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R. Nahman said to R. Isaac: 'Have you heard when Bar Nafle³⁵ will come?' 'Who is Bar Nafle?' he asked. 'Messiah,' he answered, 'Do you call Messiah Bar Nafle?' — 'Even so,' he rejoined, 'as it is written, in that day I will raise up

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the tabernacle of David ha-nofeleth [that is fallen].¹ He replied, 'Thus hath R. Johanan said: in the generation when the son of David [i.e., Messiah] will come, scholars will be few in number, and as for the rest, their eyes will fail through sorrow and grief. Multitudes of trouble and evil decrees will be promulgated anew, each new evil coming with haste before the other has ended.'

Our Rabbis taught: in the seven year cycle at the end of which the son of David will come-in the first year, this verse will be fulfilled: And I will cause it to rain upon one city and cause it not to rain upon another city;² in the second, the arrows of hunger will be sent forth;³ in the third, a great famine, in the course of which men, women, and children, pious men and saints⁴ will die, and the Torah will be forgotten by its students; in the fourth, partial plenty;⁵ in the fifth, great plenty, when men will eat, drink and rejoice, and the Torah will return to its disciples; in the sixth, [Heavenly] sounds;⁶ in the seventh, wars; and at the conclusion of the septennate the son of David will come. R. Joseph demurred: **But so many septennates have passed**, yet has he not come! — Abaye retorted: Were there then [Heavenly] sounds in the sixth and wars in the seventh! Moreover, have they [sc. the troubles] been in this order⁷!

[Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD,⁸ wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.]⁸ it has been taught, R. Judah said: in the generation when the son of David comes, the house of assembly⁹ will be for harlots, Galilee in ruins, Gablan lie desolate,¹⁰ the border inhabitants¹¹ wander about from city to city, receiving no hospitality, the wisdom of scribes in disfavour, God-fearing men despised, people¹² be dog-faced,¹³ and truth entirely lacking, as it is written, Yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.¹⁴ What is meant by 'yea, truth faileth [ne'edereth¹⁵]'? — The Scholars of the School of Rab¹⁶ said: This teaches that it will split up into separate groups¹⁷ and depart.¹⁸ What is the meaning of 'and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey [mishtolle¹⁹]'? — The School of R. Shila said: He who departs from evil will be dubbed a fool by his fellow-men.²⁰

Raba said: I used to think at first that there is no truth in the world.²¹ Whereupon one of the Rabbis, by name of R. Tabuth — others say, by name of R. Tabyomi — who, even if he were given all the treasures of the world, would not lie, told me that he once came to a place called Kushta,²² in which no one ever told lies, and where no man ever died before his time. Now, he married one of their women, by whom he had two sons. One day his wife was sitting and washing her hair, when a neighbour came and knocked at the door. Thinking to himself that it would not be etiquette [to tell her that his wife was washing herself], he called out, 'She is not here.' [As a punishment for this] his two sons died. Then people of that town came to him and questioned him, 'What is the cause of this?' So he related to them what had happened. 'We pray thee,' they answered, 'quit this town, and do not incite Death against us.'²³

It has been taught: R. Nehorai said: in the generation when Messiah comes, young men will insult the old, and old men will stand before the young [to give them honour]; daughters will rise up against their mothers, and daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law. The people shall be dog-faced, and a son will not be abashed in his father's presence.

It has been taught, R. Nehemiah said: in the generation of Messiah's coming impudence will increase, esteem be perverted,²⁴ the vine yield its fruit, yet shall wine be dear,²⁵ and the Kingdom

will be converted to heresy²⁶ with none to rebuke them. This supports R. Isaac, who said: The son of David will not come until the whole world is converted to the belief of the heretics. Raba said: What verse [proves this]? it is all turned white: he is clean.²⁷

Our Rabbis taught: For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself of his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left:²⁸ the son of David will not come until denunciators are in abundance.²⁹ Another interpretation [of their power is gone]: until scholars are few. Another interpretation: until the [last] perutah has gone from the purse. Yet another interpretation: until the redemption is despaired of, for it is written, there is none shut up or left, as — were it possible [to say so] — Israel had neither Supporter nor Helper. Even as R. Zera, who, whenever he chanced upon scholars engaged thereon [I.e., in calculating the time of the Messiah's coming], would say to them: I beg of you, do not postpone it, for it has been taught: Three come unawares:³⁰ Messiah, a found article and a scorpion.³¹

