
CHAPTER 19

The Messianic Idea

The messianic idea has been central to the development of postbiblical Judaism in all its various forms. Generally speaking, the concept envisions the eventual coming of a redeemer, a descendant of David, who will bring about major changes in the world, leading to world peace, prosperity, and the end of evil and misfortune. Essential to the messianic idea in Judaism is the expectation that when the time comes, the ancient glories of the Davidic kingdom will be reestablished in the Land of Israel. Unquestionably this-worldly, Jewish messianism expresses its ideas in concrete terms. It looks forward to the messianic era, when the spiritual level of humanity will rise, resulting in and from the ingathering of Israel and the universal recognition of Israel's God. Of course, that definition is a sweeping generalization. In reality, the messianic idea in Judaism has a complex history, further complicated by the simultaneous existence, even within the same strain of Judaism, of various views of messianism. Within this history, we can distinguish certain patterns or trends of messianic thought.

Two basic ideals of Jewish messianism can be identified: the restorative and the utopian. The restorative seeks to bring back the ancient glories; the utopian, *to* bring about an even better future surpassing all that ever came before. The restorative represents a much more rational messianism, anticipating only the improvement and perfection of the present world. The utopian, on the other hand, is much more apocalyptic, looking forward to vast, catastrophic changes with the coming of the messianic age. The perfect world of the future can be built only upon the ruins of this world, after the annihilation of its widespread evil and transgression.

Neither approach can exist independent of the other; rather, both are found in the messianic aspirations of the various Jewish groups. The balance, or creative tension, between these tendencies is what determines the character of the various messianic strands.

Solomon 17:23–27). Then righteousness will reign and the land will again be returned to the tribal inheritances (Psalms of Solomon 17:28–31). The gentiles will serve the Davidic king and come up to Jerusalem to see the glory of the Lord. This righteous king will bless his people with wisdom and be blessed by God. The text describes the king as the “anointed of the Lord.” Despite God’s providential intervention on his behalf, this messiah is seen here strictly as a worldly ruler, a flesh-and-blood king of Israel.

Extremely significant, but at the same time elusive, is the relationship of the Pharisees and the Sadducees to the question of messianic belief. Josephus relates that these two groups were divided over the eternal nature of the soul—the Pharisees accepting this idea, the Sadducees rejecting it. However, we have no reason to believe that the Sadducees similarly rejected the notion of a restorative messianism in accord with the biblical traditions. Neither can we determine the nature of Pharisaic messianism during this period. As in so many other cases, the views of the Pharisees and Sadducees must remain shrouded in mystery.

The Second Temple views we have discussed so far are essentially restorative. We find the more utopian view first expressed in the Book of Daniel and in later sources following its approach, most of which combine the Davidic messiah with the victory of the righteous, a motif found in Daniel. The Book of Daniel anticipates a time of deliverance following the present age of distress (Daniel 12:1). At that time God will judge the kingdoms of this world, taking away their temporal powers. The “holy ones of the Most High” will inherit eternal dominion. The righteous and the evildoers both will be resurrected to receive their just deserts. However, Daniel’s vision does not include a messianic king.

Sybilline Oracles 3:652–795, composed in Greek and usually dated to about 140 B.C.E., is almost exclusively messianic in content. Yet only at the beginning does it briefly mention the messianic king, who will put an end to war, in obedience to God’s command. When this king arises, the gentile kings will attack the Temple and the Land of Israel. But God will cause them to perish. As in descriptions of the biblical Day of the Lord, various natural phenomena will accompany these events. The attackers will ultimately die, and the children of God will live in peace and tranquillity with God’s help.

Although the older strata of I Enoch have little messianic material, it is useful to examine that text’s vision of the end of history expressed in 90:13–38. In a section of the book found in the Qumran collection, the author anticipates a final attack by the gentiles, who will be defeated by means of God’s miraculous intervention. God will then replace the old Jerusalem with a new one:

And I saw until the Lord of the sheep brought a new house greater and loftier than the first and set it up in place of the first. . . . All its pillars were new and larger than those of the first, the old one which He had taken away, and all the sheep (the people of Israel) were within it. (*I ENOCH 90:29*)

Then the messiah will appear, and all the gentiles will adopt the Lord's ways. In this vision, the messiah enters only at the end of a process ushered in by God Himself.

The Parables of Enoch (chs. 37-71) primarily follow the approach of Daniel—with one notable exception: In this text, the expression "son of man" is now applied to the messiah, who is assumed literally to come from heaven and to be pre-existent. Scholars have devoted considerable attention to this section of Enoch, focusing on the parallel use of the term "son of man" in the New Testament to describe Jesus. But this section of the text, not found in any of the Qumran manuscripts of Enoch, is believed not to have been part of the original book. Thus, the scrolls provide no evidence that the term "son of man" had an earlier messianic connotation.

The Assumption of Moses, written in either Hebrew or Aramaic most probably around the turn of the era, mentions no messiah but expresses a wish for the destruction of the wicked (ch. 10). The same vision of the future can be found in Jubilees. The Assumption of Moses speaks of a messianic figure, an angel of God, but mentions no human agent of salvation.

This second group of sources—Sybilline Oracles, Parables of Enoch, Jubilees, and Assumption of Moses—reflects the utopian trend, with its expectation that the wicked will eventually be destroyed. These sources are closely linked to dualistic ideas about the struggle between good and evil. Although each messianic approach includes elements of the other, it was left for the Qumran sect to integrate both trends coherently into one system, thus creating at the same time tremendous tension and tremendous power.

