

DATING THE ESCHATON: JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTIC CALCULATIONS IN LATE ANTIQUITY*

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In a recent survey on the Messiah and the Messianic age in Qumranic circles, Shemaryahu Talmon cautioned against the misunderstanding and misuse of the term Messiah in regards to the Dead Sea Scrolls. He suggested avoiding as much as possible the term "eschatology" which bears the stamp of "Metahistory". He preferred to describe the end of days according to the people of Qumran as "an Age to come . . . perceived within the framework of actual history, expecting it to set in a preordained stage in the progress of history."¹

It seems that the centrality of "The End" to the Qumranic mind (whether or not we accept Talmon's reservations regarding terminology), was never doubted. However, its scope and acuteness have become a center of attention in recent years. In a most revealing survey of Qumranic terminology, Annette Steudel² (perhaps, contra Talmon) has sketched the linear development of the term קץ הימים in the sect's own writings, and pointed out the fact that the Qumran people actually perceived themselves as living in the midst of "the final period of history". Accordingly, they utilized this term to denote events in their past, present and near future. In order to determine the "End of Days" (קץ הימים) within the constraints of "Historical

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¹ S. Talmon, "Waiting for the Messiah etc.", in *Idem, The World of Qumran from Within*, Jerusalem, 1991, pp. 273ff. at p. 277. On the perception of "historical time" in Qumranic circles see J. Licht, "The Doctrine of 'Times' According to the Sect of Qumran and Other 'Computers of Seasons'", *Eretz-Israel* 8 (E.L. Sukenik Memorial Volume), ed. by N. Avigad *et al.*, Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 63-70 (Hebrew).

² A. Steudel, "אזרח הימים in the Texts of Qumran", *Revue de Qumran* 16 (1993), pp. 225-246. For a different view on the Qumranic concept of אזרח הימים see John J. Collins, "Teacher and Messiah? The One Who Will Teach Righteousness at the End of Days", *The Community of the Renewed Covenant—The Notre Dame Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. by E. Ulrich and J. Vanderkam, Notre Dame, 1994, pp. 193ff. esp. p. 199.

Time”, the Essenes strongly focused on what they knew best, i.e. interpreting biblical prophecy, extracting from it its schemes and redemptive time tables and applying them in different modes solely to their own world.³

*The Book of Daniel and the Qumran People: Initial Stages in
Determining the End of Days*

One of the main sources of inspiration for the people of Qumran was the book of Daniel, which they regarded as a prophecy and relied on its apocalyptic calculations. The striking number of copies of that book found in the sect's library points to its prominence in its members' lives and explains the fact that the “Seventy Weeks” scheme in Daniel (9, 24–27) (along with other texts such as Apocalypse of Weeks [I Enoch 93]) were time and again readjusted and readapted to the changing historical circumstances of the sect.⁴ Here lies the

³ The mode of the biblical lemma plus comment known as the *Pesher* was most apt for this type of exegesis. The Qumran people used this technique to elucidate prophetic oracles. The definition of a *Pesher*, its form and technique, have long been based on the study of the most famous of the Qumran Pesharim the *Pesher Habakkuk* (1QpHab). See B. Nitzan, *Pesher Habakkuk: A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judaea*, Tel Aviv, 1986, pp. 29–79 (Hebrew); A. Steudel, *Der Midrasch zur Eschatologie aus der Qumrangemeinde (4QMdr Eschata.b)*, Leiden, 1994, pp. 187–189. Recently, however, some fundamental questions have been raised concerning the genre, its patterns and relations to other exegetical modes found in Qumran literature. See for instance M.J. Bernstein, “Introductory Formulas for Citation and Re-citation of Biblical Verses in the Qumran Pesharim”, *Dead Sea Discoveries* 1 (1994), pp. 31–34. A clearer definition has been proposed recently by George J. Brooke. According to him the *Pesher* serves as a mode of explicit exegesis which is particularist in nature, “most readily concerned with relating the authoritative text to the current circumstances, practices and aspirations of the commentator's community”. “4Q252 as Early Jewish Commentary (1)”, *Revue de Qumran* 17 (1996), p. 396. I thank Cana Werman for the latter references.

⁴ The importance of the book of Daniel for the Qumranians is attested by the multiple copies of the book found there, see, John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Minneapolis, 1993, pp. 2–3 and more recently, Peter W. Flint, “The Daniel Tradition at Qumran,” in: Craig E. Evans and Peter W. Flint (Eds.), *Messianism, Eschatology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids, MI 1997, pp. 41–60. Of special importance is what seems to be the sect's preoccupation with the scheme of “seventy weeks of years”. For, it did not only supply the historical framework for the emergence of the sect as seen in the Damascus Covenant 1, 5–6, but, might have been utilized to readjust and meet later eschatological aspirations. See, R.T. Beckwith, “The Significance of the Calendar for Interpreting Essene Chronology and Eschatology”, *Revue de Qumran* 10 (1979), pp. 179–180 (expecting the Messiah between 3 B.C.E.–2 C.E. not without significance for early Christian hopes and calculations). Recently D. Dimant managed to display the far-reaching implications of that scheme for a comprehensive understanding of the chronology and eschatology

greatest merit of Steudel's survey, whereby we are able to observe the actual and constant postponement of the designated "End" in a society that conducted its entire existence according to an acute messianic timetable.⁵ Steudel's survey has in fact confirmed the existence of a mechanism of constant readjustment.

Daniel's eschatological scheme contained yet another important element by which the duration of world history was calculated, namely, the division of world history into four ages—empires symbolized by the Four Beasts.⁶ This element was to play a major role in the development of future eschatological scenarios, subjected time and again to readjustment. However, in the sect's view of history this scheme played but a small part. It is well known that the compilers of the famous *Pesharim* on Nahum and Habbakuk, though very much aware of Rome's initial involvement in local Palestinian affairs and treating its collaboration with their opponents with mounting abhorrence, refrained from identifying this power with the Fourth

of the Qumran people. See eadem, "The Seventy Weeks Chronology (Dan. 9.24–27) In the Light of New Qumranic Texts", in: A.S. Van der Woude (ed.), *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings*, Leuven, 1993, pp. 57–76.

⁵ In her survey Steudel has confirmed the existence of a mechanism of constant readjustment of the eschatological timeframe. This sort of mechanism is characteristic of societies that are founded on an extreme and acute apocalyptic scenario. A fine example of Qumranian eschatological readjustment has been proposed recently by M.O. Wise, *The First Messiah: Investigating the Savior Before Christ*, San Francisco 1999, pp. 226–234. Unfortunately, Wise's fascinating book reached me too late to be fully integrated in this article. The existence of such a mechanism in early Christian circles has been demonstrated in a lucid manner by Richard Landes in his "Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography 100–800 C.E.", in: W. Verbeke et al. (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, Leuven, 1988, pp. 137–211.

⁶ On this, see H.H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires*, Cardiff 1935; J.P. Swain, "The Theory of the Four Monarchies", *Classical Philology* 30 (1940), pp. 1–20. Swain pointed out the emergence of the apocalyptic *topos* of the four plus one (i.e. Rome) monarchies in the early Greek and Roman literature. On this see D. Mendels' reservations concerning its emergence prior to the second half of the first century B.C.E. cf. idem, "The Five Empires: A Note on a Propagandistic *Topos*" *American Journal of Philology* 102 (1981), pp. 330–337. See further D. Flusser, "The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel", *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), pp. 148–175, and G.F. Hasel, "The Four Empires of Daniel 2", *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 12 (1979), pp. 17–30. On the possible influence of the Hesiodic myth of decline on the Danielic scheme of four empires, see A. Momigliano's classic essay, "The Origins of Universal History", *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Serie III, Vol. XII, fasc. 2* (1982), pp. 533–560; Gershon D. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition (Sefer Ha-Qabbalah) by Abraham Ibn Daud*, Philadelphia, 1968, pp. 223–250. On the four kingdoms scheme in the book of Daniel found in Qumran literature, see recently, D. Dimant, "The Four Empires of Daniel Chapter 2, in the Light of Texts from Qumran", in: R. Elior and J. Dan (eds.), *Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume, Part I*, Jerusalem, 1996, pp. 33–41 (Hebrew). See the following note.

Kingdom.⁷ This is to say that though the sect was cognizant of the “four kingdoms” scheme, its eschatological “sundial” was adapted to a more acute and more specified timetable.⁸ However, when it became apparent to the Qumran people that Rome was here to stay, their scenario of the eschaton, as recently suggested by Stegemann, most probably changed.⁹

Following the initial occupation by Rome in 63 B.C.E., that led to the accession of Herod the Great, the Qumran people began to show signs of growing messianic excitement. According to a recent suggestion by I. Knohl, we witness the emergence of a messianic figure, which in turn was followed by the formation and composition of the early portions of the War Rule describing the final battle with the *Kittim* (= Rome). The Qumran messiah is identified by I. Knohl as the famous Manaemus the Essene described by Josephus as “King Herod’s friend”.¹⁰ Knohl contends that the early actions of Herod, namely, the rejection of the Zadokite priestly leadership and the persecution of the Hasmoneans, were seen by the Qumran

⁷ It would seem that in the eyes of the Qumran people the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans in 63 B.C.E. was a turning point in their attitude to Rome (= *Kittim*). They incorporated in their own internal calendar the events leading to the Roman occupation (the tension between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II), and the events that ensued (the massacre of the leaders of Aristobulus’ party by Syria’s Roman governor Aemilius Scaurus), cf. recently, M.O. Wise, *Thunder in Gemini and Other Essays on the History, Language and Literature of Second Temple Palestine*, Sheffield, 1994, pp. 186–221. From thence they aspired Rome’s demise, as can be clearly envisaged from Peshar Nahum (4Q169) 1,4: He rebu[kes] the sea and dr[ives] it up]. Its [int]erpretation: the sea is all the K[ittim who are] . . . to execut[e] judgement against them and destroy them from the face [of the earth] . . . See next note.

⁸ The only clear testimony mentioning Babylon and Persia appears in an unpublished document in Starcky’s lot (registered as 4Q552, 553) and quoted by J.T. Milik, “Prière de Nabonaide”, *Revue Biblique* 63 (1956), p. 411 note 2. The allusion to “kingdoms” in 4Q Aramaic Ps Daniel (fr. A lines 32, 35) does not amount to much.

⁹ H. Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus*, Freiburg, 1991, pp. 180–188. For an overview of Rome’s image within Qumranic circles see now H. Lichtenberger, “Das Rombild in den Texten von Qumran”, in: H.J. Fabry et al. (hrsg.), *Qumranstudien*, Göttingen, 1996, pp. 221–230 (with extensive bibliography).

¹⁰ On the date of the War Rule (1QM) see in short G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Revised and Extended Fourth Edition), London, 1995, p. 124. On Manaemus the Essene, see Josephus, *Antiquities* XV, pp. 373–379 and Mishnah Hagigah, 2, 2 and L. Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore*, Philadelphia, 1955, p. 101. Knohl seems to base his suggestion on the phrase ירד המלך רע ליק[דושים] (friend of the king companion of the ho[ly] ones . . .) found in what has been termed as a self-glorification hymn of the eschatological High Priest (4Q471^b and parallels). Cf. I. Knohl, “The Friend of the King: The Messiah of the Qumran Sect,” *Kabbalah* 3 (1998), pp. 243–258 (Hebrew). See however, E. Eshel 4Q471^b: A Self Glorification Hymn”, *Revue de Qumran* 17 (1996), pp. 175–203. Michael Wise seems to proceed along similar lines, although according to his reconstruction the persecuted and slain

people as a radical change in their fate and a new stage in their unfolding eschatological scheme. These developments were followed by the return of the sect's members to Jerusalem, their settlement on Mount Zion (ca. 24 B.C.E.), and the revelation of Manaemus as their messiah. Following Herod's death (4 B.C.E.), this radical group inspired by its War Rule led an armed rebellion against Rome only to be brutally crushed by Varus, the Roman governor of Syria. This reconstruction (here, slightly abridged) demonstrates the historical circumstances that triggered the eschatological scenario and points to the atmosphere in which it became acceptable to the sect's members. In this sense it focuses our attention on the impact of the "opportunity period"¹¹ (Herod's reign) on the unfolding eschaton.

The unfolding messianic scenario of Qumran at the above mentioned "opportunity time" had most probably, great influence, on another famous messianic revelation, that of Jesus and his circle. His image was modeled by his followers on the Qumranic doctrine of the two messiahs (of Israel {= David} and Aaron),¹² though, his line of descent was presented as a fusion of both branches.¹³ However, there seems to have been a fundamental difference between the Qumranic view of the eschaton and the early Christian "End of

messiah (the Teacher of Righteousness) was murdered in different circumstances in the days of the Hasmonean ruler Alexander Jannaeus. The historiographic implications of Wise's reconstruction are too far reaching to be discussed here.

¹¹ It is tempting to link this outcome to the engendered belief supported and promoted by the king himself that he was a ruler from the House of David. On this, no doubt, propagandistic presentation, see, A. Schalit, "Die frühchristliche Überlieferung über die Herkunft der Familie des Herodes", *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 1 (1962), pp. 109ff.; See *Idem*, *König Herodes Der Mann und Sein Werk*, Berlin, 1969, pp. 472-481. The political and ideological climate in the age of Augustus which was saturated with triumphalism and clearly reflected an atmosphere of a new age might have enhanced Herod's aspirations. On the political spirit in the Augustan age see E. Gruen, "The Expansion of the Empire under Augustus", in: A.K. Bowman *et al.* (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History* (second ed.) Vol. X, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 188-194.

¹² See J. Starcky, "Les quatre étapes, du messianisme à Qumran", *Revue Biblique* 70 (1963), pp. 481-505, and B. Nitzan, "Eschatological Motives in Qumran Literature: The Messianic Concept", in: H. Graf Reventlow (ed.), *Eschatology in the Bible and in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, Sheffield, 1997, pp. 132-151 (esp. 134-148).

¹³ See W. Adler, "Exodus 6:23 and the High Priest from the Tribe of Judah", *Journal of Theological Studies* 48 (1997), pp. 24-47. Adler, who revives the premises of the now long rejected work by V. Aptowitzer, *Parteilpolitik der Hasmonäerzeit im rabbinischen und pseudo-epigraphischen Schrifttum*, Vienna, 1927, omits entirely any mention of the important link found in the Qumran literature. Another refutation of the views opposing Aptowitzer's conclusions was offered by D.R. Schwartz, "On the Pharisaic Opposition to the Hasmonean Monarchy", *idem*, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, Tübingen 1992, pp. 31-33.

Days" scenario in regard to the time frame in which it took place.