R. Kattina said: Six thousand years shall the world exist, and one [thousand, the seventh], it shall be desolate, as it is written, And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.³² Abaye said: it will be desolate two [thousand], as it is said, After two days will he revive us: in the third day, he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.³³

It has been taught in accordance with R. Kattina: Just as the seventh year is one year of release in seven, so is the world: one thousand years out of seven will be fallow, as it is written, And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day,³⁴ and it is further said, A Psalm and song for the Sabbath day,³⁴ meaning the day that is altogether Sabbath —³⁵ and it is also said, For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.³⁶

The Tanna debe Eliyyahu teaches: The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation;³⁷ two thousand years the Torah flourished;³⁸ and the next two thousand years is the Messianic era,³⁹

(1) Amos, IX, 11.

(2) *ibid.* IV, 7.

(3) I.e., not actual famine, but the first signs thereof, no one being completely satisfied.

(4) Lit., 'men on whose behalf miracles occur.' — Jast.

(5) Lit., 'plenty and no plenty'.

(6) Either Heavenly voices announcing the advent of Messiah, or the blasts of the great Shofar; cf. Isa. XXVII, 13.

(7) Though troubles and evil decrees have come in abundance, they were not in the order prescribed.

(8) Ps. LXXXIX, 52.

(9) Where scholars assemble.

(10) [Gaulan, E. of the Sea of Galilee and the upper Jordan].

(11) The Jews living by the borders of Palestine. *הגזית* the men of (the Hall of) Hewn Stones, I.e., the Sanhedrin.

(12) Lit., 'the face of the generation.'

(13) I.e., brazen, without shame of each other.

(14) Isa. LIX, 15.

(15) נעדרת

(16) V. p. 387, n. 7.

(17) *עדרים* 'Adarim, 'adarim. נעדרת is connected with עדר, meaning 'drove,' 'group.'

(18) Probably meaning that there will be so many conflicting opinions as to what is the truth as to render it, for all practical purposes, inaccessible.

(19) משחולל

(20) Cf. Job XII, 17: He leadeth counsellors away spoiled (שולל) and maketh the judges fools. Sholal being parallel to 'fools', it bears the same connotation.

(21) I.e., no person always speaks the truth.

(22) Lit., 'truth'.

(23) Lit., 'against these men.'

(24) I.e., none shall esteem another. Another opinion: even the most esteemed shall be perverted and deceitful.

- (25) Everyone will be drunk, so that in spite of the abundant yield, there will be a scarcity.
- (26) [Heb. Minuth. By 'the Kingdom' is meant the Roman Empire, and the statement is a remarkable forecast by R. Nehemia (150 C.E.) of the conversion of Rome to Christianity under Constantine the Great in 313; v. however, Herford, Christianity in the Talmud, 207ff.]
- (27) Lev. XIII, 13. This refers to leprosy: a white swelling is a symptom of uncleanness; nevertheless, if the whole skin is so affected, it is declared clean. So here too; when all are heretics, it is a sign that the world is about to be purified by the advent of Messiah.
- (28) Deut. XXXII, 36.
- (29) 'When he seeth that their power is gone' is interpreted as meaning that they will be at the mercy of informers; then God will judge his people — redeem them through the Messiah.
- (30) Lit., 'when the mind is diverted.'
- (31) Hence by thinking of him they were postponing his coming.
- (32) Isa. II, 11.
- (33) Hosea VI, 2: the 'two days' meaning two thousand years. Cf. Ps. XC, 4. quoted below.
- (34) Ps. XCII, 1.
- (35) I.e., the period of complete desolation.
- (36) Ps. XC, 4; thus 'day' in the preceding verses means a thousand years.
- (37) I.e., no Torah. It is a tradition that Abraham was fifty-two years old when he began to convert men to the worship of the true God; from Adam until then, two thousand years elapsed.
- (38) I.e., from Abraham's fifty-second year until one hundred and seventy-two years after the destruction of the second Temple. This does not mean that the Torah should cease thereafter, but is mentioned merely to distinguish it from the next era.
- (39) I.e., Messiah will come within that period.

