

# SAADYA'S PORTRAYAL OF THE MESSIAH BEN JOSEPH

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## Introduction

The idea of a second Messiah who, according to some of the sources, had to fall in an apocalyptic battle, has been called a 'curious aberration'.<sup>1</sup> Many theories have been launched to solve the problems connected with the appearance of this Messiah from among the descendants of Joseph (or of Ephraim).<sup>2</sup> For some of the more recent theories<sup>3</sup> L. Ginzberg's statement 'dass ein Windstoss genügt um sie umzuwerfen' is undoubtedly still appropriate, as they are highly hypothetical and ignore the evidence of the sources.<sup>4</sup>

Among the more reliable and solid attempts to combine the scattered references in talmudic, midrashic and targumic sources into a coherent picture is the study of Joseph Heinemann on 'The Messiah of Ephraim and the Premature Exodus of the Tribe of Ephraim'.<sup>5</sup> Heinemann, attentive in all of his studies to the stylistic

characteristics of the sources, was the first to distinguish between two different layers of our tradition, namely one that portrays a 'militant, victorious Messiah' and another, 'subsequent transmutation' of this legend into that of a 'dying Messiah'.<sup>6</sup> This transformation, according to Heinemann, was due to a traumatic event, most probably the defeat and death of Bar Kokhba at Bethar. Accepting the view that Bar Kokhba had been proclaimed the Messiah (from the House of David) by rabbi Aqiva and other leading scholars of his generation,<sup>7</sup> Heinemann attempts to explain how Bar Kokhba could remain a genuine Messiah after his defeat. In Heinemann's view, this was only possible by his becoming associated with the well-known aggadic story of the Ephraimites. According to this story, the Ephraimites, being condemned for their 'rebellious act' of 'forcing the end' by leaving Egypt before the appointed time of redemption, were at first defeated by the Philistines, but 'rehabilitated' in a later tradition, and associated with the

- 1 Moore, *Judaism* 2:370. Cf. J. Sarachek, *Doctrine of the Messiah*, p. 16: 'a mere figment of the imagination, an aberration from Biblical Messianism'.
- 2 Scholarly research has not always been cautious to differentiate between the names applied to this Messiah. Talmudic sources speak of a Messiah ben Joseph (Mbj), the targums of a Messiah bar Ephraim (MbE), in midrashic sources both names are used, and they also mention a *meshuah milhama*, an Anointed for War, who is sometimes said to descend of Ephraim but usually of Joseph. The so-called minor apocalyptic midrashim carefully distinguish between the symbolic names *Menahem ben 'Ammiel* for the Davidic Messiah and *Nehemya ben Husiel* for the Messiah ben Joseph. In *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* 19 (45b), however, we find a conflation of both names: *Menachem ben 'Ammiel ben Joseph*.
- 3 For a summary of the theories put forward by V. Aptowitz, W. Bousset, D. Castelli, G.H. Dalman, G.H. Dix, J. Drummond, M. Friedmann, L. Ginzberg, J. Hamburger, S. Hurwitz, J. Klausner, J. Levy, Ch.C. Torrey, F. Weber, see Klausner, *Messianic Idea* 483-89; Hurwitz, *Die Gestalt* 165-235; Rowley, 'Suffering Servant' 69-74; Heinemann, 'Messiah of Ephraim' 1-6. Cf. Toaff, 'Il Messia figlio di Giuseppe' 61-67; Landman, *Messianism* XXVII-XXX.
- 4 Cf. Ginzberg, *Eine unbekante jüdische Sekte* 337 [ET p. 236].
- 5 First published in *Tarbiz* 40 (1970-71) 450-61, and included in Heinemann, *Aggadah and its Development* 131-41. Quotations are from the slightly different translation in *HTR* 8 (1975) 1-15.
- 6 Cf. Heinemann, 'Messiah of Ephraim' 6.
- 7 Heinemann, 'Messiah of Ephraim' 9.

dry bones revived by the prophet Ezekiel. In such a way Bar Kokhba could become the Messiah of Ephraim.<sup>8</sup>

It is not my intention to reopen the discussion on the origin and meaning of a second Messiah. We shall concentrate here not on the fragmentary evidence of the rabbinic sources but on a coherent and fully developed compilation of traditions on the Mbj, written by Saadya Gaon. We shall attempt to describe the different elements of Saadya's story and to discover on which sources this story was based. In an appendix, however, I shall return to Heinemann's theory, to reconsider some of his arguments, especially regarding his distinction between 'earlier' and 'later' sources.

