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The Lion/Lamb of God and the Messiah ben Joseph/ben David: The Impact of the Living and Dynamic Tradition of the Church on the Interpretation of the Word of God¹

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Abstract

While scrolling through the pages of the Book of Revelation, one can appreciate the beauty of salvation history through the liturgical lens of God’s victory over the forces of evil and thus envisage its accomplishment in the Paschal event of the Messiah’s death and resurrection. As the story unfolds, however, the stunning triumph of “the lion of Judah” (Rev 5:5) must come to terms with the ostensive fiasco of the “slaughtered lamb” (Rev 5:6). This article intends to exemplify how the living and dynamic Tradition of the Church, down to its Jewish roots, can profoundly empower the unveiling “of the truth revealed in the Scriptures” (*Verbum Domini* [VD] 17) as a pastoral resource in Biblical Theology for the hermeneutical horizon of human history.

Keywords:

Lion, Lamb, Living Tradition, Messiah ben Joseph, Messiah ben David, Revelation

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The Messiah, lion to vanquish, made himself lamb to suffer.
He went up on the wood to be bridegroom, to die,
and left his blood as dowry, for his virgin bride.
And descended into hell in search of the lost sheep,
and with her ascended into Heaven,
bringing her into the house of the Father.

St. Victorinus of Pettau²

Introduction

“In Revelation 5, the drama begins”³. A mighty angel emphatically voices out a question of the highest importance⁴. This in turn creates a general sense of anxious anticipation for an equally crucial heavenly answer. The answer will in fact come as Good News of exceptional significance, which is meant to reach the entire universe, turning bitter tears into loud songs of joy (cf. Rev 5, 2-13; Rom 10, 13-15; 16, 25-27; and I Cor 1, 21-24). Soon afterwards, an elder calls the discomfited and tearful John to look up and witness the physical prowess of *a powerful and victorious lion, the only living being ever capable of completely fulfilling God’s salvific will*, while this creature takes up the papyrus roll God holds in his right hand and, by breaking open its seals, fully carries out his redemptive plan (see Rev 5, 1-5). Yet, when John turns around expecting to gaze at “the lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev 5, 5), what

² VICTORINUS OF PETTAU, *Comm. on Apoc. 5, 2* (SC 423, p. 76). The poetical rendition of the original text quoted above is from Francisco José GÓMEZ ARGÜELLO WIRTZ, “The Messiah, Lion to Vanquish”, in: *He Rose from Death. Songs for the Neocatechumenal Communities*, TIPAR - Poligrafica Editrice, Rome, 2018, p. 297. Cf., also, P. CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA, *Triunfar muriendo*, vv. 1730-42, in: V. GARCÍA RUIZ (ed.), *La segunda esposa y Triunfar muriendo. Edición de las dos versiones, estudio, bibliografía y notas*, Auto sacramentales completos 2, Kassel, Pamplona, 1992, pp. 180-81; and QUODVULTDEUS OF CARTHAGE, *The First Homily on the Creed 6.1–5* (CCL 60, pp. 305–63), in: Thomas M. FINN (ed.), *Quodvultdeus of Carthage: The Credal Homilies. Conversion in Fifth-Century North Africa*, Ancient Christian Writers 60, The Newman Press, Mahwah, N.J., 2004, pp. 37-38.

³ Donald A. CARSON, *For the Love of God: A Daily Companion for Discovering the Riches of God’s Word*, vol. 1, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL., 1998, p. 15.

⁴ See the unique use of the Greek verb κηρῦσσω (lit. “to herald, proclaim, announce”) in Rev 5, 2, which as a *hapax legomenon* in the Book of Revelation underlines the gravity of the matter it introduces.

he actually sees is “an upright slaughtered lamb” (Rev 5, 6). In this final book of the Bible, which is “an Apocalypse of Jesus Christ ([Rev] 1, 1)”⁵, why is Jesus first introduced as a lion, and then portrayed solely as a lamb⁶? Is this lion-lamb shift in emphasis accidental, or does it carry historical-eschatological value?

Numerous scholarly explanations have by now been offered in answer to the aforementioned questions⁷. One question which remains unanswered,

⁵ Anthony R. NUSCA, *The Christ of the Apocalypse: Contemplating the Faces of Jesus in the Book of Revelation*, Emmaus Road, steubenville, OH., 2018, p. 2.

⁶ Cf. Rev 5, 5-6.8.12-13; 6, 1.16; 7, 9-10.14.17; 12, 11; 13, 8; 14, 1.4.10; 15, 3; 17, 14; 19, 7.9; 21, 9.14.22-23; 22, 1.3.

⁷ See, e.g., David E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC 52, Thomas Nelson, Dallas, TX., 1997, pp. 338-53; Carson M. BAY, “Lion of the Apocalypse: A Leonine Messiah in the Book of Revelation”, in: *Biblical Research* 60 (2015), pp. 65-93; David L. BARR, “The Lamb Who Looks Like a Dragon? Characterizing Jesus in John’s Apocalypse”, in: *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, SBLSS 39, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 2006, pp. 205-20 (esp. pp. 208-10, 216); Charles K. BARRETT, “The Lamb of God”, in: *New Testament Studies* 1 (1954), pp. 210-18; Greg CAREY, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric”, in John J. COLLINS (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, pp. 218-34 (esp. pp. 230-32); Andrew S. JACOBS, “The Lion and the Lamb: Reconsidering Jewish-Christian Relations in Antiquity”, in: Adam H. BECKER and Annette Y. REED (eds.), *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, TSAJ 95, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2003, pp. 95-118; David J. MACLEOD, “The Lion Who is a Lamb: An Exposition of Revelation 5:1-7”, in: *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164, no. 655 (2007), pp. 323-40; Harry O. MAIER, “Staging the Gaze: Early Christian Apocalypses and Narrative Self-Representation”, in: *Harvard Theological Review* 90, no. 2 (1997), pp. 131-54; Patricia M. McDONALD, “Lion as Slain Lamb: On Reading Revelation Recursively”, in: *Horizons* 23, no. 1 (1996), pp. 29-47; Robert H. MOUNCE, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI., 1998, pp. 131-33; NUSCA, *The Christ of the Apocalypse*, pp. 13-14, 39-65; Ian PAUL, “The Book of Revelation: Symbol, Image, and Metaphor”, in: S. MOYISE (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2001, pp. 131-48; James L. RESSEGUIE, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI., 2009, pp. 115-24 (esp. p. 117); David A. DESILVA, *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*, WJK Press, Louisville, KY., 2009, pp. 101-2; Rebecca SKAGGS and Thomas DOYLE, “Lion/Lamb in Revelation”, in: *Currents in Biblical Research* 7, no. 3 (2009), pp. 362-75; Brent STRAWN, “Why Does the Lion Disappear in Revelation 5? Leonine Imagery in Early Jewish and Christian Literatures”, in: *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 17, no. 1 (2007), pp. 37-74; and Francesco G. VOLTAGGIO, *Il leone che si è fatto agnello: Studi esegetici su Cristo Agnello e Servo di YHWH alla luce del sottofondo ebraico*, *Il filo scarlatto* 10, Chirico, Napoli, 2017, pp. 199-228.

and which I propose to address here, is whether the idea of a Second “Coming” (Gk. παρουσία: see I Cor 4, 5; Phil 4, 5; I Thess 3, 13; Heb 10, 25.37; Jas 5, 7-9; I Pet 4, 7; I John 2, 28) or “Apocalypse/Revelation” (Gk. ἀποκάλυψις: cf. I Cor 1, 7; II Thess 1, 7; I Pet 1, 7.13; 4, 13) of the Christ was originally formulated by Christianity, or was somehow present before that as part of God’s plan of salvation from the beginning. In other words, did Jesus propose a new idea, unknown to his contemporaries (see, e.g., Mark 8, 38; Matt 24, 37.39; John 14, 3), or was something prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures — a prophecy of which perhaps the Church soon lost sight — that he would have to return in triumph “to fulfil” (Gk. πληρῶσαι: Matt 5, 17)? If so, where in the mine of “divine Revelation” must one search for the expression of the concept of the Messiah’s Second Coming or Apocalypse/Revelation, a concept which we Christians tend to take for granted? This study on the Lion/Lamb of God and the Messiah ben Joseph/ben David aims at drawing its readers beyond the observations of current exegesis into new scholarly appreciation of the interpretative impact that the “oral” tradition can have on the “written,” in a Book of the Bible that begins with the title, “The revelation of [or ‘about’] Jesus Christ” (Rev 1, 1), and ends with the bold liturgical acclamation: “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22, 20)⁸.

⁸ For the possible meaning and use of the Greek “general” genitive in Rev 1, 1, see M. ZERWICK, *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples*, SPIB 114, Rome, 1963 (repr. 2005), pp. 12-14. For the significance of an “integrated” Catholic approach to Scripture, see John BERGSMAN and Brant PITRE, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA., 2018, pp. 7-15. In contrast to the genuine ignorance of so many, the Catholic notion of “divine Revelation” as including both “written” and “oral” traditions, with the latter being essential for the former (cf. Luke 24, 27; *Dei Verbum* 8; and *Verbum Domini* 17), has its roots in the very faith of the Jewish people, who generally speak of two “Torahs” (Gen 26:5), namely, the *Tôrāh šebiktab* and the *Tôrāh šebe’alpēh*, both of which were given by God to Moses at Mount Sinai (cf. bBer 5a; bGit 60b; bYom 28b; bShab 31a; and mAv 1:1). See Renée BLOCH, “Ecriture et tradition dans le Judaïsme: Aperçus sur l’origine du midrash”, in: *Cahiers Sioniens* 8, no. 1 (1954), pp. 9-14; Roger LE DÉAUT, “La tradition juive ancienne et l’exégèse chrétienne primitive”, in: *Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 51, no. 1 (1971), pp. 31-50; David W. HALIVNI, “The Breaking of the Tablets and the Begetting of the Oral Law: A History of ‘Torah Shebe’al Peh’”, in: *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 21 (2007), pp. 137-63; and Francesco G. VOLTAGGIO, *La oración de los padres y las madres de Israel. Investigación en el Targum del Pentateuco. La Antigua tradición judía y los orígenes*

Sacred Scripture and Messianic Expectations

When one looks at the infancy narratives in the Gospels, one can imagine how attentively Mary must have participated in the Synagogue liturgies of her little town, and with what fervour she “would have listened to the Old Testament, while meditating in her heart upon the Messianic promises, comparing [Gk. συμβάλλω, lit. ‘throwing or bringing together,’ Luke 2, 19] the events of her own life with the Word of God [author’s translation]”⁹. What sort of Messiah would she have yearned to bring into the world? What earnest aspirations would her fellow villagers have likewise nourished in view of their prophetic Scriptures?

As evinced by the texts discovered amid the cliffs and caves of the Judaeen Desert and along the shores of the Dead Sea, by the intertestamental writings and by the New Testament literature alike, “At the time of Jesus there existed no normative doctrine of the Messiah; [...] divergent, or

del cristianismo, BiMi 33, Editorial Verbo Divino, Estella, 2010, pp. 31-42. The well-known NT expression comparing the Word of God with a “two-edged [Gk. δίστομος, lit. ‘double-mouthed’ or ‘having two mouths’] sword” (Heb 4, 12) may likewise be thought of as a Judaeo-Christian reference to the same idea (cf., also, Rev 1, 16; 2, 12). Be that as it may, the Pontifical Biblical Commission (*The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 2002, par. 22) and the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (*Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis of the Roman Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 1985, par. 1.3) have clearly and respectively stated that, “On the practical level of exegesis, Christians can [...] learn much from Jewish exegesis practiced for more than two thousand years”, and that an assessment of the common patrimony of the Church and Judaism, “with due awareness of the faith and religious life of the Jewish people as they are professed and practised still today, can greatly help us to understand better certain aspects of the life of the Church”.