MESSIANISM AMONG THE DEAD SEA SECTARIANS

From the very beginning of Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship, it has been clear that the documents of the Qumran sect placed great emphasis on eschatology. A number of documents are dedicated almost completely to issues relating to the End of Days. From the *Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, we learn that the sect expected to participate in the battle that would usher in the final age.

This vision of a cataclysmic battle and the ensuing radical changes in the world order have earned the Qumran group the label "apocalyptic." The notion of a great battle, similar in many ways to the Day of the Lord found in the Hebrew Bible, typifies apocalyptic sects. Various other texts from the Qumran corpus, including the *Florilegium*, have greatly added to our understanding of the messianic age in the ideology of the Qumran sect.

According to the dominant view in the sectarian texts from Qumran, two mes-

siahs were to lead the congregation in the End of Days, one priestly and the other lay. At the same time, the sect expected a prophet who was a quasi-messianic figure. The idea of a priestly messiah reflects the central role of the priesthood in the origins, leadership, and organization of the Qumran sect.

The messiah of Aaron would dominate religious matters; the messiah of Israel would rule over temporal and political matters. Both messiahs would preside over the eschatological banquet. This messianic paradigm of two leaders, based on the Moses/Aaron and Joshua/Zerubbabel model, would later be applied to Bar Kokhba and the High Priest Eleazar in the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135 C.E.). To the sect, the coming of the messiahs of Israel and Aaron and the eschatological prophet augured the restoration of the old order.

So far we have described restorative tendencies based on the biblical prophetic visions. But the Qumran sect went much further. Reflecting the apocalyptic trend, it anticipated that the advent of the messianic age would be heralded by the great war described in the *War Scroll*, leading to the victory of the forces of good over those of evil, in heaven above and on earth below. After forty years the period of wickedness would come to an end; then the elect would attain glory.

The messianic banquet, which will be treated in detail in the next chapter, is described in *Rule of the Congregation*. Presided over by the two messiahs, it would usher in the new age that would include worship at the eschatological Temple. Sacrificial worship would be conducted according to sectarian law.

In essence, Jews in the messianic age would surpass their current level of purity and perfection in observing Jewish law. Here in the sphere of Jewish law we again find the utopian trend. Only in the future age will it be possible properly to observe the Torah as interpreted by the sect.

Equally important to the sectarians was the immediacy of the End of Days. They anticipated that the old order would soon die. The sect lived on the verge of the End of Days, with one foot, as it were, in the present age and one foot in the future. They were convinced that the messianic era would happen in their lifetime. Their move to the desert from the main population centers of Judaea and their establishment of a center at Qumran had marked the dawn of the new order. Their lives were dedicated to preparing for that new age by living as if it had already come. It is within such a framework that we must approach *Rule of the Congregation*, for it sets out the nature of the future community of perfect holiness.

We cannot precisely date the elements of Qumran messianic doctrine or their crystallization except to place them sometime in the Hasmonaean period. The combination of the two trends, restorative and utopian, that appeared for the first time at Qumran, later exercised a powerful role in the future of Jewish messianic speculation.

MESSIANIC FIGURES IN THE QUMRAN SECTARIAN TEXTS

Among the documents of the Qumran sect, quite a number refer explicitly to messianic figures. Many of the texts speak of two messianic figures; others speak of only one. The former texts assume that the priestly messiah—the messiah of Aaron—will preside over the rebuilt and reconstituted Temple, and a lay messiah will reign as king over the Land of Israel. Others, specifically alluding to a Davidic messiah—a descendant of King David—anticipate only one messiah, whose primary role will be to conduct the temporal affairs of the nation.

The scrolls mention a number of other eschatological figures along with these messiahs. Especially important is the Teacher of Righteousness expected to arise in the End of Days to interpret the law. The Prince of the Congregation, on the other hand, will serve as the sect's military leader at that time. It is also possible that "prince" simply represents an alternative name for the king who will rule in the messianic era, as this term is used in the Book of Ezekiel. Some texts also speak about an eschatological prophet who will announce the coming of the messiah, a figure similar to Elijah in the rabbinic tradition.

Scholarly debate about the sectarian concept of messiah began when the *Zadokite Fragments* was discovered at the end of the past century. In that scroll, the phrase "those anointed with His holy spirit (of prophecy)" parallels the phrase "true prophets" (*Zadokite Fragments* 2:12). Clearly in this text, the Hebrew term "*mashiah*" has not yet acquired its later, unequivocal meaning of "messiah," but rather retains its earlier meaning—a person appointed for a specific leadership role—derived from the widespread custom in the ancient Near East of anointing priests and kings.

Yet the text may also suggest someone other than an earthly authority. It asserts that the "period of evil" will come to an end when:

there shall arise the one who teaches righteousness in the End of Days.
(*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS* 6:10-11)

Does this passage refer to the teacher of the sect himself, whose lifetime will extend into the End of Days, or does it refer to an eschatological Teacher of Righteousness who is yet to arise? Unfortunately, the syntax of this passage is sufficiently difficult that we cannot be certain.

In another passage, the text describes an eschatological era yet to arrive, alluded to in the phrase "with the coming of the messiah" or "messiahs" "of Aaron and of Israel" (*Zadokite Fragments* 19:10-11). Some scholars claim that this text refers to one messianic figure, representing both the priesthood and the people of Israel. Others argue, however, that the text refers to two messiahs—the Aaronide, high-priestly messiah, and the lay, temporal messiah.