Just as the eschatological clock of the Qumran people was governed by the "70 Weeks" time span found in Daniel, there are signs that the early eschatological plan of the circle surrounding Jesus and that of his immediate followers was based too, albeit in a more simplified manner, on a division of world history. However, from a later vantage point, Jesus' revelation was predominantly seen as part of the Danielic scheme of the "70 weeks" blueprint.¹⁴ From this point of view Jesus' appearance on the stage at that time and place, was not much different than the rise of other popular prophetic movements, predicting the imminent "End" and creating an acute apocalyptic atmosphere.¹⁵ But were these agitators only leaders of some splinter groups¹⁶ engaged in prophetic eschatological speculation, or were they part of a larger trend? The latter possibility seems to carry some weight.

In a recent study Albert Baumgarten presents a new and radical assessment of the late Second Temple Jewish millenarianism. Baumgarten argues for a much wider attentiveness to messianic expectations within Pharisaic circles during that period. He bases this notion on a recent scholarly contention that contrary to the widely held opinion that millenarianism is cultivated among the deprived and vanquished, it should be traced among victors as well. Thus, not only the members of the Qumran sect were absorbed in speculation about the approaching "End", but also people belonging to the

¹⁴ On the messianic expectations surrounding Jesus see Dale C. Allison, "The Eschatology of Jesus", in John J. Collins (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 1, Grand Rapids MI 1998, pp. 267-302. See also note 24, below.

¹⁵ See P.W. Barnett, "The Jewish Sign Prophets—A.D. 40-70 Their Intention and Origin", *New Testament Studies* 27 (1984), pp. 679-697; R.A. Horsley, is of the opinion that these prophetic movements did not see themselves as part of a set divine timetable, but as participating in an apocalypse of the present and not of the future, see his "Popular Prophetic Movements at the Time of Jesus their Principal Features and Social Origin", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (1986), pp. 3-27. For a more sceptical view of the first century events, see M. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome A.D. 66-70*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 90-94. See further my remarks in note 30.

¹⁶ See R.A. Horsley, "Menachem in Jerusalem: A Brief Messianic Episode among the Sicarii—Not 'Zealot Messianism'", *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1985), pp. 334-348. The historical Menachem might have prompted later legendary midrashic depictions of a messianic figure carrying the name, that clearly had a strong sentiment of a counter Christian narrative. See G. Hasan-Rokem's most revealing study, *The Web of Life—Folklore in Rabbinic Literature: The Palestinian Aggadic Midrash Eikha Rabba*, Tel Aviv, 1996, pp. 163-172 (Hebrew). On the circumstances in which this messianic episode took place and on its social context, see M. Stern, "Zealots", *Encyclopaedia Judaica Year Book 1973*, pp. 140-145.

Pharisaic sect. The latter phenomenon did not arise from the hardships encountered by the Pharisees during the decades preceding the Great Revolt (hence its eruption in the form of the above mentioned movements), but was present throughout the Hasmonean period (though probably confined to certain quarters).¹⁷ It is difficult to discern the eschatological timeframe on which the prophetic movements of the first century based their expectations. Nevertheless, there are signs that within this context the Book of Daniel "which spoke to a wide range" might have played an important role. Whether we are able to draw a straight line between these Pharisaic sentiments and the later rabbinical approach to eschatological computations remains to be determined.

The Destruction of the Temple and its Aftermath: A Period of Transition

Although we know quite little about the rabbinical attitude towards eschatology before 70 C.E., the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the ensuing events up until the Bar-Kochbah revolt, should be regarded as a turning point in rabbinical reflections on the eschaton. Here, for the first time we encounter notions emanating from mainstream Judaism concerning the "Evil Kingdom," i.e. Rome and identifying it with the "Fourth Beast" mentioned in the Book of Daniel.¹⁸ Rome's role in history, its future and fate became subject to constant reflection, particularly in the growing wave of Apocalyptic literature written in the last decades of the first century, namely Fourth Ezra, the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch and in Christian circles

¹⁷ *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation*, Leiden, 1997, pp. 152-187. A good example (one of the very few) is the Psalms of Solomon, composed in the wake of Roman conquest of Judaea. However, it seems that the overwhelming evidence for apocalyptic speculation comes from Qumran circles (hence our own emphasis on these sources) and their surrounding milieu. See, however, John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, second edition, Grand Rapids MI 1998, pp. 37-38.

¹⁸ On Rome's role as the fourth kingdom cf. M. Hadas-Lebel, "Rome 'Quatrième empire' et le symbole du porc", in: A. Caquot et al. (eds.), *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentine Nikiprowetzky*, Leuven-Paris, 1986, pp. 297-312. Rome's demise definitely became a focus of eschatological hope, as can be gleaned from the third book of Sibylline Oracles, a composite work, gathering various prophecies from different periods. Though the provenance and date of the composition remain uncertain, as the book contains the aspirations of Jews widely scattered in the Mediterranean basin, it must have reached its final form when Roman yoke disappointed initial welcome and acceptance. See Eric Gruen's illuminating appraisal, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition*, Berkeley 1998, pp. 268-290.

the Book of Revelation. If we follow the aspirations voiced by the anonymous seer in the Apocalypse of Fourth Ezra, Esau's (= Rome) destruction and the ushering in of Jacob's kingdom were at the top of his agenda.¹⁹ The Book of Daniel supplied the rabbis with yet another element, the "Seventy Weeks" scheme enabling them to come to grips with the course of history. The rabbis, as demonstrated by the only rabbinical chronography, *Seder Olam Rabbah* (attributed by tradition to R. Yossi—a second century Galilean sage), were prepared to adopt this computation only to verify past events. To them, it indicated the time that elapsed between the destruction of the first and second temples. This notion was also adopted retrospectively by Josephus.²⁰ Josephus' treatment of the Book of Daniel is instructive.

¹⁹ Fourth Ezra 12,10–36 reinterpreted Daniel's vision of the "Fourth Kingdom". The identification of Rome with Esau emanates from the vision expounded in 6, 7–10 on which see M.E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, Minneapolis, 1990, pp. 160–161. However, G. Cohen has reservations about such an identification prior to the mid-second century, see; "Esau as a Symbol in Early Medieval Thought", in: A. Altman (ed.), *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Cambridge MA, 1967, pp. 19–20. At the same time Rome became the center of Christian apocalyptic speculation. Rome – Babylon was seen as a harlot city, and Nero its ruler and the persecutor of the Christians was regarded as the Antichrist, cf. R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation*, Edinburgh, 1993, pp. 343–350. Having though said that, one ought to remember that the identification of Rome with the "Fourth Beast" was adopted by mainstream Christian circles with great reservation. For, according to Paul (II Thessalonians, 2, 7) the "mystery of the lawlessness was already active" though it was being held back by someone. Paul speaking covertly welcomed the curb imposed on the forces of lawlessness (i.e. Antichrist). The restraining power was identified by Church Fathers such as Tertullian (*De resurrectione mortuorum*, 24, 18–19) as no other than the Roman Empire. The rabbis, however, had no qualms about speculating on this element (the prophecy on the Four Beasts) in Daniel's eschatological scenario. This element is quite apparent in the classical Hebrew *Piyyut* (cf. Yahalom, *infra* note 104). Further remarks on the reactions to the destruction of the Temple, see, M.E. Stone, "Reactions to Destructions of The Second Temple", *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 12 (1981), pp. 195–204.

²⁰ Though the acceptance of the book of Daniel into the Biblical Canon reflects the high esteem the book enjoyed among Jews, rabbinical views on Daniel as a prophet were somewhat more ambivalent. See, Babylonian Talmud *Megillah* 3a (compare *ibid.*, *Sanhedrin* 93b–94a). Against the view expressed there, see *Mechilatah Pische*, I. On the other hand, Josephus, (*Antiquities* 10, 210), regarded the book as an important source of "exact information of hidden things that are to come", thus, deserving its place in the sacred writings. Was Josephus expressing a long-standing view about Daniel's prophetic reliability? (see note, 21). On Daniel and the Biblical canon, see M. Haran, *The Biblical Collection Its Consolidation to the End of the Second Temple Times and Changes of Form to the End of the Middle Ages*, Jerusalem, 1996, pp. 123–124; 315; 331–355 (Hebrew). All this does not mean that Daniel's eschatological scheme and messianic computations were ignored, as could be clearly gleaned from the *Seder Olam Rabbah*. See the following note. On the *Seder Olam Rabbah* as a reflection of rabbinical chronography within the Hellenistic and Roman chronological milieu, see Milkowsky's succinct presentation of the main issues, "Seder

In his opinion the Book of Daniel incorporated prophetic traditions pertaining to the Flavians. Thus, in his *Jewish War* he regarded the current hegemony of Rome in Palestine as the fulfillment of Daniel's predictions concerning the "Fourth Beast and its Ten Horns", the "Tenth Horn" being Vespasian.²¹ Dating the "End" was an entirely different matter.

The "Seventy Weeks" scheme was not to be used in order to determine the future. The only minor modification of that computation in Rabbinic sources is the addition of the fifty-two years to

Olam and Jewish Chronography in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods", *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 52 (1985), pp. 115-139. Though, the *Seder Olam* does occasionally refer to the Sabbatical cycles (ed. Ratner, 11, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27), this cycle does not seem to serve as a governing principle of its chronological framework, save in the concluding chapters 29-30, where the Danielic messianic chronology of 490 years (9, 24-27) is used to demonstrate the span of time between the establishment of the Second Temple and its destruction (compare Babylonian Talmud, *Nazir* 32b, *Yalcut Shimoni* sec. 1062). Accordingly, B.Z. Wacholder's suggestions (*Hebrew Union College Annual* 46 (1975), p. 211ff.) concerning the *Seder Olam* as representing a rabbinic chronomessianic school are far from convincing. The Bar Kochbah revolt signified the final blow to Jewish national and cultic independence, and in Christian eyes the final accord of heavenly retribution. For a short appraisal of Christian views on the Bar Kochbah revolt see my "Constantine and the Jews: The Prohibition Against Entering Jerusalem—History and Hagiography", *Zion* 60 (1995), pp. 129-135 (Hebrew).

We would not be far off the mark if we assume that the rabbis avoided further usage of the "70 Weeks" cycle because it was "identified" with the sectarian apocalyptic scheme (= Qumran) on which see D. Dimant's study (*supra*, note 4), as well as with Christian chronomessianism. At least in one case this very same cycle is used in what seems to be an implicit polemical note against the Jews (see *infra* note 24). Other early Christian computations saw the consummation of the 490 years in the birth of Christ, (see *infra*, note 000). While other later Christian traditions disclose an effort to readjust the "Sabbatical Cycles" (see *infra*, notes 000).

²¹ There seems to be no consensus concerning Josephus' treatment of Daniel, especially in regard to his interpretation of Daniel as predicting the destruction of the Temple. See F. Millar, "Hellenistic History in a Near Eastern Perspective: The Book of Daniel" in: P. Cartledge *et al.* (eds.), *Hellenistic Constructs: Essays in Culture, History and Historiography*, Berkeley, 1997, pp. 96-97. Millar's careful reservations stand in stark contradiction to F.F. Bruce's study "Josephus and Daniel", *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 4 (1965), pp. 148-162. S. Mason has presented a firm case for the identification and centrality of Daniel's predictions concerning the "Fourth Beast" i.e. Rome in Josephus' historical outlook, which enhances the assumption that he regarded the Book of Daniel as a prophecy and not merely as a "pseudo-prophecy" describing recent events in the early days of the Hasmonean Revolt, cf. his "Josephus, Daniel and the Flavian House" in: F. Parente & J. Sievers (eds.), *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith*, Leiden, 1994, pp. 161ff. especially pp. 178-191. It ought to be stressed further that Vespasian held a special position in Josephus' eyes as seen in the latter's famous "prophecy" on that emperor's role in history. On this anecdote and its parallels in the sibylline and rabbinical tradition see A. Schalit, "Die Erhebung Vespasians nach Flavius Josephus, Talmud und Midrasch. Zur Geschichte einer messianischen Prophetie", *ANRW* II, Berlin-New York 1975, pp. 208-327.

the sum of 490 years, based on Daniel's prediction: "He shall make a firm league with the mighty (or: many) for one week and, the week half spent" (9, 27). This modification though signifying the period between the destruction of the Temple and the end of the Bar-Kochba revolt, was most probably modeled on the fifty-two years that elapsed between the destruction of the first temple and the Cyrus declaration. In the post second Temple context it referred to the tradition alluding to a similar permit granted by Hadrian some time at the early stages of his reign.²² The Seventy Weeks scheme appears to have been vastly exploited by the early Church Fathers. The latter, so it seems, had a great impact on the usage of this timeframe by the rabbis. The rabbinical motivation to incorporate this scheme was twofold: first, to consolidate an imagery of symmetry between the destructions of both temples, which in a way resembled the Qumranian idea of two parallel aeons.²³ Second, was to refute any usage of that scheme as part of a current or future eschatological scenario. The latter had a polemical end. Early Church chronographers, such as Julius Africanus and later, Eusebius of Caesarea, followed still by others, used the "Seventy Weeks" timetable to demonstrate its applicability to the events surrounding the Incarnation of Christ during the Herodian period. In their understanding Jesus' epiphany was at the age about which Jacob the patriarch prophesied "A Prince shall not fail out of Judah . . . until there come the

²² Jerusalem Talmud, *Taanot* 4, 8 (69a) in the name of R. Yossi. Compare, *Lamentations Rabbah*, 2, 2 and *Seder Olam*, 30 (a different tradition). Hadrian's permit was hinted at in the Epistle of Barnabas, 16, 3-4, on which see the remarks of D.R. Schwartz, "On Barnabas and Bar-Kokhba" *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, Tübingen, 1992, pp. 147-153. There have been attempts, however, to interpret the tradition in the Epistle of Barnabas as relating to events during the emperor Nerva's days, whose attitude to Jews was in stark contrast to that of the Flavian emperors, see, P. Richardson & M.B. Shukster, "Barnabas, Nerva, and the Yavnean Rabbis" *Journal of Theological Studies* 34 (1983), pp. 31-55. In any case the expectations of the Jews regarding the renewal of the Temple were highlighted too in a counter apocalypse of Jewish-Christian origin, The Apocalypse of Peter which is assumed to have been composed during the very days of the Bar Kokhba revolt, see R. Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter" *Apocrypha* 5 (1994), pp. 7ff., esp. 39-43. On the 52 years that elapsed between the destruction of the first Temple and Cyrus' declaration, see *Seder Olam*, 29 and parallels. The tradition concerning the Bar Kochbah revolt surfaced later, in several of Jerome's commentaries to the Bible, on which, see most recently H.I. Newman's arguments, *Jerome and the Jews* (Doctoral Dissertation, Hebrew University) Jerusalem, 1997, pp. 204-206 (Hebrew). From the current Christian perspective Hadrian's permit signified the coming of the "last days" which consummated the epoch of the evil, see the Epistle of Barnabas, 2, 1; 4, 9.

