

A MESSIAH IN HEAVEN? A RE-EVALUATION OF JEWISH AND
CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTIC TRADITIONS

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This two-part paper begins with an attempt to reconstruct an apocalyptic work from the first century CE. It then compares the nature of the messianic expectations found in this reconstructed text to messianic expectations at Qumran. I hope through this study to identify some features of Jewish messianism common to both, and thereby make a contribution to the larger question of the nature of Jewish messianic hopes from the first century BCE to the first century CE.

PART ONE: A PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTION OF AN APOCALYPTIC
WORK FROM THE FIRST CENTURY CE: THE *ORACLE OF HYSTASPES*
AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Scholarly opinion identifies the *Oracle of Hystaspes* as an apocalyptic work.¹ Since the *Oracle* predicts the fall of the Roman Empire (which was established in the second half of the first century BCE) and is first mentioned by Justin Martyr (writing in the early second century CE), its probable time of composition is the first century CE. The *Oracle* is placed in the mouth of a young boy and addressed to Hystaspes, that is, Vistasp, the king who was Zarathustra's benefactor. The role attributed to Hystaspes in the frame story of the *Oracle* is indicative of an environment in which Iranian traditions were well known and were utilized for anti-Roman propaganda. Indeed, the *Oracle* was forbidden reading throughout the Roman Empire for several generations after its composition.²

* I would like to thank my colleague and friend Prof. Roland Deines for his comments and suggestions.

¹ See for example, E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Goodman; rev. ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 3:654.

² Thus Justin Martyr in his first *Apology* (chapter 44).

Although referred to by a number of writers in antiquity,³ the contents of the *Oracle* are known to us only from Lactantius, the third-century CE. Latin author. He quotes the *Oracle* in Book VII of his *Divine Institutes*,⁴ but does not specify what material derives from the *Oracle* and what reflects other sources. Consequently, scholars differ regarding the extent of the quotation from the *Oracle*; hence the lack of consensus as to whether the *Oracle* is of Jewish or Iranian origin.⁵ In a comprehensive paper published thirty years ago, David Flusser demonstrated the strong likelihood of a Jewish origin for the *Oracle*.⁶ Flusser also demonstrated that chapters 11 and 13 of the Book of Revelation should be considered part of the *Oracle*.

In light of Flusser's analysis and insights, we are able to posit the *Oracle's* literary structure. It seems that, like other apocalyptic writings, the *Oracle* had two parts: a symbolic vision, shown to Hystaspes in a dream, and its interpretation, conveyed to Hystaspes by a boy.⁷ The symbolic vision was used by John of Patmos and found its way into

³ For a survey, see J. R. Hinnells, "The Zoroastrian Doctrine of Salvation," in *Man and His Salvation: Studies in Memory of S. G. F. Brandon* (ed. E. J. Sharpe and J. R. Hinnells; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), 127–29.

⁴ For translations of the *Institutes*, see *Lactantius: The Divine Institutes I–VII* (trans. M. F. McDonald; FC 49; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1964); A. Bowen and P. Garnsey, *Lactantius, Divine Institutes, Translated with an Introduction and Notes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003).

⁵ The discussion of what Lactantius has taken from the *Oracle*, and of the nature of the *Oracle* itself, is characterized by circular reasoning. Based on their assumptions regarding the provenance of the *Oracle*, scholars single out the paragraphs corresponding to their expectations. Thus, for example, Hinnells ("Zoroastrian Doctrine"), who considers only paragraphs taken neither from Jewish sources nor from the Sibyl (133), concludes that the *Oracle* is "a genuine Iranian—specifically, Zoroastrian—work" (146). Scholars who reject the authenticity of Jewish elements found in Lactantius as a genuine part of the *Oracle* are noted in Flusser's essay, "Hystaspes and John of Patmos," in idem, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1988), 392–93 n. 7. To Flusser's list we may add: Schürer (*History*, 655) and Boyce and Grenet (M. Boyce and F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism: Zoroastrianism Under Macedonian and Roman Rule* [Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 1, The Near and Middle East: Religion 3; Leiden: Brill, 1991], 377–78 n. 63).

⁶ Flusser, "Hystaspes," 390–453 and n. 7. To cite Flusser: "To save the Persian character of the *Oracle*, scholars had to disregard the Jewish elements in Lactantius and to suppose that they were introduced by Lactantius from his Christian sources. So they were obliged to perform a dangerous operation and cut off the Jewish elements from the story although they are an organic part of it" (398). Aune accepts Flusser's position regarding the relationship between the *Oracle* and Revelation. See D. E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (WBC 52B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 590–92, 727.

⁷ Flusser, "Hystaspes," 446–48; Aune, *Revelation*, 588–93.

Revelation; the interpretation of the vision was preserved in Lactantius.⁸ The *Oracle* exhibits the characteristic features of political apocalypse. It reflects the belief that a chain of kingdoms will rule the world, a chain of predetermined numbers and character. The *Oracle's* writer focuses on the end of the chain, the links closest to his own time. To my mind,⁹ he first mentions the Seleucid Empire, represented by the numbers 3 and 10 familiar to us from the book of Daniel¹⁰ (and hinted at in Rev 13:1; Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 7.16.1).¹¹ The Seleucid Empire, however, is swiftly conquered by an evil ruler (Rev 13:1–10; *Divine Institutes* 7.16.3), the next link in the chain. This evil ruler, Rome, will plunder and kill, change the law, alter the name of the kingdom, and move its seat of government.

The author, aware of the two phases in Roman history—the Republic and the Empire—does not portray the Republic as the final link in the chain. Rome's rule is to be followed by that of another kingdom, the Empire, whose leader will come from Syria and will kill the first evil ruler (*Divine Institutes* 7.17.2; cf. Rev 13:11–18).¹² The son of an evil spirit, this second ruler will present himself as the son of God and will force people to worship him. This is the antichrist,¹³ who arouses the mob and tries, unsuccessfully, to destroy God's Temple.

