

^{4:21}The LORD said to Moses, ²²"Take a census also of the **Gershonites** by their families and clans. ²³Count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work at the tent of meeting. ²⁴"**This is the service of the Gershonite clans in their carrying and their other work:** ²⁵They are to carry the curtains of the tabernacle ... The Gershonites are to do all that needs to be done with these things. ²⁷All their service, whether carrying or doing other work, **is to be done under the direction of Aaron and his sons.** You shall assign to them as their responsibility all they are to carry ...

1. Exodus Rabbah vi. 1

1. TAKE THE SUM OF THE SONS OF GERSHON ALSO, etc. (iv, 22). Hence⁽¹⁾ it is written, *She⁽²⁾ is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her* (Prov. iii, 15). We have learned elsewhere⁽³⁾: A Sage takes precedence over a king of Israel,⁽⁴⁾ for if a Sage dies there is none to replace him, while if a king of Israel dies—well, all Israelites are eligible for the kingship. A king takes precedence over a High Priest; for it says, *And the king said unto them: Take with you the servants of your lord*, etc (1Kings i, 33).⁽⁵⁾ A High Priest takes precedence over a prophet; for it says, *And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there* (ib. 34). **Zadok is mentioned before Nathan** ...

- (1) Here follows an exposition on precedence prompted by the reflection that Gershon, though the firstborn, is numbered after Kohath.
- (2) Wisdom.
- (3) Horayot ("Decisions") 13a.
- (4) Even in matters of life and death.
- (5) David addressed this to Zadok the High Priest, *your lord* referring to himself; thus the king is styled his lord.

a. Proverbs 3:15

1) Proverbs 8:11; 2) Job 28:18; 3) Proverbs 31:10

b. Matthew 22:41-46

1) Psalms 110:1-7

2) "Scholars have ... speculated about the origin of the Messiah ben Joseph legend and the curious fact that the Messiah figure has ... been split in two. It would seem that in the *early* legend, the death of the Messiah was envisaged, perhaps as a development of the Suffering Servant motif. **A prophecy of Daniel ... speak(s) of the death of a *Mashiach* ('Anointed') sixty-two prophetic weeks after his coming and after the return and the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24-26) ... When the death of the Mes-**

siah became an *established tenet* in Talmudic times, this was felt to be irreconcilable with the belief in the Messiah as the Redeemer who would usher in the blissful millennium of the Messianic age. **The dilemma was solved by splitting the person of the Messiah in two: one of them, called Messiah ben Joseph**, was to raise the armies of Israel against their enemies, and ... fall victim to Gog and Magog. The other, **Messiah ben David**, will come after him ... and **will lead Israel to ultimate victory ... and the Messianic era of bliss**. This splitting of the Messiah in two persons, which took place in the Talmudic period, achieved another purpose ...

According to an old tradition, the Messiah was perfectly prefigured in Moses. But **Moses died before he could lead the Children of Israel into the Land of Promise. Consequently, for the parallel to be complete, the Messiah, too had to die before accomplishing his great task of ultimate Redemption** (italics added)."¹

a) Numbers Rabbah 11:2

The first redeemer was Moses, who appeared to them and then disappeared ... The final redeemer will also appear to them and then disappear.

- 3) There are two very distinct lines of prophecy in the Scriptures concerning the Messiah. **One line portrays him as a humble suffering-savior. The other line of prophecy depicts him as a conquering king-redeemer.**²

These two competing functions of the Messiah are recognized in Talmudic⁽¹⁾ and other Jewish sources.⁽²⁾ One explanation invoked to resolve this dilemma was that there would be two Messiahs: **one who would suffer and be humbled and one who would rule and be exalted**. The suffering Messiah was referred to as Messiah Ben Yoseph. Zechariah was said to have prophesied concerning "Messiah Ben Yoseph": *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon a colt ...* ⁽³⁾ Perhaps no other prophet has summarized in such a succinct manner the humility of the coming Messiah. **He is King of Zion yet He is lowly and riding on a humble donkey. There is little doubt that the Talmud interprets the verse to refer to the Messiah. It is quoted three times in the Babylonian Talmud, and always with a messianic connotation.** The first

1 Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Avon Books, 1979), pp. 166-167.

2 <http://www.menorah.org/tsmbj13.html>

occurrence in the Talmud is a passage dealing with dreams: He that sees a donkey in his dream should expect salvation because it says, 'Behold thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass.'⁽⁴⁾