²³ See Talmon (*op. cit.*, note 1), pp. 294-295.

things stored up for him and he is the expectation of the nations" (Genesis, 49, 10).²⁴ In contrast, the rabbis, contrary to all accepted traditions, dated Jesus' activity to the time of R. Joshua the son of Perajah i.e. to the days of Alexander Jannaeus (nearly a century earlier).²⁵ This served them not only to counter the above mentioned Christian tradition, but also to distance Jesus' crucifixion from the destruction of the Temple,²⁶ described by early Church Fathers as an act of Divine retribution to avenge the killing of the Messiah.²⁷ But, there were clear signs that later Christians were continuously exploiting the "70 Weeks" scheme to determine the approaching age of the Antichrist which was to be followed by the aspired Parousia.²⁸

²⁴ Julius Africanus concluded his reckoning of the 490 years with Christ's crucifixion, see, apud Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* VIII, 2 (ed. I.A. Heikel, GCS 23, Leipzig, 1913, pp. 375ff.). Compare Tertullian, *Adversus Judaeos* 8 (ed. A. Gerlo, CCL 2, Turnholt, 1954, pp. 1356-1364) who tended to identify the ending of the "70 Weeks" cycle with the destruction of the Second Temple. See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I, 21, who arrives at the same result in an original manner, essentially dividing Daniel's reckoning to two distinct periods of time with a long interval between them, compare, Eusebius, *ibid.* See too, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XII, 19 (PG 33, cols. 748-749). See further William Adler's illuminating survey in: James C. VanderKam and William Adler (Eds.), *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, Assen/Minneapolis 1996, pp. 201-238.

²⁵ Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 107b; *ibid.*, *Sotah* 47a. Compare traditions in the texts of *Toldoth Jeshu*, see S. Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen*, Berlin, 1902, pp. 38ff.; 182-185.

²⁶ As pointed out by J. Rosenthal (based on mediaeval Jewish polemical texts), "The State of Israel in the Light of Christian Theology", *idem, Studies and Texts in Jewish History, Literature and Religion*, Vol. II, Chicago & Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 557-558 (Hebrew). Though our assumption might require further proof, the rabbinical tradition dating Jesus' life nearly a century earlier than the accepted date should not be brushed aside as a mere chronological blunder on their part.

²⁷ See G.W.H. Lampe, "A.D. 70 in Christian Reflection", in: E. Bammel & C.F.D. Moule (eds.), *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 153-171, esp. pp. 166-171.

²⁸ In the turn of the second century a writer named Judas reckoned that the seventy weeks should end at the time of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus. See, Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI, 7. Still again in the second half of the fourth century Apollinarius of Laodicea determined the approaching "End" according to the Book of Daniel to the year ca. 490 C.E., cf. Jerome, *In Daniele*, III, 9, 24. (See further p. 144, and note 92). We ought not forget too, that the Christians were driven to vindicate Daniel's predictive calculations due to Porphyry's (Daniel's late third century pagan commentator) sharp criticism of Christian use of the Book of Daniel, which to him represented a treatise not composed by the person ("seer") under whose name it appeared, but by a contemporary of Antiochus Epiphanes, who was describing current affairs, see Jerome's introduction to his Commentary to Daniel. What was at stake in the Christian mind was aptly described by Oliver Nicholson, "Golden Age and the End of the World: Myths of Mediterranean Life from Lactantius to Joshua the Stylite", in: M.J. Chiat and K.L. Reyerson (Eds.), *The Medieval Mediterranean: Cross-Cultural Contacts*, St. Cloud 1988, pp. 11-18 (at p. 13).

The effort of the rabbis to limit the scope of Daniel's prophecy, might have been in order to refute or dismiss the Christian endeavour. We shall try to demonstrate later on, a similar reaction on the part of the Church Fathers encountering an alternative eschatological scheme being cultivated by the rabbis.

At that very same period, early signs of a change in the rabbis' outlook on the issue of national and historical redemption of the people of Israel, were beginning to emerge. The traumatic event of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple shifted the rabbis' attention from the salvation of the individual to that of the people. From a plan of redemption based on prophetic restorative notions of an amorphous plan of nature, to a much more radical (accompanied by catastrophic elements) and acute scenario of national collective deliverance. Clearly there was no essential need or craving for a redemptive scheme of the latter model prior to the most brutal blow to Jewish nationalistic and religious image by this foreign and hostile power. With all the continued criticism voiced by the Pharisees and other segments of the Jewish public against different sovereigns governing the affairs of Judaea, there was neither a real sense of eschatological urgency, nor the need for radical change, beyond (except in some details) what the bible envisaged as the scenario of the Eschaton.²⁹

But then, an alternative emerged, after the fall of Jerusalem, based on the only model of biblical national salvation ever realized, the story of the Exodus from Egypt.³⁰ It had all the ingredients other Prophetic schemes lacked, especially the element of liberation from the yoke of an oppressing power, a yoke that was according to the

²⁹ See in short, E.E. Urbach, *The Sages, Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Jerusalem, 1975, pp. 651-653. See, however, Baumgarten (*supra*, pp. 118-119 and *op. cit.*, note 17).

³⁰ I am slightly sceptical whether one ought to regard the prophetic movements that roamed the countryside around Jerusalem between 40-70 C.E., heralding apocalyptic events and signs borrowed from the biblical Exodus-Conquest context, as early precursors of the phenomenon described here. If I am right the latent usage of this model of divine redemption deserves some explanation. If we are to accept some innovative insights proposed recently by E. Gruen in a study on the nature of Graeco-Roman literature on the Jews we might possess a clue. According to Gruen, in some Jewish quarters in the Diaspora or more precisely in Egypt the Exodus story was presented in a much adapted form in an edifying manner describing the Israelites as one time rulers of Egypt and Moses as their leader who cleansed the land of Egypt from its false idols. This adaptation was designed, "to establish the claims of Jews to a place of eminence in the history of Egypt" and exalt their return to that land. It is this adaptation, he contends, which enables us to reevaluate the presentation of the Exodus story by the Graeco-Roman writers cf. *idem*, "The Use and Abuse of the Exodus Story", *Jewish History* 12 (1998), pp. 93-122.

Divine promise to be limited in time (400 or 430 years). The immediate urge to bring this somewhat latent eschatological scenario (time and again reflected on as a model by the Bible itself) into the focus of the public was the need to celebrate the Passover without a Temple. Passover was, after all, the focal point of Second Temple pilgrimage. The atmosphere of dismay and lament that engulfed many Jews after 70 C.E. presented an extreme contrast to the elation of the pilgrims and celebrants flocking to Jerusalem prior to that year.³¹ In these circumstances the rabbis laid down the foundations of a novel way to celebrate the Exodus and the Passover night by transforming it from a sacrificial meal into an occasion of reflection on and study of the Exodus narrative. There and then the Passover Haggadah made its initial steps.

There was however, another and no less important element that contributed to this important change, the adoption of the Exodus narrative by the earliest Christian traditions³² and its typological centrality for the early church's historical and theological message of the crucifixion story, as clearly demonstrated in Melito of Sardis' homily *Peri Pascha* (= On Pascha) composed ca. 160 C.E.³³ Melito's homily presented a great exegetical challenge, for it articulated in a very subtle manner the Christian argument based on typology, "that the mock-up story, i.e. the Biblical Exodus was superseded by the finished article", the story of Christ.³⁴ Was this in itself sufficient to

³¹ On the mood following the destruction of the Temple, see Urbach's now classic study, "Ascesis and Suffering in Talmudic and Midrashic Sources" in: S.W. Baron *et al.* (eds.), *Y.F. Baer's Jubilee Volume*, Jerusalem, 1960, pp. 48ff., esp. 54-56 (Hebrew).

³² On the adoption of the Exodus imagery in the New Testament corpus, see, H.W. Kuhn's summary s.v. "Exodusmotive III", *Theologische Realenzyklopädie Bd.10*, Berlin-New York 1982, pp. 741-745. It goes without saying that this notion may have been entertained within mainstream Jewish circles too.

³³ On the Passover Haggadah as a counter narrative to the Christian salvation history, see a most illuminating study by I.J. Yuval, "Easter and Passover as Early Jewish-Christian Dialogue" in: P. Bradshaw & L.A. Hoffman (eds.), *Passover and Easter: Origins and History to Modern Times*, Notre Dame 1999 pp. 98-124. On Melito's *Peri Pascha* within the context of Jewish-Christian relations in second century Asia Minor, see J. Lieu, *Image & Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century*, Edinburgh, 1996, pp. 199-240.

³⁴ The definition of Typology as well as other modes of patristic exegesis, and their employment in early Christian texts have received recently a new and thorough re-examination. See F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 193-200 (on Melito's use of typology).

An important element in Melito's interpretation of Christ's saga was its typological resemblance with the biblical story of the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis, 22), {see

bring about a polemical response to counter the latter narrative? Seen from the perspective of a ruined Temple³⁵ and a persecuted people—a fate that was being attributed openly by the Christians to the Father avenging the killing of his Son, the messiah, or, according to others, the martyrdom of the “Lord’s brother,” James³⁶—the emerging Haggadah was to serve an entirely different purpose. It was the foundation of a new and more promising salvation story for the Jews. The Exodus story was essentially not messianic or apocalyptic in nature, but it nevertheless was drawn into the center of Jewish future hope.³⁷ The great exegetical effort of interpreting the Exodus narrative resulted in the composition of substantial portions of midrashic literature. In the course of this exegetical endeavour, much attention was paid to the set timetable designated by the Divine commitment to Abraham to free his descendants from the yoke of a foreign nation, i.e. 400 years, a commitment kept to the letter. Thus, an old/new scheme of deliverance with its old/new timetable, was revitalized. At

text in S.G. Hall (ed.), *On Pascha and Fragments*, Oxford, 1979, pp. 74–79 (Fragments 9–12). According to an early, though esoteric, Jewish tradition this event occurred on the first day of the Passover, cf. Jubilees, 17,15–18; 19,1. This tradition reappeared in later rabbinical texts too (for instance in the *Mechilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Pisha*, 11 {3rd century}), as well as in several parallel targumic and midrashic texts). The rationale behind this tradition, at least in its rabbinical phrasing in the *Mechilta*, was to tie the martyrdom like sacrifice of Isaac with the redemption of his descendants from Egypt, hence the blood on the door threshold (Exodus, 12, 13). The resemblance to the crucifixion of Jesus and the salvation it entails in Christian thought was striking. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that as from a short while later, the rabbis changed their views about the dating of Isaac’s sacrifice by shifting it from the Passover to Rosh Hashanah, cf. *Leviticus Rabbah*, 29,9 with parallel hints in Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah*, 31a. What most probably decided the matter was the fact that the latter notion became firmly fixed within the liturgical rite. Notwithstanding diverse or even conflicting scholarly views on the matter, it is quite plausible in my judgement, to see the inception of this new rabbinical tradition as a result of the direct confrontation with the opposing Christian image. I would like to thank my student Shalhevet Dothan for sharing her attractive conclusions on this topic with me.

³⁵ The earliest among the Christians to allude to the connection between the ruined and deserted Temple and the cessation of the Paschal sacrifice, which gave way to Christ’s Passover, was Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, 123, 134–135. See R.A. Clements, *Peri Pascha: Passover and Displacement of Jewish Interpretation Within Origen’s Exegesis*, (Doctoral Thesis, Harvard Divinity School) 1997, pp. 149–150.

³⁶ As stated by Hegeppus, apud Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, 23, 18. Compare, Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 47, wrongly attributing this notion to Josephus, (see *supra* note 27).

³⁷ See A. Momigliano’s remark, “Preliminary Indications on the Apocalypse and Exodus in the Hebrew Tradition” in: *Idem, Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, (ed. by S. Bertl), Chicago, 1994, pp. 98–99.

first glimpse, a time span of 400 years was actually quite a long duration in eschatological terms, and its introduction might have essentially reflected a hidden intention to postpone the aspired date and to ward off acute and intense expectations. Nevertheless, it offered a new hope based on a limited and relatively short term expectation, which penetrated slowly into the minds of the people.

The Christian perception of the Exodus story was entirely different. The saga served as a type that had reached its full realization in the history of the emerging Church,³⁸ and therefore it was finite too.³⁹ Many of the Church Fathers reiterated this in their public homilies, biblical commentaries and catechetical courses.⁴⁰ Thus, Origen in his biblical homilies systematically excluded the Jews from the real and hidden meaning of the Exodus saga. He argued that their readings and interpretation of the story were merely literal "historical" and that their claim to be the recipients of biblical promises lacked foundation. He later placed the entire biblical narrative of the departure from Egypt and the subsequent journey through the desert on a new footing by regarding it typologically as a description of the Christian's path to spiritual perfection.⁴¹ Every element in the story was thus seen as prefiguring an actual and by far more significant event in the recently realized Christian narrative. Therefore, the Church Fathers were prepared to utilize the Exodus narrative only inasmuch as it vindicated or verified the epiphany of Christ and that of the Church; it was not to be utilized as an eschatological scheme yet to be fulfilled. Thus, again according to Origen the forty-two stages or stops in the journey of the Children of Israel from Egypt to the promised land, symbolized the duration of forty-two generations from Adam to Christ according to the Gospels.⁴²

The superiority of the Christian veritas over the Jewish figura became primal in later Christian exegesis and preaching. The latter notion was emphasized especially in commentaries composed during the fourth century and onward dismissing any Jewish attempt to view

³⁸ Cf. Irenaeus, *Demonstration*, 46, who contended that the Exodus from Egypt was a figure of the later Exodus of the Church from among the nations.

³⁹ See the foundation of this notion in I Cor. 10, 11.

⁴⁰ See J. Danielou's concise presentation in his *From Shadow to Reality: Studies in Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Westminster MD, 1960, pp. 175-201.

⁴¹ Cf. Origen's *Peri Archon* IV, 2.6; 3.12, *Homilies on Exodus*, IV-VII. See further Clements (*supra*, note 35) pp. 171-180.

⁴² Origen, *Homilies on Numbers*, 27, 3. Later reiterated by Jerome, *Epistle*, 78, 2.

the Exodus narrative as having present significance most probably (as I shall try to demonstrate) reflecting contemporary Jewish aspirations.⁴³ However, at the same time, during the second half of the fourth century, contrary to the above trend, leading Christian theologians like Apollinarius of Laodicea were advocating a full fledged "materialistic" eschatological scheme based on the famous biblical apocalyptic chart of the "70 Weeks". We thus witness a reverse picture of what has been demonstrated above, concerning the rabbinical attitude toward the eschatological calculations in the Book of Daniel.