⁸ As Aune notes (*Revelation*, 592, 727–28), Lactantius does not quote Revelation directly in Book VII of the *Divine Institutes*. For a different evaluation, see P. Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (trans. W. Pradels; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 52–54.

⁹ At this point I am departing from Flusser's analysis.

¹⁰ The fourth beast that comes out of the sea, according to Daniel chapter 7, has 10 horns on her head, symbolizing the ten rulers from the beginning of the Seleucid empire, from the late fourth to mid-second centuries BCE. The last three horns (Antiochus Epiphanes' brother Seleucus IV and his two sons, Antiochus and Demetrius) are removed by the little, additional horn symbolizing Antiochus IV. See J. J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 299, 321.

¹¹ The *Oracle* reworked Daniel 7, thus reusing the Canaanite myth found in Daniel as anti-Hellenistic propaganda (see J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* [HSM 16; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977], 95–118), as anti-Roman propaganda.

¹² Flusser ("Hystaspes," 396–97) and Aune (*Revelation*, 729) suggest that the second evil ruler is the *Koinon*. However, since the *Oracle* presents itself as eastern, anti-Roman propaganda, a negative portrayal of the east is improbable.

¹³ Flusser used this designation for the second ruler and I follow in his wake. Lactantius has "antichrist" as a title for the second ruler, in what seems to be his own interpolation (*Divine Institutes* 7.19.6). For a survey of the research on this term and its meaning, see L. J. L. Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist: A Traditio-Historical*

Our author targets the antichrist, the last link in the chain. During his era, a prophet will be sent by God to preach and to bring the people back to God's way. At the conclusion of this prophet's mission the antichrist will put him to death (Rev 11:3–7; *Divine Institutes* 7.17.2).¹⁴ The prophet's body will be left in the street for three days. On the third day he will be resurrected and will ascend to heaven (Rev 11:8–12; *Divine Institutes* 7.17.3). Total victory over the antichrist will be achieved only after years of terror, during which those who are faithful to God will be oppressed and will be forced to flee. Anyone captured will suffer violent death (Rev 13:15; *Divine Institutes* 7.17.7). This horror will end with the descent of a big sword from heaven, followed by the great king (Rev 19:11–15; *Divine Institutes* 7.19.5) who will judge the evildoers, fight the antichrist, and kill him at the fifth battle (Rev 19:11–21; *Divine Institutes* 7.19.5–8). Who is the "great king"? John of Patmos identified him as Jesus (19:13); so did Lactantius (*Divine Institutes* 7.19.6). The assumption that the *Oracle* depicted the coming of the true Messiah is thus not farfetched.

This is the outline of the *Oracle* in brief. Before proceeding, we should take note of details overlooked in the above summary. The vision *interpretation* found in Lactantius indeed refers to three successive, rival phases in world history: the Seleucid Empire, the Republic and the Empire. Revelation 13, on the other hand, refers only to the last two phases; John of Patmos mentions *two* beasts. To the first he gives the attributes belonging in the *Oracle* to the first phase, that of the Seleucid Empire: the numbers 7 and 10 (13:1). Furthermore, he portrays the relationship between the two beasts not as one of rivalry but as one of veneration: the second beast forces humanity to worship the first. I assume, however, that what we find in Revelation is a reworking of the original *Oracle* where the depiction of two beasts, one in combat with the other, was found. I propose the following explanation for Revelation's alteration of the original symbols. Unlike the boy who talks to Vistasp-

Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents (JSJSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 3–15.

¹⁴ In his examination of the *Oracle* and other sources discussed here, I. Knohl (*The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000]) fails to note that it was the prophet and not the Messiah who was killed by the antichrist. His attempt to reconstruct an historical event behind chapter 11 in which a Qumran community leader who perceived himself as a Messiah initiated a revolt after Herod's death and was subsequently killed, his body lying in the street for three days, is thus unfounded.

Hystaspes in the original *Oracle*, John of Patmos is a real person speaking directly to his audience. *Ex-eventu* prophesy—predictions concerning a chain of kingdoms supposedly to come in the future—would not have any effect on his addressees, who share his knowledge.¹⁵ Thus John of Patmos converts the chain into a single image referring to the political situation of his time: one beast (Rome) is worshiped by humanity since the other beast (its emperors) force it to do so.

It is harder to find an explanation for the reworking of the *Oracle* in Revelation 11, the transformation of the persecution of one prophet into the persecution of two prophets.¹⁶ Perhaps this represents the insertion of a biblical motif; note Zechariah's two (identical) messianic figures. However other Jewish and Christian motifs are also possible candidates. As was pointed out by Clements,¹⁷ John of Patmos formed here a literary parallel of two beasts (chapter 13) and two prophets (chapter 11).¹⁸

From this understanding of the *Oracle's* outline, I would like now to go one step further and reconstruct an additional component of the original, now lost, first-century *Oracle of Hystaspes*. In my opinion, a story telling of the birth of the Messiah and his escape to God immediately after his birth was included in the *Oracle*. This component is discernible in Revelation 12. It has never been thought to be part of the *Oracle* because it is completely absent from Lactantius's book. My suggestion fills a gap in the *Oracle* as commonly reconstructed: It accounts for the existence of the Messiah in heaven. The fact that this birth story is missing from Lactantius can easily be explained. For a good Christian like Lactantius, the baby Messiah's ascent to God would contradict belief in the story of Jesus' earthly life. He would therefore

¹⁵ On the question of Revelation as apocalyptic work, see R. J. Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2–17; F. D. Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (BZNV 54; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 259–64.

¹⁶ See the discussion in Aune, *Revelation*, 598–603.

¹⁷ R. Clements, personal communication.

¹⁸ As noted above (see n. 14), Knohl (*The Messiah*), reconstructed a historical conflict related to the Qumran community behind chapter 11. The presence of two figures in Revelation is what brought Knohl to see chapter 11 as a reflection of the Qumran community's thoughts and actions. He perceived these two figures as the two Messiahs whose coming at the End of Days was expected in the Community. However, as will be shown below, at Qumran the two Messiahs are of different types and have different roles, while in Revelation 11 the two figures are identical. Furthermore, it is illogical to assume that, because Revelation 11 mentions two figures, it refers to a historical event that occurred in the Qumran Community and, at the same time, to reconstruct that historical event with only one figure.

choose not to include this episode in his book notwithstanding its presence in the original *Oracle*.