#### *Saadya's Portrayal of the Messiah ben Joseph*

For a full description of the apocalyptic events related to the Mbj, we have to rely on Saadya Gaon, who offers a systematic presentation of the course of events of the last redemption in the eighth chapter (*Ma'amar ha-Ge'ullah*) of his *Book of Doctrines and Beliefs*.<sup>9</sup> Before sketching the appearance of the Mbj, Saadya answers the question -put forward by his opponents- whether this age of sufferings and persecutions connected with the Mbj is an indispensable condition for the future redemption. He therefore refers to the well-known debate between Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Yohshua ben Hananya<sup>10</sup> of whom the former stated that redemption is directly dependent on repentance, while the latter suggests that redemption will come independently of repentance (the value of which he does not deny). Saadya, attempting to reconcile the positions of both rabbi Yohshua and rabbi Eliezer, tries to combine the idea of a 'fixed time' (which excludes repentance) with that of repentance as a prerequisite for redemption. In the event that Israel repents, the Messiah ben David will manifest himself suddenly and there is no need for the appearance of his precursor. If, however, the appointed time

should come without Israel's having repented 'God would cause misfortunes and disasters to befall us that would compel us to resolve upon repentance so that we would be deserving of redemption.' He then continues to describe the time of trouble which the Jewish nation will suffer:

[Our forebears] also tell us that the cause of this [visitation] will be the appearance in *Upper Galilee* of a man from among the descendants of *Joseph*, around whom there will gather individuals from among the Jewish nation. This man will go to Jerusalem after its seizure by the Romans and stay in it for a certain length of time. Then they will be surprised by a man named Armilus, who will wage war against them and conquer the city and subject its inhabitants to massacre, captivity, and disgrace. Included among those that will be slain will be that man from among the descendants of *Joseph*.

Now there will come upon the Jewish nation at that time great misfortunes, the most difficult to endure being the deterioration of their relationship with the governments of the world who will drive them into the wildernesses to let them starve and be miserable. As a result of what has happened to them, many of them will desert their faith, only those purified remaining. To these *Elijah the prophet* will manifest himself and thus the redemption will come.<sup>11</sup>

To confirm his view Saadya quotes numerous passages of Scripture. Obviously, he is defending the authority of the Bible against the attacks of his antagonists. By adducing that many references he wants to make clear that 'The chief points of these matters are, then, all of them exposed in the Bible,...'. To this he adds: 'while their further ordering and arrangement is carried out in systematic fashion in the works of tradition'.<sup>12</sup> Scholars were, therefore, surprised

8 Heinemann, 'Messiah of Ephraim' 10-15.

9 Cf. Landauer, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*. For the Hebrew text of Ibn Tibbon, see Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 121-28. Cf. Malter, *Saadia Gaon* 237ff., on the background of the eighth chapter.

10 See *bSanhedrin* 97b and *JTa'anuyot* 1:1 (63d). This is one of the few times in this chapter that Saadya cites directly from talmudic sources, see Malter, *Saadia Gaon* 197. On the debate, see Landman, *Messianism* XIX-XXII; Urbach, 'Redemption and Repentance' 190-94; Urbach, *The Sages* 668-71.

11 Translation according to Rosenblatt, *Book of Beliefs* 301-02. Altmann, *Saadya Gaon* 172-73, offers a rather paraphrastic translation of this passage.

12 Rosenblatt, *Book of Beliefs* 303-04.

by the fact that Saadya apparently made use not of the 'traditional works' but of the so-called minor apocalyptic midrashim in his description of the MbJ. These apocalyptic works were not held in high esteem in the predominantly rationalistic circles of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and they were once called 'these obscure products of seers and prophets'.<sup>13</sup> The scholars of the Science of Judaism period were inclined to deny that Saadya might have treated them as equal to traditional literature and attempted to demonstrate that all or most of the elements of his description of the MbJ can be found in the classical sources.

Those who accept that the Gaon made use of the apocalyptic midrashim,<sup>14</sup> generally are of the opinion that his first source was the *Book of Zerubbabel*.<sup>15</sup> This may be due to the fact that, according to I. Lévi,<sup>16</sup> this work can be dated with precision in the years 629-36, at the final stages of the Perso-Byzantine war. Lévi's main argument was the identification of the recurring name Shiroy with the Persian king Shiroe (Shiruya or Khavad II), the son of Khusrau II (Chosroes) whom he murdered and succeeded in 628.<sup>17</sup> Written before the Arab conquest, the *Book of Zerubbabel* in all probability describes as *vaticinia post eventu* the struggle between the Persian king Khusrau II Abarvez (Parvez), 'the victorious' and the Byzantine emperor Heraclius.<sup>18</sup> The Persian King was successful, which resulted in the 'redemption' of Jerusalem in the year 614 by Sasanian armies led by general Sharbaraz, the expulsion of the Christian population and the

robbery of the 'true cross' which was taken to Ctesiphon as part of the booty.