Later on in the scroll we encounter the phrase "until the rise of a messiah from Aaron and from Israel" (*Zadokite Fragments* 20:1). Again we are faced with two possible interpretations. The text envisages either only one messiah—"from Aaron *and* from Israel"—or two—one from Aaron, the other from Israel.

When *Rule of the Community* became known after the first Qumran scrolls were discovered, this ambiguity was substantially clarified. In its most significant passage regarding messianism, the text states that in the End of Days, sect members will still be prohibited from mingling property with those outside the sect:

lest they be judged by the former regulations by which the men of the community began to be judged until the coming of a prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel. (*RULE OF THE COMMUNITY* 9:11–12)

Unlike the case of the *Zadokite Fragments*, this text unquestionably refers to two messiahs, who will be announced by an eschatological prophet.

Based on the cave 4 manuscripts of *Rule of the Community*, the original publication team argued that this passage was added to the text later in the history of the sect. However, the evidence in these manuscripts does not sufficiently support such an assertion. As far as we can tell, the two-messiah concept was part of *Rule of the Community* from the time it was composed.

Furthermore, because the priestly role was more prominent in the sect's earliest history, gradually weakening as lay power increased, we would expect to encounter this notion of priestly preeminence in the End of Days in earlier sectarian documents, not later ones. Significantly, the two-messiah concept is also known from various other Second Temple sources, most notably the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. Thus, it could have entered into the sect's thinking at any time.

These texts nowhere identify the lay messiah of Israel as Davidic. And in addition to the two messiahs, they mention an eschatological prophet who will join the messiahs in settling unresolved controversies in Jewish law, a role assigned to Elijah by later rabbinic tradition.

Apparently, the scribe of the *Rule Scroll* saw strong enough links between *Rule of the Community* and *Rule of Benedictions* to include them in the same manuscript (along with *Rule of the Congregation*, to be discussed in detail below). Opinions differ about who is being blessed in the various fragmentary poems in *Rule of Benedictions*. One benediction definitely refers to the Prince of the Congregation, an eschatological leader (*Rule of Benedictions* 5:20). A short excerpt follows:

[And there shall rest upon him the spirit of coun]sel and eternal valor, a spirit of knowledge and reverence for God. And justice shall be the girdle of [your loins,] [and faithful]ness the girdle of your wa[is]t.

(*RULE OF BENEDICTIONS* 5:25–26)

Deposits of Animal Bones Buried around buildings in the Qumran settlement were various deposits of animal bones, containing the remains of cooked—and apparently eaten—sheep, goats, and cattle. The bones were buried in jars covered with lids. Even though some scholars have argued that these are remains of sacrifices, there is no evidence for animal sacrifice at Qumran. *Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.*



This passage, clearly alluding to Isaiah's famous prophecy about the Davidic messiah (Isaiah 11:2–5), suggests that the Prince of the Congregation designates this figure. If so, then the term "prince" is clearly based on the Ezekiel tradition.

Thus we find that to the extent it can be reconstructed, *Rule of Benedictions* assumes that a Davidic messiah will arise in the End of Days. The text does not explicitly mention a priestly messiah, but it is possible that the full text, in a portion not preserved, did refer to such a figure.

We might have expected that the *War Scroll*, itself a description of a messianic battle between the forces of good and evil, would specifically mention the messiah. But although Israel and Aaron appear on the banner of the entire congregation along with the names of the twelve tribes (*War Scroll* 3:12), the term "*mashiah*" in the phrase "your anointed ones, the seers of things ordained" (*War Scroll* 11:7–8) refers only to prophets. Indeed, the text never explicitly mentions a messiah, perhaps because it describes only events leading up to the messianic era, not events unfolding during that era itself. On the other hand, if the Prince of the Congregation mentioned in the text refers to the lay messiah, then the prince would stand together with the high priest also described in that text. In that case, the scroll would express the two-messiah concept.

Pesher Isaiah A refers to the Prince of the Congregation who will participate in an eschatological battle. The same text interprets Isaiah 11:1–5 as referring to a Davidic messiah, who will arise in the End of Days to rule over the nations. The text of *Florilegium* describes the messianic era when the shoot of David:

will arise in the End of Days with the Interpreter of the Law who [will rule] over Zi[on in] the End of Days. (*FLORILEGIUM* 1:11–12)

This clearly alludes to a Davidic messiah, who will save Israel. Alongside him will be the Interpreter of the Law, identified by some scholars as a priestly messianic figure.

Here again we encounter explicit references to a Davidic messiah. But the text does not explicitly mention the priestly messiah, unless we identify the messiah of Aaron with the Interpreter of the Law. However, elsewhere in the scroll, the eschatological priest plays a cultic, rather than an educational or exegetical, role.

What emerges from the preceding discussion is that, contrary to the popular view, Qumran sectarian literature expressed two competing messianic ideas: the notion of a single, Davidic messiah and the notion of two complementary messiahs—the Aaronide, priestly leader and the lay messiah of Israel. We must resolutely resist the temptation to conflate these two ideas by first trying to force all Qumran texts into the two-messiah rubric and then falsely identifying the messiah of Israel as Davidic. As in every religious group, sectarians did not always agree, and certainly not in the case of messianic ideology.