⁹ Francesco G. VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede in Terra Santa: Attesa, avvento, Natale del Messia*, vol. 2, Chirico, Napoli, 2018, p. 70. As Voltaggio (Ibid., p. 45) suggests, “In particular, Miriam of Nazareth certainly cherished the biblical and Midrashic traditions relating to the Old Testament Miriam, since she bore her name [author’s translation]”. For Mary’s profound existential and vocational enlightenment at the Annunciation, see Federico SUAREZ, *Mary of Nazareth*, 2nd ed., Scepter Publishers, New York, N.Y., 2003, pp. 9-61. For the link between Miriam and the Messiah(s), see n. 29 of the present study.

even conflicting, ‘Messianic’ ideas and movements operated”¹⁰ side by side. Expectations for a Davidic Messiah’s glorious advent and triumphant mission were incredibly widespread among Jesus’ contemporaries¹¹. Even

¹⁰ Nils A. DAHL, “Messianic Ideas and the Crucifixion of Jesus”, in: James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, Fortress, Minneapolis, MN., 1992, p. 389. Cf., also, Brook W. R. PEARSON, “Dry Bones in the Judean Desert: The Messiah of Ephraim, Ezekiel 37, and the Post-Revolutionary Followers of Bar Kokhba”, in: *Journal for the study of Judaism* 29, no. 2 (1998), pp. 193-94; and Rivka ULMER, “The Contours of the Messiah in *Pesiqta Rabbati*”, in: *Harvard Theological Review* 106, no. 2 (2013), p. 119.

¹¹ According to Flavius Josephus (37/38-100 AD), for instance, at least seven historical figures of Jesus’ time rebelled against Rome and were acclaimed by their own Zealotic followers as “Kings of the Jews” and/or political (pseudo-)“Messiahs”. See FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *B.J.* 2:55, 118 (H. St. J. THACKERAY et al. (eds.), *Josephus*, 10 vols., LCL, W. Heinemann, London, 1926–1981, vol. 2, pp. 342-45, 366-69); *A.J.* 17:271-72, 278-85 (Ibid., vol. 8, pp. 498-505); *A.J.* 18:3-4, 23 (Ibid., vol. 9, pp. 4-7, 20-21); and *A.J.* 20:97-98 (Ibid., vol. 10, pp. 52-54). For intertestamental, New Testament, and rabbinic references, see *PsSol* 17:21-51 (James H. CHARLESWORTH [ed.], *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1983-1985, vol. 2, pp. 667-69); Mark 10, 47-48; 12, 35; 15, 7; Luke 1, 32.69-71; John 4, 25; 6, 14; 7, 41-42; 18, 36.40; Acts 1, 6; 5, 36-37; Matthew V. NOVENSON, “Why Does R. Akiba Acclaim Bar Kokhba as Messiah?”, in: *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 40, no. 4 (2009), pp. 551-72; and Mark L. STRAUSS, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology*, JSNT.S 110, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1995, pp. 40-43, 45-48, 57-74. For the Messianic hope in the Dead Sea Scrolls literature, see *1QS* 9:11 (Florentino GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, trans. Wilfred G. E. WATSON, Brill/Eerdmans, Leiden/Grand Rapids, MI., 1996, pp. 13-14); *1QSa* (*1Q28a*) 2:11-22 (Ibid., pp. 127-28); *1Q28b* (Ibid., p. 432); *4Q175* 9-20 (Ibid., p. 137); *4Q246* (Ibid., p. 138); *4Q252* 5:1-6 (Ibid., p. 215); *11Q13* 2:15-19 (Ibid., p. 140); *CD A* 12:23-13:1, 14:19 (Ibid., pp. 43-44); *CD B* 19:10-11, 20:1 (Ibid., pp. 45-46); Craig A. EVANS, “The Messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls”, in: Richard S. HESS and Daniel CARROLL (eds.), *Israel’s Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI., 2003, pp. 85-101; STRAUSS, *The Davidic Messiah*, pp. 43-45; and Albert M. WOLTERS, “The Messiah in the Qumran Documents”, in: Stanely E. PORTER (ed.), *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, Eerdmans, Cambridge/Grand Rapids, MI., 2007, pp. 75-89. For the Messianic hope in general, see Ronald E. CLEMENTS, “The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament”, in: *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 43 (1989), pp. 3–19; Arthur W. KAC, *The Messianic Hope: A Divine Solution for the Human Problem*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI., 1975, pp. 3-105; Shemaryahu TALMON, “The Concepts of *māšah* and Messianism in Early Judaism”, in: James H. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Messiah Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity: The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins*, Fortress, Minneapolis, MN., 1992, pp. 79-115; and VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, pp. 69-132.

in non-Jewish circles, anticipation of some sort of golden age was rampant. Thus, almost forty years before Jesus' birth, even such an illustrious Roman poet as Virgil wrote of the imminent birth of a royal scion: "Now is come the last age [...] Now the Virgin returns [...] now a new generation descends from heaven on high [...] the birth of a child [...] a golden race [...] a king [...] He shall have the gift of divine life [...] the herds shall fear not huge lions [...] The serpent, too, shall perish [...] the hour will soon be here — O thou dear offspring of the gods, mighty seed"¹². Within the Judaeo-Christian world, similar expectations were usually founded upon various scriptural passages (e.g., Gen 3, 15; 49, 10; Ps 72[71]; etc.), among which stands out the one associating both "lion" and "lamb" (cf. Rev 5, 5-6) with the birth of a "little child" (cf. Rev 12, 2) from Jesse's stock, destined to rule the world with great power and majesty (see Isa 11, 1.6-7)¹³.

¹² VIRGIL, *Eclogues* 4:1-63 (*Virgil*, trans. H. Rushton FAIRCLOUGH, 2 vols., LCL 63–64, Harvard University Press, London/Cambridge, MA., 1916-1918, vol. 1, pp. 28–33). As Voltaggio points out, this description evokes images that display surprising affinities with the biblical text of Isaiah 11:1-9. See VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, pp. 77-78.

¹³ As John J. COLLINS ("The Royal Psalms and Eschatological Messianism", in: David HAMIDOVIĆ (ed.), *Aux origines des messianismes juifs: Actes du colloque international tenu en Sorbonne, à Paris, les 8 et 9 juin 2010*, SVT 158, Brill, Leiden, 2013, p. 77) points out, "The Messianic texts from around the turn of the era construct[ed] their hopes for the future by drawing on older scriptures that had by then attained authoritative status". For the main Biblical texts prophesying the coming of a Davidic Messiah, see Isa 11, 1; Jer 23, 5; 30, 9; Ezek 34, 23-24; 37, 24-25; Hos 3, 5; Mic 5, 2; and STRAUSS, *The Davidic Messiah*, pp. 35-40. For the Messianic interpretation of Gen 3, 15, see Raymond A. MARTIN, "The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15", in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84, no. 4 (1965), pp. 425-27; Michael B. SHEPHERD, "Targums, New Testament, and Biblical Theology of the Messiah", in: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51, no. 1 (2008), pp. 45-58 (esp. pp. 52-53); and BerR 23:5. For that of Gen 49, 10, see Joseph BLENKINSOPP, "The Oracle of Judah and the Messianic Entry", in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80, no. 1 (1961), pp. 55-64; Edwin M. GOOD, "The 'Blessing' on Judah", in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82, no. 4 (1963), pp. 427–32; BerR 98:13; bSan 98b; and TgOnk on Gen 49, 10. For that of Ps 72(71), see Walter KAISER, "Psalm 72: An Historical and Messianic Current Example of Antiochene Hermeneutical *Theoria*", in: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52, no. 2 (2009), pp. 257-70; bSan 98b; and TgPs on Ps 71, 1.

Simultaneously with this “strong and persistent stream of royal-Davidic expectations”¹⁴, other (less numerous and therefore less prevalent) “predictions” envisaged the rather paradoxical and mysterious figure of a suffering Messiah who, despite his righteous and humble state in life, was to accomplish a great mission through the endurance of great sufferings and tribulations (see, esp., Isa 52, 13-53, 12; Zech 9, 9; and 12, 10)¹⁵. In the New Testament, Luke is the Evangelist who appears to be most familiar with these traditions (see Luke 24, 25-26.46; Acts 3, 18; 17, 3; and 26, 23). In his Gospel, for instance, Jesus himself reprimands two of his disciples

¹⁴ STRAUSS, *The Davidic Messiah*, p. 49.

¹⁵ Thus, at least three centuries prior to the Christian era, and in terms reminiscent of Wis 2, 10-20, even a Greek philosopher of the stature of Plato (*The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, 2 vols., LCL, Harvard University Press, London/Cambridge, MA., 1930-1935, vol. 1, pp. 122-25) considers the fatefulness of the sufferings destined to the just as follows: “the just man [...] we must strip him bare of everything [...] Though doing no wrong he must have the repute of the greatest injustice, so that he may be put to the test [...] let him hold on his course unchangeable even unto death, seeming all his life to be unjust though being just [...] the just man will have to endure the lash, the rack, chains [...] and finally, after every extremity of suffering, he will be crucified” (*Resp.* 2:361c-362a). According to the corresponding biblical understanding (see, e.g., the sufferings of the Old Testament righteous figures of Joseph, Job, Jeremiah, etc.), the Messiah, as the just one par excellence, needs likewise to undergo great sufferings and persecutions. For the New Testament reception of such Old Testament traditions, see, e.g., Ps 2, 1-2.9 (cf. Acts 4, 24-28; Rev 2, 27; 12, 5; 19, 15); 22, 1-19 (cf. Mark 15, 34; Matt 27, 35.43.46; John 19, 24); Wis 2, 18-20 (cf. John 5, 18); Isa 52, 13-53, 12 (cf. Acts 8, 32-35; I Pet 2, 22-25); Zech 9, 5.9 (cf. Matt 21, 5; John 12, 15); and 12, 1.9-10 (cf. John 19, 37; Rev 1, 7b; JUSTIN, *Dial.* 32). See, also, COLLINS, “The Royal Psalms and Eschatological Messianism”, pp. 80-88; George A. GUNN, “Psalm 2 and the Reign of the Messiah”, in: *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169, no. 676 (2012), pp. 427-42; Clay A. HAM, *The Coming King and the Rejected Shepherd: Matthew’s Reading of Zechariah’s Messianic Hope*, New Testament Monographs 4, Sheffield Phoenix Press, Sheffield, 2005, pp. 23-106 (see, esp., p. 95, n. 46); KAC, *The Messianic Hope*, pp. 58-116; Gerard ROUWHORST and Marcel POORTHUIS, “‘Why do the Nations Conspire?’ Psalm 2 in Post-biblical Jewish and Christian Traditions”, in: Alberdina HOUTMAN et al. (eds.), *Empsychoi Logoi. Religious Innovations in Antiquity. Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van der Horst*, Brill, Leiden, 2008, pp. 434-35; Serge RUZER, *Early Jewish Messianism in the New Testament: Reflections in the Dim Mirror*, Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 36, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 2004, 2020, pp. 59-61, 161-232; James E. SMITH, *What the Bible Teaches about the Promised Messiah*, T. Nelson, Nashville, TN., 1993, p. 426; and ULMER, “The Contours of the Messiah”, pp. 125-28.

with the following words: “Oh, how foolish you are and how slow [of heart] to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary [Gk. ἔδει] that the Messiah should suffer [these things] before entering into his glory? Then, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things [written] about himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24, 25-27).

Taking into consideration the two aforementioned Messianic ideas, namely, that of a triumphant lion-like Messiah and that of a suffering lamb-like one, and noting the absence in the prophetic literature of any clear mention of a Messiah coming twice, scholars throughout the centuries have wondered if and how these two opposing traditions could have developed side by side and how they could be reconciled. Would it be possible that not one, but two Messiahs are in fact envisaged to come and fulfil God’s sovereign salvific plan? Or should one speak of alternative “scripts,” such that the Messiah, in his one and only advent, will manifest himself either in glory or in suffering, depending on how well or badly his people has behaved¹⁶?

