem b. ‘Amiel will come, accompanied by Nehemiah b. Ḥushiel and all Israel. All of the dead will resurrect, and Elijah the prophet will be with them. They will come up to Jerusalem. In the month of Av, during which they formerly mourned for Nehemiah (and) for the destruction of Jerusalem, Israel will hold a great celebration and bring an offering to the Lord, which the Lord will accept on their behalf. “The offering of Israel will be pleasing to the Lord as it was formerly during her past history” (cf. Mal 3:4). The Lord will discern the pleasant aroma of His people Israel¹⁷⁹ and greatly rejoice. Then the Lord will lower the celestial Temple which had been previously built to earth,¹⁸⁰ and a column of fire and a cloud of smoke will rise to heaven. The Messiah and all of Israel will follow them to the gates of Jerusalem.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Read ושללו in place of וטטו.

¹⁷⁶ See Ezek 39:10-14.

¹⁷⁷ A locale in Benjaminite territory; see Josh 18:28.

¹⁷⁸ Obviously typological, since Šērōy never left Persia after usurping the throne from his father and he died after a reign of only seven months. See Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 174-81.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Ezek 20:41 (בריח ניחח ארצה אתכם) with the commentary of Radaq *ad loc.*

¹⁸⁰ For a parallel descent of a celestial Temple, see *Midrash ‘Aseret ha-Dibbarot* (Jellinek, *BHM* 1:64): מטה של מטה הוא בית המקדש שבבבל לירושלים של מטה ‘then the Holy One, blessed be He, will lower the Temple which is (located) in (the heaven named) Zevul to the terrestrial Jerusalem.’ For a conceptually cognate descent of a ‘celestial Jerusalem’ *sans* Temple, see Rev 21:9-27. A new Temple is constructed in Jerusalem by God in *I En.* 90:29.

¹⁸¹ See Saadya, *Kitāb al-Amānāt wa’l-I’tiqādāt von Sa’adja b. Jūsuf al-Fajjūmī* (ed. S. Landauer; Leiden: Brill, 1880), 245.10-17, as well as the responsum of Hai Gaon in Reeves, *Trajectories*, 133-43.

The holy God will stand on the Mount of Olives. Dread at and reverence for Him will be¹⁸² upon the heavens and the uppermost heavens, the entire earth and its deepest levels, and every wall and structure to their foundations. No one will be able to catch their breath when the Lord God reveals Himself before everyone on the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives will crack open beneath Him, and the exiles from Jerusalem will come up to the Mount of Olives. Zion and Jerusalem will behold (these things) and ask: “Who bore these to us? ... Where have these been?” (Isa 49:21). Nehemiah and Zerubbabel will then come up to Jerusalem and say to her: “Behold, (they are) your children whom you bore¹⁸³ who went into exile from you. ‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!’” (Zech 9:9).’

Again I started to question Metatron, leader of the host of the Lord: ‘Sir, show me how far and how wide Jerusalem will extend, along with its architecture.’ He showed me the walls which surrounded Jerusalem—walls of fire—extending from the Great Desert unto the Mediterranean Sea and unto the Euphrates River.¹⁸⁴ Then he showed me the Temple and the structure. The Temple was built on the peaks of five mountains which the Lord had chosen¹⁸⁵ to support His sanctuary: Lebanon, Mount Moriah, Tabor, Carmel, and Hermon.¹⁸⁶ Michael spoke and said to me, ‘At the completion of nine hundred and ninety years for the ruins of Jerusalem is the appointed time for the deliverance of Israel.’ He also continued to interpret for me the message and the vision in accordance with what he had first said to me: ‘If you wish to know, ask! Keep coming back!’ (cf. Isa 21:12).

In the fifth (year) of the week Nehemiah b. Hushiel will come and gather together all Israel. In the sixth (year) of the week Hephšibah, the wife of Nathan the prophet, she who was born in Hebron, will come¹⁸⁷ and slay the two kings Noph and ’Esrōgan (אסרוגן).¹⁸⁸ That same year the ‘shoot of Jesse’ (Isa 11:10), Menaḥem b. ’Amiel, will spring up. Ten kings from among the nations shall also arise, but they will not supply enough (rulers) to rule for a week (of years) and a half-week (of years), each one (ruling)

¹⁸² Oxford Ms. Opp. 236a: ... ואימתו יכבד על ... ‘dread at Him will weigh upon’

¹⁸³ Based on Ezek 16:20.

¹⁸⁴ Himmelfarb (“Sefer Zerubbabel,” 89 n.111) suggests these dimensions echo Deut 11:24; cf. also Josh 1:4. Note especially the traditions cited in *Sifre Deut* §1 (Finkelstein, 7-8) regarding the eschatological expansion of the boundaries for Jerusalem and for Eretz Israel.