LITERARY EVIDENCE OF MESSIANISM IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

It is clear by surveying the scrolls that a variety of motifs and beliefs are distributed throughout many different texts in what may appear to be random fashion. Two possible explanations can be suggested for this pluralism of ideas: Either several parallel approaches coexisted within the group, or the ideas evolved gradually over time. Thus, certain messianic ideas may be earlier, and others later. Most likely, both dynamics operated in the Qumran community. It is virtually impossible to separate coexisting trends from those developing over time, except in certain particular cases. It is also significant that in certain texts, messianism is absent altogether.

More difficult to reckon with, and certainly the case at Qumran, is the confluence of both the restorative and utopian trends found in the literature. The traditions of pre-Hasmonaean Judaism, the new ideas evolving both within the sect and in the general community outside, and the momentous historical forces at work during the period all joined together to produce a set of related but differing concepts. Those concepts, distributed throughout both time and text, express certain common elements, yet testify to diversity and pluralism even within the Dead Sea sect.

It was once thought that a history of the messianic idea at Qumran could be constructed that would go hand in hand with the archaeological reconstruction of the site's history of occupation. However, it has proven impossible to stratify the sect's messianic beliefs historically, as scholars have discovered from surveying the texts. It is clear that in every period, a variety of ideas coexisted within the group. It is far more helpful to analyze the scrolls according to the two dominant trends in Jewish messianism—the restorative and the utopian.

At Qumran those texts that espouse the Davidic messiah tend toward the restorative, emphasizing the prophecies of peace and prosperity and not expect-

ing the cataclysmic destruction of all evil. The more catastrophic, utopian, or even apocalyptic tendencies usually exclude a Davidic messiah. They seek instead to invest authority in a dominant, priestly, religious leader and a temporal prince who will be subservient to the priestly figure. They give no evidence of Davidic allegiance. Instead, they transpose the prominent role of the priesthood in sectarian life onto the End of Days. Sometimes the utopians sought to limit the leadership to one messianic figure. We occasionally encounter both the restorative and utopian trends side by side in the same text, demonstrating that these two trends were beginning the long process of merging into what later would become the messianic ideal of rabbinic Judaism.

We will never be able to construct an exact historical sequence for the messianic ideas and texts found at Qumran. The best we can do is to understand them within the framework just proposed: a matrix of history on one axis and the restorative-utopian dichotomy on the other. Only through such a dynamic perspective can we make sense of the rich and variegated eschatological ideas and approaches represented in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Above all, we cannot approach these materials as a monolithic corpus.

The eschatological nature of many of the Qumran texts gives us an idea of the kind of world the sectarians envisioned in the future: how they would prepare for the End of Days, what events would occur to precipitate it, what battles the sect would fight against its enemies, and what the ultimate, perfected world would be like. These concepts were intimately connected with the sectarian laws and practices that were designed to cultivate purity and perfection. In the next chapter, we will study how the sect hoped to realize its goals in the messianic community that would emerge immediately after the great eschatological war.

CHAPTER 21

The "Pierced Messiah" and Other Controversial Texts

Most of the messianic ideology presented so far has been based on material available to scholars for years. The recent release of the cave 4 documents, previously monopolized by the publication team, has made available a number of texts that either actually or allegedly contain messianic references. In some cases, these texts had already been published, but the intense interest occasioned by their release focused renewed attention upon them. Because of the shrill public debate surrounding these texts and because their import may significantly transform our understanding of both Jewish and Christian history, it is necessary to give them particular attention. These documents confirm that in addition to expecting an apocalyptic messianic cataclysm, the Qumran sect shared with other Jews of that period the traditional Jewish hope for messianic redemption at the End of Days.

THE SON OF GOD TEXT

The biblical Book of Daniel has often been the subject of later additions and adaptations. The Septuagint Daniel, for instance, contains several additions found in Greek Bibles that were not part of the Hebrew original. Scholars have identified a variety of Qumran texts as pseudo-Danielic because they resemble the biblical book in both style and content. In the manuscripts found at Qumran, these materials and the canonical Book of Daniel are each preserved separately, without any hint of overlap or confusion. Yet these texts cannot be understood without referring back to the biblical Daniel.

Perhaps the most significant of these manuscripts is the Son of God text that contains in it an Aramaic expression translated as "son of God." As we will see, the meaning of this term is highly debatable. Although originally designated as *Pseudo-Daniel D*, the text is now generally known as the *Aramaic Apocalypse*.

The manuscript has been dated to the first century B.C.E. and must be assigned to the pre-Qumranic stage of Second Temple Jewish literature.

In the case of this text, it is probable that the entire Son of God passage is based on the elusive text of Daniel 7:13-14: "As I looked on, in the night vision, one like a human being came with the clouds of heaven. . . . Dominion, glory and kingship were given to him; all peoples and nations of every language must serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship, one that shall not be destroyed." In this passage, Daniel sees a vision of an apocalyptic redeemer, who is assigned everlasting rule.

After a break in the manuscript, the *Aramaic Apocalypse* mentions a king. Thereafter, someone, understood by scholars to be the prophet Daniel in the broken text, falls before the throne of the king, presumably the ruler of Babylonia. Apparently the king has had a dream that is to be interpreted here in an apocalyptic manner. The speaker then says to the king:

You have been angry from eternity and your years (have been spent) [in fear. I will interpret (?)] your vision and all that is to come to pass unto eternity.