Another Talmudic reference was referred to in Chapter Ten. In response to Rabbi Hillel's statement that "Israel can expect no Messiah because they consumed him in the days of Hezekiah," a retort is given by citing the Zechariah scripture, and noting that it prophesied a coming Messiah after the days of Hezekiah; hence, the Messiah had not yet come⁽⁵⁾ Finally, Rabbi Yehoshua Bar Levi,¹⁰⁹ referring to the Zechariah scripture, said that if Israel is not worthy, then the Messiah will come in humility riding upon an ass⁽⁶⁾. This is Messiah Ben Yoseph—the Suffering Messiah. A rabbinic commentary interprets the verse to mean that Messiah is not only humble but is oppressed as well.⁽⁷⁾ **Zechariah is not the only prophet who spoke of Messiah's humiliation.** As concerning him, Isaiah wrote: All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. [Y]et he opened not his mouth.⁽⁸⁾ We are all unworthy, and hence there was no other way for the Messiah to come but by humiliation, suffering & sacrifice. Isaiah refers to this suffering Messiah as "servant." In one passage he says: Behold my servant, whom I uphold ... I have put my Spirit upon Him.⁽⁹⁾ Many Jewish commentators agree that this passage refers to the Messiah.⁽¹⁰⁾ One Targum paraphrases it:

Behold **my Servant, the Messiah**, I will draw Him near, my chosen one in whom my Memra [Logos] is well pleased.

(1) Sukkah 52.

(2) Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts*, p. 166

(3) Zechariah 9:9

(4) Berachot 56b

(5) Sanhedrin 99a

(6) Sanhedrin 98b

(7) "He is humble riding upon an ass." This refers to Messiah and He is called *anee* [poor, humble and oppressed because He was oppressed all these years in prison, and the sinners of Israel derided Him ... For the merits of Messiah, The Holy One, blessed be He, will protect and redeem you." (Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 35.)

(8) Isaiah 53:6-7.

(9) Isaiah 42:11; see also verses 2-7.

(10) Rabbi David Kimchi³ expositis the scripture as follows: "Behold my servant. ... This is King Messiah ... I have put my Spirit ... refers to what is said of Him, 'And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him'

(Isaiah 11:2)." The commentaries Metsudat David ("Stronghold of David")⁴ and Metsudat Zion, also refer the chapter to Messiah.

- 4) THERE IS, in rabbinic literature, a figure called Messiah ben Joseph. **This Messiah comes from Galilee to die, pierced by ruthless foes, at the gate of Jerusalem. Upon his death, Israel are scattered amidst the nations. But his death, as we shall see, confounds Satan, atones for sin, and abolishes death itself. And then he is raised to life again.**⁵

Now anyone with the least idea of what divides the Abrahamic faiths must find the existence of such a figure in Jewish literature remarkable. **Yet there he is. In hundreds of passages, in scores of documents of every flavour: in the Targums and Talmud; in the homiletic ("art of preaching") and exegetic ("critical explanation or interpretation of a text") midrashim; in the apocalyptic midrashim⁶ and the geonic responsa;⁷ in the *hekhalot* literature⁸ and the Zohar; in the *rishomim*⁹ and the *acharonim*.⁹ In short, he features in Jewish literature of every genre and period, in documents written by Jews for Jews,**

4 Rabbi David Altschuler (18th century) is commonly known by the name ... Metzudat David. He wrote two Biblical commentaries: the *Metzudat David* to expound upon the meaning of the text, and *Metzudat Tzion* to explain words in the text. The *Metzudat David* commentary is considered basic for understanding the books of the prophets. They were first published in 1753.

5 David Mitchell, *Messiah ben Joseph*, (Campbell Publications. Kindle Edition), pp. 1-2.

6 The ... apocalyptic midrashim (are) a distinctive genre of Jewish literature which flourished in the first millennium (CE). These midrashic texts generally come to us preserved in later rabbinic compendia, although, occasionally, as with the celebrated *Sefer Zerubbabel*, stand-alone editions are also found. Apocalyptic midrash was sometimes dismissed by later sages. Ibn Ezra, for instance, wrote of *Sefer Zerubabel* that such books 'were not compiled by prophets or sages, and contain ideas which run counter to an appropriate understanding of Torah'. Yet their descriptions of the wars of the Messiah and the final redemption and victory of Israel had an enormous impact upon early medieval Judaism. Most of all, from our view-point, the value of apocalyptic midrash is in the detail of its traditions about Messiah ben Joseph ...

7 The *Geonim* were the presidents of the two great Babylonian Talmudic Academies of Sura and Pumbedita, in the Abbasid Caliphate, and were the generally accepted spiritual leaders of the Jewish community worldwide in the early medieval era. The *Responsa* are the collections of the thousands of answers sent by the *geonim* to queries received from correspondents throughout the geonic period (c. 600-1040).

8 The *Hekhalot* literature (Heb. "Palaces") is the record of visions of ascents into heavenly palaces.

9 *Rishomim* ... *Acharonim*—*Rishonim* ("the first ones") were the leading rabbis and *poskim* ("decisors") who lived approximately during the 11th to 15th centuries, in the era before the writing of the *Shulchan Aruch* ("Set Table"), a common printed code of Jewish law, 1563 CE) and following the *Geonim* (589-1038 CE). Rabbinic scholars subsequent to the *Shulkhan Arukh* (by R' Yosef Karo) are generally known as *acharonim* ("the latter ones").

3 David Kimchi (1160-1235), also known as the RaDaK (Rabbi David Kimchi), was a medieval rabbi, biblical commentator, philosopher, and grammarian.

passed down from generation to generation in Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and Persian, tongues which medieval Christendom could not read, much less write.