Although we have little information on the events which followed this 'redemption', we may assume that the Persians allowed the Jews some form of self-government. This, however, soon came to an end by a sudden change in the Persian attitude, owing to unknown factors.<sup>19</sup> There is, in our view, insufficient evidence to assume that the Jews, during the short period of self-administration, were headed by a leader called *Nehemya* and tried to secure autonomy or to restore Jewish sacrificial worship.<sup>20</sup> According to Lévi the *Book of Zerubbabel*, describing the execution of *Nehemya ben Husiel* (that is the MbJ) by Shiroy, in all probability reflects the Persian withdrawal from Jerusalem in the year 628 when the Byzantine emperor Heraclius recaptured Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Saadya's sources*

Returning now to Saadya's report, we shall look into some of the details of his story. This will enable us at the same time to see whether the prevailing assumption that he made use of the *Book of Zerubbabel* can be defended successfully.

(a) [Our forebears] also tell us that the cause of this [visitation] will be the appearance in *Upper Galilee* of a man from among the descendants of *Joseph*...

13 Marmorstein, 'Doctrine of Redemption' 118.

14 For bibliographical information on the Minor Apocalyptic Midrashim, see Townsend, 'Minor Midrashim'. Good observations on their historical reliability will be found in Alexander, 'Medieval Apocalypses' 999ff. Avi-Yonah, *Geschichte* 261, offers no good criteria for his distinction between the historically trustworthy parts of these midrashim and the remainder 'wo die historische Wirklichkeit verlassen wird'.

15 So, for instance, Klatzkin, 'Amilus' 476; Dan, 'Zerubbabel, Book of' 1002. For a critical edition, see Lévi, 'L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel' 131-44. Cf. also Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 2:54-57; Eisenstein, *Otsar Midrashim* 1:159-61; Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot* 2:495-505; Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 71-88. For studies on the *Book of Zerubbabel*, see Steinschneider, 'Apocalypsen' 630-31; Baron, *History* 5:354-55 n. 3; Sternberger, *Die römische Herrschaft* 138-43; Dan, 'Messiah in the Middle Ages' 1412-14; Martola, 'Serubbabels Bok'; Wilken, 'Restoration' 454-57.

16 Lévi, 'L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel' 108-15.

17 See Frye, 'Political History' 166ff.; Ghirshman, *Iran* 306-09; Baron, *History* 3:17-24; Avi-Yonah, *Geschichte* 262-74, esp. 271; Schäfer, *Geschichte* 206-10, esp. 209.

18 See Baras, *Ha-Kibbush ha-Farsi* 302-19, 340-45. During the first year of his reign, Khusrau II, who married a Christian wife called Shirin, and for this was eulogized by Christian authors of his time, lived in peace with the Byzantine emperor Maurice. Their treaty came to an end when Phocas murdered Maurice. Cf. Baron, *History* 3:18-19; Avi-Yonah, *Geschichte* 258.

19 Frye, 'Political History' 168; Baron, *History* 3:238-39 n. 25; Avi-Yonah, *Geschichte* 270-72; Schäfer, *Geschichte* 209.

20 As has been suggested by Avi-Yonah, *Geschichte* 267, and by Schäfer, *Geschichte* 207. Cf. Baron, *History* 3:21-22, who first remarks that the apocalyptic *Book of Zerubbabel* '...is too vague and obscure to enable us to reconstruct any significant details' (p. 21), but then states (p. 22): 'An unnamed leader quickly assumed the name of *Nehemiah*'.

21 Lévi, 'L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel' 110-11. Cf. Baron, *History* 3:23; Avi-Yonah, *Geschichte* 271; Frye, 'Political History' 169ff.

We are not justified in assuming, as Rosenblatt does,<sup>22</sup> that Saadya is the first to mention Upper-Galilee as the place where the MbJ will start his work. Landauer's edition reads *Jabal Jalil*, the 'hill country of Galilee'.<sup>23</sup> In consequence of this N. Wieder rightly concludes: 'The earliest explicit mention of Upper Galilee as assembly-place of the returning exiles and the appearance of the Messiah...occurs in an apocalypse which has been preserved in the work *Leqah Tobh* by Tobhiah b. 'Eli'ezer of Castoria...'.<sup>24</sup> The apocalypse in question is the *Aggadat ha-Mashiah*, in which a reference to the MbJ occurs in a passage ascribed to the third-century Palestinian Amora R. Levi:

Rav Huna said in the name of rabbi Levi: This [referring to Joel 3:5 and Obadiah 17] teaches that the Israelites will be gathered in Upper-Galilee, and there the MbJ will reveal himself to them from Galilee.<sup>25</sup>