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but through our many iniquities all these years have been lost.¹

Elijah said to Rab Judah, the brother of R. Salia the pious: 'The world shall exist not less than eighty five jubilees,² and in the last jubilee the son of David will come.'³ He asked him, 'At the beginning or at the end?'⁴ — He replied, 'I do not know.' 'Shall [this period] be completed or not?'⁵ - 'I do not know,' he answered. R. Ashi said: He spoke thus to him, 'Before that, do not expect him; afterwards thou mayest await him.'⁶

R. Hanan b. Tahlifa sent [word] to R. Joseph: I once met a man who possessed a scroll written in Hebrew in Assyrian characters.⁷ I said to him: 'Whence has this come to thee?' He replied, 'I hired myself as a mercenary in the Roman army, and found it amongst the Roman archives. In it is stated that four thousand, two hundred and thirty⁸ - one years after the creation the world will be orphaned.⁹ [As to the years following,] some of them will be spent in the war of the great sea monsters,¹⁰ and some in the war of Gog and Magog, and the remaining [period] will be the Messianic era, whilst the Holy One, blessed be He, will renew his world only after seven thousand years.' R. Abba the son of Raba said: The statement was after five thousand years.

It has been taught; R. Nathan said: This verse pierces and descends to the very abyss:¹¹ For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though he tarry, wait for him; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.¹² Not as our Masters, who interpreted the verse, until a time and times and the dividing of time;¹³ nor as R. Simlai who expounded, Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink a third time;¹⁴ nor as R. Akiba who expounded, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth:¹⁵ but the first dynasty [sc. the Hasmonean] shall last seventy years, the second [the Herodian], fifty two, and the reign of Bar Koziba¹⁶ two and a half years.¹⁷

What is meant by 'but at the end it shall speak [we-yafeah] and not lie?' — R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: Blasted be¹⁸ the bones of those who calculate the end.¹⁹ For they would say, since the predetermined time has arrived, and yet he has not come, he will never come. But [even so], wait for him, as it is written, Though he tarry, wait for him. Should you say, We look

forward [to his coming] but He does not: therefore Scripture saith, And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you.²⁰ But since we look forward to it, and He does likewise, what delays [his coming]? — The Attribute of Justice delays it.²¹ But since the Attribute of Justice delays it, why do we await it? — To be rewarded [for hoping], as it is written, blessed are all they that wait for him.²²

Abaye said: **The world must contain not less than thirty-six righteous men in each generation who are vouchsafed [the sight of] the Shechinah's countenance, for it is written, Blessed are all they that wait lo²³ [for him]; the numerical value of 'lo' is thirty-six.** But that is not so, for did not Raba say: The row [of righteous men immediately] before the Holy One, blessed be He, consists of eighteen thousand,²⁴ for it is written, it shall be eighteen thousand round about?²⁴ — That is no difficulty: the former number **[thirty-six] refers to those who see Him through a bright speculum,** the latter to those who contemplate him through a dim one.²⁵ But are there as many? Did not Hezekiah say in the name of R. Jeremiah on the authority of R. Simeon b. Yohai: I have seen the sons of heaven,²⁶ and they are but few; if there are a thousand, I and my son are included; if a hundred, I and my son are included; and if only two, they are myself and my son? — There is no difficulty: the former number **[thirty-six] refers to those who enter [within the barrier to contemplate the Shechinah]** with permission; the latter [uncertain number] to those who may enter without permission.

Rab said: All the predestined dates [for redemption] have passed, and the matter [now] depends only on repentance and good deeds. But Samuel maintained: it is sufficient for a mourner to keep his [period of] mourning.²⁷ This matter is disputed by Tannaim: R. Eliezer said: if Israel repent, they will be redeemed; if not, they will not be redeemed. R. Joshua said to him, if they do not repent, will they not be redeemed! But the Holy One, blessed be He, will set up a king over them, whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman's, whereby Israel shall engage in repentance, and he will thus bring them back to the right path.²⁸ Another [Baraita] taught: R. Eliezer said: if Israel repent, they will be redeemed, as it is written, Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.²⁹ R. Joshua said to him, But is it not written, ye have sold yourselves for naught; and ye shall be redeemed without money?³⁰ Ye have sold yourselves for naught, for idolatry; and ye shall be redeemed without money — without repentance and good deeds. R. Eliezer retorted to R. Joshua, But is it not written, Return unto me, and I will return unto you?³¹ R. Joshua rejoined — But is it not written, For I am master over you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion?³² R. Eliezer replied, But it is written, in returning and rest shall ye be saved.³³ R. Joshua replied, But is it not written, Thus saith the LORD, The Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nations abhorreth, to a servant of rulers,