We are able to conclude so far that a readjustment mechanism, though not so similar to the one we have encountered above, within the Qumran circle, seems to have developed within rabbinical circles as well. We may also infer (and later try to demonstrate), that from thence Jewish eschatological schemes and calculations were being moulded in conjunction or as a reaction to the eschatological models that were being disseminated in Christian circles. It is my contention that the rabbis, though aware of the far-reaching social implications of apocalyptic miscalculations,⁴⁴ did not hesitate to delve themselves openly into such computations. The aim of this study is therefore, to demonstrate how Jews in late antiquity calculated the "End" and tried to apply their computations within a complex cultural atmosphere in the midst of rapidly changing historical circumstances. At the center of our interest lies the mechanism by which this process took place. It should be stressed, however, that

⁴³ This is the impression one receives from arguments voiced by Ambrose of Milan and Zeno of Verona and other current and later exegetes. See the remarks by R. Hillier, *Arator on the Acts of the Apostles: A Baptismal Commentary*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 163-169.

⁴⁴ The rabbis' harsh judgment of those who were discouraged by the failure of such calculations to materialize is voiced in their famous maxim: "R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end etc." (Bab. Talmud *Sanhedrin* 97b). On the division, between those who expect attentively and acutely the appearance of the Messiah, and those who watch all this with reservation, and its impact on the historical documentation of apocalyptic expectations, see R. Landes, "On Owls, Roosters and Apocalyptic Time: A Historical Method of Reading a Refractory Documentation", *Union Theological Seminary Quarterly* (1997), pp. 49-69 (especially pp. 49-59). Landes follows a rabbinical metaphor about a cock and a bat discussing the coming dawn (Babylonian Talmud, *ibid.*, 98b). In the following discussion I shall restrict my observations to two types of eschatological computations within rabbinical sources: (a). The acute and precise dating (b). The redemptive typological cycles (400/430 years in Egyptian exile) of which we have external (i.e. Christian) testimony as to their presence and importance in Jewish circles.

neither the terminology nor the nature or the scope of the apocalyptic scenarios envisaged by the rabbis (or the Church Fathers) will be discussed here.

Deferring the Moment and Relying on Others

Following the humiliating defeat of the Bar-Kochbah rebels, the rabbis made an effort to quell messianic fervor by toning it down.⁴⁵ It finally dawned on the members of Rabbinic circles that Rome was not a passing phase in history, and that its supremacy was part of a divine mission.⁴⁶ Not entirely surprisingly and based on the recent Jewish debacle, though perhaps for other reasons as well, early Christian apologists such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyon were advocating the idea of a terrestrial kingdom of Christ in Jerusalem.⁴⁷ Rabbinical effort to quell active messianic fervor was apparent in more than one way. While on the one hand they reiterated the importance of the "Four Empires" scheme, stressing its preordained nature,⁴⁸ on the other hand they introduced a septennial scheme of the "Signs of the End" of an extremely amorphous character, resembling similar schemes found in earlier apocalyptic texts such as the Apocalypse of Baruch. At the same time they refrained from specifying when all this actually will come to pass.⁴⁹ This attempt seems

⁴⁵ On the messianic foundation of the Bar Kochba revolt, see among other studies, P. Schäfer, "Akiva and Bar Kokhba" in: W.S. Green (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, Vol. II, Michigan, 1980, pp. 113-130; A. Oppenheimer, "The Messianism of Bar Kokhba" in: Z. Baras (ed.) *Messianism and Eschatology*, Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 153-165 (with further references) (Hebrew); and I.M. Gafni, *Land Center and Diaspora—Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity*, Sheffield, 1997, pp. 71-73.

⁴⁶ Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 18a. The Rabbis seem to have been the last to accept the scope and duration of Roman rule. Compare Josephus, *supra* n. 21. Skepticism concerning Rome's role in universal history was not limited to her rivals. See E. Gabba, *Dionysius and the History of Archaic Rome*, Berkeley 1991, pp. 192-194.

⁴⁷ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 80-83; 118,2; 138,3. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haereses* 5.33-36, confuting Christians who see only symbols in millenarian texts.

⁴⁸ *Genesis Rabbah* 2.4. This saying is attributed to R. Simon. b. Lakish (mid third century), but it may well reflect a longer standing tradition.

⁴⁹ *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, "This Month", 9 and parallels, among others, compare Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 97a. The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch alongside Fourth Ezra offer a different division of the "signs of the End" comprising of twelve eras. The apocalyptic scenario in Baruch leads to a cosmic annihilation followed by a new era, the age of the Messiah. In the past it has been debated time and again whether the eschatological scenario according to mainstream Jewish circles carried within it a catastrophic dimension. In any case, the early Christian tradition

to have been enhanced later by an expansion of the eschatological time frame, introducing a scheme of a preordained plan of world history of seven millennia based on the famous verse in Psalms: "For a thousand years in your eyes are like a day etc." (90, 4).⁵⁰ This concept made its way into the early Christian visionary apocalyptic literature via the Book of Revelation (20; 21) and the Second Epistle of Peter (3, 8).⁵¹ This scheme and particularly its subdivision into three eras of two thousand years each, might have originated within early Iranian Apocalyptic literature, as reaffirmed recently,⁵² but it was introduced concurrently in Christian as well as in rabbinical circles.⁵³ The shared concept of a "world week" served as yet another

developed this characteristic which influenced apocalyptic tradition such as the one found in the Apocalypse of Baruch. Cf. R. Nir-Grinstein, "The Destruction of Jerusalem and Eschatology in 'The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch'", Doctoral dissertation, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, 1996, pp. 131-138. R. Nir's view goes against the grain of current opinion concerning the nature and sources of this apocalypse, therefore the presence of the above mentioned notions in later rabbinical sources could be attributed to the absorption of Christian ideas.

⁵⁰ Babylonian Talmud, 97a; *Genesis Rabbah*, 8, 2 and parallels.

⁵¹ On the Christian concept of the "cosmic week" see, J. Daniélou, "Le typologie millénariste de la semaine", *Vigiliae Christianae* 2 (1948), pp. 1-16.

⁵² See P. Gignoux, "Hexaéméron et Millénarisme: Quelques motifs de comparaison entre Mazdéisme et Judaïsme", in: S. Shaked & A. Netzer (eds.), *Irano-Judaica II: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages*, Jerusalem, 1990, pp. 72-84, esp. 81-84.

⁵³ Though, admittedly, some traces of it are to be found in earlier esoteric Jewish traditions such as in the Assumption of Moses, 10, 2 (first century C.E.). As for the Christian tradition see, Epistle of Barnabas, XV, 4. For a different view of Barnabas as an early representative of millenarianism describing him rather as a propagator of the eighth day, the "new aeon", see E. Ferguson, "Was Barnabas a Chiliast?", *Greeks, Romans and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham Y. Malherbe*, ed. by D.L. Black et al., Minneapolis, 1990, pp. 157-167. The theory of the six millennia was later to be transformed by Augustine, who "replaced" it by the notion of the six *aetates mundi* (= ages of the world). See Augustine, *De civitate dei* 22,30. See further the important study by R. Schmidt, "Aetates Mundi: Die Weltalter als Gliederungsprinzip der Geschichte", *ZKG* 67 (1956), pp. 288-317.

On the adoption of a millenarian scheme by later Church Fathers, see A. Luneau, *L'Histoire du salut chez les Pères de l'Église: la doctrine des âges du monde*, Paris, 1964, pp. 47ff. Contrary to traditional scholarly views on the scope of millenarianism, in the thought of the church fathers, such as Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Lactantius and others, Charles C. Hill has raised some fundamental objections challenging the current view that chiliasm was widespread. See his *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christianity*, Oxford, 1992, *passim*.

This view was however, central to Julius Africanus' concept of Chronology. Cf. Alden A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition*, Lewisburg, 1979, pp. 146-147. On Eusebius' manner in tackling this scheme, see B. Croke, "The Origins of the Christian World Chronicles", *History and Historians in Late Antiquity*, ed. by B. Croke & Alanna M. Emmett, Sydney, 1990, pp. 120-121;

means to defer acute messianic expectations in Jewish circles: the Messianic Age was to begin only in the year 240 C.E.⁵⁴ In the case of the Church the aim was to defer the close consummation of the *Parousia* (i.e. the second coming) in face of arousing expectations towards the turn of the second century.⁵⁵ However, the sub-division of the 6000 years into three eras of 2000 years each, 2000 of Chaos followed by 2000 years of Law (= Torah) and then 2000 years of Messianic age, though accepted in principle by both religions,⁵⁶ incurred some difficulties in both camps and was subjected to ongoing

On its use by later Byzantine Chroniclers, see E. Jefferys, "Chronological Structures in Malalas' Chronicle", *Studies in John Malalas*, ed. by *idem et al.*, Sydney, 1990, pp. 111-120.

⁵⁴ In the eyes of third century rabbis like the famous Babylonian sage Rav (d. 247 C.E.) the appearance of the Messiah in a time when "all the predestined dates have passed", was entirely dependent on the "repentance and good deeds" of the people, Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 97b. Compare the saying, *ibid.* that the Messiah should have come at the beginning of the 2000 years of the Messianic era, and therefore any delay should be attributed to iniquities of the people.

⁵⁵ The Christian writer Judas composed a discourse on the weeks in the book of Daniel. His record stopped at the tenth year of the reign of Septimus Severus (ca. 202 C.E.), and he was of the opinion that Antichrist was near. See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI, 7. Compare Hippolytus' anecdotes on the occasional cases in which bishops induced their flock to expect the imminent return of Christ, *Commentary on Daniel* III, 18, 19. The second half of the second century saw an intensification in the composition of Christian *Sibyllina* (i.e. the *Seventh* and *Eighth Sibylline Oracles*) with an acute sense of the approaching "End" coupled with a vehement attack on Rome, cf. in short B. McGinn, "Teste David cum Sibylla: The Significance of the Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages", *Idem, Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition*, Aldershot 1994, (Variorum Rep. No. IV), pp. 12-14.

Although, widely accepted opinion attributed to the early Montanists the belief in chiliasm and the belief in an approaching *Parousia*, recent research along the lines suggested by Hill (*supra*, note 53) demonstrates a much more complex picture. See C. Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy*, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 95-105.

⁵⁶ Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 97a-97b; compare Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah*, 9a. Paul himself already, seems to hint at the existence of three stages in history (Romans 5, 12-17) namely Adam = sin; Moses = Law; Christ = Messiah. This subdivision of time appears later in Augustine's *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistola ad Romanos*, 13-18, though he himself was as has been reiterated time and again a great opponent of the millennial scheme. See R. Landes (*op. cit.*, note 5), pp. 156-160. For a more moderate view of Augustine's attitude to millenarianism, see G. Bonner, "Augustine and Millenarianism", in: R. Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 235-254.

However, this division of history became an important component in later chronological works such as in the case of John Malalas. See Jeffreys (*supra* note 53), p. 113; Procopius' of Gaza, *Commentary on Genesis*, XI (PG 87, col. 316). It appeared later in the Western chronological tradition, in treatises such as the *Laterculus Malalianus*, cf. recently, J. Stevenson, *The "Laterculus Malalianus" and the School of Archbishop Theodore*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 23-25; 122 (text), 173-174 (notes).

polemics. For, in the first place, schematically speaking the year 240 C.E. was 4000 years from the creation, according to an accepted tradition. Nevertheless, on closer Rabbinical scrutiny, the era of the Law did not end in 240 C.E.; indeed, it was nowhere close to it.⁵⁷ Secondly, and more importantly, although there were signs of internal rabbinical debate on the nature and duration of the messianic era in contrast with the age of Torah (= Law),⁵⁸ the greater "embarrassment" lay in fact that from the Church's point of view Jesus' incarnation and crucifixion annulled the importance of the Law. The approach of the predicted *Parousia* must have only aggravated the tension.

The centrality of the latter element in the debate becomes quite apparent when seen from Eusebius' chronographical perspective. In his opinion, the year 29 C.E. the year in which Jesus was crucified, was actually the beginning of the 81st Jubilee of the world according to the Hebrews (*Principium LXXXI lobelei secundum Hebraeos*), i.e. the beginning of the messianic era.⁵⁹ This apparently polemic statement

⁵⁷ See Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah*, 9a. This element in rabbinical chronology was the subject of an on-going philological-historical discussion in Geonic and later medieval Jewish Talmudic commentary. For a succinct discussion of some of the problems see D. Rosenthal, *Mishna Aboda Zara—A Critical Edition*, Part 2, Jerusalem 1980, pp. 100–106. See also below, n. 63.

⁵⁸ Namely, the role of the Torah in the messianic age, on which see Davies' comprehensive survey, W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on Mount*, Cambridge 1964, pp. 156–190.

⁵⁹ Eusebius, *Chronicle* (ed. R. Helm, GCS 47, Berlin, 1956, p. 174). Apparently, the rabbis as well as Eusebius, calculated the years "ab Abrahamo", though they differed in their reasoning and actual results. Eusebius "Considered Abraham to be the most ancient figure whose date could be established with credible precision", so Mosshammer (*op. cit.*, note 53), p. 25. He therefore, introduced the date of Abraham's birth into his Canons as a universal standard. On this matter Eusebius differed from Julius Africanus who began his chronography from the creation, thus dating Christ's birth to the year 5500.

Jewish tradition, reckoning the world's chronology from Adam's birth, followed two different schemes for the computation of the antediluvian chronology. The first, based on the Massoretic Text, (cf. *Seder Olam*, Ch. 1), totalled 1656 years, whereas the second was based on the Septuagint version followed among others, by Josephus (*Antiquities* 1, 82), totalled 2262 years. It seems that the rabbis tended to agree with Eusebius on the fact that with Abraham a new era had begun. Thus, according to one rabbinical tradition the age of Torah (= Law) should be reckoned from the date Abraham migrated from Haran, at the age of 52, totalling 2023 years from Adam (Babylonian Talmud, *Avoda Zarah* 9a). Compare, Eusebius' reckoning according to which the fifty-first year of Abraham was the beginning of the forty-first Jubilee of the Jews, totalling together 2000 years from Adam. Cf. apud Georgios Syncellus 185.3 (ed. Alden A. Mosshammer, Teubner, 1984, p. 28 112), compare however, Eusebius, *Chronicle* (ed. R. Helm, p. 250) totalling 3184 years between Adam and Abraham, cf. Mosshammer, (*op. cit.*, note 53) p. 78. According to Eusebius the Exodus from Egypt took place 1512 B.C.E. Along these lines, Eusebius concluded

was meant not only to counter the current rabbinical tradition which dated the beginning of the messianic era to the year 240 C.E., but also to demonstrate that even according to an authentic Jewish tradition this era was supposed to be calculated from Jesus' crucifixion.⁶⁰

Alongside these bold attempts to consolidate a reconfiguration of the "Eras of the World" in order to ward off and postpone the expected "End", we witness, as mentioned earlier, an opposite attempt demonstrated in a growing exegetical effort to "narrow down" the duration of the eschatological time frame. The alternative was supposed to be more applicable. Thus, as early as the late Tannaitic period, calculations were being modeled on the biblical precedent of the deliverance from Egypt. In this context it becomes quite clear, that the wide array of computations found in the *Mekilta* and *Seder Olam Rabba* was not designed as a mere Midrashic exercise. It contained an element of typological and eschatological speculation.⁶¹ It is not surprising therefore, that the seemingly contradicting time spans the Israelites spent in Egypt, 400 years (according to Gen. 15, 13) or 430 years (Exodus 12, 40-41) brought about a rich display of chronological solutions embodying a whole set of intermediary dates, all applicable to the period of sojourn in Egypt (210; 116/117; and 350 years).⁶² When taken at face value the Egyptian set of "target dates" of deliverance meant a rich "selection" of future dates for the awaited deliverance from Rome. In which case, for instance, the 400 year mark, if calculated from the period following the Bar-Kochbah revolt meant that the Children of Israel were yet to be redeemed.

that Christ's crucifixion, which inaugurated yet another era (= Messianic age), occurred on the eighty-first Jubilee of the Jews. It seems that Eusebius took this reckoning from traditions similar to those prevailing in Qumran, see now the chart drawn out by D. Dimant (*supra*, note 4) pp. 67-68; 70-71. Eusebius goes on to mention the seventy-first Jubilee year 3500 (p. 109); the beginning of the ninety-sixth Jubilee year 4250 (p. 233) concerning which see *infra* a rabbinic tradition, p. 147.