Several suggestions have been ventured as to the question at what time the idea arose of (Upper-) Galilee 'as the *locale* of the initial phase of the messianic drama'.<sup>26</sup> Scholars have pointed to Josephus' victories in Galilee,<sup>27</sup> to the position of Galilee as the new center of Jewish learning after the second war,<sup>28</sup> to the possible outbreak of a Jewish revolt in Galilee under Gallus in the fourth century ('probably sustained by the hope that Shapur II would invade the Roman Empire'),<sup>29</sup> or to the role of Galilean cities in connection with the arrival of the Persian general Sharbaraz in 614.<sup>30</sup>

The *Book of Zerubbabel* does not mention Upper-Galilee but relates that the MbE has been hidden in Raqat, that is Tiberias, a tradition which may go back to talmudic sources.<sup>31</sup>

(b) ...around whom there will gather individuals from among the Jewish nation. This man will go to Jerusalem after its seizure by the Romans and stay in it for a certain length of time.

Contrary to what has been said in the *Book of Zerubbabel* (*kol yiśra'el k'e'iš 'aḥ ad*) and in the *Aggadat ha-Mashiah* (*w'kol yiśra'el 'immō*) Saadya minimizes the number of adherents of the MbJ. Adducing his proof-text, Jer 3:14 ('And I will take you, one of a city, and two of a family') he explicitly states that only a few among the Jewish nation will gather about the MbJ. He may have borrowed this from the *Otot ha-Mashiah* as it says:

At the end of nine months the MbJ will be revealed, under the name of Nehemyah ben Husiel, accompanied by the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin and parts of Gad...and around him gather *few* of all countries and all cities.<sup>32</sup>

The underlying motive of Saadya appears to be a rationalistic one: in order to make a future ingathering of the exiles admissible he wants to avoid the idea that all Israelites will follow the MbJ. With this one may compare the account of Hai Gaon who, admittedly, says that *many* people will gather around the MbJ in Upper

22 Rosenblatt, *Book of Beliefs* 301 n. 26.

23 Landauer, *Kitāb al-Amānāt* 239. Cf. Altmann, *Saadya Gaon* 172, who translates 'on the mount of Galilee'. See for a description of the *Jabal al Jalil*, Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems* 77.

24 Wieder, *Judean Scrolls* 21 n. 4.

25 Buber, *Lekach Tob*, *Parasjat Balaq* 2:258. Cf. Horowitz, *Qovets Midrašim Qetanim* 2:56; Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 3:141; Eisenstein, *Otsar Midrašim* 2:389; Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 103. See Ginzberg, *Unknown Jewish Sect* 216 n. 33, who wrongly states: '...nor the very ancient source quoted by R. Tobiah b. Eliezer...mention him [the Ephraimite Messiah]'. A parallel tradition in *Tefillat Rabbi Shim'on bar Yohai* (Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 277) does not mention the MbJ.

26 Wieder, *Judean Scrolls* 21.

27 Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 3:XXIX n. 1.

28 Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 99 n. 4.

29 Baron, *History* 2:179, cf. 398 n. 11. See the discussion on the remark of Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus* 42:11 ('Et interea Iudaeorum seditio...oppressa'), in Stem, *Greek and Latin Authors* 2:499-501. Cf. Avi-Yonah, *Geschichte* 181-87; Schäfer, *Geschichte* 196-97; Geiger, 'Ha-Mered Bimei Gallus'; Stemberger, *Die römische Herrschaft* 100-03; Schäfer, 'Der Aufstand gegen Gallus Caesar'.

30 Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 99 n. 4.

31 Lévi, 'L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel' 135. See Marmorstein, 'Doctrine of Redemption' 117.

32 Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 2:60; Eisenstein, *Otsar Midrašim* 2:390; Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 320. On the *Otot ha-Mashiah*, see Baron, *History* 5:143-45; Stemberger, *Die römische Herrschaft* 141-42.

Galilee and that he will be their king, but adds to this the sober statement that most of the Israelites will remain in their exile, for it will not become clear to them that the end has come.<sup>33</sup>

As noticed already by L. Ginzberg,<sup>34</sup> Ibn Tibbon has misunderstood the Arabic *al bait al mukaddas*, which has to be interpreted as Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup> Altmann, in his turn, incorrectly renders Ibn Tibbon's *beit miqdash* by 'place of the Temple'.<sup>36</sup> Saadya does not refer to a possible rebuilding of the Temple or renewal of the sacrificial worship which has been alluded to in several of the apocalyptic midrashim (see above).

Of much interest is the addition of Hai Gaon who records that they (the MbJ and the men who rally around him), after their arrival at Jerusalem, will slay the procurator of the king of Edom (*ha-paqid 'asher l'maelak 'edôm*) and the people who will be with him.<sup>37</sup> Apparently, this leans upon a similar account in the *Otot R. Shim'on b. Yohai*<sup>38</sup> where, in contrast to most of the other sources, the MbJ is said to have been at first successful and to have killed the king of Edom, crowning himself with the crown that had been returned to Jerusalem by the king of Edom. Elsewhere, in the *Otot ha-Mashiah*, we are told,<sup>39</sup> that the MbJ will kill the king of Edom, destroy the city of Rome, and remove part of the implements of the Temple, hidden in the house of the Emperor Julian.