Living Oral Tradition and Messianic Expectations

When one looks back at the Judaeo-Christian sources and considers the ancient oral traditions that accompanied and interpreted the written ones, the results of one’s investigation become all the more fascinating¹⁷. All

¹⁶ See, e.g., Larry BRANDT, “Messianic Prophecies – First Things First”, in: *Jews for Jesus UK* (2010), accessed on April 22, 2020, <https://www.bethinking.org/is-the-bible-reliable/messianic-prophecies-first-things-first>.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Robert CHISHOLM, “A Theology of the Psalms”, in: Roy B. Zuck (ed.), *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, Moody Press, Chicago, IL., 1991, pp. 257-304; and José COSTA, “Le Messie judéo-chrétien et les rabbins: étude de quelques motifs”, in: David HAMIDOVIĆ (ed.), *Aux origines des messianismes juifs: Actes du colloque international tenu en Sorbonne, à Paris, les 8 et 9 juin 2010*, SVT 158, Brill, Leiden, 2013, pp. 203-27. For a survey of the diverse Jewish medieval interpretations of the Messianic eschatological expectations, see Martha HIMMELFARB, *Jewish Messiahs in a Christian Empire: A History of the Book of Zerubbabel*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., 2017, pp. 144-45; Eric LAWEE, “‘Israel Has No Messiah’ in Late Medieval Spain”, in: *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (1996), pp. 245-79; David C. MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, Campbell Publications, Newton Mearns, Scotland, 2016, pp. 159-242; David B. RUDERMAN, “Hope Against Hope: Jewish and Christian Messianic Expectations in the Late

in all, among Jesus' contemporaries, belief in the Messiah's coming was already an essential element of the Jewish faith and identity¹⁸. However, as recommended by the Jewish sages of old (bGit 43a: "One does not understand words of Torah unless one has stumbled over them")¹⁹, the rabbis chose to "stumble over" the meaning of the Messianic prophecies in search of a way around the problem which is the focus of this article. Confronted with two biblical trends of thought: on the one hand, that of a Messiah who would come and reign forever on "the throne of David his father" (Luke 1, 32; cf. Isa 9, 6-7), without his body being allowed to "experience corruption" (Acts 2, 27; cf. 13, 35; and Ps 16, 10) and, on the other hand, that of a Messiah who "must suffer" (Acts 26, 23; cf. Isa 53, 3) greatly and "be killed" (Luke 9, 22; cf. 18, 32; and Isa 53, 8-9), they came up with what later came to be known in the Synagogue as the teaching of the two Messiahs²⁰.

Middle Ages", in: *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, New York University Press, New York, N.Y., 1992, pp. 299-302; and Jan A. SIGVARTSEN, *Messiah ben Joseph: A Type in both Jewish and Christian Traditions*, GHSTL.MS 1, GlossaHouse, Wilmore, KY., 2018, pp. 33-40. For the Messianic expectations in contemporary Jewish thought, see Reuven KIMELMAN, "The Messiah of the Amidah: A Study in Comparative Messianism", in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, no. 2 (1997), pp. 313-20.

¹⁸ Cf. Menachem KELLNER, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986, pp. 17-18, 63-65; and LAWEE, "'Israel Has No Messiah,'" pp. 256-60.

¹⁹ Reinhard NEUDECKER, "Does God Visit the Iniquity of the Fathers Upon Their Children? Rabbinic Commentaries on Exod 20:5b (Deut 5:9b)", in: Reinhard NEUDECKER (ed.), *Rabbinic Literature – A Rich Source for the Interpretation and Implementation of the Old and New Testaments: Selected Essays*, AnBib studia 7, GBP Press, Rome, 2016, p. 133, n. 10.

²⁰ See, e.g., Thomas GRIEBEL, *Der sterbende Messias Ben Joseph und der leidende Messias Ben David in der rabbinischen Literatur*, GRIN Verlag, München, 2007; Jacob LIVER, "The Doctrine of the Two Messiahs in Sectarian Literature in the Time of the Second Commonwealth", in: *The Harvard Theological Review* 52, no. 3 (1959), pp. 149-85; Jeffrey F. MORTON, "The Doctrine of the Two Messiahs among the Jews", in: *The Baptist Review* 3, no. 9 (1881), pp. 64-73; Herman L. STRACK and Paul BILLERBECK, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud & Midrash*, vol. 2, trans. Jacob N. CERONE, Lexham Press, Bellingham, WA., 2022, pp. 319-48; and Naphtali WIEDER, "The Doctrine of the Two Messiahs among the Karaites", in: *Journal of Jewish Studies* 6, no. 1 (1955), pp. 14-25. For a similar twofold teaching in Pseudepigraphic and Dead Sea Scrolls writings, cf. George R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, "The Two Messiahs in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs", in: *The Journal of*

Theological Studies 48, no. 189/190 (1947), pp. 1-12; Raymond E. BROWN, "The Messianism of Qumran", in: *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1957), pp. 53-82; John J. COLLINS, "Testaments", in: Michael E. STONE (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, CRINT II.2, Van Gorcum/Fortress Press, Assen/Philadelphia, PA., 1984, pp. 325-56 (see, esp., p. 339); *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, ABRL, Doubleday, New York, N.Y., 1995; "What was Distinctive about Messianic Expectation at Qumran?", in: J.H. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 2, Baylor University Press, Waco, TX., 2006, pp. 71-92; Frank M. CROSS, "Notes on the Doctrine of the Two Messiahs at Qumran and the Extracanonical Daniel Apocalypse (4Q246)", in: D. W. PARRY and S. D. RICKS (eds.), *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Conference on the Texts from the Judean Desert, Jerusalem, 30 April 1995*, STDJ 20, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 1996, pp. 1-13; Devorah DIMANT, "Qumran Sectarian Literature", in: STONE (ed.), *The Literature of the Jewish People*, pp. 483-550; David FLUSSER, "Jewish Messianism Reflected in the Early Church", in: *Judaism of the Second Temple Period 2: The Jewish Sages and Their Literature*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI., 2009, pp. 258-88; Florentino GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, "Two Messianic Figures in the Qumran Texts", in: Eibert J. C. TIGCHELAAR (ed.), *Qumranica Minora II: Thematic Studies on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 64, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 2007, pp. 13-32; Albert L. A. HOGETERP, *Expectations of the End: A Comparative Traditio-Historical Study of Eschatological, Apocalyptic and Messianic Ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, STDJ 83, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA, 2009; Marinus DE JONGE, "Two Messiahs in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs?", in: Id. (ed.), *Jewish Eschatology, Early Christian Christology, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Collected Essays*, SNT 63, Brill, Leiden, 1991, pp. 191-203; Robert B. LAURIN, "The problem of the Two Messiahs in the Qumran Scrolls", in: *Revue de Qumrân* 4, no. 1 (1963), pp. 39-52; Gerbern S. OEGEMA, *The Anointed and His People: Messianic Expectations from the Maccabees to Bar Kochba*, JSP.S 27, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1998; Lou H. SILBERMANN, "The Two Messiahs of the Manual of Discipline", in: *Vetus Testamentum* 5, no. 1 (1955), pp. 77-82; Shemaryahu TALMON, "Waiting for the Messiah at Qumran", in: J. NEUSNER, W. S. GREEN, and E. FRERICHS (eds.), *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 111-37; Géza G. XERAVITS, "The Early History of Qumran's Messianic Expectations", in: *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 76, no. 1 (2000), pp. 113-21; "Moses Redivivus in Qumran?", in: *Qumran Chronicle* 11, no. 1/4 (2003), pp. 91-105; *King, Priest, Prophet: Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library*, STDJ 47, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 2003; *From Qumran to the Synagogues: Selected Studies on Ancient Judaism*, DCLS 43, De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, MA., 2019; and Johannes ZIMMERMANN, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran: Königliche, priesterliche und prophetische Messiasvorstellungen in den Schriftfunden von Qumran*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 1998.

“One a *Messiah ben Joseph*, of the house of Ephraim, or Joseph, and one [a] *Messiah ben David*. Concerning the Messiah ben Joseph she [the ancient Synagogue] teaches that he would live in poverty and misery, and finally be obliged to suffer death; but concerning the Messiah ben David she teaches that he would not see death, but after redeeming the chosen people he would forever reign over them. The Josephic Messiah undertakes a battle with the nations of the earth, Gog and Magog, by whom he himself is destroyed, while the Davidic Messiah overthrows the tyrants, redeems Israel, and establishes with the help of God a kingdom, the limits of which are extended to the ends of the world”²¹.

²¹ August WUENSCHÉ, “The Messiah son of Joseph and the Messiah Son of David”, in: *The Peculiar People: A Christian Monthly Devoted to Jewish Interests* 5, no. 7 (1892), p. 153. Several (both Jewish and Christian) scholars argue for a late dating of this tradition, attributing it either to the time after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70 AD) or the death of Bar Kokhba (135 AD). See, e.g., Joseph HEINEMANN, “The Messiah of Ephraim and the Premature Exodus of the Tribe of Ephraim”, in: *Harvard Theological Review* 68, no. 1 (1975), pp. 1-15; Edward G. KING, *The Yalkut on Zechariah: Translated with Notes and Appendices*, Deighton, Bell & Co., Cambridge, 1882, p. 85; David C. MITCHELL, “The Fourth Deliverer: A Josephite Messiah in 4Q175”, in: *Biblica* 86, no. 4 (2005), p. 547, n. 9; *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 4-7; PEARSON, “Dry Bones in the Judean Desert”, pp. 192-201; and Harry SYSLING, “Saadya’s Portrayal of the Messiah Ben Joseph”, in: *Nordisk Judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 13, no. 2 (1992), pp. 80-81. However, Voltaggio (*Alle sorgenti della fede*, pp. 130-31) is probably right when he writes: “As a specialist in the dating of the traditions contained in the Jewish literature, I can’t hide my strong doubts as to Heinemann’s theory [...] Besides the supporting text-based evidence, the reason Heinemann’s dating is not convincing is as follows: it is hard to imagine that after 135 AD, in a period characterized precisely by major controversies with the Christians, the rabbis would have introduced the new figure of a suffering Messiah who dies outside the gates of Jerusalem, who is killed by pagans and who is even called *ben Yôsēp*, ‘son of Joseph,’ which would have been a hint towards both the Old Testament figure of Joshua [Heb. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ], whose name Jesus [Aram. יֵשׁוּעַ] bore, and Jesus’ own putative father, as mentioned by the Gospels [see, e.g., Luke 3, 23; 4, 22; John 1, 45; 6, 42]. Besides, Christians quite soon saw Jesus in relation to Joseph: both were sold by their brothers to save the people. That would have meant handing over to Christians on a silver platter new grounds for arguing against themselves that such a Messiah was precisely Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had not recognized! For the same reason, it would be illogical to think that the Jews would have shaped such a tradition on the basis of the Jesus of the Gospels. Consequently, in our opinion, the traditions concerning the Messiah son of Joseph or Ephraim can be traced back to the Second Temple period [586 BC-70 AD], although, as we have seen, the predominant

On the one hand, as attested by numerous and varied rabbinic sources, one can see how “some of the traditions concerning the suffering Messiah [...] constitute a kind of ‘relic’ [author’s translation]”²² (see, e.g., IV Ezra

expectations had to do with a triumphant Messiah [author’s translation]”. For a similar opinion, see Israel KNOHL, “On ‘the Son of God,’ Armilus and Messiah Son of Joseph”, in: *Tarbiz* 68 (1998), pp. 13-38; and Charles C. TORREY, “The Messiah Son of Ephraim”, in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 66, no. 3 (1947), pp. 253-77 (see, esp., p. 255). For some text-based evidence in support of an early date for such traditions, see Frédéric MANNS, “Messiah son of Ephraim”, in: *Studium Biblicum Annual 2005* [Chinese], Studium Biblicum, Hong Kong, 2008, pp. 99-104, as well as the bibliographic references in David C. MITCHELL, “Firstborn *Shor* and *Rem*: A Sacrificial Josephite Messiah in *1 Enoch* 90:37–38 and Deuteronomy 3:17”, in: *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 15, no. 3 (2006), pp. 226-27; “Messiah ben Joseph: A Sacrifice of Atonement for Israel”, in: *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 10, no. 1 (2007), p. 77, n. 1; “A Dying and Rising Josephite Messiah in 4Q372”, in: *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 18, no. 3 (2009), pp. 181-205; and *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 7-9. For Joseph and Joshua as Messianic types in the writings of the Rabbis and Church Fathers, see MITCHELL, “Firstborn *Shor* and *Rem*”, pp. 221–23; and *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 122-30.

²² VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, p. 130. As Raphael Patai (*The Messiah Texts: Jewish Legends of Three Thousand Years*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, MI., 1988, p. 166) indicates, “the author of 4 Ezra unmistakably refers to the Messiah [...] when he puts words in the mouth of God to the effect that after four hundred years (counted from when?), ‘My son the Messiah shall die.’” For the text of IV Ezra 7, 29, cf. CHARLESWORTH, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, p. 537; MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 78-79; and TORREY, “The Messiah Son of Ephraim”, pp. 259-63. For some recent studies on 4 Ezra, see Florentino GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, “Traditions Common to 4 Ezra and the Dead Sea Scrolls”, in: Eibert J. C. TIGCHELAAR (ed.), *Qumranica Minora I: Qumran Origins and Apocalypticism*, STDJ 63, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 2007, pp. 153-67; Matthias HENZE et al. (eds.), *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*, JSJ.S 164, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 2013; Karina M. HOGAN, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom Debate and Apocalyptic Solution*, JSJ.S 130, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 2008; Soonyoung D. HONG, “The Son of Man in the Similitudes of Enoch and 4Ezra: An Adaptation of the Synoptic Son of Man as a Response to the Fall of the Temple”, in: *Evangelical Quarterly* 93 (2022), pp. 319-337; and Juan Carlos OSSANDÓN WIDOW, *The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible: An Analysis of Josephus and 4 Ezra*, JSJ.S 186, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 2018, pp. 87-216. See, also, the late 1st c. BC apocalyptic text known as *The Gabriel Revelation*, discovered in Jordan, around the year 2000, not far from the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. As Israel Knohl (*Messiahs and Resurrection in ‘The Gabriel Revelation,’* KLJS 6, Continuum, New York, N.Y., 2009, p. xiii) comments, “The text, like other texts of its time [...] presents a Messiah quite different from the conventional messianic view: not the heroic son of David, but the suffering son

7, 29), the struggling remains of a living tradition buried beneath the sands of ancient Jewish literature, which nonetheless is recently being unearthed, especially within Jewish scholarly circles²³.

of Joseph, who will die in battle and be resurrected three days later. The death of the Messiah son of Joseph is, according to this tradition, a necessary stage in the redemptive process”.

²³ Among the latest publications on the subject, see, e.g., the aforementioned monograph by David C. Mitchell (*Messiah ben Joseph*, 2016) and his several articles mentioned in the present study, as well as Daniel T. LANCASTER, “The Two Sisters: How Two Messiahs Became One Messiah”, in: *Messiah Journal* 120 (2015), pp. 23-28; and Jan A. SIGVARTSEN, *Messiah ben Joseph* (2018). Although challenges in the dating and attribution of the Jewish traditions can be a real problem, it is a matter of fact that extant rabbinic literature can occasionally serve as a historical source for New Testament study, and vice versa, the Gospels can at times be helpful in dating ancient rabbinic traditions. See, e.g., Moshe LAVEE, “Rabbinic Literature and the History of Judaism in Late Antiquity: Challenges, Methodologies and New Approaches”, in: M. GOODMAN and P. ALEXANDER (eds.), *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine*, PBA 165, Oxford University Press for the British Academy, Oxford, 2010, pp. 319-51 (see, esp., pp. 332-36); Frédéric MANNS, “Rabbinic Literature as a Historical Source for the Study of the Gospels’ Background”, in: *Liber Annuus* 52 (2002), pp. 217-46; and Giuseppe G. SCOLLO, *The Strength Needed to Enter the Kingdom of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Luke 16,16 in Context*, WUNT 2.485, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2019, p. 15, n. 94. Indeed, a few criteria do exist, which can be used as a scientific means of dating rabbinic traditions. As pointed out by Frédéric Manns, these criteria can be both internal (e.g., the occurrences of names, such as Hillel and Šammai; the mention of Temple liturgies and Jewish feasts of pilgrimage; historical events and characters, such as Agrippa or Vespasian; style, vocabulary and archaisms) and external (e.g., the comparison with Qumran texts, Greek [LXX] and Aramaic [Targums] translations, Apocryphal writings [such as Jubilees, Enoch, etc.], parallel texts in the Tosefta, and archaeological findings). See Frédéric MANNS, *Leggere la Mišnah*, trans. Giulio BUSI, StBi 78, Paideia Editrice, Brescia, 1987, p. 178; and VOLTAGGIO, *La oración de los padres y las madres de Israel*, pp. 39-42. Concerning the tradition of a suffering Josephite Messiah, David C. Mitchell (“Rabbi Dosa and the Rabbis Differ: Messiah ben Joseph in the Babylonian Talmud”, in: *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 8, no. 1 [2005], pp. 80, 83, 89) specifically writes: “One would assume at least that it existed [...] in the first half of the first century [AD] [...] while the Temple was [still] standing [...] and [...] known in some form around 100 BC”. For a survey of this tradition in the Dead Sea Scrolls and inscriptions, see MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 83-104. For the pairing of the Messiah ben Joseph with the prophet Jonah, see Ferdinand E. DEIST, “Die teken van Jona en Jesus as Messias”, in: *Skrif en Kerk* 14, no. 1 (1993), pp. 20-27; and Yehuda LIEBES, “Jonah as the Messiah ben Joseph”, in: *Studies in Jewish Thought* 3 [Heb.], no. 1-2 (1983/4), pp. 269-311.

Thus, one reads in the Targum on Cant 4, 5: “Your two redeemers who are going to redeem you, the Messiah son of David and the Messiah son of Ephraim, are like Moses and Aaron, sons of Jochebed, who are compared to two fawns, twins of a gazelle. By their merits, they would feed the people, the house of Israel, for forty years in the wilderness with manna, plump fowl, and water from Miriam’s well”²⁴. In other words, the work of deliverance that is to be accomplished by the Davidic and Josephite Messiahs is described in terms of a new Exodus, whose prodigies they need to renew, together²⁵. Specifically, their accomplishments will involve feeding

²⁴ Andrew W. LITKE, *Targum Song of Songs and Late Jewish Literary Aramaic: Language, Lexicon, Text, and Translation*, Supplements to Aramaic Studies 15, Brill, Leiden, 2019, pp. 254-55. For the Targum on Cant 7, 4, cf., also, *Ibid.*, pp. 268-69; MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 114-15; Alexander SPERBER (ed.), *The Bible in Aramaic: Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts*, 4 vols., Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 2004, 2013, vol. 4, pp. 134, 138; and WUENSCHÉ, “The Messiah son of Joseph and the Messiah Son of David”, pp. 155-63. Further evidence on the tradition of a suffering Messiah can also be found in bSan 98a-b; bBM 85a; bSuk 52a; ShirR 2:13; PesR 31:26-27; 36:2-6; 37:2-4; Yalq on Isaiah 499; and Zohar 2:212a. See, e.g., COSTA, “Le Messie judéo-chrétien et les rabbins”, pp. 203-6, 215-16, 220-22; MITCHELL, “Rabbi Dosa and the Rabbis Differ”, p. 89, ns. 41-42; Martin PICKUP, “The Emergence of the Suffering Messiah in Rabbinic Literature”, in: Jacob NEUSNER (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, New Series, SFSHJ 154, Scholars Press, Atlanta, GA., 1997, vol. 11, pp. 143-62; Rivka ULMER, “The Culture of Apocalypticism: Is the Rabbinic Work *Pesiqta Rabbati* Intertextually Related to the New Testament Book *The Revelation to John*?”, in: *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 14, no. 1 (2011), pp. 37-70 (esp. p. 61); “Psalm 22 in *Pesiqta Rabbati*: The Suffering of the Jewish Messiah and Jesus”, in: Zev GARBER (ed.), *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, Shofar Suppl. in Jewish Studies, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, IN., 2011, pp. 106-28; “The Contours of the Messiah in *Pesiqta Rabbati*”, in: *Harvard Theological Review* 106, no. 2 (2013), pp. 115-44; and VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, pp. 101-28. For a survey of the tradition of a suffering Josephite Messiah in the Targums, cf. David C. MITCHELL, “Messiah bar Ephraim in the Targums”, in: *Aramaic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2006), pp. 221-41; and *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 105-16.

²⁵ Thus, Mitchell (“Messiah ben Joseph: A Sacrifice of Atonement for Israel”, p. 94) writes: “the two Messiahs work together in the redemption. In Targum on Cant 4, 5 and 7, 4, they stand shoulder to shoulder like Moses and Aaron, the one providing leadership (Ben David) and the other atonement (Ben Joseph). Since Ben David cannot come without Ben Joseph’s atonement, the latter is crucial to the whole plan of redemption. In fact, he is to Ben David as is Ephraim to Judah: one slain and buried to rise again, one preserved in life; but both to rejoice together in the Messianic time”. Elsewhere, Mitchell (“Rabbi Dosa and the Rabbis Differ”, p. 83) writes: “Here

the people of Israel with a new “manna,” namely, that “unknown” (Deut 8, 3.16; cf. Rev 2, 17) “bread from heaven” (Exod 16, 4; cf. Ps 105, 40; and LXX on Ps 77, 24) that according to the Jewish tradition “is the Torah” (BerR 70:5; cf. Deut 8, 3; Prov 9, 5; Wis 16, 20-21.26; and Amos 8, 11) itself, and most probably, therefore, a “new” interpretation of it²⁶. In fact, the Targum on Cant 4, 5 juxtaposes the two Messiahs, who “are like Moses and Aaron” (Tg on Cant 4, 5), with the beloved’s “two breasts” (Cant 4, 5) of the biblical text, which the rabbis often interpret as an image of the two tablets of the Law²⁷.

[bSuk 52a] Messiah ben Joseph appears in the same scene as the Messiah from David. Therefore the two figures are not part of rival eschatological schemas, but part of the same drama [...] Messiah ben Joseph has been slain by unnamed foes [...] here we learn that this event takes place before Messiah ben David receives authority over the nations. This suggests that a sequence of eschatological events is envisaged, an idea implicit in some biblical texts”. See, also, TORREY, “The Messiah Son of Ephraim”, p. 254.

²⁶ For the text of the Midrash Genesis Rabba quoted above, see Tommaso FEDERICI (ed.), *Commento alla Genesi (Berešit Rabbā)*, UTET, Torino, 1978, p. 574.

²⁷ See RASHI DI TROYES, *Commento al Cantico dei Cantici: Introduzione, traduzione e note a cura di Alberto MELLO, Monaco di Bose*, Spiritualità ebraica, Edizioni Qiqajon, Magnano, BI., 1997, pp. 91-92, 136; and Francesco G. VOLTAGGIO, *Siedi solitario e silenzioso fino ai giorni del Re Messia! Il Targum di Qoèlet. Il Targum delle Lamentazioni*, Il filo scarlatto 5, Chirico, Napoli, 2014, p. 182, n. 56. In fact, according to the Jewish tradition, the Messiah is expected to give a “new” and full interpretation to the Mosaic Law, with special regard to its secret intentions and hidden mysteries (cf. Rev 5:4). Jesus did this explicitly when he preached his Sermon on the Mount/ Plain. Cf. Exod 20, 1-17; 24, 12; Deut 5, 6-21; Matt 5, 1-7, 29; Luke 6, 20-49; and POPE JOHN PAUL II, “Holy Land Pilgrimage: Mass in Korazim”, in: *L’Osservatore Romano. Weekly ed. in English*, 29 March, 2000, Vatican City, no. 13, p. 9. Thus, William D. Davies (*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA., 1980, pp. 72–73, 144) explains: “When the Rabbis taught [...] that the Messiah [...] would bring a new Law, they thought of that Law as new not in the sense that it would be contrary to the Law of Moses but that it would explain it more fully [...] True to this expectation Jesus had come and preached a new Torah from the mount and had yet remained loyal to the old Torah [...] In view of all this, it would not be unnatural for Paul also to believe that loyalty to the new law of Christ [Gal 6, 2] did not involve disloyalty to the Torah of his fathers [...] Paul must have regarded Jesus in the light of a new Moses, and [...] recognized in the words of Christ a *nómos toû Christou* [...] a New Torah”. See, e.g., TJon on Isa 12, 3; BerR 98:9; QohR 1:11; BHM 3:27; MTalp 58a; William D. DAVIES, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come*, SBL.MS 7, Fortress Press, Philadelphia,

The text quoted above mentions also Aaron and Miriam in conjunction with Moses. Aaron is here seen as a type not only of the priestly Messiah, but specifically of the Messiah ben Ephraim (or ben Joseph): both will make atonement for all the people (cf. Lev 16, 23-24.32-33)²⁸. Why is Miriam mentioned in this context? The Jewish tradition attributes the gift of living water in the history of salvation not only to Moses and the Messiah who was to succeed him (see, e.g., Exod 17, 5-6; Deut 18, 15; and QohR 1:9), but also to Miriam's own merits (cf. bBM 86b). Thus, Francesco G. Voltaggio explains: "thanks to her, wells of water were given to the people of Israel in the desert, as for instance the well of Marah, where bitter waters were made sweet (cf. Exod 15, 23-26) [author's translation]"²⁹ and, as a consequence, as

PA., 1952, p. 92; PATAI, *The Messiah Texts*, pp. 247-57; and Peter SCHÄFER, "Die Torah der messianischen Zeit", in: *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 65 (1974), pp. 27-42.