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- (1) He should have come at the beginning of the last two thousand years; the delay is due to our sins.
 - (2) Of fifty years.
 - (3) [Messiah. The belief in his Davidic descent is already mentioned in the Psalms of Solomon XVII, 21.]
 - (4) Of the last fifty years.
 - (5) I.e., if at the end of the jubilee, shall it be at the beginning of the fiftieth year or at the end thereof?
 - (6) He will certainly not come before then, but may delay a long time afterwards.
 - (7) The square character of Hebrew letters is so called on account of the great resemblance it bears to Aramaic writing, the name Assyria being here used in the widest sense to include the countries on the Mediterranean inhabited by the Arameans; v. supra, 22b and 22a and notes.
 - (8) So the Wilna Gaon; v. A.Z. 9b; our editions have ninety.
 - (9) In great distress, as an orphan who has none to take care of him.
 - (10) Maharsha explains this as a figurative reference to the great nations.
 - (11) Just as the bottom of an abyss cannot be reached, so is it impossible to grasp the full purport of this verse (Rashi).
 - (12) Hab. II, 3.
 - (13) Dan. VII, 25.
 - (14) Ps. LXXX, 6.
 - (15) Hag. II, 6.
 - (16) V. p. 627, n. 4.

(17) The verses cited from Daniel, the Psalms, and Haggai were interpreted so as to give a definite date for the advent of the Messiah. R. Nathan however, on the authority of Hab. II, 3, asserts that all such calculations are false. The three verses refer to the Hasmonean, Herodian, and Bar Koziba's reign, but the advent of Messiah is unknowable, Rashi.

(18) לַיּוֹם The verse is rendered, 'he will blast him who calculated the end.'

(19) I.e., Messiah's advent.

(20) Isa. XXX, 18.

(21) I.e., because we are not yet worthy of it.

(22) Ibid.

(23) לו

(24) Maharsha deletes פָּרָסָא, parasang. (12) Ezek. XLVIII, 35.

(25) Only thirty-six see Him with absolute clarity. The others receive a clouded vision of Him.

(26) I.e., those who enjoy the sight of the Shechinah in the hereafter.

(27) Israel's sufferings in the Galuth in themselves sufficiently warrant their redemption, regardless of repentance.

(28) [in the Jerushalmi, the last sentence, 'But the Holy . . . right path' is given as R. Eliezer's reply to R. Joshua.]

(29) Jer. III, 22.

(30) Isa. LII, 3.

(31) Mal. III, 7.

(32) Jer. III, 14: 'master over you' implies even against your wishes — i.e., without repentance of the whole nation (Rashi).

(33) Isa. XXX, 15.

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Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship?¹ R. Eliezer countered, But is it not written, if thou wilt return,² O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me?³ R. Joshua answered, But it is elsewhere written, And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times and a half⁴ and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.⁴ At this R. Eliezer remained silent.

R. Abba also said: There can be no more manifest [sign of] redemption than this: viz., what is said, But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel, for they are at hand to come.⁵ R. Eleazar said: Than this too, as it is written, For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction.⁶ What is meant by, 'neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction?' — Rab said: Even for scholars, who are promised peace,⁷ as it is written, Great peace have they which love thy law,⁸ 'There [shall] be no peace on account of the affliction.' Samuel said, 'Until all prices are equal.'⁹

R. Hanina said: The Son of David will not come until a fish is sought for an invalid and cannot be procured, as it is written, Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil;¹⁰ whilst it is written,¹¹ in that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth.¹²

R. Hama b. Hanina said: The son of David will not come until even the pettiest kingdom ceases [to have power] over Israel,¹³ as it is written, He shall both cut off the sprigs¹⁴ with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches;¹⁵ and this is followed by, in that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people that is scattered and peeled.¹⁶