(c) Then they will be surprised by a man named Armilus who will wage war against them and conquer the city and subject its inhabitants to massacre, captivity, and disgrace. Included among those that will be

slain will be that man from among the descendants of *Joseph*.

1. In Tannaitic and Amoraic sources the final battle in the end of days is fought against the so-called 'collective anti-Messiah',<sup>40</sup> Gog and Magog, or Gog and his allies. There is no consistent and clear picture in these sources as to the question by whom this anti-Messiah will be opposed. The same uncertainty is to be found in post-Talmudic sources, designating as Gog's adversary in turn the MbD and the MbJ. In most of the apocalyptic midrashim Gog is replaced by Armilus, although sometimes -as it is in Saadya's account- both adversaries are on the apocalyptic scene.<sup>41</sup>

Saadya is not the first to mention the appearance of Armilus,<sup>42</sup> with whom various legendary tales are connected. The Gaon makes no mention of these popular traditions, as for instance his birth in Rome from a marble stone in the shape of a beautiful girl. One of his appellations is *maelak 'az-panim*, according to Dan 8:23, elsewhere he is called *bæn-satan*. He is sometimes presented with terrifying physical features:

The hair of his head is dyed, and his hands hang down until the steps of his feet, and the length of his face is a span, and his stature is twelve cubits high, and his eyes are deep, and he has two skulls.<sup>43</sup>

It would be of interest to study these physiognomic traditions, which as I. Gruenwald remarks are meant to 'define the moral and spiritual qualities of a person'<sup>44</sup> against the background of similar traditions in Qumran-sources

33 Lewin, *Otzar Ha-Gaonim* 6/2, p. 72. Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 135. Cf. Jacobs, *Theology in the Responsa* 22-23.

34 Ginzberg, 'Armilus' 119.

35 See for the name *al bait al mukaddas*, Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems* 83.

36 Altmann, *Saadya Gaon* 173.

37 Cf. Lewin, *Otzar Ha-Gaonim* 6/2, 72.

38 According to the Cambridge Genizah text which was published by Marmorstein ('Les signes du Messie' 183). Cf. Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 312. On the different titles of this work, see Townsend, 'Minor Midrashim' 389.

39 See the sources and literature mentioned in n. 32.

40 Klausner, *Messianic Idea* 497.

41 See the juxtaposition of Armalgus (Armilus) and Gog in targum Pseudo-Yonatan on Deut 34:3.

42 One may, of course, as Ginzberg ('Armilus' 2:118) does, call him 'the earliest trustworthy authority'. Thus, similarly, Sarachek, *Doctrine of the Messiah*, 43

43 See *Sefer Zerubbavel* (Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot* 2:502; Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 79; Lévi, 'L'Apocalypse de Zerobabel' 143, has a shorter version). Cf. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend* 156-57 ('The Antichrist in the Character of a Monster'). For the different mythological explanations, see Hurwitz, *Die Gestalt* 141-43.

44 Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* 218.

(4Q186),<sup>45</sup> in talmudic writings and Merkavah mysticism, and in several Apocalypses (*Apoc. of Elijah* 3:14-17; *Apoc. of Daniel* 9:16-26; *Greek Apoc. of Ezra* 4:29-32).<sup>46</sup>

The name Amilus has been variously interpreted, the prevailing scholarly opinion being that it has to be understood as derived from *Romulus*, one of the legendary founders of Rome.<sup>47</sup>

It is of particular interest to note that, according to some of the apocalyptic sources, the confrontation of Armilus with the MbJ will take place at the *Eastern Gate* of Jerusalem. In other traditions there are allusions to the fact that, after the defeat of the MbJ, his corpse will remain cast out before the *gates of Jerusalem*.<sup>48</sup> With these sources one may compare the tradition found in the 'additional' targum on Zech 12:10 where it is said: 'Gog will kill him [the Ephraimite Messiah] before the *gates of Jerusalem*'.<sup>49</sup>

2. Support for the idea of a slain Messiah Saadya finds in Zech 12:10. From the same biblical passage he derives that after his death people will weep over the MbJ and will mourn over him. Saadya's report of this crucial event is extremely scanty, in contrast with the extensive descriptions in most of the apocalyptic midrashim - all of them referring to the passage quoted - which contain embellishments of this tradition as regards the duration of the mourning (41 days) or the place where his corpse will be found, etc... In the *Book of Zerubbabel* the MbJ is said to be buried by the Holy-One- Praised-Be-He in the tombs of the Judean kings.<sup>50</sup> A connected idea is found in the *Otot ha-Mashiah* which narrates that the 'Messiah of the Lord' (here the name for the MbJ)<sup>51</sup> will be killed and the ministering angels

will come and take him and conceal (bury) him with the Fathers of the World.<sup>52</sup>

(d) Now there will come upon the Jewish nation at that time great misfortunes, the most difficult to endure being the deterioration of their relationship with the governments of the world, who will drive them into the wildernesses to let them starve and be miserable.