(ARAMAIC APOCALYPSE I 2-3)

In this passage, we encounter the classic form of Danielic apocalyptic visions. Here, following the biblical model, the prophet becomes a conduit of revelation for a king. The text then proceeds to give its vision of the war to come:

[Because of the g]reat [kings (there will be)] great distress on the earth, [there will be war among the peoples] and a great slaughter in the cities. [The kings will arise and do battle,] the king of Assyria and Egypt. [Then there will arise the final king and he] will be great upon the earth. [The nations will] make [peace with him] and all will serve [him]. (ARAMAIC APOCALYPSE I 4-9)

Here the text foretells a great war between the kings of the northern and southern empires, a scenario greatly resembling the expected eschatological battle. Then, in describing the "final king," the text mentions the son of God:

The [son of the] G[reat Master] shall he be called, and by His name he will be called. He will be said (to be) the son of God, and they will call him the son of the Most High. (ARAMAIC APOCALYPSE I 9-II 1)

The foregoing passage is clearly the key to the entire document. It seems to speak of a figure, arising in connection with the final messianic battle, who will be called the son of God. Not surprisingly, this text has given rise to a number of interpretations. Of course, it is impossible to determine the precise meaning of this phrase outside the context of the entire passage. But for the moment, let us posit several primary possibilities: First, the term "son of God" could in fact designate a messianic figure, evidence that at that time some Jews expected a messiah who would be called the son of God. If this were the case, then the designation, found

later in Christianity, appears to have derived from the messianism of a particular Jewish group whose approach is represented in this document.

We can find a close parallel to the passage in two verses from the New Testament (Luke 1:32-33), wherein the angel Gabriel, speaking about the newborn Jesus, proclaims, "He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High . . . and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." This parallel lends support to the claim that in pre-Christian times some Jews considered "son of God" a designation for the messiah. However, it is irresponsible to conclude from this evidence that the analogy points to some particularly strong link between the Qumran sectarians, who included this earlier text in their collection, and the Christian faith, which emerged only later.

Alternatively, we might argue that the passage describes a boastful ruler of the entire world, who will arise and declare himself the son of God, only to be later defeated. If so, we would expect to find further on in the text a description of the messianic war but no designation of the messiah as the son of God. Scholars have suggested two candidates for this ruler: Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.E.), villain of the Maccabean revolt, or his son Alexander Balas (152-145 B.C.E.).

Another theory, one much less likely, is that the text is referring to a kind of anti-Christ, a Belial-like figure who heads the lot of evildoers, the Sons of Darkness. If this were the case, the text would first describe this figure's dominion and then would describe the rule by the leader of the lot of good, the Sons of Light, a figure such as Michael, Melchizedek, or the like.

Let us now examine the next passage in the text. It describes the period of the reign of kings, most probably those of Assyria and Egypt:

Like the comets which are seen, thus shall their rule be. They shall rule for years upon the earth and shall trample everything. Nation shall trample nation and city (shall trample) city, until there arises the people of God, and all will (then) rest from the sword. (*ARAMAIC APOCALYPSE II 1-4*)

Here is where the confusion starts. The text seems to say that the people of God will arise and usher in a period of world peace. If we identify the people collectively as the redeemer, a notion that in fact can be found in certain Second Temple period texts, then "son of God" must refer to the boastful king, not to a messianic figure. On the other hand, if we assume that the text does not really follow a logical order, then we can still identify the son of God as a messianic figure in whose time the people of God arise to bring peace to the earth.

There follows, in the remaining preserved portion of this text, a description of the End of Days and the role of the redeemer:

His kingship shall be eternal kingship and all his rule shall be in truth. He will judge the earth with truth and will entirely make peace. The sword

shall cease from the earth, and all the cities shall bow down to him. The great God will be his strength and will make war for him. The nations He will give into his hand, and all of them He will cast (down) before him. His dominion shall be an eternal dominion and all of the boundaries . . .

(ARAMAIC APOCALYPSE II 5-9)

Here the text breaks off; we know nothing more of its contents. This last passage clearly describes the End of Days. But who will usher it in? Will it be the son of God understood as a messianic figure, or will it be the people of God—Israel—here described in the singular, who will collectively play that role? Because it is difficult to maintain that the son of God can be at the same time both the boastful king and the ruler presiding over the redeemed world, we must conclude that the term “son of God,” refers to a messianic agent.

Taken in its entirety, this passage fits well into the context of the pseudo-Danielic literature and in the apocalyptic context of Second Temple Judaism. The description of the messianic era conforms precisely to the vision embraced by virtually all Jews both then and throughout the ages: the ultimate reign of the messiah in an everlasting period of truth and righteousness. In this respect, it conforms to the restorative trend in Jewish messianism, although the battles it anticipates take their cue from utopian, cataclysmic ideas. The son of God imagery, indeed new to Jewish texts of that period, finds its source in the Hebrew Bible, wherein the Jewish people is identified as the firstborn son of God. Since the New Testament uses this imagery, we can assume that it was current among some Second Temple period Jews. Read this way, the text does not contradict the basic premise that the scrolls are Jewish texts that, for the most part, share the common Jewish beliefs of the Hellenistic period.

THE SO-CALLED PIERCED MESSIAH TEXT

Perhaps the most curious of all of these texts is the one that some have claimed speaks of an executed messiah. Press reports have repeated the claim that the text mentions the piercing of the messiah and refers to his death by crucifixion. Behind these reports, of course, is the assumption that finding such a messianic description in a Qumran text would link the Qumran corpus intimately with Christianity. Upon examination of the entire document, however, this claim proves to be utterly false.