Ze'iri said in R. Hanina's name: The son of David will not come until there are no conceited men in Israel, as it is written, For then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride:¹⁷ which is followed by, I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall take refuge in the name of the Lord.¹⁸

R. Simlai said in the name of R. Eleazar, son of R. Simeon: The son of David will not come until all judges and officers are gone from Israel, as it is written, And I will turn my hand upon thee, and

purely purge away thy dross and take away all thy tin: And I will restore thy judges as at first.¹⁹ ‘Ulla said: Jerusalem shall be redeemed only by righteousness,²⁰ as it is written, Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.²¹

R. Papa said: When the haughty cease to exist [in Israel] the magi²² shall cease [among the Persians]; when the judges cease to exist [in Israel], the chiliarchi²³ shall cease likewise. Now, ‘when the haughty cease to exist, the magi shall also cease,’ as it is written, And I will purely purge away thy haughty ones²⁴ and take away all thy tin.²⁵ ‘When the judges cease to exist, the chiliarchi shall cease likewise, as it is written, The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy.²⁶

R. Johanan said: When you see a generation ever dwindling, hope for him [**the Messiah**], as it is written, And the afflicted people thou wilt save.²⁷ R. Johanan said: When thou seest a generation overwhelmed by many troubles as by a river, await him, as it is written, when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the **Spirit of the Lord** shall lift up a standard against him;²⁸ which is followed by, And the Redeemer shall come to Zion.²⁹

R. Johanan also said: The son of David will come only in a generation that is either altogether righteous or altogether wicked. ‘in a generation that is altogether righteous,’ — as it is written, Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever.³⁰ ‘Or altogether wicked,’ — as it is written, And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor;³¹ and it is [elsewhere] written, For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it.³²

R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua b. Levi pointed out a contradiction. it is written, in its time [will the Messiah come], whilst it is also written, I [the Lord] will hasten it!³³ — if they are worthy, I will hasten it: if not, [he will come] at the due time. R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua opposed two verses: it is written, And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven³⁴ whilst [elsewhere] it is written, [behold, thy king cometh unto thee . . .] **lowly, and riding upon an ass!**³⁵ — **if they are meritorious, [he will come] with the clouds of heaven;**³⁶ if not, lowly and riding upon an ass. King Shapur [I] said to Samuel, ‘Ye maintain that the Messiah will come upon an ass: I will rather send him a white horse of mine.’³⁷ He replied, ‘Have you a hundred-hued steed?’³⁸

R. Joshua b. Levi met Elijah standing by the entrance of R. Simeon b. Yohai's tomb. He asked him: **‘Have I a portion in the world to come?’** He replied, ‘if this Master desires it.’³⁹ R. Joshua b. Levi said, ‘I saw two, but heard the voice of a third.’⁴⁰ He then asked him, ‘When will the Messiah come?’ — ‘Go and ask him himself,’ was his reply. ‘Where is he sitting?’ — ‘At the entrance.’⁴¹ And by what sign may I recognize him?’ — ‘He is sitting among the poor lepers: all of them untie [them]⁴² all at once, and rebandage them together,⁴³ whereas he unties and rebandages each separately, [before treating the next], thinking, should I be wanted, [it being time for my appearance as the Messiah] I must not be delayed [through having to bandage a number of sores].’ So he went to him and greeted him, saying, ‘peace upon thee, Master and Teacher.’ ‘peace upon thee, O son of Levi,’ he replied. ‘When wilt thou come Master?’ asked he, ‘To-day’, was his answer. On his returning to Elijah, the latter enquired, ‘What did he say to thee?’ — ‘peace Upon thee, O son of Levi,’ he answered. Thereupon he [Elijah] observed, ‘He thereby assured thee and thy father of [a portion in] the world to come.’ ‘He spoke falsely to me,’ he rejoined, ‘stating that he would come to-day, but has not.’ He [Elijah] answered him, ‘This is what he said to thee, To-day, if ye will hear his voice.’⁴⁴