In these documents, Messiah ben Joseph always appears before his better-known comrade, Messiah ben David. Nevertheless, Messiah ben Joseph is no minor figure. On the contrary, as C.C. Torrey of Yale wrote years ago:

The doctrine of The two Messiahs [i.e. ben David and ben Ephraim] holds an important place in Jewish Theology ... **It is not a theory imperfectly formulated or only temporarily held, but a standard article of faith, early and firmly established and universally accepted.**⁽¹⁾

The Talmud says Messiah ben David cannot come till Messiah ben Joseph appears. The Targum on the Song of Songs says Ben Joseph will rule with Ben David like Aaron with Moses. The full inauguration of the Messianic Age **is to begin with the death of Messiah ben Joseph**. And to this day, observant Jews await his coming as the beginning of the redemption.

(1) Torrey 1947: 253.

c. Acts 18:1-4

¹After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²There he met **a Jew named Aquila**, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy **with his wife Priscilla**, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.

⁴**Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.**

1) Acts 18:18-21

¹⁸... accompanied by **Priscilla and Aquila**. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a (*Nazarite*) vow he had taken. ¹⁹They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left **Priscilla and Aquila ...**

2) Acts 18:24-28

²⁴Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures ... ²⁶When **Priscilla and Aquila** heard him, **they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately ...**

3) Romans 16:3-5

³Greet **Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers** in Messiah Yeshua.

a) ³*my co-workers ...*

1] συνεργός (*sunergós*)—*fellow worker, co-worker, helper*.

2] Urbanus (Rom 16:9), Timothy (Rom 16:21; 1Tim 3:2), Titus (2Cor 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Clement (Phil 4:3), Justus (Col 4:11), Philemon (Phm 1:1), Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke (Phm 1:24).

4) 1Corinthians 16:19-20

¹⁹The *k'hilot* in the province of Asia send you greetings. **Aquila and Priscilla** greet you warmly in the Lord, and **so does the k'hilah (or edah) that meets at their house**.

5) 2Timothy 4:19

¹⁹Greet **Priscilla and Aquila** and the household of Onesiphorus.

6) "Many scholars note that Paul (almost) always uses Priscilla's name first when he refers to this couple, **doubtless because her teaching gifts were stronger and more recognized by the early (k'hilot).**"¹⁰

²⁹"Count the **Merarites** by their clans and families. ³⁰Count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work at the tent of meeting. ³¹As part of all their service at the tent, they are to carry the frames of the tabernacle, its crossbars, posts and bases ... **Assign to each man the specific things he is to carry.** ³³This is the service of the Merarite clans as they work at the tent of meeting under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest."

³⁴Moses, Aaron and the leaders of the community counted the **Kohathites** by their clans and families. ³⁵All the men from thirty to fifty years of age who came to serve in the work at the tent of meeting, ³⁶counted by clans, were **2,750**. ³⁷This was the total of all those in the Kohathite clans who served at the tent of meeting. Moses and Aaron counted them according to the LORD's command through Moses.

³⁸The **Gershonites** were counted by their clans and families. ³⁹All the men from thirty to fifty years of age who came to serve in the work at the tent of meeting, ⁴⁰counted by their clans and families, were **2,630**.

⁴²The Merarites were counted by their clans and families. ⁴³All the men from thirty to fifty years of age who came to serve in the work at the tent of meeting, ⁴⁴counted by their clans, were **3,200**.

⁴⁶So Moses, Aaron and the leaders of Israel counted all the **Levites** by their clans and families. ⁴⁷All the men from thirty to fifty years of age who came to do the work of serving and carrying the tent of meeting

⁴⁸numbered **8,580**. ⁴⁹**At the LORD's command through Moses, each was**

assigned his work and told what to carry. Thus they were counted, as the LORD commanded Moses.

1. Mark 13:26-37

³⁴**It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.**

2. Acts 22:6-11 - Paul's "testimony at the Temple Mount

¹⁰**"What shall I do, Lord?" I asked. "Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'** ¹¹My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

1) Acts 9:10-20

¹⁵But the Lord said to Ananias, **"Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."** ¹⁷Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, **"Brother Saul, the Lord—Yeshua, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."** ⁸Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was immersed, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰**At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Yeshua is the Son of God ...**

a) Why didn't the Lord just heal Saul and "pour-out" His Spirit upon him Himself—because it was Ananias' **"assigned"** task.

3. 1Corinthians 3:5-9

⁵What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as **the Lord has assigned to each his task.** ⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow...⁹**For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.**

4. 1Corinthians 7:17-24

¹⁷Nevertheless, **each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them,** just as God has called them.

5. Acts 14:21-23

²³**Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each k'hilah and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord ...**

6. Romans 1:1-6

¹Paul, a servant of Messiah Yeshua, **called to be an apostle** and set apart for the gospel of God—²the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³regarding his Son, **who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David,** ⁴and who **through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God** in power by his resurrection from the dead: Yeshua the Messiah our Lord. ⁵Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake ...

7. 1Timothy 4:6-16

¹³Until I come, **devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.** ¹⁴**Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.**