⁶⁰ See *infra* notes 88 and 109.

⁶¹ *Seder Olam*, 14; *Mekilta de Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*, Bo, 12, 39-40; Compare *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, "The Month", 9; *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 48. The rabbis themselves imagined the Jews in Egypt engaging in speculative computations concerning the duration of their enslavement. See L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, Vol. II, p. 237; compare *Exodus Rabbah*, 5, 18.

⁶² Though strictly speaking these calculations were to be found in a few non-rabbinic Second Temple period sources (in some cases only in an implicit form), they surfaced later in abundance and in a much detailed form in rabbinical sources. Of all the cited figures in the diverse traditions the one most cited for the duration of Children of Israel's stay in Egypt is 210 years (out of 400), on this see, J. Heine-mann, "210 Years of Egyptian Exile", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 22 (1971), pp. 19-30.

If, however, the 210⁶³ year mark was calculated from the earliest days of Roman hegemony in Eretz-Israel (i.e. 63 B.C.E.), that day was not too far off, though, the latter date seems to have left few traces in rabbinical tradition.⁶⁴

Could this distortion have occurred on account of the later more traumatic event of the destruction of the Temple, which naturally had a greater impact on the rabbinical perspective of Rome's historical role? Seen from a later perspective this must have been a result of the extreme messianic tension existing between 66–135 C.E. which resulted in three anti-Roman insurrections.⁶⁵ One should not discount

⁶³ It is interesting to note the usage of this very same figure by Josephus in his statement concerning the duration of time between the prophecy of Isaiah (44, 28) and Cyrus' famous declaration ending the Babylonian captivity (*Antiquities*, 11, 1–7), a figure which is not wholly consistent with his own chronology given earlier.

⁶⁴ Though in current Pharisaic and sectarian local traditions it received its due attention. See Peshar Ha-bakkuk (1Qp Hab) 8, lines 6–7; Psalms of Solomon VIII, 15–21, on which see most recently M. Stern's remarks, *Hasmonean Judaea in the Hellenistic World: Chapters in Political History*, ed. by D.R. Schwartz, Jerusalem, 1995, pp. 203–212, esp. 209–212 (Hebrew).

Rabbinical tradition on the matter is evasive. Though, Pompey's name is not mentioned at all, nevertheless, the Hasmonean power struggle between the brothers Hyrcanus II and Aristobolus II (culminating in the Roman siege and capture of Jerusalem), was described by the rabbis (Babylonian Talmud, *Menachot* 64b and parallels; Jerusalem Talmud, *Taanit*, IV, 68c and parallels) in terms resembling their description of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 69/70 C.E.

Scholars who have dealt with these traditions have tended to dwell on their interdependence and on their relationship to Josephus' account in *Antiquities* XIV, 25–28, ignoring their affinity with and their location within the context of the traditions of the destruction of Jerusalem. See R. Wilk, "When Hyrcanus was Besieging Aristobolus in Jerusalem", *Dor Le-Dor—From the End of Biblical Times Up to the Redaction of the Talmud: Studies in Honor of Joshua Efron*, Jerusalem, 1995, pp. 99–104 (Hebrew). If we are to follow the impression conveyed here by the rabbis one could infer that they regarded the event as one of those that heralded the destruction of the Temple, but not as an event that stood on its own. This could be seen as an intentional distortion on their part for reasons similar to those employed in the dating of Jesus' activity (see notes 26; 27).

All in all, the pre-destruction chronology in rabbinical tradition cf. Babylonian Talmud, *Avoda Zarah*, 9a–9b; *Seder Olam*, 30, merits a separate discussion. See also D.R. Schwartz, "On the Pharisaic Opposition to the Hasmonean Monarchy", *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, Tübingen, 1992, pp. 51–52. Schwartz tends to accept the accuracy of the rabbinical chronology by linking the time divisions pointed out by them to certain events in the history of the Hasmonean monarchy.

⁶⁵ See M.D. Herr's survey "Realistic Political Messianism and Cosmic Eschatological Messianism in the Teaching of the Sages", *Tarbiz* 54 (1985), pp. 337–339 (Hebrew). On the messianic background of the revolt under Trajan, see, T.D. Barnes, "Trajan and the Jews", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 40 (1989), pp. 145–162, and more recently in W. Horbury's study, "The Beginnings of the Jewish Revolt Under Trajan", *Martin Hengel's Festschrift*, Tübingen, 1996, pp. 283ff. (esp. pp. 295–303) making a firm case for messianic fervor guiding the revolt. See also *supra* notes 15 and 22.

the possibility that this "distortion" might have had some polemical anti-sectarian aims too. 70 C.E. was a more suitable date to start a new eschatological "count down" of the approaching end of the Fourth Empire.⁶⁶

During the third century which witnessed the greatest crisis of the Roman Empire yet to occur,⁶⁷ we encounter a new element in rabbinical messianic expectations. The Rabbis were diverted from inward looking eschatological speculations and calculations, to the realm of aspirations based on political.⁶⁸

Thus, much of the expected scenario was based on what the rabbis observed in the political arena surrounding them, especially in the Roman Near East. Accordingly, the demise of the Fourth Kingdom was to come as a result of internal strife, economical hardships and above all, through overwhelming external pressure caused by the Barbarians, the Palmyrenes or by the hands of the greatest opposing power, Sassanian Persia. It was indeed a passive apocalyptic scenario shared by non-Jewish circles as well, such as the ideas expressed by the anonymous author of the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ The redactor of *Genesis Rabbah* clearly tried to convey this impression by juxtaposing the scheme of the "Four Empires" (ending with Rome), to that of the 400 years duration promised to Abraham at the "covenant between the parts" (Genesis 15), cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 44, 12-14.

⁶⁷ D.S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire: A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 3-69; F. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 B.C.-A.D. 337*, Cambridge MA, 1993, pp. 141-173. It is in this context, ca. 250 C.E., and most probably under the impression of the universal concerted imperial prosecution of the Christians, that the Church Father Cyprian expressed his view on the *senectus mundi* (= aging world), leading to the inevitable end, *Ad Demetrianum* 3-4.

⁶⁸ This aspect of rabbinical thought has been somewhat neglected. Herr (*supra* n. 65), pp. 340-342 is of the opinion that this attitude could be traced back to the earliest days of Roman occupation of Palestine. However, in his survey he tends somewhat to blur the unique historical circumstances of the third century to which the rabbis paid special attention. Some rabbinical observations on that period have been dealt with in S. Lieberman's classic study, "Palestine in the Third and Fourth Centuries", *Jewish Quarterly Review* 36 (1946), pp. 329ff.; *Ibid.* 37 (1947), pp. 31-41. It seems on the whole that the rabbinical approach towards Roman hegemony was of a more dialectical nature. See N.R.M. de Lange, "Jewish Attitudes to the Roman Empire", *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, ed. by P. Garnsey and C.R. Whitaker, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 255ff. (esp. pp. 269-281). An interesting parallel could be drawn from the evolving Christian attitude towards Rome about the same time as seen through the eyes of Hippolytus, cf. David G. Dunbar, "The Delay of the Parousia in Hippolytus", *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983), pp. 113-127. See too G. Alföldy, "The Crisis of the Third Century as Seen by Contemporaries", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 15 (1974), pp. 89-111.

⁶⁹ D.S. Potter (*op. cit.*, note 67), p. 238. Most instructive in this sense is the rabbis'

One of the common features of the book of Daniel and the Sibylline Oracles was the use of allegedly significant numbers in set patterns in order to calculate the End. The rabbis' new disposition towards a passive eschatological scheme brought to their attention a different set of dates that were lurking behind numerals, such as those recently defined by David Potter as "tools used to contextualize contemporary events".⁷⁰ It is not without significance that the rabbis who resorted to an unassertive scenario relied on the power struggle of mighty external forces which were seen as pawns in a universal salvation scheme. At the same time they aspired to harmonize it with a set of dates determining the "end of Rome", based on the millennial anxiety cultivated in Rome itself. This explains, to some extent, the current rabbinical preoccupation (according to some of the traditions) with the legendary stories concerning the foundation of Rome.⁷¹ All this came about at an "opportune moment", the

attitude to the role of Palmyra as an ally of Rome in the East. Following the Palmyrene nobleman Odenathus' expeditions against Persia in the early 260s we encounter this rabbinical Midrash: "Deliver me, I pray thee from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau" (Genesis 33, 10): from the hand of my brother, who advances against me with the power of Esau. Thus, it is stated, "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one" (Daniel 7, 8)—this alludes to the son of Nazor, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by their roots (ib.)—that alludes to Macrinus, Carinus and Kyriades' (Genesis Rabbah, 86, 6). Bar Nazor should be identified with Odaenathus as apparent from local inscriptions. On Odaenathus, cf. Potter (*op. cit. supra* note 67), pp. 381–394. The other princes/kings were the famous usurpers Macrinus and Quietus his son who were slain by Odenathus, all in the cause of restoring imperial interests in the East (compare, *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Tyranni Triginta, XV). See S. Lieberman (*op. cit.*, note 68), *JQR* 37 (1946/7), p. 38. The rabbis' attitude towards the Palmyrenes smacks of blatant reproach of the latter's role on Rome's behalf. The only consolation they could offer was to portray the Palmyrene actions as the final stages of Roman universal power hence the "small horn", the "final horn" in Daniel's vision, after which he envisaged the dawning of the End. In this context R. Yohanan (d. 279 C.E.) uttered the following: "Blessed be he who lives to see the demise of Tadmor (= Palmyra)", (Jerusalem Talmud, *Taanit* 69b and parallels). After a short spell of rebellion against Rome in the late 260s and early 270s during which the Palmyrenes succeeded in establishing a local "Empire" which included Roman Egypt too, they were crushed by the Roman emperor Aurelian in the year 272, never to recover again. R. Yohanan's statement that was most probably uttered earlier was nevertheless symptomatic of the current rabbinic view of the course of world history.

⁷⁰ D.S. Potter, *Prophets & Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius*, Cambridge MA, 1994, p. 101.

⁷¹ This notion is reflected in a unique tradition attributed to R. Levi (second half of third century), about a certain wise old man named Abba Kolon, who advised the Romans, troubled by the fact that two huts that were built in Rome collapsed, that unless water brought from the Euphrates were mixed with mortar these huts

dawning of a new messianic era, i.e. 240 C.E., the beginning of the fifth millennium. Thus, the first millennium of Rome in 248 (according to widely accepted tradition)⁷² a date that caused great anxiety coincided with the Messianic age targeted by the rabbis. "Rav Judah said in the name of Samuel: They observe yet another festival in

would not stand (*Song of Songs Rabbah* 1,6,4 and parallels). This strange tradition was interpreted recently by L. Feldman as referring in a symbolic way to Palmyra's role in maintaining Rome's stability in the East (the huts being the legendary huts built by Romulus) see, "Abba Kolon and the Founding of Rome", *Jewish Quarterly Review* 81 (1991), pp. 239-266. It seems to me, however, that Feldman has overstated his case. This rather bizarre tradition is far more sophisticated than so far interpreted. It should be seen on the one hand rather as an ironic twist on the part of the rabbis, of a widely disseminated foundation myth, (cf. M. Eliade's hints in his, *Zalmonix: The Vanishing God*, Chicago, 1972, pp. 179-181). In this context it is important to draw attention to a further parallel—most probably widely known—between figures surrounding the foundation legend of Rome and the figures cited in the Bible in conjunction with the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt. For it has been noted that the period of time that elapsed between the fall of Troy and Aeneas journey to Italy and the foundation of Rome by the two famous twins amounted according to most traditions (including, Eusebius) to approximately 430 years, resembling the time lapse cited in the Bible between the divine promise granted to Abraham and the actual deliverance of his descendents from Egypt. See N.H. Horsfall, "Virgil's Roman Chronography", *Classical Quarterly* 24 (1974), pp. 111-116; M. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites*, Berkeley, 1993, pp. 6-7. See my forthcoming study "Roman Myths and Christian Foundation Stories in Rabbinical Eyes".

⁷² D. Potter, *ibid.* But was the Varronian Calculation, which dated the foundation of Rome to 753 B.C.E. an accepted calculation among late antique writers? On this see A.E. Samuël's reservations, *Greek and Roman Chronology: Calendars and Years in Classical Antiquity*, Munich, 1972, pp. 251-252. It seems too that it was not widely used in Christian chronologies. Cf. recently M. Bland Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca: Religious Conflict and Competition in the Age of Diocletian*, Oxford 1995, pp. 58-60. Alternative calculations, such as the one referred to in the Eighth Sibylline Oracle, 147-150 (which was an amalgamation of Jewish and Christian traditions) dated the final destruction to the year 948. If calculated according to Varro it would have fallen in the days of Septimius Severus, however, if calculated according to the third century Greek historian Timaeus who dated Rome's foundation to 814 B.C. the 948th year would have fallen during the days of the Bar-Kockba revolt. Cf. Potter, *ibid.*, p. 104. In either case we are able to detect the presence of Jewish messianic aspirations. For the latter example, see (*supra*, note 58), as for the former, one has only to recall the rabbinical traditions describing R. Judah the Patriarch's messianic like image which was promoted by him to extremity, see M. Aberbach, "Hezekia King of Judah and Rabbi Judah the Patriarch—Messianic Aspects", *Tarbiz* 53 (1984) pp. 353-371. On the Davidic genealogy of the Patriarchate that was based on traditions that surfaced during Judah's time in office, see D. Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Jewish Self-Government in Antiquity*, Tübingen, 1994, pp. 147-175. For counterclaims from different quarters, see A.I. Baumgarten, "R. Judah I and His Opponents", *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 12 (1982), pp. 145-149. The thickening atmosphere of tension and despair during the second half of the third century had its impact on Christian circles too. For instance, in the Arsinoite nome in Upper Egypt extreme social conditions were linked up with a nationalistic and

Rome which occurs every seventy years⁷³ the underlying message being the implicit hope that this would be the end of all festivities in Rome.