The fragment in question is part of the *War Rule*, which in turn is part of a larger, interrelated group of documents, most prominent among which is the *War Scroll*, available in two versions at Qumran. This group of texts depicts the war at the End of Days, the great cataclysm inaugurating the messianic era. For the sect, the Roman invasion of Judaea was understood to signal the onset of the End of Days. Indeed, the sectarians, like other Jews in the Hasmonaean period, were

painfully aware that the Romans would soon attempt to conquer their land. The sectarians hoped that this war would be the last, ushering in eternal peace.

The *War Rule* survives in ten fragments of various sizes. A look at all the fragments together reveals that the claim concerning a reference in this text to a pierced messiah falls apart.

The first fragment preserves a poem of blessing, an expansion of the Priestly Blessing (Numbers 6:24–26). Another manuscript of this poem, known as *Blessings*, has been preserved in cave 11. In this text, God is asked to give his blessings from heaven and to provide fruitful agricultural produce. It concludes with:

... God is with you and His [holy] angels [take their stand] in your congregation, and His holy name is called u[pon you].

(*WAR RULE 1 9–10 = BLESSINGS 1–2 13–14*)

The presence of angels among the community is reminiscent both of the *War Scroll*, which envisions angels in the military camp of the End of Days, and of *Rule of the Congregation*, which foretells their presence in the community in the End of Days. Another fragment actually mentions the four archangels, a motif also found in the *War Scroll*. Thus, these benedictions clearly relate to an Israel on the verge of the messianic era and to the eschatological military community. In this respect we are here clearly in the world of sectarian thought.

Other fragments of the *War Rule* mention graves and corpses and the return of troops to their base. They also mention the destruction of evil and horns known to have been used for military commands. The enemy is specifically identified as the Kittim, a code word in the scrolls that always designates the Romans.

One fragmentary passage partially describes the extensive scope of the war that will ensue on the verge of the End of Days:

... [the Prince of the Congregation, until the [great] sea (the Mediterranean) ... [and] they [will flee] before Israel at that time ... will stand against them and array themselves for battle against them ... and they will return to the dry land at th[at] time. (*WAR RULE 4 2–5*)

Here we encounter the Prince of the Congregation, whom some identify as the messiah, who will lead the sectarians in the End of Days. In this text and in the *War Scroll*, the Prince of the Congregation plays the role of a military leader. Opposite this leader is an enemy leader who according to this text was to be captured:

... and they will bring him before the Prince [of the Congregation].

(*WAR RULE 4 6*)

Now that the full content of the other *War Rule* fragments has been established, we turn finally to the smoking gun—that fragment released to the news media that allegedly describes the execution of the messiah. Although the pas-

sage is again fragmentary, we can restore parts of it by referring to the biblical verse that serves as its basis:

[. . . as it is written in the Book of] Isaiah the prophet, “[The thickets of the forest] shall be hacked away [with iron, and the Lebanon trees in their majesty shall] fall. But a shoot shall grow out of the stump of Jesse, [a twig shall sprout from his stock (Isaiah 10:34–11:1) . . .] shoot of David, and they will be judged, the . . . and the Prince of the Congregation will kill him, the arm[y] of . . . [with drum]s and with dances. And the [high] priest commanded . . . [the c]orpse[s] of the Kittim . . . (WAR RULE 5 1–5)

The beginning of this passage is an interpretation of Isaiah that parallels that found in *Pesher Isaiah A*. The passage speaks of the sprout from Jesse, the branch of David, an expression based on biblical usage (Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15), meaning the Davidic messiah. According to some Second Temple period views, this figure alone would be the messiah.

The rest of the passage has been the subject of fierce debate. In light of its context and the rules of Hebrew grammar, there can only be one possible interpretation. I have translated “and the Prince of the Congregation will kill him” to mean that the prince will kill someone, most probably the leader of the opposition who is discussed in the fragment just prior to this. Others, ignoring the rules of Hebrew grammar and syntax, have translated the same clause as “and he shall kill the Prince of the Congregation,” incorrectly reversing the subject and object of the verb. Then, by misreading the text that follows, these others have claimed that the prince is to be identified with the branch of David. Based upon these misreadings, they then took one easy but impossible step: they interpreted the word that I have translated as “dances” (*meḥollot*, cf. Exodus 15:20) as if it meant “pierced” (*meḥollal*), in accord with Christian interpretation of the suffering-servant passage in Isaiah 53:5. Jewish interpreters have understood this passage in Isaiah to refer to Israel, God’s servant, “disgraced (*meḥollal*) because of our sins.” Christians, on the other hand, have read it as “pierced in atonement for our sins.”

None of this, however, has anything to do with the *War Rule* because here neither killing nor suffering, let alone “piercing,” of the Prince of the Congregation is even discussed. Rather, the reference to drums and dances must have to do with the celebration of victory anticipated in the *War Rule* and presented in much more extensive detail in the *War Scroll*. Furthermore, those who released this fragment as a pierced messiah text did not realize that the last line contains a direct reference to “the corpses of the Kittim,” that is, the Romans, thus making clear that it is neither the sect’s leader nor the Jewish people who will perish in the messianic battle, but rather the Kittim and, apparently, their leader.