However, although we may plausibly understand the lack of a birth story in Lactantius as an intentional omission, plausibility in and of itself does not constitute proof for the existence of a birth story in the original *Oracle*. Not every first century BCE to first century CE work that tells of the Messiah's coming or testifies to belief in his activities contains a full account of the Messiah's origins. The best known example is the Gospel of Mark, which provides no information regarding Jesus' birth and infancy. To this we can add *Second Baruch* and also *Fourth Ezra*,¹⁹ which mention the Messiah (2 *Baruch* 39–40, 70–72; 4 *Ezra* 7, 11–14) but provide no clear statement regarding his background, although it seems that both writings assume his preexistence.²⁰

In favor of the existence of a birth story in the *Oracle* I would like to enlist two arguments—one internal and one external. The internal argument is the *Oracle's* portrayal of the Messiah as a human being, born of a human mother. The external argument is the existence of related, even parallel, writings that mention the Messiah's mother and contain elements recounting the Messiah's birth and ascent to heaven.

My evaluation of the internal argument takes as a starting point the question of *whether* the Messiah in the *Oracle* is a human being. In order to answer this question, we must first evaluate another figure found in the *Oracle*: the prophet. As I noted earlier, prior to his encounter with the Messiah who descends from heaven, the antichrist struggles with a prophet sent by God. According to the *Oracle* (*Divine Institutes* 7.17.2), this prophet possesses the ability to cause drought (see 1 Kings 16–17, where Elijah brings drought upon the earth) and to turn water into blood (see 2 Kings 3:22 where Elisha assists the kings of Israel and Judah in their war against the Moabites by causing water to appear to be blood). Furthermore, fire comes out of the prophet's mouth and burns his enemies (see 2 Kings 1:10–14 where Elijah exterminates with

¹⁹ Note that neither 2 *Baruch* nor 4 *Ezra*, in accordance with their apocalyptic world-views, award centrality to the Messiah's role. Stone points to the inconsistency of the portrayal of the Messiah in 4 *Ezra* and concludes: "In terms of the overall thought of the book, it must be observed that the redeemer figure occurs predominantly in those parts of the book which claim to be drawing on prior traditions." See M. Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress 1990), 213.

²⁰ Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 207–13, esp. 212. See also L. W. Hurtado, "Pre-Existence," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 743–46.

heavenly fire the messengers sent to him by Ahaziah). As Flusser notes, there is a strong affinity between the prophet described here and the biblical Elijah.²¹

Thus, the *Oracle's* prophet is likened to Elijah, or is perhaps even meant to be Elijah himself, as his end also resembles that of Elijah (note that, in the *Oracle*, after lying dead in the street for three days, the prophet ascends to heaven). If indeed Elijah is alluded to in the *Oracle*, then in the author's worldview special human beings may ascend to (biblical Elijah) and then descend from and reascend to heaven (Elijah in the *Oracle*), for a series of set times determined by God. Similarly, the Messiah who descends from heaven could be a human being. Furthermore, when the Messiah descends from heaven he is accompanied by a group of angels (Rev 19:14; *Divine Institutes* 7.19.5), yet the author nowhere explicitly states that the Messiah himself is an angel. We should also be aware of the fact that, in the *Oracle*, the Messiah has no role in any cosmic or heavenly transformation, nor does he change the order of nature.

I therefore propose that, like Elijah, the Messiah of the *Oracle* is a human being who dwells in heaven and is sent back to earth at the End of Days. We might then expect to find a story of how this human being came to ascend to heaven in the first place. For this purpose I turn to works contemporary with the *Oracle of Hystaspes* that include descriptions of the Messiah's ascent. There are works close to our author's time that relate, or hint at, the Messiah's ascent to heaven before his return to save the world. For example, in *Slavonic Enoch*, the young Melchizedek is taken to heaven for protection from the Flood (ch. 71).

As indicated earlier, I suggest that in the *Oracle*, the ascent was part of a birth story. To support this proposition I would like to evaluate a story from the tractate *Berakhot* in the Palestinian Talmud. As we shall see, a comparison of this story with Revelation chapter 12 is of importance for the question of the presence of a birth story in the *Oracle*.

The story in *y. Berakhot* (5a; with a parallel in *Lam. Rab.* 1:51 on Lam. 1:16)²² tells of a Jew who, while plowing his field, learns that the Temple

²¹ Flusser, "Hystaspes," 420–21.

²² Martha Himmelfarb recently discussed this story in great detail. See M. Himmelfarb, "The Mother of the Messiah in the Talmud Yerushalmi and *Sefer Zerubabel*," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture III* (ed. P. Schäfer; TSAJ 93; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 367–89. See also: H. Newman "The Birth of the Messiah on the Day of Destruction—Historical and Anti-Historical Comments," in *For Uriel: Studies in the History of Israel in Antiquity Presented to Professor Uriel*

has been destroyed. At the same time he also learns that the Messiah, Menachem the son of Hezekiah,²³ “from the royal city, Bethlehem in Judah” has been born on the same day. Consequently, he decides to search for the baby Messiah. Wandering about as a trader of swaddling clothes for babies, he arrives at a certain village where he meets the Messiah’s mother. While chatting with the mother, he gives her a swaddling cloth for the baby. During their conversation the mother expresses her wish to strangle her baby, calling him the enemy of her people. Time passes and upon his return to that village, the mother informs the trader that strong winds had snatched the baby from her arms.