The disciples of R. Jose b. Kisma asked him, ‘When will the Messiah come?’ — He answered, ‘I fear lest ye demand a sign of me [that my answer is correct].’ They assured him, ‘We will demand no sign of you.’ So he answered them, ‘When this gate⁴⁵ falls down, is rebuilt, falls again, and is again

rebuilt, and then falls a third time, before it can be rebuilt the son of David will come.' They said to him, 'Master, give us a sign.' He protested, 'Did ye not assure me that ye would not demand a sign?' They replied, 'Even so, [we desire one].' He said to them. 'if so, let the waters of the grotto of Paneas turn into blood;' and they turned into blood. When he lay dying he said to them, 'place my coffin deep [in the earth],

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- (1) *ibid.* XLIX, 7: 'to him whom man despiseth etc.' implies that he is still an unrepentant sinner (Rashi), or that their prostration in itself will bring about the redemption (Yad Ramah).
- (2) I.e., to thy land.
- (3) Jer. IV, 1.
- (4) Dan. XII, 7, thus proving that Messiah's coming is dependant only upon the utter prostration of Israel, not his repentance.
- (5) Ezek. XXXVI, 8. When Palestine becomes so very fertile, Messiah's advent is near, and there can be no clearer sign than this (Rashi).
- (6) Zech. VIII, 10; I.e., when there is no money left, and troubles abound everywhere. Cf. supra 'until the perutah ceases from the purse.'
- (7) Lit., 'concerning whom peace is written.'
- (8) Ps. CXIX, 165.
- (9) This is a difficult passage. Rashi explains it as meaning either that the prices of all commodities, e.g., wheat, wine, oil etc. shall be alike, or that all commodities shall be equally dear. But it is difficult to see how this explains 'neither was there any peace etc. Maharsha therefore connects this verse 'to him that went out or came in' with Ezek. XLVI, 9: But when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate . . . Accordingly he interprets: until all gates are alike, i.e., all people, whether entering or leaving the Temple—an idiom denoting 'without exception' — will suffer.
- (10) Ezek. XXXII, 14. When an oily film covers the water, fish cannot be caught—an anticipation of the havoc to sea life wrought in modern times by oil-burning vessels?
- (11) [in the same connection, dealing with the destruction of Egypt (Maharsha).]
- (12) *Ibid.* XXIX, 21.
- (13) [So Maharsha. Rashi renders: 'until even the pettiest rule ceases among Israel' — i.e., Israel will be deprived of all semblance of power.]
- (14) Metaphorical for 'petty kingdoms.'
- (15) Isa. XVIII, 5.
- (16) *Ibid.* 7.
- (17) Zeph. III, 11.
- (18) *Ibid.* 12: i.e., for them shall the redeemer come.
- (19) Isa. I, 25f: this proves that they must first have been removed.
- (20) I.e., through the exercise of charity.
- (21) *Ibid.* 27.
- (22) [The Guebres who were responsible for much of the suffering of the Jews under the Sassanians, v. supra p. 504, n. 6.]
- (23) גזירפטי [Pers. Wezirpat, a ruler, Funk, Schwarz Festschrift, p. 432;] the name of a class of oppressive Persian officers.
- (24) סגני from סג, 'great', 'haughty'.
- (25) Metaphorically applied to the magi, as being 'a cheap metal.'
- (26) Zeph. III, 15.
- (27) II Sam. XXII, 28.
- (28) Isa. LIX, 19.
- (29) *Ibid.* 20.
- (30) *Ibid.* LX, 21.
- (31) *Ibid.* LIX, 16.
- (32) *Ibid.* XLVIII, 11.
- (33) *Ibid.* LX, 22: The verse reads, I the Lord will hasten it in its time. The two phrases are contradictory, since 'hasten it' implies before its proper time.
- (34) Dan. VII, 13.
- (35) Zech. IX, 7.
- (36) 'Swiftly' (Rashi).
- (37) This is more fitting.
- (38) [This jest is explained by Krochmal, (Hechalutz, I, p. 83) as an overt invitation to the Jews to help Shapur in his struggle with the Romans.]
- (39) He referred to the Shechinah, which was with them (Rashi). Maharsha renders: when thou art worthy thereof.