Towards the end of the century hopes flared up again, probably triggered by the typology of the salvation from Egypt which heralded new opportunities. Under the heading Esau or Edom (= Rome), Palestinian Amoraim of the third century toyed with the idea of identifying the Biblical rulers of Edom listed in Genesis 36 with Roman emperors and usurpers of their time. Thus, when Diocletian was crowned, R. Ami (late third century) had a dream in which it was revealed to him that Diocletian should be identified as the biblical "Aluf Magdiel" (*ibid.*, 36, 43), to which he uttered "Another king to go before Rome's demise".⁷⁴

R. Ami's statement could easily be attributed to his objective and realistic observation of the horrendous state of the empire. However, it might have also been prompted by a genuine calculation based on the typology of Egypt according to a widely received tradition cited above, that maintained that the duration of the period of enslavement of the Children of Israel in Egypt was only 210 years.⁷⁵ If reckoned from the destruction of the second Temple, this period would have ended in the early eighties of the third century, around the days of Diocletian's accession. To that period we could also attribute the following dialogue between a Roman prefect and one of the members of the Silani clan (דְּרָבִי סִילָנִי): The Roman prefect asked . . . Who will enjoy power after us? [In reply the member of the Silani family] brought a blank piece of paper, lifted a quill and wrote upon it "And after that came forth his brother and his hand had hold on [Esau's] heel" (Genesis 25, 26).⁷⁶ The date of the destruc-

political rebellious mood in Alexandria (in fact aggravated by the Palmyrene invasion in 269 C.E.) to generate a Christian millennialistic movement. In this atmosphere the Apocalypse of Elijah was composed. See D. Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity*, Minneapolis, 1993, pp. 249–278.

⁷³ Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 11b and S. Lieberman (*supra*, note 68), pp. 39–40.

⁷⁴ *Genesis Rabbah*, 83, 43 on which see recently D. Sperber, "Aluf Magdiel: Diocletian", *Idem, Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature*, Ramat Gan, 1994, pp. 127–130.

⁷⁵ See sources cited (*supra* n. 61).

⁷⁶ *Genesis Rabbah*, 63, 9. Members of this aristocratic and rich family are mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud in conjunction with the late third century Palestinian sage R. Hiyya bar Abba, cf. *Horayot* 3, 7 (48a).

tion of the Temple became, as will be elaborated later on, the most appropriate date to begin such eschatological computations. These intermediary calculations and dates, might seem at first to be coincidental in nature and perhaps secondary if not marginal. Nevertheless, these time elements probably did not escape the attentive mind of the third century Jew.

*The Christian Challenge: The Interplay of Parousia and Geula*⁷⁷

The triumph of Christianity in the fourth century turned the tables on this somewhat passive eschatological scenario. It was indeed a major transformation in the course of Roman history epitomized in the rapidly growing numbers of Christian followers.⁷⁸ In the eyes of the Jews, no doubt, Christianity was emerging at the turn of the third century as a much greater challenge, if not a real threat, than previously suspected. The apocalyptic scenario in which "the entire kingdom was being converted to heresy", was close at hand.⁷⁹ Once Christianity or Esau or Edom were all being identified with Christian Rome, the eschatological aspirations based on a shared textual foundation became mutually contradictory if not hostile. At this stage both sides were making use of the same biblical imagery to portray their anxiety and hope, most conspicuously the deliverance from Egypt. Thus, in the wake of what seemed to be the beginning of Christian triumph, the rabbis voiced the notion of divine retribution

⁷⁷ Some of the following traditions were assembled in the memorable but rather inept survey of A.H. Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel*, Gloucester MA, 1978 (reprint), pp. 25-35.

⁷⁸ An experiment in estimation of the numbers of Christians along successive stages of early Christian evolution and examined for its historical implications was carried out recently by K. Hopkins who demonstrated that the great surge in the numbers of Christians occurred only between the third and first half of the fourth century, cf. "Christian Numbers and Its Implications", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998), pp. 185-226.

⁷⁹ Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 97a in the name of R. Yitzhak. Compare the addition to Mishnah tractate *Sotah*, 9, 15. If taken at face value this rabbinic saying touched upon a sensitive cord in Christian political ideology, namely, the task of the Christian emperor to achieve and enhance unity and concord in the world under the symbol of the cross. On the prospect of achieving Christian universalism in the fourth century see H. Chadwick, "Christian and Roman Universalism in the Fourth Century", in: L.R. Wickham et al. (eds.), *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity: Essays in Tribute to George Christopher Stead*, Leiden, 1993, pp. 26-42.

(based on the model of the ten plagues in Egypt) which will be meted out to the evil kingdom of Edom.⁸⁰ At the very same time, following the major outburst of hostilities against the Christians at the beginning of the fourth century ("The Great Persecutions"), the North African church father Lactantius, a leading propagator of the notion of the approaching "End", described the servitude in and redemption from Egypt as follows. It is "a pre-signification and figure of a great thing which the same God is going to do at the final consummation of time. For He will free His people from the heavy servitude of the world . . . the end of this age is drawing near".⁸¹ But, although it was used, the biblical model of the Exodus was not at the heart of Christian eschatological speculation.

By the fourth century the Christians were according to their own eschatological time table (advocated by leading Church Fathers) only two centuries away from their expected Eschaton, i.e. end of the sixth Millennium *Consumatio Mundi* (= End of the World) which was to be subsequently followed by the *Parousia*. Some of them were paving the way to the final date of the *Consumatio Saeculi* at the year 500 C.E.,⁸² with intermediary dates such as 350 years, using the symbol 3.5 years found in Daniel (9, 27) and Revelation, or 365 years (according to the number of days in the solar year, a notion which they shared with the Pagans and Jews), calculated from the Incarnation or from the Crucifixion of Christ.⁸³ Beginning in 350 C.E. the Christians

⁸⁰ *Pesikta deRav Kahana*, 7 ("And it came to pass in the midnight"), 11 (R. Levi son of Zechariah in the name of R. Brechiah). The same concept was reiterated in the sixth century in the early Piyut, cf. M. Zulay, *Piyute Yannai—Liturgical Poems of Yannai*, Berlin, 1938, pp. 90–91 (Hebrew).

⁸¹ *Divine Institutes*, 7, 15. This treatise was composed most probably shortly after the promulgation of the "Edict of Milan", ca. 313, see E. DePalma Digeser, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994), pp. 33–52. On the eschatological time chart of Lactantius and its roots see, O.P. Nicholson, "The Source of the Dates in Lactantius' *Divine Institutes*", *Journal of Theological Studies*, 36 (1985), pp. 291–310.

⁸² Hippolytus of Rome, *In Daniele*, IV, 4, 23–24. On the background of Hippolytus' eschatological calculus which was anti-Apocalyptic in nature (aiming to defuse late second and early third century acute messianic tendencies), and on its profound impact on later Christian chronology, see, R. Landes, (*supra*, note 5), pp. 144–149. Approximately two centuries later, in the year 397 C.E., an African Christian writer named Hilarianus wrote that Christ's *parousia* is due in 101 years. Cf. *de cursu temporum* 16–17. However, as stressed above, not all Church Fathers adopted this scheme, chief among them at the time of Hilarianus was Augustine. See R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, Cambridge 1970, pp. 17–21.

⁸³ The rabbis allude to the latter in their description of Rome, Babylonian Talmud, *Pesachim* 118b. Compare the tradition concerning the number of markets in Rome,

entered what one might rightly define as the "Hot Time Zone" of intensified Apocalyptic expectation, in which practically every major historical event especially when accompanied by supernatural portents and prodigies, was interpreted in Apocalyptic terms.⁸⁴ In some cases the eschatological agenda, though presented in general terms and based on what seemed to be sound biblical exegesis, actually reflected sectarian aspirations coupled with an acute sense of imminent fulfillment.⁸⁵ The Jews too, according to their own eschatological timetable described above, were by the fourth century entering a period in which their own model of biblical redemption was becoming more and more applicable. A series of events occurring between 350 and 500 C.E. in which the Jews were at the center (described here only in brief), with distinct messianic connotations, must have added much to their Messianic agitation. At the same time, I presume, it aroused Christian Messianic fervor, as well.

In the Spring of 351 a luminous cross was seen in the sky above Jerusalem. This event had an immense impact at the time and ample attestation in Christian chronicles. The local recipients of this heavenly portent viewed it as an apocalyptic event, as the sign of the

365 in number, one for each day, see Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 6a. Compare too, R. Judah the Patriarch's saying Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 99a. The tradition concerning a target date of 365 years for the duration of Christianity (dated from the crucifixion) was referred to as some sort of "pagan prophecy" which was being circulated during the last decade of the fourth century. See Augustine, *De Civitate dei* XVIII, 53, 2; Slightly earlier, Filastrius of Brescia noted an heretical tradition according to which the world would come to an end 365 years after the Incarnation, bringing us approximately to the days of Julian the "Apostate". On these traditions see H. Chadwick, 'Oracles of the End in the Conflict of Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century', *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière: Antiquité païenne et Chrétienne*, E. Lucchesi and H.D. Saffrey (eds.), Geneva, 1984, pp. 125-129, at p. 127, see our further remarks *infra*, note 97.

⁸⁴ See Landes (*supra*, note 5), pp. 155-156. In the view of many scholars, the most famous propagator of the target date of 350 years from the crucifixion or Passion was probably the Donatist Tyconius who grounded his calculations on biblical verses. See *Liber regularum*, V (ed. F.C. Burkitt, *The Rules of Tyconius, Texts and Studies*, Vol. III/1, Cambridge, 1894), p. 50f. See, however, P. Fredriksen's comprehensive evaluation of Tyconius' views, presenting a case against the grain of accepted scholarship, arguing that Tyconius did not share contemporary enthusiasm concerning the approaching End, "Tyconius and the End of the World", *Revue des études augustiniennes* 28 (1982), pp. 60-63.

⁸⁵ This might have been the hidden agenda in Tyconius' calculations as expressed by Chadwick (*supra*, note 79). St. Martin of Tour (316-397) is reported to have told his disciple Postumianus that Antichrist had been born already and that he was about to come to power in a rebuilt Jerusalem. See Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, 2, 14 on which see H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 9-10.

"Coming of the Son of Man" to judge those who have judged him (i.e., the Jews), on the eve of the *Parousia* as described in the gospels.⁸⁶ Some months later a Jewish uprising, known as the Gallus Revolt broke out in Galilee. From the little evidence we possess regarding this event, it might have been headed by a Jew named Patricius whom the Jews raised to royalty. The circumstances preceding the sedition are far from clear.⁸⁷ Had the above mentioned prodigy any bearing on the outburst of hostilities? Was this opportune moment chosen for its discernible messianic connotations, ca. 350 years of Christian existence, or better perhaps for its proximity to the 400 year mark since the inception of Christianity according to Jewish traditions? These questions remain open ended. With all probability these calculations became much more useful a decade later.

The next event, which came during the spring of 363, namely, the abortive plan of Julian "the Apostate" to rebuild the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, needs neither introduction nor detailed description. Following the disastrous outcome of the plan, aborted among other reasons due to a major earthquake destroying several towns in Eretz Israel and claiming the lives of many, the messianic overtones of this event were alluded to only very vaguely in rabbinical sources. However, in Christian sources dating from just a few months later the apocalyptic dimensions of the episode were strongly emphasized. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, Cyril of Jerusalem, in his fifteenth catechetical lecture chose to describe the future Antichrist and his actions in the End of Days with characteristics resembling Julian's character and actions, portraying the coming of the Christian *Parousia* in a manner of a *Vaticinium ex Eventu*.⁸⁸ Some of his contemporaries, Ephrem the Syrian and Gregory Nazianzus, chose rather to describe in their invectives, the outburst of messianic expectations among Jews on receipt of the imperial promise, and during the ensuing preparations. Some of the imagery they employed was based on the biblical description of the Exodus from Egypt, and its disastrous

⁸⁶ See my recent study "Cyril of Jerusalem: The Apparition of the Cross and the Jews", in: O. Limor and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Contra Judaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews*, Tübingen, 1996, pp. 85-104.

⁸⁷ On the circumstances of the revolt, or better even a skirmish, which was crushed in the summer of 352 C.E., see J. Arce, "La rebelation de los Judios durante el gobierno de Constancio Galo Cesar: 353d.C.", *Athenaeum* 65 (1987), pp. 109-125.

⁸⁸ *Historical Aspects of the Christian-Jewish Polemic Concerning the Church of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century* (Doctoral Dissertation, Hebrew University), Jerusalem, 1993, pp. 148-168 (Hebrew).

anti-climax when the Children of Israel created the Golden Calf.⁸⁹ Why did they use this imagery?

The reasons behind this imagery may be rooted in the plausible observation arrived at by those Church Fathers, while documenting Jewish enthusiasm, indeed, perhaps even based on a genuine Jewish tradition that the year 363 C.E. was approximately 430 years since the first Roman occupation of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E. Or, might it have been the 400 years mark reckoned since Christ's death, according to a popular Jewish calculation dating it to the early days of Herod. Although the latter tradition as we know it dates from the twelfth century,⁹⁰ it was in all likelihood in use earlier. Suffice it here to state that it accords with the common rabbinical tradition mentioned above (p. 123).

Julian's failure gave Ephrem the Syrian the opportunity to describe Jews of his time, the followers of Julian, as Golden Calf worshipers and not as a people who merited redemption. In light of the outcome of the event, the rabbis' startling silence about the whole episode might have had after all something to do with their reservations concerning the use and abuse of messianic computation, after all the Rabbis did caution against speculation on the End. It seems that although Ephrem's allusions to the biblical Exodus had traces of speculative imagery, it nonetheless rested on firm ground. In the late fourth century, Church Fathers demonstrated their profound awareness of the centrality of the Exodus precedent (400/430 years) among the Jews of their time. Although, Filaster of Brescia wrote about this without disclosing its origin,⁹¹ Jerome attributed it with

⁸⁹ Gregory Nazianzus, *Sermon V (Contra Julianum)*, 3, 4. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns against Julian*, I, 16-17. See my discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 157-159, 165-166.

⁹⁰ See A. Marx, "A Tractate on a Salvation Year", *Ha'Zofe le-Chochmat Yisrael* 5 (1921), pp. 198-200 (Hebrew). Compare similar (though not parallel) traditions in other mediaeval chronologies published by A. Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles II*, Oxford, 1887, p. 194. For a wider array of traditions alluding to Jesus' birth in Mediaeval Jewish sources see now S. Epanuel "A Jewish-Christian Debate: France 1100" *Zion* 63 (1998), pp. 143-155 (Hebrew).