In the *Yerushalmi* the baby is in danger. Blaming him for the destruction that has befallen her people, his mother seeks his death. From the mother’s point of view, the kidnapping of the baby by the winds is an appropriate punishment. However, a second point of view is found in the story: that of the trader, who believes that the winds carried the baby to God to save him from his mother’s threat. This is also the narrator’s point of view, as seen from the choice of the rare term *al’ulin* “strong winds.” This word appears only one other time in all the Aramaic texts of that period, where it refers to Elijah’s ascent to Heaven.²⁴

Scholars have noted the similarity between the story in the *Yerushalmi* and that of Jesus’ birth.²⁵ But the similarity is only superficial.²⁶ Jesus was alive and safe in his mother’s bosom, whereas in the *Yerushalmi* the main event is the baby’s disappearance. The comparison drawn by

Rappaport (ed. M. Mor et al.; Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2005), 85–110 (Hebrew).

²³ On this name as the traditionally expected name of the Messiah of the House of David see Newman, “The Birth,” 94–99.

²⁴ Y. Fraenkel, *Iyyunim be-Olam ha-ruchani shel sippur ha-aggadah* (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1981), 163 n. 19.

²⁵ G. Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature* (trans. Batya Stein; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 152–60.

²⁶ See Himmelfarb, “Mother of the Messiah,” 373–76. Knohl (*The Messiah*) erred in his attempt to link the *Yerushalmi* to Revelation 11. Whereas Revelation 11 speaks about the ascent to heaven of an adult who completed his mission on earth, the *Yerushalmi* tells of a baby that ascended in order to be prepared for his future mission on earth. Thus, we cannot deduce the name of the hero referred to in Revelation 11 from the name of the hero in the *Yerushalmi*: Menachem. Accordingly, Knohl’s identification of the event told in Revelation 11 as the death and resurrection of Menachem the Essene is more than doubtful.

the German scholar Eberhard Vischer between Revelation 12 and the *Yerushalmi* is more instructive.²⁷

In Revelation 12 a struggle takes place in heaven between a heavenly mother crowned by stars and a dragon who removes the celestial stars with its tail. The dragon seeks to swallow the newborn Messiah, but the latter is carried to God. The Messiah's mother is saved by the winds and transported to the desert.

The participants in the *Yerushalmi* are terrestrial. In Revelation the characters are cosmic: the crowned mother, the dragon, and the archangel Michael and his assistants, who fight the dragon and throw him down to earth.²⁸ D. Aune's discussion of chapter 12,²⁹ however, downplays the differences between the *Yerushalmi* and Revelation. Pointing to the lack of coherence between the components of chapter 12, Aune, following many others, argues that this chapter combines two different myths: the story of the baby, and the story of Michael and his helpers.

In discussing the origin of the myth of the mother, the dragon, the baby and the winds, most scholars accept to a greater or lesser degree A. Yarbro Collins's evaluation.³⁰ Demonstrating that the birth myth as found here exemplifies the use of cosmological myths for the purposes of anti-Hellenistic and anti-Roman propaganda, Yarbro Collins identified the closest parallel to the myth of the mother and the dragon as a cosmological myth prevalent in the western part of Asia Minor: the tradition of the pursuit of the goddess Leto by the dragon Python. When Python threatens the pregnant Leto, because he knows that Zeus's offspring Apollo is destined to kill him, Zeus sends the north wind to save Leto. Leto subsequently gives birth to Apollo and Artemis, and, ultimately, Apollo kills Python.³¹

According to Yarbro Collins, the childbirth story retold in Revelation originally took place on earth, not in heaven. When the myth of the archangel Michael was combined with that of the dragon and the

²⁷ E. Vischer, *Die Offenbarung Johannis: Eine jüdische Apokalypse in christlicher Bearbeitung* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1886). As Himmelfarb notes ("Mother of the Messiah," 371–72 and nn. 10–11), other scholars have adopted Vischer's suggestion.

²⁸ Because of this difference, Himmelfarb (p. 372) declined to see a close connection between Revelation and the *Yerushalmi*.

²⁹ Aune, *Revelation*, 664–65.

³⁰ Aune, *Revelation*, 670–74; A. Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (HDR 9; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 116–19, 122–29.

³¹ Kalms, however, points to the biblical and Jewish background. See J. H. Kalms, *Der Sturz des Gottesfeindes: Traditonsgeschichtliche Studien zu Apokalypse 12* (WMANT 93; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 31–65.

woman, heavenly attributes were given to the latter. It seems to me that in the reworking of the myth another change took place as well: the beast found in the original story (a beast we know from Revelation 11 and 13) became a dragon, a character more fitting for heavenly combat.³²

Thus, the similarity between the *Yerushalmi* and Revelation 12 is more striking than it seems at first sight. In both sources the baby is in danger on earth and is taken to dwell in God's shadow. The idea of combat—a struggle between destruction and salvation—is also shared by both stories. In Revelation the beast-dragon symbolizes Rome, eager to destroy the savior who threatens its existence. In the *Yerushalmi* the mother intends to destroy the savior because she perceives him as the agent of her nation's destruction.

It is the similarity between the *Yerushalmi* and Revelation that provides the basis upon which to assume that there was a story about the Messiah's birth in the *Oracle*. Thus while both Flusser and Aune view chapter 12 as a foreign body, intervening between the two chapters taken from the *Oracle*, I suggest that chapter 12 was taken from the *Oracle* as well. As I reconstruct it, in the original *Oracle* the antichrist (Revelation 13) opposes the helpless baby Messiah (Chapter 12) and the helpless prophet (Chapter 11) and will be killed by the powerful Messiah at the End of Days (Chapter 19). The argument that the story of the beast-dragon, the baby, and the mother was not known in Jewish tradition cannot be sustained in light of the *Yerushalmi*.

Two other sources are pertinent to, and support, my argument. The first is a Jewish apocalypse from circa the fifth century CE, *Sefer Zerubbabel*.³³ The textual evidence for this book is extremely confusing, making it difficult to reach any definite conclusions regarding the work. Nonetheless, scholars have noted similarities between the plot lines of *Sefer Zerubbabel* and the *Oracle of Hystaspes*, suggesting that the *Oracle* was one of its sources.³⁴ For our investigation, the important point is that all

³² On the importance of the heavenly opponent and his defeat for the message of Revelation itself, see Peerbolte, *Antecedents of Antichrist*, 133–38, 141.