- (40) I.e., he saw only himself and Elijah there, but heard a third voice — that of the Shechinah.
- (41) Cur. edd. read ‘. . . of the town.’ The Wilna Gaon deletes this and substitutes ‘of Rome.’
- (42) The bandages of their sores for dressing.
- (43) I.e., if they have many leprous sores, they first take off all the bandages, and treat each sore, then replace them together.
- (44) Ps. XCV, 7, thus he made his coming conditional—the condition was unfulfilled.
- (45) [The gate of Caesarea Philippi, the home of R. Jose. Its fall would be a symbol of the destruction of the Roman power by the Parthians. Bacher, AT, I, p. 402.]

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for there is not one palm-tree in Babylon to which a Persian horse will not be tethered, nor one coffin in Palestine out of which a Median horse will not eat straw.¹

Rab said: The son of David will not come until the [Roman] power enfolds Israel² for nine months, as it is written, therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.³

‘Ulla said; Let him [The Messiah] come, but let me not see him.⁴ Rabbah said likewise: Let him come, but let me not see him. R. Joseph said: Let him come, and may I be worthy of sitting in the shadow of his ass's saddle.⁵ Abaye enquired of Rabbah: ‘What is your reason [for not wishing to see him]? **Shall we say, because of the birth pangs** [preceding the advent] of the Messiah?⁶ But it has been taught, R. Eleazar's disciples asked him: ‘**What must a man do to be spared the pangs of the Messiah?**’ [He answered,] ‘**Let him engage in study and benevolence; and you Master do both.**’ He replied: ‘[I fear] lest sin cause it,⁷ in accordance with [the teaching of] R. Jacob b. Idi, who opposed [two verses] [viz.,] it is written, And, Behold, I am with thee, and ‘will guard thee in all places whither thou goest:⁸ but it is written, Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed⁹ — He was afraid that sin might cause [the nullification of God's promise]. Even as it was taught, Till thy people pass over, O Lord.’¹⁰ this refers to the first entry [into Palestine]; till thy people pass over, which thou hast purchased:¹¹ this refers to their second entry. Hence you may reason: The Israelites were as worthy of a miracle being wrought for them at the second entry as at the first, but that sin caused it [not to happen].

R. Johanan said likewise: Let him come, and let me not see him. Resh Lakish said to him: Why so? Shall we say, because it is written, As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him,¹² or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him?¹³ But come, and I will shew you its like even in this world. When one goes out into the field and meets a bailiff,¹³ it is as though he had met a lion. When he enters the town, and is accosted by a tax-collector, it is as though he had met a bear. On entering his house and finding his sons and daughters in the throes of hunger, it is as though he were bitten by a serpent!¹⁴ — But [his unwillingness to see the Messiah] is because it is written, Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man [geber]¹⁵ with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?¹⁶ What is meant by ‘wherefore do I see every geber?’ — Raba b. Isaac said in Rab's name: it refers to Him to whom all geburah¹⁷ [strength] belongs.¹⁸ And what is the meaning of ‘and all faces are turned into paleness?’ — R. Johanan said: [This refers to God's] heavenly family [I.e., the angels] and his earthly family [I.e., Israel,] when God says, These [the Gentiles] are my handiwork, and so are these [the Jews]; how shall I destroy the former on account of the latter?¹⁹ R. Papa said: Thus men say, ‘When the ox runs and falls, the horse is put into his stall.’²⁰

R. Giddal said in Rab's name: The Jews are destined to eat [their fill] in the days of the Messiah.²¹ R. Joseph demurred: is this not obvious; who else then should eat — Hilek and Bilek?²² — This was said in opposition to R. Hillel, who maintained that there will be no Messiah for Israel, since they have already enjoyed him during the reign of Hezekiah.²³

Rab said: The world was created only on David's account.²⁴ Samuel said: On Moshe's account;²⁵ R. Johanan said: For the sake of the Messiah. What is his [the Messiah's] name? — The School of R. Shila said: His name is Shiloh, for it is written, until Shiloh come.²⁶ The School of R. Yannai said: His name is Yinnon, for it is written, His name shall endure for ever:²⁷ e'er the sun was, his name is Yinnon.²⁸ The School of R. Haninah maintained: His name is Haninah, as it is written, Where I will not give you Haninah.²⁹ Others say: His name is Menahem the son of Hezekiah, for it is written, Because Menahem ['the comforter'], that would relieve my soul, is far.³⁰ The Rabbis said: His name is 'the leper scholar,' as it is written, Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God, and afflicted.³¹