The severe sufferings which the people of Israel will have to endure in the messianic future and their expulsion to the wilderness are a common theme in all (minor) apocalyptic writings. Undoubtedly this is based upon the parallelism between the events of the first redemption and their recurrence in the messianic era. The scriptural foundation for this view are the visions of Daniel and the prophecies of Ezekiel. Thus they generally assume that, as a result of 'a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time' (Dan 12:1), Israel will be forced to live in the desert for 45 days<sup>53</sup> (which is based on Dan 12:11-12). Several names are employed to define this desert, such as 'wilderness of the peoples' (Ezek 20:35, cf. *War Scroll* 1:3), 'the desert of reeds', 'desert of marshes', or more specifically the 'desert of Judah / of Ammon and Moab'. To describe the hardships of this 'desolate wasteland', these writings quote from the Book of Job in which one reads: 'They pluck saltwort and wormwood; the roots of brooms are their food' (Job 30:4).

The emphasis which is laid by Saadya on the 'deterioration of Israels relationship with the governments of the world' may have its background in the *Otot haMashiah* where it is pointed

45 See Allegro, *Qumrân Cave 4*, 88-91.

46 Cf. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 1:745-46, 767-68, 575.

47 See Klatzkin, 'Amilus' 476. For similar and other theories, see Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge* 282n.; Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend* 53, 105; Dalman, *Der leidende...Messias* 14; Hurwitz, *Die Gestalt* 142-53; Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 3:XVIII n. 1; Lévi, 'L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel' 58-61; Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 37 n. 26, 51 n. 67; Krauss, *Lehnwörter* 1:241-43; Stenberger, *Die römische Herrschaft* 140.

48 Cf. *Nistarot shel rabbi Shim'on b. Yohai* (Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 3:80; Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 195); *Sefer Zerubbabel* (Lévi, 'L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel' 137; Even Shemuel, *id.* 81). See Hurwitz, *Die Gestalt* 153-54.

49 Churgin, *Targum Jonathan* 138 (= Smolar-Aberbach, *Studies* 366). See also *Midr. Teh.* 60:11 (ed. Buber, 305): 'Nechemya ben Husiel dies before the gates of Jerusalem'.

50 Cf. Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 81.

51 Elsewhere the term is employed for Aaron, cf. *Midr. Teh.* 2:3 (Buber, p. 25).

52 Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 2:61; Eisenstein, *Otsar Midrashim* 2:391; Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 321.

53 Cp. the midrashic tradition of the MbD being hidden during 45 days. Just as the first redeemer, i. e. Moses, disappeared for some time, so will the last. See Urbach, 'Redemption and Repentance' 201-02; *id.* *Sages* 686; Ginzberg, *Legends* 6:340, n. 112; Ginzberg, *Unknown Jewish Sect* 224 n. 76, 235; Higgins, 'Jewish Messianic Belief' 184 (300).

out that 'all nations of the world will expel Israel from their countries and will not allow them to dwell with them in their countries.'<sup>54</sup>

(e) As a result of what has happened to them, many of them will desert their faith, only those purified remaining. To these *Elijah the prophet* will manifest himself and thus the redemption will come.

The apostasy of many as a result of growing pressure and sufferings constitutes an important factor in the description of apocalyptic events which are accompanied by the appearance of the MbJ.<sup>55</sup> This may reflect the growth of anti-Jewish measures (*gezerot*) of the Byzantine emperors in the post-Justinian period.<sup>56</sup>

One of the many tasks of Elijah at the time of redemption is the revivification of the dead (cf. *mSotah* 9:15). According to several of the texts discussed above, and also according to Saadya, Elijah will revive the dead MbJ. See for instance *Pereq R. Yoshiyyahu* (Jellinek, *Bet Ha-Midrash* 6:115): 'The third miracle: he resurrects Nehemiah ben Husiel, who was killed in the gates of Jerusalem'. That rabbinic tradition assigns Elijah the task of the revivification of the dead is undubitably based on his resuscitation of the widow of Zarphat's son. In one source (*Seder Eliyahu Rabba* 18, p. 97/98) this son is explicitly identified with the MbJ.<sup>57</sup>