³³ Personal communication by Dr. Hillel Newman of Haifa University, who has studied *Sefer Zerubbabel* for the last fifteen years. For a relatively recent English translation see M. Himmelfarb, "Sefer Zerubbabel," in *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narrative from Classical Hebrew Literature* (ed. D. Satran and M. J. Mirsky; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 67–90.

³⁴ Flusser, "Hystaspes," 47–51.

the manuscripts testify to the existence of a female figure, the mother of the Messiah.

Admittedly, there is no birth story in *Sefer Zerubbabel*. The author, or the compiler, chose another scheme of salvation in his book, that of a Messiah who dwells in the evil city which is to be destroyed by him in the future (as in *b. Sanh.* 98a). The Messiah's mother does, however, play a significant role before the coming of her son, the savior, at the story's end. We must note that the mother's role in *Sefer Zerubbabel* was shaped by the author to fit his worldview of the role of empires in world history. Although *Sefer Zerubbabel*, like the *Oracle of Hystaspes* and other apocalyptic writings, refers to a chain of world kingdoms, in *Sefer Zerubbabel* the links are not connected, that is, one kingdom does not defeat the other but each kingdom is overcome by the people of Israel. The Messiah's mother, holding a magic scepter, is the people's leader. The compiler/author of *Sefer Zerubbabel* did not wish to portray the people of Israel as under foreign rule in their own land; rather, he presented the kingdoms as invaders who are eventually defeated. The Messiah's mother with her magic scepter is a focal part of this imaginary scenario.³⁵

Thus, we cannot deduce from *Sefer Zerubbabel* the precise nature of the role played by the mother in its presumed source, the *Oracle of Hystaspes*. I propose that, in the *Oracle*, only the role of giving birth was assigned to the woman. Interestingly, in most of the manuscripts of *Sefer Zerubbabel* we find that the Messiah was taken up by God's wind (in this case, however, to Rome, not to heaven): "This is the Messiah of God . . . who was born to the House of David and God's wind carried him and hid him in this place until the End of Time." Indeed, according to a medieval midrash, *Maase of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi*, the messiah is not in Rome but in heaven.³⁶

A second source with affinities to the *Oracle of Hystaspes* is the *Apocalypse of Elijah*.³⁷ In the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, in addition to the two

³⁵ Himmelfarb ("Mother of the Messiah," 384) suggests that the role of the Messiah's mother in *Sefer Zerubbabel* is a response to the figure of Mary as developed in the Byzantine era.

³⁶ A. Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash 2* (Jerusalem: Bamberger and Wahrman, 1938), 48–51.

³⁷ Aune, *Revelation*, 588–93. For discussion of *The Apocalypse of Elijah*'s date and provenance, see D. Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt: the Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 17–20. The last quarter of the third century is the *terminus ante quem* according to Frankfurter; the *terminus post*

prophets Enoch and Elijah (who descend from heaven and preach to an evil ruler, are killed by him, and are subsequently resurrected and preach again), there is a virgin with a role parallel to that of Enoch and Elijah. I submit that a woman is found in the *Apocalypse of Elijah* because there was a woman in its source. In other words, lacking a reason to invent a female figure, the author included her because she appeared in the source that he reworked.

The birth story of the *Yerushalmi*, its parallel in Revelation 12, the female figures in *Sefer Zerubbabel* and *Apocalypse of Elijah* all point to the missing component of the *Oracle*. Thus, I propose the following outline of the ancient *Oracle*: The first-century Jewish apocalyptic work was an account, presented through a symbolic vision and its interpretation, of confrontations between the antichrist and two personages whom he considered to be rivals, the newly-born Messiah and the prophet Elijah. Killed by the antichrist, the prophet was resurrected and returned to heaven. The Messiah, who was in danger from the moment of his birth, was saved by God who took him to heaven; from there he is to return to take revenge on the evil ruler.³⁸

This proposed reconstruction enables the isolation of several features of early Jewish messianism. First, the *Oracle* provides additional evidence for Elijah's role in the messianic age. Furthermore, in this scheme, not only does Elijah appear, he also disappears again. He is to suffer, to be killed, undergo resurrection and reascend to heaven.³⁹ Second, even in

quem is the mid-second century. Most scholars assume this work to be an expansion of early Jewish apocalypse (ibid., 10–17); Frankfurter himself emphasizes the role of Egyptian Christianity in the *Apocalypse's* evolution.

³⁸ This description can be considered an early interpretation of Psalm 110, where God calls the chosen one to “sit at My right hand” (v. 1), declaring “from the womb, from the dawn . . .” (v. 3). On Psalm 110 in pre-Christian literature, see D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 21–27.

³⁹ We can also assume that he will reappear one more time. Thus we find in *Seder Olam Rabbah*: “In the second year of Ahaziah Elijah was hidden away and is not seen until the Messiah comes. In the days of the Messiah he will be seen and hidden away a second time and will not be seen until Gog will arrive. At present he records the deeds of all generations”; see C. Milikowsky, “Elijah and the Messiah,” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 2 (1982–1983): 491–96 (Hebrew). The date of *Seder Olam Rabbah* is discussed by idem, “Josephus between Rabbinic Culture and Hellenistic Historiography,” in *Shem in the Tents of Japhet: Essays on the Encounter of Judaism and Hellenism* (ed. J. Kugel; JSJSup 74; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 159–200, esp. 190, 199–200. Milikowsky suggests the first or second century CE as the probable date for *SOR*. Furthermore, he

a source from a Greek-speaking Diasporan milieu, the Messiah's role is that of warrior and not that of suffering servant. Third, both in the *Yerushalmi* and in *Sefer Zerubbabel*, the warrior Messiah is of the House of David. Thus, we are entitled to suggest that the *Oracle*, too, identified the Messiah as of Davidic lineage. In this case, we may point out that the story of his departure to heaven provides a solution to a major issue in the first century CE—who is the true heir to the House of David?⁴⁰ In the *Oracle* God provides the answer to this question: it is the one taken by Him, who is kept in heaven until the right time.