²⁸ Thus, Mitchell ("Messiah ben Joseph: A Sacrifice of Atonement for Israel", p. 81) points out: "[The] Messiah ben Joseph is to take upon himself all the guilt of Israel and die for their sin as a perfect atonement. Thereupon Israel, seeing him pierced, shall repent and mourn for him". Cf. Ferdinand WEBER, *Jüdische Theologie auf Grund des Talmud und verwandten Schriften*, Dörffling & Franke, Leipzig, 1897, p. 362; MITCHELL, "Messiah bar Ephraim in the Targums", pp. 238-39; "Messiah ben Joseph: A Sacrifice of Atonement for Israel", pp. 93-94; and ULMER, "The Contours of the Messiah", pp. 132-34.

²⁹ VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, p. 63. See Germain BIENAIMÉ, *Moïse et le don de l'eau dans la tradition juive ancienne: targum et midrash*, AnBib 98, Biblical Institute Press, Rome, 1984, pp. 8-57, 88-113; and Frédéric MANNS, *Le symbole eau-esprit dans le judaïsme ancien*, SBFA 19, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 195-201. Thus, Voltaggio (Ibid., pp. 65-66) continues: "If, in the Jewish tradition, fresh water was given at Marah and other places thanks to the merits of Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron, such a reality was then fulfilled in the Virgin Mary and us as well: the living water, which flows from Jesus Christ's side, has reached us thanks to the Wellspring, who is Mary herself [author's translation]". Moreover, if these Synagogue traditions were already available in Jesus' days, the pregnant Mary (Heb. מרים; Gk. Μαρία) must have presumably listened to them with the greatest attention, "pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2, 19)! For the importance attributed to the mother of the Messiah in the medieval Hebrew apocalyptic Book of Zerubbabel, cf. KNOHL, *Messiahs and Resurrection in "The Gabriel Revelation"*, pp. 74-76; and HIMMELFARB, *Jewish Messiahs in a Christian Empire*, pp. 5, 10, 35-59, 76, 124, 133, 149-53, 157. For a Christian perspective on the topic, see Rev 12:1-18; Aristide SERRA, *Miryam Figlia di Sion: La donna di Nazaret e il femminile a partire dal giudaismo antico*, Maria di Nazaret 6, Ed. Paoline, Milano, 1997, pp. 19-121; "Una spada trafiggerà la tua vita" (Lc 2,35a): *Quale spada? Bibbia e tradizione giudaico-*

soon as she had died, the Israelites grumblingly suffered the lack of water (cf. Num 20, 1-2; and bTaan 9a).

With regard to the Messiah ben Joseph, David C. Mitchell summarizes the traditions contained in a Talmudic tractate (bSuk 52a), as follows:

“This [i.e., Messiah ben Joseph] is the only name by which he is known in the Talmud, in spite of references to him in the Targums as Messiah ben Ephraim, or in Midrashic literature as Ephraim Messiah or War Messiah [...] He is slain by unnamed foes and is associated with the pierced and lamented hero of Zech 12:10 [...] Messiah ben Joseph is slain before Messiah ben David receives sovereignty over the nations, suggesting that a sequence of events is envisaged [...] Messiah ben Joseph is accompanied by Elijah the prophet, the Righteous Priest Melchizedek and Messiah ben David. Each figure would have had a role to play, suggesting again a sequence of events. A comparison with its precursors shows that a martial Josephite Messiah was one of four expected redeemers as far back as the early first century BC [...] [the] characteristics which define him in later literature [are]: violent death with atoning power, an association with Zech 12:10, and a tendency to provoke dispute”³⁰.

Other traditions, finally, associate the suffering Messiah with the text of Isaiah 53, 4 (“It was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. We thought of him as stricken, struck down by God and afflicted”), and his name to that of “the leper of the house of Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Nasi” (bSan 98b). Voltaggio clarifies this point thus: “Reference is made here to the [Hebrew] term *nāgûa* ‘, which literally means ‘stricken,’ but which in

cristiana a confronto, Marianum/Servitium editrice, Roma/Palazzago, BG., 2003, pp. 53-92; Brant PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary: Unveiling the Mother of the Messiah*, Crown Publishing Group, New York, N.Y., 2018, pp. 60-70, 136-184; and VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, pp. 29-68.

³⁰ MITCHELL, “Rabbi Dosa and the Rabbis Differ”, pp. 89-90. See, also, VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, pp. 114-18. For a survey of the tradition of a suffering Josephite Messiah in the Targums, the Babylonian Talmud, and the various Midrashim, see MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 105-16, 131-230.

the Old Testament connotes specifically one who has been ‘stricken with leprosy’ [author’s translation]”³¹ (see, e.g., II Chr 26, 20 and II Kgs 15, 5). According to another Talmudic text found just a few paragraphs earlier, in fact, when the Messiah comes, one will be able to find him “disguised as a filthy beggar, sitting among the lepers [at the city gate] (in Rome), untying and retying his bandages”³² (bSan 98a).

Concerning the triumphant Messiah ben David, on the other hand, the Jewish tradition has it that he will appear “after the suffering Messiah. He will complete the redemption that the Messiah son of Joseph initiated, and he will fulfil all the prophecies that point to a Messiah of victory and salvation. He will avenge the death of [the] Messiah son of Joseph and, according to some legends, he will resurrect him from the dead”³³ (see.,

³¹ VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, p. 113. Thus, the author (Ibid., p. 113) continues: “The reference to R. Yehuda Ha-Nasi is due to the fact that for thirteen years such a rabbi suffered from a severe illness and in response to it he reacted with faith, even to the point of sustaining that people who suffer are particularly loved by God, since God shows them his mercy in this way [author’s translation]”. In the New Testament, one can see an allusion to such a tradition in Mark 1, 40-45, where after touching a leper, Jesus is clearly depicted like a leper himself, since he “could no longer enter any town openly” (Mark 1, 45; cf. Heb 13, 13; Lev 13, 46; Num 5, 2; and 11QT^a 48:14-17). See VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, p. 114. A fragment found at cave 4 in Qumran (4Q285) appears to mention some, perhaps related, Messianic figure being judged, wounded, pierced, crushed and killed. See James D. TABOR, “A Pierced or Piercing Messiah? – The Verdict is still Out”, in: *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18, no. 6 (1992), pp. 58–59.

³² Ronald L. EISENBERG, *What the Rabbis Said. 250 Topics from the Talmud*, Praeger, Santa Barbara, CA., 2010, p. 196. Cf. Isidore EPSTEIN (ed.), *The Babylonian Talmud*, The Soncino Press, London, 1935, pp. 663-64. It is perhaps not by chance that, in the Jewish tradition, the city of Rome is often symbolized by the enigmatic figure of Gog (cf. Tosefta on Zech 12, 10; PesR 17:8; and TJ on Ezek 39, 16). See Samson H. LEVEY, *The Targum of Ezekiel: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible 13, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1987, pp. 10, 107 (esp., ns. 3 and 19), and p. 109 (esp., n. 10); MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 106-11; SPERBER (ed.), *The Bible in Aramaic*, vol. 3, p. 360; and VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, pp. 116-19, 129-30. For the Messianic character of the servant figure in the Fourth Song of the Book of Isaiah, see, e.g., Cullen STORY, “Another Look at the Fourth Servant Song of Second Isaiah”, in: *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 31, no. 2 (2009), pp. 100-10. For further texts and traditions concerning the Messiah ben Joseph, see PATAI, *The Messiah Texts*, pp. 165-70.

³³ LANCASTER, “The Two Sisters”, p. 23. Cf. Aaron EBY, “Midrash of the Suffering Messiah: Yalkut Shimoni Isaiah 499”, in: *Messiah Journal* 104 (2010), pp. 50-57;

e.g., bSuk 52a-b; PesR 36; and Yalq Isa 499). Thus, a Midrashic fragment makes it clear that: “In the Future to Come, the Anointed of War [or War Messiah] will arise from Joseph. And the Messiah who will arise from Judah (i.e., Messiah ben David) will be stronger than he”³⁴ (BHM 6:96). “[The] Messiah ben David [...] will kill the wicked Armilus [...] and] thereafter the Holy One [...] will gather all Israel who are dispersed here and there”³⁵ (BHM 1:56) and “a built-up Temple will descend from heaven”³⁶ (BHM 3:80; cf. Rev 21, 10). Finally, according to a 1st c. BC pseudepigraphal writing, the Messiah ben David will “smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter’s jar [...] shatter all their substance with an iron rod [...] and] destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth”³⁷ (PsSol 17, 23-24; cf. Ps 2, 9; Isa 11, 4; Hos 6, 5; Rev 2, 27; 12, 5; and 19, 15).

The Historical Potential for the “Two Messiahs” in the Old Testament

At this point, the question may even arise: “From where did Judaism derive the idea that there will be two Messiahs?”³⁸ Is it just a subtle subterfuge used to evade the problem of the two divergent biblical traditions mentioned above? Contrary to the majority opinion, a few scholars contend that the “Messiah ben Joseph was not simply a rabbinic interpretation imposed upon the scriptures, but a belief current in ancient Israel and recorded within the scriptures”³⁹. As a matter of fact, according to their assessment, the rabbis commented on such a “strange and fantastic Messianic expectation”⁴⁰ as if

and PATAI, *The Messiah Texts*, pp. xxxiii-iv, 166, 341. A fragmentary document from Qumran Cave 4 (200 BC - 70 AD), mentions likewise a Messiah figure who is expected to exercise universal dominion, preach the good news to the poor, and “resurrect the dead” (line 12). Cf. Isa 61, 1; Matt 11, 2-6; Luke 4, 18-21; 7, 22-23; and Michael O. WISE and James D. TABOR, “The Messiah at Qumran”, in: *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18, no. 6 (1992), pp. 60-61, 65.

³⁴ PATAI, *The Messiah Texts*, p. 165.

³⁵ PATAI, *The Messiah Texts*, p. 160.

³⁶ PATAI, *The Messiah Texts*, p. 161.

³⁷ CHARLESWORTH, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, p. 667.

³⁸ LANCASTER, “The Two Sisters”, p. 23.

³⁹ MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, p. 5.

⁴⁰ George H. DIX, “The Messiah ben Joseph”, in: *Journal of Theological studies* 27, no. 106 (1926), p. 130.

the teaching of the two Messiahs “is not a theory imperfectly formulated or only temporarily held, but a standard article of faith, early and firmly established”⁴¹.

For instance, according to Edward G. King, “the *germ* of this belief exists even in the Book of Genesis [...] it runs through the whole of Jewish history, disappearing at times but always breaking out again with increased vividness”⁴². More precisely, for King, this tradition has its origin in Jacob/Israel’s farewell discourse (or testament), for the reason that the patriarch’s words prophesy his sons’ destinies and, therefore, the future of their tribes as well (see Gen 49, 1-28). In fact, the promise of a Messianic ruler is here made equally to both Judah (see vv. 8-12, esp. v. 9: “Judah [...] lies down like a lion,” and v. 10: “until the one comes to whom it [i.e., the sceptre] belongs”) and Joseph (see vv. 22-26, esp. v. 24: “from there [Heb. מִשָּׁם] is the Shepherd [Heb. רֹעֵה], the stone [Heb. יָסֵד] of Israel”)⁴³.

Similarly, for Charles C. Torrey, the two Messiahs ben Joseph/ben David and the tribes of Judah and Joseph are so closely related in the history of salvation (cf., e.g., Josh 18, 5b; and Zech 10, 6) that he asks: “can it always be easy to keep the two separate?”⁴⁴ Thus, commenting on chapters 11 and 12 of the fourth apocalyptic Book of Ezra, the author writes: “a lion is heard from the wood [IV Ezra 11, 37] [...] The angel who interprets the vision says (12:31f.): ‘This lion is the Anointed One, whom the Most High has kept unto the end of days.’ Which of the two Anointed Ones? [...] this *must* be the Son of Ephraim”⁴⁵. Even so, one would have expected Torrey to answer “the Son of Judah,” as the text itself suggests

⁴¹ TORREY, “The Messiah Son of Ephraim”, p. 253.