¹⁸⁵ Read בחר in place of בהר.

¹⁸⁶ Based on Isa 2:2 (בראש ההרים) as interpreted in *Midr. Teh.* 68.9, although the latter source names only four peaks (Tabor, Carmel, Sinai, and Zion). Note *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21.4 (Mandelbaum, 1:321), and see the further references cited by Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:31 n.184; Avraham Grossman, “Jerusalem in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” in Prawer and Ben-Shammai, *The History of Jerusalem*, 299-300 n.13.

¹⁸⁷ Read with Oxford Ms. Opp. 236a תבוא in place of תביא.

¹⁸⁸ Above this latter king was named ’Isrinan (איסרינן).

for a year. These are the ten kings who will arise over the nations for the week of years: these are their names correlated with their cities and their places. The first king is Sīlqōm and the name of his city is Seferad, which is Aspamia, a distant country. The second king is Hartōmōs, and the name of his city is Gītanya. The third king is Flē'vas (Flavius?), and the name of his city is Flō'yas. The fourth king is Glū'as (Julius?), and the name of his city is Galya (Gaul?). The fifth king is Ramōshdīs, and the name of his city is Mōdītīka. The sixth king is Mōqlanōs, and the name of his city is Italia. The seventh king is 'Ōktīnōs, and the name of his city is Dōrmīs. The eighth king is 'Aplōstōs from Mesopotamia. The ninth king is Šērōy, the king of Persia.

The tenth king is Armilos, the son of Satan who emerged from the sculpted stone. He will gain sovereignty over all of them. He will come along with the rulers of Qedar and the inhabitants of the East¹⁸⁹ and provoke a battle in the Valley of 'Arb'el, and they will take possession of the kingdom. He will ascend with his force and subdue the entire world. From there in Riblah, which is Antioch,¹⁹⁰ he will begin to erect all the idols of the nations on the face of the earth and to serve their gods, those whom the Lord hates. During those days 'there will be reward for neither human nor beast' (cf. Zech 8:10). He will construct four altars,¹⁹¹ and he will anger the Lord with his wicked deeds. There will be a very terrible and harsh famine upon the surface of the whole land for forty days—their food will stem from the salt-plant; leaves plucked from shrubbery and broom to sustain them (cf. Job 30:4). On that day 'a fountain will flow forth from the Temple of the Lord and fill the Wadi Shittim' (Joel 4:18).¹⁹²

Now this Armilos will take his mother—the statue from whom he was spawned—from the 'house of filth'¹⁹³ of the scornful ones, and from every place and from every nation they will come and worship that stone, burn offerings to her, and pour out libations to her. No one will be able to view her face due to her beauty. Anyone who refuses to worship her will die in agony (like?) animals.

This is the mark of Armilos: the color of the hair of his head is similar to gold, and (he is) green, even the soles of his feet. His face is one span in width, his eyes are deep-set, and he has two heads. He

¹⁸⁹ Literally 'the children of Qedem' (בני קדם), a generic term for the nomadic tribes living east of Eretz Israel. See Gen 29:1; Judg 6:3; Job 1:3. 'Qedar' and 'the children of Qedem' appear together in Jer 49:28.

¹⁹⁰ See *b. Sanh.* 96b.

¹⁹¹ Oxford Ms. Opp. 236a reads 'seven' (ז') instead of 'four.' Armilos's construction of 'seven altars' would establish a parallel with the wicked schemes of Balaam and Balaq (see Num 23:1); see Berger, "Three Typological Themes," 160.

¹⁹² See also Zech 14:8 and Rashi *ad loc.*; Ezek 47:1-12.

¹⁹³ As above, reading בית התורף in place of בית החורף.

will arise and rule over 'Īmīs (?),¹⁹⁴ the province of Satan, the father of Belial.¹⁹⁵ All who see him will tremble before him. Menaḥem will come up from the Wadi Shittim and breathe in the face of Armilos and thereby slay him, just as it is written: 'he will slay the wicked one with the breath of his mouth' (Isa 11:4). Israel will take possession of the kingdom; 'the holy ones of the Most High will receive sovereign power' (Dan 7:18).

These were the words which Metatron spoke to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, (future) governor of Judah, while he was still living in exile during the time of the Persian empire. Zechariah b. 'Anan and Elijah recorded them when the period of exile was completed.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ אימיס. Lévi ("L'apocalypse," 160 n. 1) tentatively suggests the village of Emmaus, but this is unlikely.

¹⁹⁵ An Aramaic phrase: מדינתא דשטן אבי בליעל.

¹⁹⁶ Oxford Ms. Opp. 236a reads: זכריהו ויכתבם זכריה בן עדוא ואליהו 'Zechariah b. 'Ido and Elijah wrote them down.'