PART TWO: THE MESSIAH(S) IN QUMRAN

I now proceed to the second part of my paper, moving backward in time to Qumran, where we find a somewhat different perspective on the Messiah and the messianic role. The Qumranic worldview is complex. Counter to the notion that there are mythic forces who rebel against God, an idea found in both the early sections of *1 Enoch* and the second part of the book of Daniel, the Qumranites envisioned creation as combining both good and evil on three levels: cosmic, heavenly, and earthly.⁴¹ In this worldview, God is the primary agent who brings evil to an end, and terrestrial figures play different and less significant roles.⁴² This provides clues as to why the closest Qumran parallel to the *Oracle*

points to the existence of a “proto-*Seder Olam*” which was known by Josephus, i.e., which was written by the mid-first century CE at the latest.

⁴⁰ D. R. Schwartz (“The Messianic Departure from Judah [4Q Patriarchal Blessings]” *TZ* 37 [1986]: 257–66) found hints of this question in 4Q252.

⁴¹ “In a spring of light emanates the nature of truth and from a well of darkness emerges the nature of deceit [cosmic level]; in the hand of the Prince of Lights (is) the dominion of all the Sons of Righteousness...but in the hand of the Angel of Darkness (is) the dominion of the Sons of Deceit [heavenly level]” (*Rule of the Community* 3:19–21; translation: J. H. Charlesworth and L. T. Stuckenbruck, “Rule of the Community,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Texts with English Translations. Vol. 1: Rule of the Community and Related Documents* [ed. J. H. Charlesworth et al.; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck); Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994], 14); the sons of righteousness and of deceit represent the third, earthly level.

⁴² See H. Lichtenberger, “Messianic Expectations and Messianic Figures,” in *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth, H. Lichtenberger, and G. S. Oegema; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 13. Lichtenberger comments that eschatological expectations do not have to include the coming of a Messiah.

of *Hystaspes*, the Pseudo-Daniel text 4Q246,⁴³ makes no mention of a Messiah.

The first part of 4Q246 did not survive. From the first few lines preserved we can deduce that a symbolic vision was shown to a ruler and that he received an elaboration on its content from an earthly speaker. I interpret the first part of the elaboration (cols 1:4–2:3) as referring to the last two links of the chain of kingdoms mentioned before. The Hellenistic kingdom, referred to as מלך אַתּוּר [וּמ] צָרִיךְ, the “king of Assyria and Egypt,” is defeated by Rome. Like King Antiochus in Daniel (7:8), Rome is pictured as rebelling against God: “He will be called son of God, and they will call him son of the Most High” (2:1).

However, as we read in col. 2:4–9, Rome will be defeated by עַם אֱלֹהִים, the people of God who will rule for eternity. Thus, we find at Qumran a work that is one step earlier (or rather, one link shorter) than the *Oracle of Hystaspes*, since the *Oracle* refers both to Rome and to the Roman Empire. However, as noted, no Messiah appears in 4Q246.⁴⁴

If there is no need for a Messiah to battle the powers of evil at the End of Days, it is possible to attribute a different role to the Messiah. In *Peshar Melchizedek*,⁴⁵ the battle with the evil heavenly forces is assigned to a heavenly being, Melchizedek. The Messiah, called מְשִׁיחַ הַרוּחַ, the “anointed of the spirit,” has no role in defeating the evil powers. Like many apocalyptic seers, his role is to teach—לְהַשְׁכִּיל—his people about the coming salvation: “‘To comfo[rt] the [afflicted]’: Its interpretation: to [in]struct them in all the ages of the w[orld]” (18–20).

However, as Collins notes, in the central writings of the Qumran Community (such as the *Damascus Document* and the *Rule of the Community*) we find a belief in the coming of two messiahs, the Davidic Messiah and the Priestly Messiah.⁴⁶ The portrayal of the Davidic Mes-

⁴³ E. Puech, “246. 4Qapocryphe de Daniel ar,” in *Qumran Cave 4.XVII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 3* (ed. G. J. Brooke et al.; DJD 22; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 165–84. For a discussion of the text, see J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 154–69.

⁴⁴ See also M. Kister, “Notes on Some New Texts from Qumran,” *JJS* 44 (1993): 290 n. 48.

⁴⁵ F. García Martínez, E. J. C. Tigchelaar, and A. S. van der Woude, *Qumran Cave 11.II: 11Q2–18, 11Q20–31* (DJD 23; Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 221–41.

⁴⁶ Collins, *Scepter*, 49–123; idem, “Jesus, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth, H. Lichtenberger, and G. S. Oegema; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 100–119.

siah at Qumran is clear. He is a warrior, who will lead the forces in the earthly battle of the End of Days, judge the nation with the breath of his mouth, and save Israel. He is called נשיא העדה or צמח דוד.

The second, priestly Messiah is called כוהן הראש in the *War Scroll*; in *Florilegium* as well as in the *Damascus Document* his title is דורש התורה (7:18–21). In the *Damascus Document*, as part of a well-known midrash, we also find him referred to as יורה הצדק (6:2–11). The fact that the titles דורש התורה and מורה צדק also serve the Qumranites to describe their leaders in the past creates a certain lack of clarity.⁴⁷

I submit that there is no expectation in the Community for the return of their past leader. It is important to note that the *Damascus Document* provides not the name of the leader but his titles (מורה צדק and not מורה הצדק). דורש התורה, מורה צדק, are designations for the significant leader who helped the community to build and shape its way during the final generation of evil; the Qumran Community looks forward to the appearance of a leader at the End of Days who will fulfill the same role as its leader did in the past, helping to shape the life of the community at the End of Days by giving its members the proper tools for learning. There is expectation not for the coming of a lawgiver (hence there is no expectation for a second Moses) but for a second *teacher* who will be of priestly origin. As a priestly figure he will also take the main role in running the Temple to be built by God, and will atone for his generation (4Q541).⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The *Damascus Document* col. 1 mentions מורה צדק as the leader who was sent by God to guide the Community according to God's heart; דורש התורה is the leader sent by God to create the appropriate tools to interpret the Torah, for exploring and deducing the correct halakhot (see A. Shemesh and C. Werman, "Hidden Things and their Revelation," *RevQ* 18 [1998]: 409–27). He is mentioned in the same paragraph which promises the coming of יורה הצדק at the End of Days: "and the מחקק is the interpreter of the Torah, of whom Isaiah said: He takes out a tool for his work" (Isa. 54:16).