When we compare the *War Rule* passage with a parallel section in *Pesher Isaiah A*, we find definitive proof that mine is the correct interpretation. This parallel passage interprets the same text in Isaiah (10:33–11:5). After quoting

10:34, "The thickets of the forest shall be hacked away with iron, and the Lebanon trees in their majesty shall fall," the *peshet* continues:

[These are the] Kittim wh[o] will fa[ll] into the hand of Israel . . . these are the mighty ones of the Kit[tim] . . . (*PESHET ISAIAH A 7-10 III 7-9*)

The text then interprets the "shoot of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:1):

[The interpretation of the text concerns the branch] of David who will arise in the en[d] of days to save Israel and to destroy its en[em]ies. . . . And he will rule over all the na[tion]s . . . [a]ll the nations will his sword judge.
(*PESHET ISAIAH A 7-10 III 22-26*)

This passage leaves no doubt that the parallel in the *War Rule* refers to the defeat of the Romans at the hands of the sect and its leader, the Prince of the Congregation. The eschatological expectations of the sectarians previous to the Roman conquest of 63 B.C.E. looked forward to such a victory in the great battle that would occur. Far from describing the piercing of a messiah, the *War Rule* foretells the hoped for sectarian defeat of the Romans, including the killing of their leader and his soldiers, whose corpses are explicitly mentioned in the text.

THE MESSIANIC APOCALYPSE

Perhaps one of the most beautiful messianic descriptions is the *Messianic Apocalypse* from Qumran. The manuscript of this text has been dated to between 100 and 80 B.C.E. The text's largest fragment contains the clearest messianic material. Poetic in quality and lacking any sectarian character, the passage reflects the messianic hopes of the people of Israel as a whole. Here again, we see the blending of the restorative and utopian varieties of Jewish messianism. Most important, the text foretells the resurrection of the dead, a notion rare in the Qumran corpus. Because of its poetic character, it is translated here in its entirety, following the poetic lines of the manuscript (*Messianic Apocalypse* 2 ii + 4, 1-15):

[For the hea]vens and the earth will harken to His messiah,
[And all w]ho are in them shall not retreat from the commandment of the holy ones.
Make effort, O seekers of the Lord, in His service,
For is it not in this that you will find the Lord, all who hope in their hearts?
For the Lord will visit the pious and call the righteous by name,
And over the humble His spirit will hover and He will renew the faithful with His strength.
For He will honor the pious upon the eternal royal throne.
He frees the captives, makes the blind see, and makes the ben[t over] stand straight.

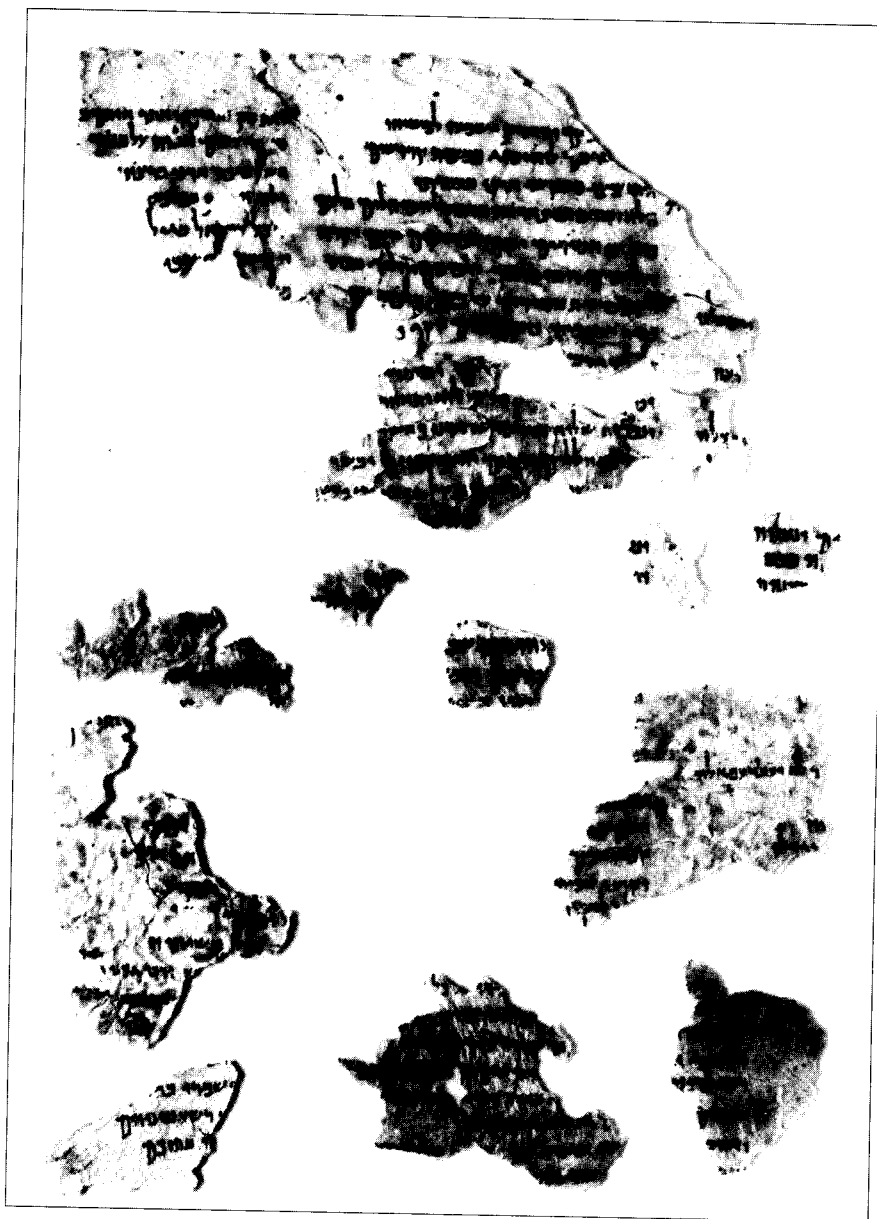
So for[ev]er I will cleave [to those who h]ope, and He will [repay] His pious
 ones,
 And the frui[t of a] good dee[d] to a person He will not delay.
 Glorious deeds such as have never been will the Lord do as He has pro[mised,]
 For He will heal the sick, revive the dead, and give good news to the humble,
 And the [po]or He will satis[fy], the abandoned He will lead, and the hungry
 He will make rich,
 And the wi[se . . .] and all of them, like holy [ones]. . .