⁴² KING, *The Yalkut on Zechariah*, p. 85. Cf. DIX, “The Messiah ben Joseph”, pp. 130-43; and TORREY, “The Messiah Son of Ephraim”, pp. 253-77.

⁴³ See KING, *The Yalkut on Zechariah*, pp. 85-87. For a study of the Messianic interpretation of Gen 49, 8-12, see Joseph BLENKINSOPP, “The Oracle of Judah and the Messianic Entry”, in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80, no. 1 (1961), pp. 55-64; and Edwin M. GOOD, “The ‘Blessing’ on Judah, Gen 49:8-12”, in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82, no. 4 (1963), pp. 427-32. For the Targumic traditions on the Messiah in Gen 49, see Miguel PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ, *Tradiciones mesiánicas en el Targum Palestinense: Estudios exegeticos*, InstSJ 12, Institución San Jerónimo, Valencia, 1981, pp. 97-169.

⁴⁴ TORREY, “The Messiah Son of Ephraim”, p. 259.

⁴⁵ TORREY, “The Messiah Son of Ephraim”, p. 262. For the texts of IV Ezra 11, 37 and 12, 31-32, see CHARLESWORTH, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, pp. 549-50.

with the expression, one “from the posterity of David” (IV Ezra 12, 32; cf. Gen 49, 9 and Rev 5, 5). After drawing similar conclusions from two other pseudepigraphic works, namely, the Apocalypse of Baruch (chaps. 29-30, and 40) and I Enoch 90, 37-38 (cf. Deut 33, 17), Torrey finally identifies the Josephite Messiah with the “Anointed Ones” mentioned both by Daniel in the prophecy of the “seventy weeks” (see Dan 9, 24-27), and by Zechariah in the enigmatic figures of the “slain hero” and the “two olive trees” (cf. Zech 4, 3.14; 12, 9-11; Yalq on Zech 4, 3; John 19, 37; and Rev 1, 7; 11, 4)⁴⁶.

Finally, a remarkably interesting proposal has lately been advanced by Daniel T. Lancaster. According to him, the biblical source behind the Jewish doctrine of the two Messiahs, and thus a further Old Testament precedent for expecting the Messiah to come more than once in God’s plan of salvation history, is already identifiable in the story of Jacob’s marriage to two sisters, Leah and Rachel, and in the two Messianic dynasties originating from their respective offspring (see Gen 29, 15-30):

“The sisters engaged in an intense rivalry to beget sons for their husband. On a literal level the sisters vied against one another in a competition for the prestige of motherhood and for their husband’s loyalty and affection. On a spiritual level they competed to beget the line of Messiah. The two sisters represent the two kingdoms of the Jewish people: Leah was the mother of the kingdom of Judah — the southern kingdom that remained loyal to the Davidic kings who were from the tribe of her son Judah. Rachel was the mother of the kingdom of Israel — the northern kingdom that followed King Jeroboam who was from the tribe of her son Joseph. Therefore, the two sisters also represent two potentials for bringing forth the Messianic redeemer: one from the tribe of Judah, the firstborn of Leah (after the disqualification of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi), and one from the tribe of Joseph,

⁴⁶ See KING, *The Yalkut on Zechariah*, p. 17; and TORREY, “The Messiah Son of Ephraim”, pp. 263-77. For a more recent study on the subject of the Josephite Messiah in I Enoch 90, 37-38 (ca. 165 BC) and Deut 33, 17, cf. MITCHELL, “Firstborn Shor and Rem”, pp. 211-28; and *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 63-68. For a study of many other possible Old Testament allusions to this Messianic tradition, see *Ibid.*, pp. 11-62 (esp., pp. 49-62, for a detailed survey of the Josephite tradition in the Book of Psalms).

the firstborn of Rachel [...] the Torah tells this story on the principle that the deeds of the fathers are portents [or signs] for the sons. That is to say that the events that took place in the lives of the patriarchs had ramifications throughout Jewish history [...] Jacob's marriage to the two sisters also had ramifications regarding the identity of Messiah"⁴⁷

The author then goes on to develop an interpretation of how those ramifications unfolded in the history of salvation. By custom, the promises which God had originally made to Abraham (cf. Gen 12, 7; 17, 7; 22, 17-18; and Gal 3, 16) should have passed from Abraham to Isaac, and from Isaac to his firstborn, Esau. Even though Esau and Jacob had been at first destined by God to marry, respectively, Leah and Rachel, because of Leah's tearful prayers and cries to God (see BerR 70:15-73:6; cf. CN, TC, TJI, TJII on Gen 29, 17), Jacob was allowed to steal from his brother Esau both the right of primogeniture and the Abrahamic blessings (see Gen 25, 27-34; 27, 1-40), and thus "found himself married to two sisters: the one he had meant to marry [Rachel] and the one to whom HaShem married him [Leah] as a result of his taking Esau's destiny"⁴⁸. Therefore, consistent with the hermeneutic principle of typological prefiguration, in the same way

⁴⁷ LANCASTER, "The Two Sisters", p. 24. This hermeneutic principle of typological prefiguration, used in the postexilic period to narrate the events of the patriarchs, is expressed by a great rabbi of the 12th c. AD Spain, known as Maimonides or Ramban (an acronym for Rabbi Moshè ben Maimon), as follows: "Whatever happened to the fathers is a sign [siman] for the sons" (Charles B. CHAVEL [ed.], *Perushe ha-Torah le-Rabbenu Mosheh ben Nahman (Ramban)*, 2 vols., Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 1959-60, vol. 1, p. 77). In other words, the stories about the deeds of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob function as a prophetic indication of what is meant to occur in future generations. Cf. BerR 40:8; 48:6; Tan 9; bSot 34a; I Cor 10, 11; and Gal 3, 16-18. Cf., also, Mauro PERANI, "storia e prefigurazione tipologica nell'esegesi biblica di Nahmanide", in: *Rivista Biblica* 37 (1989), pp. 329-41; and Jean-Louis SKA, "Basic Characteristics of Ancient Literature", in: *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*, trans. Sr. Pascale DOMINIQUE, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, IN., 2006, pp. 165-83 (see, esp., pp. 165-73).

⁴⁸ LANCASTER, "The Two Sisters", p. 25. For the text of the Midrash Genesis Rabba, see FEDERICI (ed.), *Commento alla Genesi (Berešit Rabbâ)*, pp. 581-604. For the Targumic traditions relating to Leah's prayer, see VOLTAGGIO, *La oración de los padres y las madres de Israel*, pp. 245-51.

as Jacob and Esau had jostled each other in Rebekah's womb, so did the two dynasties emerging out of these marriages compete with each other for their respective Messianic lines (cf. Gen 25, 21-23; 30, 8; and BHM 4:79-90)⁴⁹:

“Initially, the LORD vested the Messianic promises with the house of David [see II Sam 7, 13-14] [...] David's son Solomon, however, allowed his many wives to lead him into idolatry, and the LORD punished the house of David by raising up a rival from Rachel's son Joseph, from the tribe of Ephraim [...] just as the LORD had promised a Messiah through the house of David, he now promised a Messiah through the house of Jeroboam [see I Kgs 11, 26-39]. This does not mean that he revoked the promise he had made to David; instead, it introduces the possibility of a second Messiah [...] This Messianic line from the house of Joseph represented a potential future, but Jeroboam the son of Nebat forfeited the offer that HaShem made to him. HaShem's promises to Jeroboam were contingent upon Jeroboam's obedience to the Torah [...] Jeroboam took the kingdom, but he did not remain obedient to the Torah. He introduced idolatry into the worship of the LORD, appointed a new priesthood, and altered the biblical calendar [see I Kgs 12, 26-33]”⁵⁰.

As Rachel, in her attempt to preserve the right of inheritance, had sinned by intentional deception, stealing the teraphim-gods from her father's household (cf. Gen 27, 1-29; 31, 19.34; 35, 2; I Sam 15, 23; and II Kgs 23, 24), so did her descendant, Jeroboam, sin by idolatry (see I Kgs

⁴⁹ As Mitchell (*Messiah ben Joseph*, p. 37) points out, the “Midrash Yelamdenu [...] takes Rachel's words at the birth of Joseph [*Yôsēf*] [...] to mean that a Messiah is to arise from Joseph: ‘The Lord will add [*yosēf*] to me another [*‘ahēr*] son’ (Gen 30:24); [that is,] a son at the end [*‘ah’rôn*] of the age. From this [we learn] that a War Messiah will arise from Joseph, as [in the passage] where it says, ‘For God will appoint to me another [*‘aher*] seed’ (Gen 4:25); [that is,] that a Messiah will arise from him [from Seth]. ‘God has taken away my reproach’ (Gen 30:24). She prophesies that a Messiah will arise from her (BHM 4:79-90).”

⁵⁰ LANCASTER, “The Two Sisters”, pp. 26-27.

13, 33-34), and God penalized his idolatry just as he had that of Solomon⁵¹. Consequently, the promise of a Messianic descendant reverted to the house of David, along with the initial covenantal promises, and “Much as Jacob intercepted the prophetic destiny originally vested with Esau when he took Esau’s blessing and married Leah, so too, the house of David received the forfeited spiritual potential of Ephraim’s messianic dynasty”⁵². In this way, as foretold by the prophets (cf. Ezek 37, 15-28; Hos 2, 2; and Amos 9, 11), God not only kept the promises made initially to the house of David, but also united them with those made later to the house of Joseph, by raising one and only one Messiah who would then appear twice on the world stage, as a ben Joseph and a ben David, respectively⁵³.

The Historical Fulfilment of the Two Comings of Christ in the New Testament

Every reader of the New Testament is familiar with the acclamations of the crowds hailing Jesus as “the Son of David” (Matt 1, 1), particularly in the Synoptics (cf., e.g., Matt 21, 9; Mark 11, 10; Luke 18, 38-39)⁵⁴. However, during his lifetime, Jesus himself asked: “How [Gk. πῶς]” (Mark 12, 35; Luke 20, 41; cf. Matt 22, 41-46) can that be so? Few are those who

⁵¹ Cf. Moshe GREENBERG, “Another Look at Rachel’s Theft of the Teraphim”, in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no. 3 (1962), pp. 239-48.

⁵² LANCASTER, “The Two Sisters”, p. 28.

⁵³ Cf. KING, *The Yalkut on Zechariah*, pp. 86-87; and LANCASTER, “The Two Sisters”, p. 28. For similar but independent implications, see also James M. HAMILTON, “Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah? Tracing the Typological Identification between Joseph, David, and Jesus”, in: *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 4 (2008), pp. 52-77; and Walter KAISER, “The Messiah of Psalm 80”, in: *Bibliotheca Sacra* 174, no. 696 (2017), pp. 387-93.

⁵⁴ Thus, Mitchell (*Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 117-18) comments: “In the three synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke – Jesus is hailed as David’s son, reflecting popular belief that the Messiah was to come from David’s line. The crowd ask if he might be David’s son (Matt 12:23). He is called ‘son of David’ by a Canaanite woman (Matt 15:22), by blind beggars (Matt 20:30-31; Mark 10:47); by Palm Sunday crowds and children in the temple (Matt 21:9, 15; Mark 11:10). Matthew the Evangelist calls him David’s son (Matt 1:1). So does the angel Gabriel (Luke 3:32)”. Cf. KNOHL, *Messiahs and Resurrection in “The Gabriel Revelation”*, pp. 88-93; and MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 117-22.

recognize the significance of the fact that the historical way in which Jesus became the son of David was through his being first “the son of Joseph” (Luke 4, 22; John 1, 45; 6, 42), who was himself a descendant of the house of David (cf. Matt 1, 20; Luke 3, 23.31).