⁴⁸ 4Q541 was published by E. Puech, in idem, *Qumran Cave 4.22: Texts Araméens: Première Partie (4Q529–549)* (DJD 31; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 241. J. M. Baumgarten, who discussed the role of the Messiah in CD ("Messianic Forgiveness of Sin in CD 14:19," in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls* [ed. D. W. Parry and E. Ulrich; STDJ 30; Leiden: Brill, 1999], 537–44), suggests that the coming of the Messiah itself atones for the generation's sins. However, we know from the *War Scroll* and from other writings from Qumran that the time of the priestly leader at the Eschaton is also the time of the rebuilding of the temple. Thus the atonement mentioned both in 4Q541 and in CD 14 could be achieved through the temple cult to be carried out by the priestly leader.

Do the Qumranic Messiahs and the *Oracle's* Messiah share any features? As Flusser noted,⁴⁹ there is some resemblance between the *Oracle's* Messiah and the Qumranic Davidic Messiah. Both are warriors; both are apparently from the House of David; both fight the evil forces on earth; and both are expected to kill the leader of the evil forces (see 4Q285 7 1–5 for the Qumranic Davidic Messiah). Furthermore, a heavenly sword is associated with both. *War Scroll* col. 19 relates the defeat of the Kittim's army during the night by חרב אל: "In the morning [] they shall come to the [p]lace of the line [the mi]ghty men of Kittim, the multitude of Asshur, and the army of all the nations assembled [] (the) slain [] have fallen there by the sword of God" (19:9–11; note the similarity to the story related in 2 Kings 19:35).

The Qumranic mighty leader, however, has fewer miraculous features than the one from the *Oracle*. He does not, as far as we know, come down from heaven, nor does he wield the heavenly sword, which is a free agent. Also less miraculous is the Qumranic prophet. While there are statements at Qumran regarding a prophet who will come together with the two messiahs (1QS 9:11), neither dying nor resurrection nor second ascent is attributed to him.

We should not, however, ignore the existence of a heavenly character from Qumran who is an exalted human being. The speaker in 4Q491 (and related texts)⁵⁰ declares that he no longer has human needs and desire; he is among and above angels and holy ones; he is *the* teacher, who has also suffered disdain in the past.⁵¹ It is not certain whether this figure should be perceived as a messiah. I tend to think not. In describing his status, the speaker in 4Q491 exemplifies the spiritual condition that is promised to the *maskilim* at the End of Days in the book of Daniel. In Daniel the *maskilim* are to become, after the final judgment, like angels, and to achieve a rank that contrasts sharply with their sufferings and their humiliating deaths under Antiochus's decrees. In the Qumran worldview the most fitting person to reach the rank of

⁴⁹ D. Flusser, "The Death of the Evil King," in *A Light to Jacob: Studies in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls in Memory of Jacob Licht* (ed. Y. Hoffman and F. H. Polak; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1997), 254–62 (Hebrew).

⁵⁰ See the text and a brief discussion in J. J. Collins and D. Dimant, "A Thrice-Told Hymn," *JQR* 85 (1994–95): 151–57, and the longer discussion in Collins, *Scepter*, 136–49.

⁵¹ For a discussion of the many possible interpretations of this text, see Collins, *Scepter*, 136–53.

the *maskilim* at the End of Days is the leader of the community.⁵² Coping with the same dilemma as the *maskilim* of “Daniel’s” day, that is, the problem of explaining the humiliation of a highly regarded person in his lifetime, the Community gives a similar answer by envisaging a high stature for its leader in the angelic world.⁵³

Does this spiritual ex-leader have any role in the future? It is clear that the heavenly, enthroned human being of 4Q491 is different from the *Oracle’s* Messiah. Whereas in the *Oracle* the figure from heaven is a warrior whose role is to fight, the role attributed to the speaker of 4Q491 is, or was, to instruct. It is hard to imagine that this highly elevated, spiritual human being would agree to descend to fight the earthly forces as the *Oracle’s* Messiah does. Moreover, as we know, judgment can be carried out in heaven, too. The figure of the Son of Man in *1 Enoch’s* Book of Similitudes comes to mind: in the Similitudes, the Danielic Son of Man plays the role of judge, a role attributed to God in Daniel 7. Indeed, the word *משפט* does appear in 4Q491. However, in its context the meaning “law” seems more apt than the meaning, “judgment.” Thus, no future role is ascribed to our speaker.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

Qumran and the *Oracle of Hystaspes* point to the strong hold of the belief in the figure of the son of David as a savior, primarily as taking a role on the battlefield.⁵⁵ At Qumran the Davidic Messiah is less fantastic than the one in the *Oracle* and is accompanied by, and subject

⁵² The fact that 4Q491 contains sections in which the End of Days is described (Collins and Dimant, “Thrice-Told Hymn,” 159) suggests, to my mind, that the speaker’s status is to be achieved only at the End of Days. This reasoning leads me to reject the suggestion made by J. W. van Henten (“Moses as Heavenly Messenger in *Assumptio Mosis* 10:2 and Qumran Passages,” *JJS* 54 [2003]: 220–27) that the speaker is Moses.

⁵³ I thus agree with M. Abegg (“4Q491, 4Q427, and the Teacher of Righteousness,” in *Eschatology, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls* [ed. C. A. Evans and P. W. Flint; Grand Rapids, Michigan, Cambridge, England: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997]), who stated: “...it is possible that such a claim (to have ascended to heaven) was made on behalf of the Teacher of Righteousness by the author of the text...” (p. 72).

⁵⁴ This conclusion inevitably denies the ties Knohl posits between the speaker and the (reconstructed) Qumranic earthly warrior involved in a revolt after Herod’s death, further weakening Knohl’s theory regarding the Qumranic Messiah’s death and resurrection.