Some scholars have attempted to bring this poem into the sphere of early Christianity. Somehow, they seem to have forgotten that messianism—the beliefs in the coming restoration of the ancient glories of Israel and in a utopian future age—was widespread and almost normative among Jews of the Hasmonaean and Roman periods. Even though there existed various approaches to messianism, the basic principles were shared by most Jews. This text, then, offers a glimpse into early Jewish messianic thought.

Some of the phrases are recognizable from the traditional Jewish liturgy that itself traces its roots back to Second Temple and rabbinic times. One such prayer, dating to early rabbinic times, says of God, "He awakens the slumberers, makes the dumb speak, frees the captives, gives support to those who have fallen, and causes the bent over to stand upright." Elsewhere God "frees the captives, saves the poor, and helps the destitute." In one of the opening paragraphs of the Amidah prayer we read, "You restore the dead to life in Your great mercies, give support to those who have fallen, heal the sick and free the captives." Certainly, in ascribing such actions to God in the End of Days, our text is expressing nothing more than the common Jewish beliefs of the period, views in fact that have remained central to Judaism up until our own day.

According to the *Messianic Apocalypse*, the messiah has ultimate authority over the heavens and earth and calls upon those who seek God to observe the Torah even more vigilantly. Such seekers are enjoined to concentrate on God's service, for only through proper observance of the commandments can one achieve closeness to the divine. God reciprocates by establishing a special relationship with the pious, protecting those who are faithful to him. It is God who helps the downtrodden, the captives, the blind, and the bent over. In the End of Days, God will perform miracles—healing the sick, reviving the dead, and feeding the hungry. The wise will live like angels. Every one of these ideas can be found in traditional Judaism.

But in an effort to render a Christianized reading of this material, the text has been misinterpreted to suggest that the messiah, not God, will revive the dead. That interpretation, however, is difficult to defend. The pseudo-Ezekiel texts from Qumran (*Pseudo-Ezekiel A 2 5–8*), adapting material from Ezekiel 37:1–14



Messianic Apocalypse This document describes the messiah, emphasizing the great works to be done by God in the End of Days. Among those works is the resurrection of the dead. Some have misinterpreted this document, however, claiming that it speaks of resurrection that is effected by the messiah, but that view cannot be sustained. The text fits squarely within Jewish tradition and has important parallels in later Jewish liturgy. *Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.*

(especially verses 12–14), emphasize that God himself will revive the dead, demonstrating that the sect did not expect a messianic surrogate to perform this miracle.

The dominant Christian conception of resurrection asserts that the messiah himself will die and be resurrected. In the *Messianic Apocalypse*, however, the resurrection of the dead refers to the people, not to the messiah. Even if it were to be interpreted as referring to the resurrection of the dead *by* the messiah, such a notion still would not be comparable to the resurrection of Jesus in Christian belief.

This text, therefore, has no connection to Christianity at all, except that it indicates the presence of the messianic idea in Judaism before Christianity emerged. It is understandable that those Jews who started the early Jesus movement brought with them the teachings of Judaism that they had learned. This beautiful poem sums up these beliefs, calling on human beings to observe God's Torah in order to bring about the eternal redemption.

The texts examined here in some detail have occasioned considerable controversy in the media because they allegedly espouse messianic views somehow connected with Christianity. While some parallels do exist, they merely demonstrate that early Christianity borrowed its messianic ideals from Judaism, specifically, the kinds of apocalyptic notions contained in some of the texts preserved at Qumran. Some of these documents were authored by the sectarians; some were composed by their predecessors even before the Maccabean Revolt.

In these texts, as in those examined in previous chapters, we find expressed the fervent Jewish hope for messianic redemption, usually coupled with the notion of one or two redeemers. Jews hoped, then as now, that the messianic era would both put an end to all the evils besetting the Jewish people and bring lasting peace to the world. For some, this meant utter destruction of the wicked as a prelude to the coming messianic era; for others, indeed for the restorative rabbinic tradition that would long outlive sectarian apocalyptic trends, it meant repentance by the wicked and their return to the commandments of God that would bring about the End of Days.

The messianic views of the Qumran sectarians and of other Jews of the period were focused on creating a world hospitable to the perfect observance of God's Torah. Yet even in the present world, Jews strove for closer contact with God. In the next chapter we address the mystical side of Qumran literature as well as the magical tradition that has always played some part in the Jewish community.