⁹¹ Filaster of Brescia, *Diversarum Haereseon Liber*, 106, citing an heretical tradition according to which from the Incarnation until the End "not more and not less than 365 years will pass" (*non plus non minus fieri annorum numerum nisi trecentorem sexaginta quinque*). However, Filastrius refutes this tradition stating that 400 years (*ibid.*) or later in the text 430 years (*ibid.*, ch. 112) will have passed since the time of Christ. Though the first modern editor of Filaster's treatise F. Marx (*CSEL* 38, Vindobonae, 1898, pp. XI-XV), followed by H. Chadwick (*supra*, note 79), p. 127, assume that these dates in fact indicated the dates of compilation or a copyist revision of the work or might have even reflected a "limited capacity to count" (Chadwick) it

no hesitation to the Jews.⁹² From thence this notion was subjected to constant readjustment by the Jews and at the same time in a subtle way was being reiterated by Christian historiographers. Thus, ca. 400 C.E. Sulpicius Severus, stating in his *Chronicle* that the last persecution of the Christians occurred in the days of Diocletian, added the following:

From that time, we have continued to enjoy tranquility nor do I believe that there will be any further persecutions except that which Antichrist will carry on just before the end of the world. For it has been proclaimed, in divine words, that the world was to be visited by ten afflictions (*decem plagis*) and since nine of these have already been endured the one, which remains, must be the last.⁹³

It appears that the fascinating Exodus typology seems to have triggered mutually contradicting eschatological scenarios in both camps. Millennial bells were sounding. It is tempting to link Julian's aborted plan with Apollinarius of Laodicea's radically materialistic Christian millenarian scheme, advocating among other things the renewal of the Jerusalem Temple with its sacrificial cult, the appointment of a high priest and the sprinkling of the Red Heifer's ashes.⁹⁴

seems more plausible to adduce the usage of these dates as part of the operative biblical cycle. In all, it seems that Julian's attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple rekindled the notion that Antichrist was no demonic or superhuman figure, as can be seen from John Chrysostom's homily on 2 Thess. 3.2 (*PG* 62, col. 482).

⁹² In *Joel*, III, 19 (ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 76, Turnholt, 1969, p. 208).

⁹³ *Chronicon*, II, 33, compare Orosius, *Historiarum adversus paganos*, VII, 26-28. On this theme see V. Grümel, "Du nombre des persécutions païennes dans les anciennes chroniques", *Revue des études augustiniennes* 2 (1956), pp. 59-66.

⁹⁴ Our main sources for Apollinarius' messianic scheme come from his opponents, described by them with a variable degree of invective. So Basil of Caesarea, *Epistles*, 263, 4; 265, 2; Gregorius Nazianzus, *Epistle*, 102,14 and Jerome (among several passages), *De viris illustribus*, 18 (placing Apollinarius in a long chain of millenarians beginning with Papias). At the same time, though, Epiphanius seems to deny the attribution of such views to Apollinarius. See, *Panarion*, 77,36-38. It is difficult however, to ascertain when and more important in what circumstances Apollinarius' messianic Judaizing tendencies were formed. For some clue as to the surroundings in which such views were sounded one might follow the clue offered by Gregorius of Nyssa who on a study mission to Jerusalem in the early 80s of the fourth century encountered similar views among the locals, cf. *Epistle*, 3, 24. The exact nature of these notions, their possible background in the local scenery and their connection to Apollinarius' views have yet to be determined (as for now see, P. Maraval, "La lettre 3 de Gregoire de Nysse dans le débat Christologique" *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 61 (1987), pp. 74-89). On Jerome's criticism of millenarianists views (among them Apollinarius) see, M. Dulacy, "Jérôme, Victorin et le Millénarisme", in: (Y.-M. Duval éd.), *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient*, Paris 1988, pp. 83-98. However, for a more convincing

Events unfolding in different parts of the empire from Constantinopolis to Minorca, between 398–418 C.E. reflected growing anxiety and excitement. Beginning in the year 398 C.E. in Constantinopolis, with signs of an approaching fire from heaven, continuing with the sack of Rome by the Barbarians in 410,⁹⁵ and culminating with the coercive conversion of the Minorcan Jews in the year 418, an act triggered at least partially by millennial anxiety,⁹⁶ we see a vivid picture of the social tension and upheaval in which the Christian society was living nearly a century prior to the “designated” end of the “Cosmic Week” (ca. 500 C.E.).⁹⁷

view expounding Apollinaris’ scheme as a Jewish component within a wider Christian construct see now H.L. Newman, “Jerome’s Judaizers”, forthcoming.

In this context it is important to note that the attention drawn to Jerusalem at that period might have triggered yet another literary venture, that of Pseudo-Hegesippus. His treatise bearing the name *De excidio Hierosolymitano*, was an adaptation of Josephus’ *Jewish War*. It was most probably composed ca. 370 by an anonymous author, who set out to demonstrate to his readers that the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus was a final act—*supermum excidium*, an act of God designed to destroy the Jewish people. This message no doubt carried special significance for the generation that witnessed the sinister threat to Christian supremacy posed by Julian. On the Pseudo-Hegesippus see, Albert A. Bell, “Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus”, in: L.H. Feldman and G. Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, Detroit, 1987, pp. 349–361.

⁹⁵ Events in Constantinople towards the end of the century, namely, the earthquake of 396 C.E. were reported by Orosius, *History Against the Pagans*, III, 3, 2 (compare Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 396) followed by signs and prodigies in the year 398 C.E. which caused panic in the Byzantine capital. Cf. Augustine, *Sermo de excidio urbis* 6, 7, were all seen within an apocalyptic context. It is not surprising therefore that in the midst of these events a Western Christian chronographer began a count down pointing out that only 101 years remained until the end of the sixth millennium. Cf. Julius Hilarius, *De duratione mundi* (ed. C. Frick, *Chronica Minora* I, Leipzig, 1892, pp. 153ff.).

The sack of Rome in 410 had the most profound impact on public atmosphere. On its reflection in current Christian thought, particularly the notion of “Christian times” (*tempora Christiana*), see W.H.C. Frend, “Augustine and Orosius on the End of the Ancient World”, *Augustinian Studies* 20 (1989), pp. 9–38. On the rhetoric and arguments Augustine used to dispel his congregation’s anxiety see Theodore S. De Bruyn, “Ambivalence Within a ‘Totalizing Discourse’: Augustine’s Sermons on the Sack of Rome”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993), pp. 405–421.

⁹⁶ See most recently the comprehensive study of the episode by S. Bradbury (ed. and trans.), *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 43–53. Bradbury himself, it must be added, tends to tone down messianic anxiety as a factor guiding Severus’ actions. Nevertheless, it is still plausible to assume that Severus was incited to coerce the local Jewish community to convert by the very same rumours that Jerome (*op. cit.*, note 88) was citing in the name of the Jews. These rumors might very well have accompanied the remains of St. Stephen, brought to Minorca from Palestine by Orosius.

⁹⁷ It is tempting to see in the major project undertaken ca. 400 C.E. by the

Approximately fifteen years after the Minorcan episode yet another abortive plan to redeem the Children of Israel, was attempted. Equipped with the salvation story of the captives in Egypt accompanied by some sort of messianic computation, an unknown impostor pretending to be Moses, approached Jews dwelling in Crete and promised them a swift deliverance and a safe conduct from the island through the sea to the Promised Land. The Constantinopolitan historiographer Socrates Scholasticus, who is unfortunately our only early source for this episode, described vividly the outcome of this illusory attempt.

Deluded by such expectations, they (= the Cretan Jews) neglected business of every kind, despising what they possessed . . . When the day appointed by this deceiver for their departure had arrived, he himself took the lead and all followed with their wives and children. He led them therefore until they reached a promontory that overlooked the sea, from which he ordered them to fling themselves headlong into it. Those who came first to the precipice did so and were immediately destroyed . . . When at length the Jews perceived how fearfully they had been duped, they blamed first of all their own indiscreet credulity and then sought to lay hold of the pseudo-Moses . . . In consequence of this experience many of the Jews in Crete . . . attached themselves to the Christian faith.⁹⁸

Even if we take into account the apparent anti-Jewish bias of that ecclesiastical historian, writing about a decade after the event, the intense atmosphere of the messianic delusion engulfing the local Jews, is inescapable. It is tempting to see in the Cretan episode a repeated performance based on the Minorcan precedent. We can only speculate about what might have stirred up this extraordinary

Alexandrian monk Panodorus to synchronize the chronological systems of Eusebius and that of Julius Africanus in order to determine the correct date of Christ's Incarnation relative to the date of Creation, as emanating (among other reasons) from the saturated apocalyptic atmosphere of the period. On Panodorus' enterprise see, Alden A. Mosshammer, (*op. cit. supra*, note 50), pp. 77-78.

⁹⁸ Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* VII, 38 (the text here is taken from A.C. Zenos, *NPNF*, Vol. II, Grand Rapids, 1979, pp. 174-175). This anecdote has no parallel in contemporary sources (only in later ones) and its bearing on Socrates' historical framework has yet to be determined. Indeed the outstanding presence of traditions and anecdotes involving Jews in this important historiographical treatise is in need of a thorough investigation, a subject I shall be dealing with in a forthcoming study. As for now, see the rather simplistic comments on the "Jewish Theme" in Socrates' history, by T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople Historian of Church and State*, Ann Arbor, 1997, p. 85.

event. For, at least in one aspect this was no "repeat performance" of the events in Minorca which were entirely instigated by the local bishop Severus, while, in the latter case local Jewish expectations were the driving force.

Even when given the apparent presence of the Exodus story in Socrates' account, it is doubtful whether we can safely assert that the "deceiver's appointed day" was based on the recurring cycle of 400/430 years. The starting point of this computation would place it very neatly within Christian chronology; namely, the Incarnation or the Crucifixion, which would undoubtedly not have persuaded the local Jewish population. If however we resort to the usage of intermediary dates, such as those suggested in rabbinical and other sources, the number 350 for the duration of stay in Egypt crops up leading us approximately to the year 70 C.E. We do not know what might have triggered this event, especially the circumstances in which the local Jews were tricked into participation in the deceiver's scheme. There exists a remote possibility that the demise of the Jewish Patriarchate only a short while earlier might have sounded the messianic bells.⁹⁹ At the time, the Patriarchate was a dominant symbol of messianic imagery within Jewish society.¹⁰⁰ Could this "messianic eruption", have been fueled by the famous rabbinical maxim that the Messiah will come once the Patriarchate is abolished?¹⁰¹ In an

⁹⁹ See Codex Theodosianus XVI, 8, 29 (30 May, 429) (which alludes to the fact that the Patriarchate is a matter of the past). See A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, Detroit, 1987, pp. 320-323.

¹⁰⁰ See recently, Goodblatt (*op. cit. supra*, note 72) esp. pp. 169-175. The Patriarchate became a prime target of Christian polemic and criticism during the fourth century. Epiphanius of Salamis published the life story of Joseph the Comes who vowed that he saw the Patriarch Judah baptized in the name of Christ on his death bed. Joseph, who claimed to be a member of the inner circle of the Patriarch, went on to describe the disgraceful conduct of the Patriarch's sons. Though the story which appears in Epiphanius' *Panarion*, XXX, 4-12 seems to be essentially a legendary account of events during the days of Constantine the Great, there are some who tend to detect in it a kernel of historical truth. Cf. T.C.G. Thornton, "The Stories of Joseph of Tiberias", *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990), pp. 54-63. However, in the debate surrounding the historicity of the account the main purpose of its dissemination has been somewhat overlooked. For, the manner of ridicule and caricature in which the Patriarchate is portrayed by Joseph was meant not only to add yet another invective against the Jews but was part of a general onslaught on the legitimacy of the inherited and "divinely chosen" leadership of the Jews. Further remarks by Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XII, 17 (PG 33, cols. 744-745) and later (fifth century) by Theodore of Cyrus, *Eranistes*, Dialogue I, and others serve to elucidate our point.

¹⁰¹ Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 38a. The saying was a critique on the claim of the Patriarchs that they were descendants of the house of David.

atmosphere of growing disillusion as a lesson to be remembered, the rabbis depicted a similar scene from the lives of the captives in Egypt to their followers. "Therefore (said Pharaoh) they cry . . . let heavier work be laid upon the men—and let them not regard lying words (Exodus, 5, 9). This is to teach us that the Israelites possessed scrolls with the contents of which they regaled themselves each Sabbath, assuring them that God would redeem them"¹⁰²

All in all, the picture emerging from our portrayal of the events beginning ca. 350 C.E. is of a somewhat entangled set of messianic computations based on the same or similar biblical typology, or imagery, exploited vigorously by opposing camps. We know that at least in some Christian circles serious attempts were made out to quell this fervor and to place the biblical symbolism of the current millennial expectation on an entirely different footing.¹⁰³

Turning back to what went on in Jewish society, we observe a change. If until then we are only able to expose what might seem as the hidden foundations of the target dates based on biblical precedents, that might have served only esoteric circles, towards the end of that century they surface as part of the main stream messianic scenario.

The Babylonian Talmud records a small list of designated dates and calculations of an eschatological nature.¹⁰⁴ The first statement is as follows: A. "After the four hundredth year of the destruction of the Temple if someone offers you a field worth a thousand dinars for just one do not buy it". B. The same formula with a slightly different ending: "do not buy it after the year 4231 A.M.". C. "Elijah said to R. Judah, the brother of R. Salla the Pious: 'The world shall exist not less than eighty five jubilees and in the last jubilee the son of David will come'. He asked him at the beginning or at the end (of the jubilee)? He replied: 'I do not know'. Shall this period be

¹⁰² An anonymous tradition, *Exodus Rabbah*, 5, 18. See L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 5, p. 405 (note 72).

¹⁰³ On the North African example see P. Fredriksen, "Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse", in: Richard K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, 1992, pp. 20–37, see too G. Bonner (*op. cit. supra*, note 56). On Jerome's attitude see M. Dulaey (*op. cit. supra*, note 93). For the local angle of Jerome's polemic with the millennialists see recently, Hillel I. Newman, "Between Jerusalem and Bethlehem: Jerome on the Holy Places of Palestine", in A. Houtman *et al.* (eds.), *Sanctity of Time and Place. Tradition and Modernity*, Leiden, 1998, pp. 215–227.

¹⁰⁴ Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 97a–97b.

completed or not? I do not know he answered. R. Ashi said: 'He spoke thus to him. Before that do not expect him, afterwards thou mayest await him'."

The dates referred to in these statements corresponded to ca. 470/471 C.E. and 441-491 C.E. respectively.¹⁰⁵ The typologies underlining them have been discussed extensively by David Berger,¹⁰⁶ who went to great lengths to expound them within their Jewish context. So did Jacob Neusner some years ago, who pointed out their probable local Babylonian messianic context.¹⁰⁷ However, according to what we have seen so far, whatever their origin, these traditions deserve to be analyzed within a wider Christian context.