⁵⁵ See further K. Atkinson, “On the Herodian Origin of Militant Davidic Messianism at Qumran: New Light from *Psalms of Solomon* 17,” *JBL* 118 (1999): 435–60.

to, another figure. The priestly, halakhically oriented intellectuals at Qumran subscribed, in addition, to the promise of the future coming of a priestly teacher. Nonetheless, it is also possible that there was a circle at Qumran which had no messianic expectations, or which perhaps assigned to the Messiah only a role of teaching and explaining the coming of the End.

This last role, to my mind, was the one ascribed to John the Baptist. Jesus' self-image is harder to detect, hence its background is less transparent. His earthly mission might be compared to that articulated in another of the texts found in Qumran, 4Q521 (*4QMessianic Apocalypse*).⁵⁶ 4Q521 portrays a Messiah with attributes similar to those of (biblical) Elijah and of Jesus:⁵⁷ Heaven and earth obey him. The consensus is that 4Q521 was not written by the Qumranites,⁵⁸ and the parallels with Jesus traditions indicate that these messianic attributes had some wider currency in the Second Temple era.⁵⁹ As to Jesus' own perception regarding his anticipated heavenly mission, the closest parallel seems to be the Enochic 'Son of Man' mentioned above. In *1 Enoch's* Book of Similitudes, the Danielic Son of Man plays the role of judge.

A final word: Notwithstanding the variety of sources and messianic conceptions discussed here we find among them no expectation of the death and resurrection of any Messiah—neither at Qumran, nor in the *Oracle of Hystaspes*, nor in fragments or books from outside the Community. It seems to me that the extant sources lead to the conclusion

⁵⁶ É. Puech, "4Q521," in idem, *Qumrân Grotte 4.XVIII: Textes Hébreux (4Q521–4Q528, 4Q576–4Q579)* (DJD 25; Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 10.

⁵⁷ Collins, *Scepter*, 117–22.

⁵⁸ 4Q521 expresses the belief in resurrection while, insofar as we know, the Qumranites did not believe in resurrection. See: J. J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997), 110–29; G. W. Nickelsburg, "Resurrection," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. L. H. Schiffman and J. C. VanderKam; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2:766; D. Dimant, "Resurrection, Restoration and Time-Curtailing in Qumran, Early Judaism and Christianity," *RevQ* 19 (2000): 527–29.

⁵⁹ Both S. Byrskog (*Jesus the only Teacher* [ConBNT 24; Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1994]) and R. Deines (*Die Gerechtigkeit der Tora im Reich des Messias: Mt 5,13–20 als Schlüsseltext der matthäischen Theologie* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004]) point to the role of Jesus as a teacher in Matthew. The difference between Matthew's Messiah and Qumran's priestly Messiah is that the Qumranic Messiah gives his followers the *tools* for learning new laws from Scripture, whereas Matthew's Jesus supplies a body of knowledge.

that Jesus' death was an unexpected event, which neither Jesus nor his followers either predicted or hoped for.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ It is possible, however, that Jesus, knowing of John's death, did feel vulnerable. See B. Chilton, "Friends and Enemies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus* (ed. M. Bockmuehl; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 72–86. I follow J. J. Collins ("Asking for the Meaning of a Fragmentary Qumran Text: The Referential Background of 4QAaron A," in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in their Textual and Situational Contexts* [ed. T. Fornberg and D. Hellholm; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995], 579–90) in taking issue with G. J. Brooke ("4QTestament of Levi d[?]" and the Messianic Servant High Priest," in *From Jesus to John: Essays on Jesus and New Testament Christology in Honour of Marinus de Jonge* [ed. M. C. De Boer; JSNTSup 84; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993], 83–100), who found hints of a suffering Messiah in 4Q541. As is evident from nn. 14, 18, 26, 54 above, I completely reject Knohl's conclusions in his *The Messiah*. There is no evidence for an active Qumranic Messiah at the turn of the era, nor for his death and resurrection: Jesus had no prior scheme to follow.

* The idea of maschiach (messiah) is an ancient one in Judaism * The Jewish idea of maschiach is a great human leader like King David, not a savior And now the most funny one: * Jews do not believe in Jesus because he did not accomplish these tasks. It's absolutely striking for me and I guess for each Christian out there that the Jewish people plainly tell that they're looking forward for the coming of the Anti-Christ, that we tremble at and are constantly warned about in our Orthodox Christian Churches. Of course getting to know Jewish tradition and faith is a good thing especially in order to complain and see how much similar Orthodox Judaism is in many aspects to Orthodox Christianity. This dissertation attempts to evaluate the "apocalyptic Paul" movement through an examination of its major theological emphases in the light of the Jewish apocalypses 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and the Christian book of Revelation. Placing Paul in this literary and historical context confirms his place as an apocalyptic thinker, but raises important questions about how this is construed in these recent approaches. Each chapter will address one of four interrelated themes: epistemology, eschatology, cosmology and soteriology. The study intends to suggest that the "apocalyptic Paul" movement is c In Jewish circles the term goes back to a kind of royal ideology (i.e., understandings of the kingship) from centuries before Jesus. In the Old Testament, it was first and foremost the king of Israel who was thought to be the "anointed one." That's because at the king's coronation ceremony, he had, as part of the ritual, oil poured on his head to show that he was the one who stood under God's special favor. You need to appreciate this use of apocalyptic language as meant allegorically to apply to inner experience of the individual. Every single OT story has a mystic allegorical meaning, and most of the NT ones, as well, Bart. Because the Christians never proclaimed such a messiah. That's not the narrative in Mark anyway. Or the other Gospels.

If such a messianic description really is there, it will contribute to a developing re-evaluation of both popular and scholarly views of Jesus, since it suggests that the story of his death and resurrection was not unique but part of a recognized Jewish tradition at the time. The tablet, probably found near the Dead Sea in Jordan according to some scholars who have studied it, is a rare example of a stone with ink writings from that era — in essence, a Dead Sea Scroll on stone. It is written, not engraved, across two neat columns, similar to columns in a Torah. But the stone is broken, and som