As a matter of fact, some commentators affirm that, “There is no second Messiah in the New Testament, as there was at Qumran”⁵⁵. The same conclusion also applies, as we have seen, in the pseudepigraphic and rabbinic writings. Michael O. Wise and James D. Tabor, for instance, are of the opinion that, “The early Christians, in contrast, focused on a single Messiah or Christ [...] They expected this person to be a descendant of King David and of course saw Jesus of Nazareth in this role (Mark 8:27-30; Acts 2:36)”⁵⁶. And yet, when Jesus inaugurated his ministry and confirmed his Messianic mission as God’s “anointed [Heb. מָשִׁיחַ] one” (Luke 4, 18; cf. v. 21), his fellow townspeople wondered: “Isn’t this the *son of Joseph* [emphasis added]?” (Luke 4, 22). Then, taking him to the brow of the hill, they wanted to hurl him down the cliff headlong (see Luke 4, 29). Could this not be a veiled allusion to the fact that Jesus, the “Nazorean [Gk. Ναζωραῖος]” (Matt 2, 23; Luke 18, 37; from the Heb. נֶצְרִי, lit. the “branch” or “bud” of Isa 11, 1; cf. Isa 60, 21-61, 3; and Luke 4, 14-30), was recognized by his Davidic clan as the *Messiah ben Joseph* and, having as such disappointed their deeply rooted hopes for a *Messiah ben David*, was rather ironically judged as someone worthy of death⁵⁷?

⁵⁵ James C. VANDERKAM, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christianity”, in: Hershel SHANKS (ed.), *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Random House, New York, N.Y., 1992, p. 196. For the scholarly opinion concerning the different portraits of Jesus and the Messiah ben Joseph, see Joel MARCUS, “Are You the Messiah-Son-of-God?”, in: *Novum Testamentum* 31, no. 2 (1989), pp. 130-31.

⁵⁶ WISE and TABOR, “The Messiah at Qumran”, p. 60.

⁵⁷ MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, p. 119. For John’s use of the literary device of the *double entendre*, cf. Earl J. RICHARD, “Expressions of Double Meaning and their Function in the Gospel of John”, in: *New Testament Studies* 31, no. 1 (1985), pp. 96-112; David W. WEAD, “The Johannine Double Meaning”, in: *Restoration Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1970), pp. 106-20; and Jan G. VAN DER WATT, “*Double Entendre* in the Gospel According to John”, in: Gilbert VAN BELLE, Jan G. VAN DER WATT, and Petrus J. MARITZ (eds.), *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar*, BETL 184, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 2005, pp. 463-81.

In the Gospel of John, likewise, we hear of some of Jesus' contemporaries stating grumblingly: "Isn't this Jesus the *son of Joseph* [emphasis added]?" (John 6, 42). As Mitchell rightly observes,

"The crowds believe that the Messiah must be David's son, but think that Jesus does not qualify because he does not come from David's town (7:42). Others do not know where the Messiah will come from (7:27). But none of them ever calls Jesus "son of David." However, near the beginning of John's Gospel, we meet a Messianic testimony not unlike Peter's confession in the synoptic Gospels [see Matt 16:16] [...] Philip [...] confesses that "the one spoken of by Moses and the prophets" is "Jesus (Joshua) son of Joseph of Nazareth," who is the "son of God" and "the king of Israel" (1:45-49). Now, of course, the obvious sense of "son of Joseph" would refer here to Joseph the husband of Mary (6:42). But [...] one must suspect that, by the title "son of Joseph," that is "bar/ben Joseph," John is indicating Jesus, in *double-entendre*, as the expected Messianic Joshua from Joseph's line"⁵⁸.

According to the interpretation of some commentators, in fact, the adulterous Samaritan woman said to have "five husbands" (John 4, 18), whom Jesus met at Sychar "near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son *Joseph* [emphasis added]" (John 4, 5), represents the Ephraimite people of Samaria, "led astray by five idols (II Kgs 17, 24.30-32) and living in illicit union with an amorphous form of worship"⁵⁹. The hope of the

⁵⁸ MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, p. 120. Cf., e.g., FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *A.J.* 9:288 (H. St. J. THACKERAY et al. [eds.], *Josephus*, vol. 6, pp. 152-53); FRANCIS J. MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, SP 4, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN., 1998, pp. 131-32; LORING A. PREST, "The Samaritan Woman", in: *The Bible Today* 30, no. 6 (1992), pp. 367-71; and JAMES D. PURVIS, "The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans", in: DAVID E. ORTON (ed.), *The Composition of John's Gospel: Selected Studies from Novum Testamentum*, BRBS 2, Brill, Leiden/Boston, MA., 1999, pp. 180-82.

⁵⁹ See MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 122-30 (esp., pp. 122-25); and SIGVARTSEN, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 41-42, 94-97. For some early Judaeo-Christian interpretations of the Messianic expectations, see, also, LOUIS MARIÉS, "Le Messie issu de Lévi chez Hippolyte de Rome", in: *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 39 (1951), pp. 381-

townsfolk was then probably that of a Josephite Messiah, descending from the house of Jacob and Joseph (cf. John 4, 25.39-42). Many of the Fathers of the Church (e.g., Ambrose, Augustine, Bede, Chrysostom, Cyprian, Justin Martyr, Origen, Tertullian, etc.) will interpret the patriarchal figure of Joseph in Christological terms, that is, as a Messianic prefiguration or type of Jesus (Aram. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), in the same way as they interpret Joshua (Heb. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), and this might also be why the early Christian preaching readily spread throughout Samaria (cf. John 4; and Acts 8)⁶⁰.

Finally, in addition to the Messianic “Lion/Lamb” depiction of Jesus, the author of the book of Revelation mentions two mysterious “witnesses” (Rev 11, 3), who are set apart or consecrated to accomplish their mission within a symbolic *amount of time* (namely, 1260 days, which correspond to three and half years, or half of seven years: cf. Rev 11, 3 and 12, 6). They will wage war against the beast and will be killed by it (see Rev 11, 7), but after three and a half days, or half of seven days, they will rise up on their feet and ascend to Heaven (see Rev 11, 9-12). The imagery used to describe them is directly related to the idea of oil and anointing (Rev 11, 4: “These are the two *olive trees* [emphasis added] and the two *lampstands* [emphasis added] that stand before the Lord of the earth”), and could well be summed up, a few verses later, by the heavenly voices’ exclamation: “The kingdom of the world now belongs to *our Lord* [emphasis added] and to *his Messiah* [emphasis added], and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11, 15; cf. I Kgs 11, 34-39).

96; Simon C. MIMOUNI, “Jésus: Messie ‘Fils de David’ et Messie ‘Fils d’Aaron’”, in David HAMIDOVIĆ (ed.), *Aux origines des messianismes juifs: Actes du colloque international tenu en Sorbonne, à Paris, les 8 et 9 juin 2010*, SVT 158, Brill, Leiden, 2013, pp. 145-72; and Geza VERMES, *Jésus le Juif. Les documents évangéliques à l’épreuve d’un historien*, Desclée, Paris, 1978, pp. 173-210.

⁶⁰ See MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 122-30 (esp., pp. 122-25); and SIGVARTSEN, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 41-42, 94-97. For some early Judaeo-Christian interpretations of the Messianic expectations, see, also, Louis MARIÉS, “Le Messie issu de Lévi chez Hippolyte de Rome”, in: *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 39 (1951), pp. 381-96; Simon C. MIMOUNI, “Jésus: Messie ‘Fils de David’ et Messie ‘Fils d’Aaron’”, in David HAMIDOVIĆ (ed.), *Aux origines des messianismes juifs: Actes du colloque international tenu en Sorbonne, à Paris, les 8 et 9 juin 2010*, SVT 158, Brill, Leiden, 2013, pp. 145-72; and Geza VERMES, *Jésus le Juif. Les documents évangéliques à l’épreuve d’un historien*, Desclée, Paris, 1978, pp. 173-210.

Although scholars generally agree in seeing in these two mysterious witnesses an allusion to Zechariah's "sons of fresh oil" (cf. Zech 4, 2-3.11-14), when it comes to establishing their identity, it is puzzling that they offer so many diverse solutions (e.g., Joshua and Zerubbabel, Moses and Elijah, Enoch and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, the Church and the Synagogue, Jesus and John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, etc.), failing for the most part to see here a possible allusion to the Jewish tradition of the two Messiahs (Heb. מָשִׁיחַ, lit. "anointed one") already pointed out by Torrey and others (cf. Yalq on Zech 4, 3; and PesR 8:4)⁶¹. After all, is not "Jesus Christ," the Lion/Lamb of God, also characterized in this book *twice* as "the faithful witness" (see Rev 1, 5 and 3, 14)?

In particular, when dealing with the emblematic *amount of time* these two mysterious "testifiers" (Rev 11, 3) will need to fulfil their mission, an oral tradition later recorded in the rabbinic literature affirms that, while the overall length of God's plan of salvation extends through a span of six thousand years altogether - "two thousand of desolation, two thousand of Torah, and two thousand of the days of the Messiah"⁶² (bAZ 9a) - the duration of this latter Messianic era itself can vary from "forty" (bSan 99a) to either "four hundred" (PesR 4a) or "a thousand years" (MTeh 90:17; cf. Rev 20, 1-15)⁶³. Moreover, based on the biblical notions that

⁶¹ See TORREY, "The Messiah Son of Ephraim", pp. 273-77. Edward G. King (*The Yalkut on Zechariah*, p. 17) translates the Midrashic text of *Yalqut Shim'oni* on Zech 4, 3 as follows: "And two olive (trees) were above it. These are the two Messiahs; one the Messiah (anointed) for war, and one the Messiah (anointed) for King over Israel". Cf., also, John J. COLLINS, "The Works of the Messiah", in: *Dead Sea Discoveries* 1, no. 1 (1994), p. 102; KNOHL, *Messiahs and Resurrection in "The Gabriel Revelation"*, pp. 66-68; MITCHELL, *Messiah ben Joseph*, pp. 150-52; and STRACK and BILLERBECK, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 3, pp. 937, 949-50.

⁶² LAWEE, "Israel Has No Messiah", p. 248. The author (*Ibid.*, p. 270) refers then to a further explanation according to which there exist "three stages in eschatological history: one in which the Messiah could not come, another following in which he could come if the Jewish people merited it, and a final period by the end of which the Messiah would come regardless". Could this view be related to the language of the author of the Book of Revelation when he employs the "half of seven" refrain mentioned above (cf. Rev 11, 3.9-12 and 12, 6)?

⁶³ See Everett FERGUSON, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI., 2003, p. 553; and TORREY, "The Messiah Son of Ephraim", pp. 261-62. As the latter (*Ibid.*, p. 261, n. 8) specifies, the idea of a reign of 400 years could have been

a thousand years in God's eyes are like a day come and gone (cf. Ps 90, 4 and II Pet 3, 8), and that God completed all his works in six days (cf. LXX on Gen 2, 2; Exod 20, 11 and 31, 17), an ancient Judaeo-Christian belief divided the history of salvation into six ages of a thousand years each (cf. the 6 occurrences of the expression, "a thousand years," in Rev 20, 1-7), from the creation of the world to its end, predicting that the Messiah would come in the course of the sixth age. Specifically, the 1st millennium would go from Adam to Noah; the 2nd from Noah to Abraham; the 3rd from Abraham to David; the 4th from David to the Babylonian Exile; the 5th from the Babylonian Exile to the Messiah's advent; the 6th from the Messiah's advent to the end of the world; and the 7th epoch would be an everlasting sabbatical rest⁶⁴.

constructed on "the combination of Ps 90:15 with Gen 15:13. The Hebrew people were 'afflicted' for four hundred years, now they will be 'rejoiced' for the same length of time". The number 40 could then allude to the time of Israel's trials and testing in the desert (cf. Num 14, 33-34; Deut 8, 2-4; and Ezek 4, 6). The longest span of a 1000 years seems thus to be the most interesting one. However, as Lawee ("Israel Has No Messiah", p. 253) indicates, other Jewish commentators would argue that "the *days of the Messiah* will last neither decades nor several generations as various earlier authorities had taught. Rather, immediately or soon after the Messiah's arrival, the 'period of resurrection' will begin".