During the same period, thousands of miles west of Babylon, in Gallaecia (North Western Spain), a relatively unknown chronicler, Hydatius bishop of Aquae Flaviae voiced strong sentiments concerning the *Consumatio Mundi*. His chronicle, which is filled with portents, prodigies and pessimism, comes to an end in the year 468 announcing that Jesus' Second Coming—the *Parousia*—will occur on the twenty-seventh of May 482 C.E., nine jubilees after the Ascension.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ With slight modifications arising from the problem of the extant dating of the fall of Jerusalem on which see, M. Assis, "A Responsa Regarding the Fixing of the Year 4834 A.M. (1077/8 C.E.)", *Hebrew Union College Annual* 49 (1978), pp. I-XXVII (Hebrew). A possible source (or parallel) for this dating could be traced back to the early first century Jewish apocalyptic text, The Assumption of Moses, 10, 12: "For from my death, my being taken away until his advent, there will be 250 times that will happen . . ." It has been quite plausibly suggested (by R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudo-epigrapha*, vol. II, Oxford, 1913, p. 423), that this figure should be regarded as symbolizing 250 year weeks or 1750 years and as according to the same writer Moses died 2500 years after the creation (*ibid.* 1,2), the final judgement will occur 4250 years or 85 jubilees following the Creation.

¹⁰⁶ "Three Typological Themes in Early Jewish Messianism: Messiah Son of Joseph, Rabbinic Calculations and the Figure of Armilus", *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 10 (1985), pp. 141-164, esp. pp. 149-155. It was already I. Levi who identified some of these traditions and others as segments of now lost apocalyptic texts compiled during the Talmudic era, see his note in *Revue des Études Juives* 1 (1880), pp. 108-114.

¹⁰⁷ *History of the Jews in Babylonia*, Vol. V, Leiden 1970, pp. 60-69, esp. 67-69. See further note 113.

¹⁰⁸ R.W. Burges, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 122-123. Similar sentiments, however, emanating from a different point of view though containing signs of bitter criticism of Rome and a growing list of her defeats and disasters, are to be found in the anonymous Gallic Chronicler of 452. His list of uninterrupted disasters beginning in the year 440 C.E. was presented in clear negation to the successes of the emperors at the end of the fourth century combating the heretics from within and the Barbarians from without. See S. Muhlberger, *The Fifth Century Chroniclers: Prosper, Hydatius, and the Gallic Chronicler of 452*, Leeds, 1990, pp. 185-191. In fact the tide of outstanding events which intensified the atmosphere

The tradition itself originated in "a certain book written by the Apostle Thomas" in which the latter quoted a tradition transmitted to him by no one else but Jesus himself. Hydatius' usage of this tradition reflected his own need to anchor his eschatological speculation in an apocalyptic chronology that had a prophetic aura. In fact Christ's crucifixion was dated in the *Chronici Canones* of 381, and according to the Jews, this event happened in their eighty-first jubilee.¹⁰⁹ As clearly sketched recently by Richard Burgess, Hydatius was agitated by the penetration of the Barbarians into Roman territory. As a result, Hydatius envisaged the collapse of the frontiers guarding the Roman world thus heralding the *Consummatio Mundi*.¹¹⁰

The anxiety created by the approaching date of the "End of the

during the latter part of the fifth century began with a fusion of natural disaster with the enemy's wrath. Thus, on 26.1.447 a major earthquake shook Constantinople destroying large sections of the Theodosian Wall, claiming many lives, causing hunger and creating havoc and fear, which led people to leave the city (Marcellinus Comes s.a. 447 compare John Malalas, 363.20–364.2). Certain monks prepared to retreat to Jerusalem (Callinicus, *Vita Hypatii*, 52, 3). A few months later the Huns invaded Thrace and headed to Constantinople whose people rebuilt its wall in sixty days (by March) to avert the approaching danger. This earthquake received due commemoration in local liturgy. Cf. B. Croke, "Two Early Byzantine Earthquakes and their Liturgical Commemoration", *Byzantion* 51 (1981), pp. 122–147, at 131–140.

¹⁰⁹ Hydatius came across this tradition in Jerome's *Chronici canones*. It appears as an interpolation in Fotheringham's apparatus of the Bodleian manuscript of the *Chronicle*. See J.K. Fotheringham, *The Bodleian Manuscript of Jerome's Version of the Chronicle of Eusebius*, Oxford, 1905, p. 256. See Burgess (*op. cit.*, note 104), pp. 31–32. For a different view on Hydatius' apocalyptic aspirations, placing Hydatius within a more conservative and more reserved line of Christian writers, see Muhlbarger (*op. cit.*, note 104), pp. 262–264.

¹¹⁰ "Hydatius and the Final Frontier: The Fall of the Roman Empire and the End of the World", in: Ralph W. Mathisen and Hagith S. Sivan (eds.), *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, Aldershot, 1996, pp. 321–332. Compare the contemporary saying of the North African Church Father Quodvultdeus, that the Goths and Maurs were the Biblical Gog and Magog, cf. *Dimidium Temporis* 22 (CSEL 60, p. 207). A major event in the agitation of the time was the fall of Rome, in 476 C.E., in the course of which the last emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed by a barbarian officer, Odoacer.

Much attention has been paid to this event most notably in the comprehensive study of M.A. Wes, *Das Ende des Kaisertums im Westen des Römischen Reichs*, 's-Gravenhage 1967, who traced the origin of the idea found in sixth century historiography about the "end of the Western Empire" to a circle of leading anti-Ostogothic Italian aristocrats who disseminated it. However, a thorough study of chronographic sources has shown that the event in Rome in 476 C.E. made the greatest impression on the people of the eastern capital, Constantinople. In their eyes, as described by the chronographers Jordannes and Marcellinus Comes, the fall of the Western Empire (*Hesperium imperium*) in 476 marked the End. See B. Croke, "A.D. 476: The Manufacture of a Turning Point", *Chiron* 13 (1983), pp. 81–119, at 114–115. Indeed, this idea had its own Western adherents who were not dependent on the tradition pointed out by Wes. Such was the case of Eugippius writing ca. 488 the Life of St. Severinus.

World" was shared by other Christian writers too. Closer yet to Babylon and for similar reasons to those adduced just now, a group of Syriac Chroniclers described the events and disasters of the End. Joshua the Stylite recorded a series of troubles: drought, famine, plague, and finally a breakout of hostilities between Byzantium and Persia during the years 495–506. Thus, around the year 500 C.E., the predicted date of the *Consumatio Saeculi*, and that of the *Parousia*, Christians were witnessing yet again signs of the possible collapse of the Roman Frontier.¹¹¹ At the same time the annotations to the *Pascale Campanum* in the entry to the year 496 C.E. refer to the agitation led by those named the *delirantes*, who have claimed to have seen the Antichrist.¹¹² In any case the period in question corresponded closely to the commencement of the eighty-fifth Jubilee according to the above mentioned Talmudic calculations. For the first time the dates guiding the exclusive messianic scenarios in both camps nearly merged.

Could there have been any link between the Talmudic preoccupation with apocalyptic calculations at the very time when the atmosphere of apocalyptic anxiety was at its peak in Christian circles? Was this just a mere coincidence?

It must be emphasized that the rabbinical traditions cited above are presented in the context of the Talmudic discussion on the topic of the "Cosmic Week". Were then Jews aware at all of what went

Cf. Robert A. Markus, "The End of the Roman Empire: A Note on Eugippius, Vita Sancti Severini, 20", *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 26 (1982), pp. 1–7.

In any rate, the "Eastern" view of things must have been made widely known a possibility, which supplies us with yet another link to Jewish eschatological aspirations. For in some of the Jewish apocalyptic sources we encounter the figure of the final ruler of Rome—Edom named Armilus, who has been identified as fashioned according to the figure of the legendary Romulus, but at the same time signifying that of Romulus Augustulus too, see Berger (*op. cit.*, note 106), p. 158, who in fact cautions against the latter identification, on the ground that the perception of the "fallen" Western empire was not shared by the residents of the Eastern Roman Empire. In light of the above, this reservation is unwarranted. In fact, the symbolic symmetry between Romulus the founder of Rome and Romulus its last ruler did not escape the Byzantine mind. On the contrary, it became part and parcel of later Byzantine chronography. Cf. Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 5965 (= 472/3 C.E.); C. Mango and R. Scott (eds. and trans.), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 283–813*, Oxford, 1997, pp. 185–186.

¹¹¹ S. Ashbrook Harvey, "Remembering Pain: Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches", *Byzantion* 57 (1988), pp. 295–302. Compare P. Alexander, *The Oracle of Baalbeck*, Washington, 1967, pp. 116–120. Both Alexander and Ashbrook Harvey's surveys differ considerably from A.A. Vasiliev's classic study "Medieval Ideas of the End of the World: West and East", *Byzantion* 16 (1944), pp. 462–502, where he states that the date of the 6000 years from creation made little impression on contemporaries.

¹¹² T. Mommsen, *Consularia Italica*, *MGH* AA, IX, p. 747.

on in Christian minds? A definite answer is difficult, if not impossible, but the concurrence is too compelling to be dismissed. In this context, additional intriguing phenomena present themselves.

In the necropolis of the Palestinian southern townlet named Zoara (south of the Dead Sea) archaeologists have uncovered in the past decades a set of funerary inscriptions (ranging from the early fifth century to the year 601) all using dating systems starting with the destruction of the Temple as well as that of the sabbatical cycle. This is indeed a unique discovery inasmuch as it constitutes most of the dated Jewish inscription (mostly funerary) found in Eretz Israel.¹¹³ However, the significance of their location is even greater. For, according to a tenth century Karaite tradition Zoara (alongside Tiberias and Gaza) served throughout the Byzantine period as an alternative pilgrim site to Jerusalem¹¹⁴ from where the Jews, so tradition has it, were denied entrance by its Christian rulers.¹¹⁵ Hence correlation between time and place in this case was highly significant and bore all the marks of an acute messianic expectation.

Returning to the Babylonian scene we encounter yet another set of events, with clear eschatological connotations. In the year 468 C.E. (according to a tenth century Muslim tradition) or 470 (according to a Geonic tradition), the Sassanians began a wave of religious persecution against Jews and Christians. As indicated in Rav Sherirah Gaon's famous epistle this wave was much harsher than any ever before.¹¹⁶ It resulted in the assassination of some of the leading figures of Babylonian Jewry, the imprisonment of others, the closure of synagogues and the kidnapping of children by the Amagushees. Four hundred years after the destruction of Jerusalem Babylonian Jews were encountering their own possible destruction. It did not take much to draw the inevitable conclusions. According to a later, much embellished tradition, during the last decade of the fifth century, led

¹¹³ J. Naveh, "The Zoar Tombstones", *Tarbiz* 64 (1995), pp. 476-497. This is a full report on the inscriptions which were first unearthed over sixty years ago. Although the earliest dated inscription is from 282 years after the destruction of the Temple, the majority (eight altogether) cover 388 to 435, all within a reasonable span of time or of close as possible to the biblical cycles.

¹¹⁴ See the testimony of Sahl ben Masliah, in A. Harkavy, "Me'asef Nidahim", 13, *Ha'meliz* 15 (1879), p. 640.

¹¹⁵ On this see my study (*op. cit. supra*, note 20), pp. 135-178 (Hebrew).

¹¹⁶ On this ongoing affair see G. Widengren, "The Status of the Jews in the Sasanian Empire", *Iranica Antiqua* 1 (1963), pp. 143-145. On the Jews and the Mazdak movement see O. Klima, "Mazdak und die Juden", *Archiv Orientalni* 24 (1956), pp. 420-431.

by one of the last representatives of the "House of David", the Exilarch Mar Zutra (מר זוטרא ריש גלותא), the Jews successfully revolted against the Sassanian authorities and managed to establish autonomous rule for seven years.¹¹⁷

I do not accept the current opinion that tends to see the episode entirely within an internal Sassanian context. For, the legendary embellishment of the above mentioned traditions, describing the fate of the Exilarch's family, coupled with yet another tradition recounting the fact that the sole survivor of the family, the young Mar Zutra, emigrated ca. 520 C.E. to Palestine, and was appointed there as a leader of an academy, all have a strong messianic overtone.¹¹⁸ It seems then, that around the year 500 C.E. we witness a major concurrence between wide spread Jewish as well as Christian expectations. The Jewish calculations of the "End of Days", Redemption or the Coming of the Messiah at that period could and should be viewed in conjunction with the emerging sentiments surrounding the predicted Christian Eschaton, *Parousia* or *Consummatio Saeculi*.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ *Seder Olam Zuta*, A. Neubauer (ed.), *Medieval Jewish Chronicles II*, Oxford, 1895, pp. 72-73, 76 (Hebrew). A detailed study of the various traditions is offered by J. Neusner (*op. cit. supra*, note 107), pp. 95-105. Neusner tends to regard the *Seder Olam Zuta* story as a fairytale and has great difficulty assigning any historicity to the Jewish revolt and its outcome. In my opinion the value of the tradition about Mar Zutra lies not in its historical validity but in the fact that it reflects genuine trends of messianic fervor among Babylonian Jews emanating from local apocalyptic aspirations embodied in local agitation as well as (perhaps) external computations.

¹¹⁸ On the interrelationship between Mar Zutra's story and the Bostanai legend see M. Gil, "The Exilarchate", *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society and Identity*, ed. by D. Frank, Leiden, 1995, pp. 33-65. Though Gil tended to regard the *Seder Olam Zuta* tradition as modeled on the Bostanai story, he recently retracted this view, see *In the Kingdom of Ishmael, Vol. I: Studies in Jewish History in Islamic Lands in the Early Middle Ages*, Tel Aviv, 1997, pp. 58ff., esp. 62 note 48 (Hebrew).

¹¹⁹ Following the year 500 the need to readjust the 'Eschaton' was felt in both camps. Events during the sixth and seventh centuries culminating in the Arab conquest of the Middle East only enhanced this tendency. On the tick and chime of the Byzantine eschatological clock in an age of growing anxiety see the fascinating study of P. Magdalino, "The History of the Future and its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda", in: R. Beaton and Ch. Rouché (eds.), *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol on his Seventieth Birthday*, Aldershot, 1993, pp. 3-34. On signs of similar sentiments in Jewish circles, see, Y. Yahalom, "The Transition of Kingdoms in Eretz Israel as Conceived by Poets and Homelists", in: J. Hacker (ed.), *Shalem: Studies in the History of the Jews in Eretz Israel*, VI, Jerusalem, 1992, pp. 1-22 (Hebrew). See also J. Elbaum, "Messianism in Pirque-de Rabbi Eliezer: Apocalypse and Midrash", *Teuda XI: Studies in Aggadic Midrashim in Memory of Z.M. Rabinowitz* ed. by M.A. Friedman and M.B. Lerner, Tel Aviv, 1996, pp. 245-266 (Hebrew).

APOCALYPTIC TIME

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