In the *Book of Zerubbabel* Elijah is assisted in his task by the enigmatic figure of Hephziba (in the biblical history, see 2 Kgs 21:1, the mother of King Manasseh and the wife of Hezekiah), the mother of Menahem ben Ammiel, the Davidic Messiah, who plays no further role in any of the other apocalyptic midrashim.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusions

We now may summarize our conclusions. As mentioned earlier, it has been maintained by renowned scholars that Saadya first and foremost made use of the *Book of Zerubbabel* in presenting the elements of his description of the MbJ. It seems, however, quite evident from the foregoing that he employed other sources as well. Thus we have shown that he relies in some cases upon the *Aggadat HaMashiah* (pace L. Ginzberg)<sup>59</sup> as against the *Book of Zerubbabel*. By contrast Saadya once has a striking parallel with the *Otot haMashiah* as against both the *Book of Zerubbabel* and *Aggadat HaMashiah*. His description of the appearance of Armilus and of the death of the MbJ is surprisingly restrained in comparison with the colourful details in the *Book of Zerubbabel*. Use of the *Otot ha-Mashiah* can also be demonstrated in the emphasis which is laid by Saadya on the 'deterioration of Israel's relationship with the governments of the world'.

Of course there is no conclusive evidence that Saadya knew these sources in the form now before us in the (far from definitive) text-editions, but at least there is reason to question whether his one and only source has been the *Book of Zerubbabel*. To decide whether he may have been acquainted with other sources as well, further investigation of the traditions used in his *Ma'amar Ha-Ge'ullah* would be required.

54 Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 2:61; Eisenstein, *Otsar Midrashim* 2:391; Even-Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* 321.

55 See, for instance, the *Aggadat ha-Mashiah*, Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 142.

56 Avi-Yonah, *Geschichte* 255; Schäfer, *Geschichte* 206.

57 Wiener, *The Prophet Elijah* 68.

58 Lévi, 'L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel' 138. Cf. Baron, *History* 5:141. See also Isa 62:4 and Berger, 'Ayalta' 212 ('a name given by Isaiah to the future redeemed Jerusalem'). Cf. Patai, *Messiah Texts* 122-30; Martola, 'Serubbabels Bok' 13-15.

59 Ginzberg, 'Amilus' 119 ('...but the rôle ascribed there to the Messiah, son of Joseph, shows that this Midrash is not Saadia's source').

## APPENDIX

### *Heinemann's theory: A militant messiah and a dying messiah*

In light of the above considerations, we shall now return to Heinemann's theory (see the introduction above), which has been highly influential.<sup>60</sup> Heinemann criticizes all other scholars for neglecting, as a result of *optical illusion*, the in his view basic difference between the earliest sources, which speak of a 'militant, victorious Messiah' and the later ones, which make reference to his death.<sup>61</sup> He, therefore, argues that there are sources which are older than the two passages in *bSukkah* 52a which refer to the death of the Mbj. He agrees with Klausner's statement that the *bavli*-sources 'though tannaitic, need not be earlier than the post-Hadrianic period'.<sup>62</sup> (I may remark here that we have to bear in mind that both passages which speak of the Mbj who will be killed, seem to refer to a well-known tradition, the first being an accepted homiletic interpretation of Zech 12:10, the second a *baraita* reflecting a common apocalyptic explanation of the second Psalm).<sup>63</sup>

In favour of his argument that the idea of a militant Messiah is of an early date, Heinemann cites several sources:

(a) Targum Pseudo-Yonathan to Exod 40:11. Here, the MbE is said to descend from Joshua: '...and on account of the MbE who will come forth from him [Joshua], through whom the House of Israel will defeat Gog and his associates in the end of days'. There is no parallel to this in the other Palestinian Targums, nor is there any other allusion in targumic or midrashic sources

to a battle of the Mbj with Gog, since the latter is always said to fall into the hands of the King Messiah (cf. FT to Num 11:26: 'In the final end of days Gog and Magog and their armies will go up against Jerusalem; and they will fall into the hands of the King Messiah'). In our view, the Ps-Yon text is closely related to similar traditions in the minor apocalyptic midrashim referring to a final battle in the end of days between Gog and the Mbj (see above). If this targumic tradition should, indeed, be an early one, it is surprising that it is not reflected in the Palestinian targums to Deut 33:17, where it is said that the 'sons of Joseph go out to war against those who hate them.. These are the myriads of the Amorites that Joshua son of Nun, who was of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim, slew'.<sup>64</sup>

(b) Targum to Cant 4:5, 4:7. In tg. Cant 4:5, and its shorter variant tg. Cant 7:4, the MbD and the MbE are described as the 'two redeemers who will redeem you in the future' and compared to the redeemers of the first redemption, Moses and Aaron. The tg. to Cant has been dated by R. Loewe in the seventh century<sup>65</sup> and although it may contain earlier traditions we have no reason to assume that they are pre-Hadrianic. Similar references to the two Messiahs (*Midr. Teh* 87:4, p. 378) confirm this judgement.