⁶⁴ See, e.g., *Jubilees* 4:30-31; *Epistle of Barnabas* 15:3-5 (SC 172, pp. 182-85); HIPPOLYTUS, *Comm. on Daniel* 4:23 (SC 14, pp. 187-89); IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies* 5, 23:2 and 28:3 (SC 153, pp. 290-94, 358-59); AUGUSTINE, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 9:6-17 (CCL 36, pp. 90-100); *On Genesis against the Manichees* 1:23 (CSEL 91, pp. 104-11); *Contra Faustum* 12:8 (CSEL 25.1, pp. 336-37); *Gospel of Nicodemus* (or *Acts of Pilate*), Part II, Lat. A 12(28) (in Montague R. JAMES, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, pp. 144-45; bRHS 31a; bSan 97b; Aristide SERRA, "'Vi erano la sei giare:' Gv 2,6 alla luce di antiche tradizioni giudaico-cristiane relative ai 'sei giorni' della creazione", in: *Marian Library Studies* 17, no. 15 (1985), pp. 158-83; *Maria e la pienezza del tempo: Meditazioni sul mistero dell'Incarnazione per il Giubileo del Duemila*, Maria di Nazaret 8, Ed. Paoline, Milano, 1999, pp. 29-86; William H. SHEA, "The Sabbath in the Epistle of Barnabas", in: *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 4, no. 2 (1966), pp. 158-61, 164-66; Johannes M. TEVEL, "The Labourers in the Vineyard: The Exegesis of Matthew 20:1-17 in the Early Church", in: *Vigiliae Christianae* 46, no. 4 (1992), pp. 356-80; and VOLTAGGIO, *Siedi solitario e silenzioso*, p. 105, n. 132. Granted that, "as for that day and hour, no one [really] knows it" (Matt 24, 36; cf. Acts 1, 6-7; TgQoh 7:24; and bPes 54b); if one considers that, according to the current Jewish calculations, the year 2024 in the Gregorian calendar corresponds to the 5784th year in the Jewish calendar, and that Jews are still expecting the first and only coming of their triumphant Messiah *ben David*, an

Interpretations such as these, which both Jews (Rabbis) and early Christians (Church Fathers) hold in common, manifest how the living and dynamic Tradition of the Church often finds its roots in an age-old Jewish tradition. Over time, these or analogous traditions help to understand God's plan, and thus contribute to its elucidation within a concrete history of salvation⁶⁵. Thus, if Jesus were to ask an early Christian the same question as that which he asked the Pharisees: "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose Son is He?" (Matt 22, 42), or if he had asked more specifically: "Is He Son of David or Son of Joseph?," their answer could have been along these lines: It is not really a matter of two Messianic figures or "testifiers," *ben Joseph* or *ben David*, *Lion of Judah* or *Slaughtered Lamb*; it is rather a question of two separate "testimonies" or "witnesses" given by the same and only Messiah, in two separate stages or comings (cf. Ezek 37, 15-28; and John 10, 11-18)⁶⁶. The rabbis too could perhaps find an answer to it in the following commentary: "As was the first redeemer [i.e., Moses], so is the last redeemer [i.e., the Messiah]: just as the first redeemer was revealed and then hidden from them [i.e., the children of Israel] [...] (Exod 5, 20) [...] so the last redeemer will be revealed to them and then hidden from them [for a while]"⁶⁷ (RutR 5:6). And so, Mitchell might even be right to

educated guess about the possible end of the world would identify it either at the beginning of the 6th or 7th millennium, namely, in only 216 or 1216 years!

⁶⁵ In this regard, Rabbi Hillel's saying, that "Israel has no Messiah because they have already consumed him in the days of Hezekiah" (bSan 99a), could actually be read by Christians as an allusion to the fact that some of the aforementioned Messianic biblical expectations have already been fulfilled in Jesus' first coming, without however contradicting the eschatological hopes in his second coming. See LAWEE, "Israel Has No Messiah", p. 268. As the author (Ibid., p. 254) implies, the same could be said of "Rav's statement that 'the Israelites are going to eat in the years of the Messiah,'" with reference to the Christian Paschal banquet and Eucharistic sacrifice.

⁶⁶ See MARCUS, "Are You the Messiah-Son-of-God?", p. 135.

⁶⁷ Jacob NEUSNER, *Ruth Rabbah: An Analytical Translation*, BJS 183, Scholars Press, Atlanta, GA., 1989, p. 126. As Kac (*The Messianic Hope*, p. 77) specifies, the abovementioned commentary is given within the context of a Midrashic discussion revolving "around the story of Ruth, who through her marriage to Boaz, became the ancestress of the royal family of David, who in turn became the progenitor of the Messiah [cf. Matt 1, 5-6]". Cf. David BERGER, "Three Typological Themes in Early Jewish Messianism: Messiah Son of Joseph, Rabbinic Calculations, and the Figure of Armilus", in: *AJS Review* 10, no. 2 (1985), p. 142, n. 8; KAC, *The Messianic Hope*, p. 78; and PATAI, *The Messiah Texts*, p. 99. Thus, Kurt Hruby ("Die Messiaserwartungen

conclude: “Perhaps the New Testament writers were not the first Israelites to believe that a second Joshua ben Joseph would die as a sacrifice for the transformation of the human race and then rise to power”⁶⁸.

Conclusion

To sum up, the Messiah ben David is incomplete without the Messiah ben Joseph: to accomplish God’s plan of salvation, both must be present in the same immanent and transcendent person. This truth was admirably fulfilled in Christ, the Messiah ben Joseph/ben David, “The Lion who is the Lamb [...] ‘the centerpiece of the whole tableau’ of John’s description of Heaven”⁶⁹. In fulfilment of Moses’ blessing on the tribe of Joseph (Deut 33, 16; cf. Gen 49, 1.23-26), by the Messiah’s incarnation and cross, God “came down” (Exod 3, 8) and “resided [Heb. *šokēn*]” (Deut 33, 16; cf. Gk. *eskēnōsen*, in John 1, 14) in the burning thorn-bush of human sufferings (cf. Exod 3, 7-8; Ps 91, 15; and Isa 63, 9) to show solidarity with his people’s affliction (see ShemR 2:5), like that pure olive oil feeding the flames of the gold menorah, burning perpetually in the holy presence of God (cf. Exod 25, 31-40; 27, 20; Lev 24, 2-4; I Kgs 11, 36; and Rev 21, 23)⁷⁰. He was humbly crowned with thorns, as a king (see John 19, 2-5),

der Talmudischen Zeit mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Leidens des Messias”, in: *Judaica* 20 [1964], pp. 6-22, quoted in KAC, *The Messianic Hope*, p. 78) clarifies: “The Messiah of the Midrash Ruth Rabba is a king robbed for a time of his kingship, who, however, will then win ascendancy over his adversaries again”. For a possible NT link between the Messiah and the *ʾāpīqômān* (from Gk. ἀφικνέομαι, lit. “to arrive”), in their both being “hidden” for a little while and then revealed, cf. John 6, 48-51; 16, 16-22; and Risto SANTALA, *The Midrash of the Messiah: The Messiah and His Meal in Midrash Ruth Chapters V, VII and VIII*, Tummavuoren Kirjapaino Oy, Heinola, 2002, pp. 123-32, 213-15.

⁶⁸ MITCHELL, “Firstborn Shor and Rem”, p. 228.

⁶⁹ MACLEOD, “The Lion Who is a Lamb”, p. 339.

⁷⁰ A Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, affirms something similar as he recalls an awe-inspiring experience he himself had in the concentration camp of Auschwitz, while staring at a young boy hanged on the gallows. Wiesel (*Night*, trans. Marion WIESEL, Hill and Wang, New York, N.Y., 2006, pp. 64-65) writes: “‘Where is merciful God, where is He?’ someone behind me was asking [...] ‘For God’s sake, where is God?’ And from within me, I heard a voice answer: ‘Where He is? This is where — hanging here from these gallows...’”

but he was not consumed by the flames, owing to the triumphant power of his resurrection⁷¹. The Zohar speaks in fact of the Messiah's "both dying and not dying; [...] Both have to be taken together"⁷²: the Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah. Indeed, "The two Messiahs are the figures of a dialectic of present and to come; history and something like a transcendent frame around it"⁷³, and as such, they cannot be separated. Both the Sacred Scriptures and the living and dynamic Tradition of the Church concur: "Apart from the person and redeeming work of Jesus Christ, history is an enigma"⁷⁴ (cf. Rev 5, 1-5).

In a fusion of imagery, the author of the Book of Revelation lays bare before our eyes a Christ/Messiah who is at once the apocalyptic Lion and Lamb of God (see Augustine, *Sermon 26*, 3:2), "the cosmic Lord of time and history, who has achieved total victory over the powers of sin and death by emptying Himself upon the cross for the salvation of humanity"⁷⁵ (cf. Phil 2, 5-8). The "kerygmatic" preaching introduced by the mighty angel's question (see Rev 5, 2), "alludes to the irony in the Christian proclamation that the one on the cross reigns as king (see I Cor 1, 23-24)"⁷⁶. While God could have perfectly fulfilled his salvific plan without sharing fully in our

Cf. Ps 42, 4.11-12; Mark 15, 27-39; and VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, pp. 105-06, 132.

⁷¹ As MITCHELL ("Messiah bar Ephraim in the Targums", p. 224) suggests, we could say that in the person of Jesus as the Josephite Messiah, God Himself was "pierced" by the sufferings his firstborn Son endured (cf. Zech 12, 10; John 19, 37; and Rev 1, 7). See, also, ShemR 2:5; bYom 39a; bMen 29a; 86b; Erwin R. GOODENOUGH, "The Menorah among the Jews of the Roman World", in: *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23, no. 2 (1950/51), pp. 449-92; and VOLTAGGIO, *Alle sorgenti della fede*, p. 132.

⁷² MITCHELL, "Messiah ben Joseph: A Sacrifice of Atonement for Israel", p. 82. See, also, MITCHELL, "A Dying and Rising Josephite Messiah in 4Q372", pp. 199-201.

⁷³ Bettina BERGO, "Levinas's Weak Messianism in Time and Flesh, or The Insistence of Messiah Ben David", in: *Journal for Cultural Research* 13, no. 3-4 (2009), p. 234.

⁷⁴ George E. LADD, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI., 1972, p. 82. Cf. MACLEOD, "The Lion Who is a Lamb", p. 331.

⁷⁵ NUSCA, *The Christ of the Apocalypse*, p. 14. For the text of Augustine's sermon, see William C. WEINRICH (ed.), *Revelation*, ACCS.NT 12, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL., 2005, p. 73.

⁷⁶ Leonard L. THOMPSON, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, p. 48.

human nature, the Son of God chose to make himself Son of David, humbling himself by being first Son of Joseph, so that he could carry our pain, endure our sufferings, and be pierced for our sins (cf. Isa 53, 4-5; Zech 12, 10; John 19, 37; and Rev 1, 7). What the Church proclaims and celebrates as Good News thus makes sense: the Messiah has already come; He has already risen; and yet, He will come again. “*Maranathá!*”⁷⁷ (I Cor 16, 22; cf. Rev 22, 20; *Did.* 10.6, and CCC 671).

⁷⁷ As is generally known, in Aramaic, the expression can be written in two different ways, i.e., מְרַנָּא תָא (I Cor 16, 22; cf. ἔρχου κύριε, in Rev 22, 20) and מְרַן אֱתָא (as some variants in I Cor 16, 22 likewise attest). While the former (“[our] Lord, come!”) articulates the Judaeo-Christian Church’s eschatological invocation for Christ’s second coming, the latter (“[our] Lord has come!”) is rather the expression and statement of her own faith in the factual, historical knowledge, of his first coming. Cf. Cleon L. ROGERS Jr. and Cleon L. ROGERS III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI., 1998, p. 391.



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Fig. 1. *Messiah*, Graphite Drawing⁷⁸

⁷⁸ A brief description by the artist: The title of this icon is “Messiah”. In it, I emphasize the two schools of thought for Jesus as Messiah: the suffering servant and the triumphant king, represented by the lamb and the shadow of a lion that it casts. In Hebrew lettering, there are the words Son, followed by Joseph and David, the names of the biblical figures by which we know Jesus. These names are at the heart of Jesus’ messianic mission as the suffering servant (Son of Joseph) and the triumphant king (Son of David). The menorah forms the word Messiah in Hebrew at the bottom of the picture, which represents Jesus as the true Messiah who comes to save his people by entering the burning bush of human sufferings. At the top of the picture, the prayer: “Jesus Son of David have mercy on me”, takes on a deeper meaning for me: only the humble will rejoice (and not fear) when they see Jesus in all his glory.