R. Nahman said: if he [the Messiah] is of those living [to day], it might be one like myself, as it is written, And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governors shall proceed from the midst of them.³² Rab said: if he is of the living, it would be our holy Master;³³ if of the dead, it would have been Daniel the most desirable man.³⁴ Rab Judah said in Rab's name: The Holy One, blessed be He, will raise up another David for us,³⁵ as it is written, But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them:³⁶ not 'I raised up', but 'I will raise up' is said. R. Papa said to Abaye: But it is written, And my servant David shall be their prince [nasi] for ever?³⁷ — E.g., an emperor and a viceroy.³⁸

R. Simlai expounded: What is meant by, Woe unto you, that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.³⁹ This may be compared to a cock and a bat who were hopefully waiting for the light [i.e., dawn]. The cock said to the bat, 'I look forward to the light, because I have sight; but of what use is the light to thee?'⁴⁰

(1) This was a forecast of the future. Babylon and Palestine would be overrun with Persians, Medes and Parthians and their horses would dig up the dead, whose coffins would serve as cribs.

(2) I.e., the whole world in which Israel is scattered.

(3) Micah V, 2: 'therefore will he give them up' is interpreted as meaning to a foreign — viz., the Roman — power, and the duration of their servitude is fixed by 'until the time etc.' i.e., nine months, the period of pregnancy.

(4) V. n. 7.

(5) [Following the reading in Yalkut (v. Levy,) בשולא. Our texts read: דכופיחא, 'dung'.]

(6) These troubles are generally referred to as birth pangs, being the travail which precedes the birth of a new era.

(7) That sin may neutralise the other two, and so I will suffer after all.

(8) Gen. XXVIII, 15; spoken by God to Jacob.

(9) Ibid. XXXII, 8: in view of God's promise, why did he fear?

(10) Ex. XV, 16.

(11) Ibid.

(12) Amos V, 19.

(13) Who contests his title to the field-(Jast.). Rashi translates: an official surveyor, who fixes the boundary lines of the different owners, and thus may increase or: limit one's property.

(14) I.e., we experience the same successive troubles even now, without the Messiah coming: why then should you be afraid of it?

(15) גבר.

(16) Jer. XXX, 6.

(17) גבורה.

(18) I.e., the Almighty himself bewails Israel in the power of the Gentile.

(19) To avenge the wrongs suffered by the Jews. Because the suffering would be so great that even the Almighty would lament it, R. Johanan desired to be spared the Messiah's coming.

(20) The horse is made to replace it, but when the ox recovers, it is difficult to remove the horse. So the Israelites, having fallen, were replaced in power by the Gentiles: but on their recovery, it will be difficult to remove the Gentiles from their position without inflicting much suffering.

(21) I.e., the years of plenty which the Messiah will usher in will be enjoyed by the Israelites.'

(22) Two fictitious names — 'any Tom, Dick and Harry' — shall these years be enjoyed indiscriminately by anyone?

(23) Therefore R. Giddal puts it in the future.

(24) That he might sing hymns and psalms to God.

(25) That he might receive the Torah.

- (26) Gen. XLIX, 10.
- (27) E.V. 'shall be continued'.
- (28) Ps. LXXII, 17.
- (29) Jer. XVI, 13. Thus each School evinced intense admiration of its teacher in naming the Messiah after him by a play on words.
- (30) Lam. I, 16.
- (31) Isa. LIII, 4.
- (32) Jer. XXX, 21: this description fitted R. Nahman, who, as the son-in-law of the Resh Galutha, enjoyed great power and prestige.
- (33) I.e., R. Judah the Nasi, generally called Rabbi par excellence.
- (34) [Preferably, if of the living, our holy Master (would be the type) of the Messiah; if of the dead, Daniel.]
- (35) Lit., 'for them'.
- (36) Ibid. XXX, 9.
- (37) Ezek. XXXVII, 25: prince (nasi) is a lower title than king.
- (38) The second David shall be the king, and the former David shall be his viceroy.
- (39) Amos V, 18.
- (40) Thus Israel should hope for the redemption, because it will be a day of light to them: but why should the Gentiles, seeing that for them it will be a day of darkness?