(c) We do not know at what time the 'Anointed for War', one of the four craftsmen of Zech 2:3 as explained in *bSukkah* 52b and in several midrashim,<sup>66</sup> came to be identified with the Mbj. If we accept L. Ginzberg's opinion that in the Talmudic passage the designation Mbj has been substituted for the more original Anointed-for-War (originally, according to Ginzberg, an honorific for Elijah),<sup>67</sup> this passage would presuppose such an identification. The tradition of *bSukkah*

60 So, for example, with regard to the recent studies of Skarsaune (*Proof from Prophecy* 395-97) and of Agus (*Binding of Isaac* 207-21). Skarsaune has suggested, starting from Heinemann's theory, that Christians may have adopted the Mbj concept and 'turned it to their advantage' (p. 396). This might explain the Joseph (= Christ) tradition in Justin's *Dialogue* 91:1-3, with its peculiar interpretation of the 'hom of the unicom' (= cross) of Deut 33:17. According to Skarsaune it reflects a triumphant Messiah, which is supposed to be based on a pre-Bar Kokhba version of the Mbj tradition. Agus explains the death of the Mbj as 'martyrdom for the sake of deliverance' (*Binding of Isaac* 209).

61 Heinemann, 'Messiah of Ephraim' 6, 9.

62 Heinemann, 'Messiah of Ephraim' 2. Cf. Klausner, *Messianic Idea* 489-92.

63 This Psalm is supposed to refer to Gog and Magog, see *bBerakhot* 7b, 10a; *bAvoda Zara* 3b.

64 Cf. *Gen. Rabba* 75:12, p. 698; *Num. Rabba* 1:12. To Joshua ben Nun, aggadic tradition ascribes the future war with Amalek, which in post-Tannaitic sources gradually came to be identified with the 'Evil-Kingdom'. For this one may compare tg. Yon on Judges 5:14: 'From those of the House of Ephraim there arose Joshua ben Nun (and) he was the first to wage war against the House of Amalek...' (Sperber, *Bible in Aramaic* 2:56).

65 Loewe, 'Apologetic Motifs' 165. Cf. the Dutch study of Mulder, *De targum op het Hooglied* 18-22.

66 Hurwitz, *Die Gestalt* 80-81; Ginzberg, *Unknown Jewish Sects* 239-47; Martola, 'Anointed for Battle'.

67 Ginzberg, *Unknown Jewish Sect* 247.

52b has been ascribed to rabbi Simeon heHasid, who is to be regarded as a Palestinian Amora of the third century.<sup>68</sup> We find the same identification in *Num. Rabbah* 14:1:

'Ephraim is also the defence of My head' (Ps 60:9) - This refers to the Anointed for War who comes from Ephraim.. (Cf. *Gen. Rabba* 99:2, p. 1274: 'the Anointed for War, who comes from Joseph..').

There is no evidence, however, that any of these sources are of pre-Hadrianic times.

(d) Heinemann furthermore finds support for his thesis in the well-known tradition that Esau will fall only by the hands of the sons of Rahel, ascribed to Rabbi Samuel bar Nahman, a third-century Amora, a tradition which can be found in several passages of *Gen. Rabba*.<sup>69</sup> (Cf. also Ps-Yon on Gen 30:25). I cannot agree with Heinemann's remark that these are all comparatively early midrashic sources, nor is there sufficient reason to assume that they are earlier than the sources which speak of the death of the MbJ. Heinemann himself rightly wonders why 'teachers of the third century and after faithfully continue to transmit the older version as they received it, even though they must already have been aware of the new conception of the death of Messiah ben Ephraim'.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> But see Ginzberg, *Unknown Jewish Sect* 239 n. 124. Bacher, *Agada der bab. Amoräer* T7n. 8, was of the opinion that Simeon he Hasid was to be regarded as a Tanna, but corrected his view in *Ergänzungen und Berichtigungen* (included in the second edition of his book) p. 9: 'Es ist sogar mit Bestimmtheit anzunehmen, daß der nur mit der aramäischen Form des Epitheton als "der Fromme" bezeichnete Simon ein palästinensischer Amora des 3. Jahrhunderts war.' Urbach, *Sages* 781 n. 26, wrongly states that Bacher regarded Simon as a Tanna.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *Gen. Rabba* 73:7, p. 851; 97, p. 1224; 99:2, p. 1274. It is called an 'aggadic tradition' (*masoret*), see Bacher, *Exegetische Terminologie* 1:107-09, 2:115.

<sup>70</sup> Heinemann, 'Messiah of Ephraim' 8 n. 31.

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