

**Risto Santala**

**THE MIDRASH OF THE MESSIAH**

**The Messiah and His Meal**  
**in Midrash Ruth Chapters V, VII and VIII**  
and its roots and reflections in corresponding Jewish literature  
**המונח לאכול למשיח במדרש רות ובספרי חז"ל**

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This book and three other main Rabbinical studies of the author,  
“The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings”,  
“The Messiah in the New Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings”  
and “Paul, the Man and the Teacher in the Light of Jewish Sources”  
can also be found at Internet.

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**"Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus - I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places." Is. 45:1 - 3.**

כה-אמר יהוה למשיחו לכורש - נתתי לך אוצרות חשך ומטמני

מסתרים למען תדע כי אני יהוה.

**RaSHI explains that "according to rabbi God will say this to the King Messiah".**

**"He reveals deep and mysterious things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him." Daniel 2:22.**

הוא גלא עמיקתא ומסתרתא, ידע מה בחשוכא ונהירא עמה שרא.

**Midrash Lamentations Rabbah I:51 says: "'Light dwells with him'; this is the King Messiah, for it is written: 'Arise, shine, for your light has come'." Is. 60:1**

**The study is dedicated to Institutum Judaicum Aboense**



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It is difficult to grasp the nature of the main Hebrew sources. Therefore we give some extracts of them **visualized as they appear in the original texts**: 1. Midrash Ruth, 2. Mikraoth Gedoloth where RaSHI, Ibn Ezra, RaMBaN, RaDaQ and RaLBaG repeatedly appear, 3. the Talmud, 4. the Zohar, 5. Isaiah 53 at Qumran, 6. the Yalkut, 7. the Siddur, 8. the Mahzor, 9. the Messianic text of RaMBaM in Hilkhoth Melakhim, 10. the flyleaf of Mikr. Gedoloth.

The only legitimate method in Midrashic studies is to lean on these Hebrew and Aramaic sources. They dovetail the Jewish selfunderstanding into the correct rabbinic frame of reference.

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**LITERATURE CONSULTED**

I to XVII



# THE MIDRASH OF THE MESSIAH

## The Messiah and His Meal

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and its roots and reflections in corresponding Jewish literature

המונח לאכול למשיח במדרש רות ובספרי חז"ל

## PREFACE

### The topic, its derivation and words of dedication

Adopting an academic approach does not necessarily imply that the substance is boring. Every scientific challenge has its own motive and personal history behind it. This fact fits in with Archimedes' exclamation of "heureka" while he was sitting in the bathtub and with Newton's discovery when the famous apple fell upon his head - the same rule can be applied to every scholar who makes new original discoveries. Only an inspired attitude can spur also others to tackle the same puzzle.

My personal interest in Jewish literature is the result of a long process. As a young student in 1948 I ordered from Sweden some books on the so-called "Jewish question". In particular the celebrated rabbis **Marcus Ehrenpreis** and **Gottlieb Klein** left their imprint on my soul. In the early 80's I wrote two studies in Hebrew

on the Messiah in the Old and New Testaments in the Light of Rabbinical Writings. In the process I came across our subject, the "Messiah-parashiyoth" in Midrash Ruth. It reveals *an eternal perspective on the Messianic banquet* similar to the Holy Communion in the New Testament. The concepts as "to eat in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come", "the bread of the kingdom", the Messiah, who "was wounded for our transgressions", the Messiah who will "rain down manna" upon his people, the discussion concerning Elijah recording our good deeds and "the Messiah and the Holy One subscribing to and sealing" them, provided imposing spectacles for studying other Jewish writings. No wonder Midrash Ruth has been awarded the nickname "the Midrash of the Messiah".

The only academic study on Midrash Ruth which was then available was the doctoral thesis published by **Myron Bialik Lerner** in 1971.<sup>1</sup> The author produced a critical edition of the major Midrashic compilation of Midrash Ruth Rabbah and gave his exegesis of the Book of Ruth in midrashic-talmudic literature and related sources. I had the privilege of contacting this respected scholar and asking his opinion about the Messiah-parashiyoth. The professor of the orthodox Bar Ilan University in Tel-Aviv then modestly replied that he did not respond to the specific Messianic problem in his query. However, I noticed that he quoted many Christian theologians and the New Testament, comparing the genre of Midrash and the parables in the New Testament. This unprejudiced position is typical of Jewish scholars in our day. Since 1925 the New Testament has been taught at the University of Jerusalem as Jewish literature. The famous professor **Joseph Klausner** was a pioneer in writing books about the Messianic idea and Christian faith. His successor, **David Flusser** was profoundly acquainted with the New Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

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<sup>1</sup> **Lerner Myron Bialik**, אגדת רות ומדרש רות רבה, Academic dissertation consisting of three parts in Hebrew, Jerusalem 1971.

Having personal contact with both of them and reading their books, I received a deeper insight into Jewish thinking.<sup>2</sup> It is commonly accepted that the New Testament reflects the way of thought in old Jewish sources.

This new viewpoint has mostly been neglected. Between 1965-70 as we conversed in the *LWF-Committee on the Church and Jewish People* over the role of Jewish thinking in Christian theology the attitude to this kind of approach was rather supercilious. In the mutual conference of the *Evangelical Churches and the Jewish Synagogues in Berlin* in October 1976 the situation somewhat softened. In the statement made then, support was given to Christians to spread the fundamentals of their faith to Jews and vice versa. Probably the most productive negotiation occurred in Bossey in August 1982. This international consultation on "*The Significance of the Jews in the Life and Ministry of the Church*" benefited from the presence of a notable Jewish contingent. The main theme of the discussion was "The Christian's relationship to his Jewish inheritance". The final statement of the consultation averred that the Old Testament knowledge of both ancient and modern Jewish scholars may well "enrich the church and give to it a deeper understanding of its own biblical roots". For this reason the church's teachers should "compare" its roots and faith with the religious inheritance of Israel. When we become aware of the "Jewish roots" of our faith and its "Jewish inheritance", this can effect "new power of faith" in every aspect of church life.<sup>3</sup> This

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<sup>2</sup> **Klausner Joseph**, *The Messianic Idea in Israel from its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, London 1956; *Jesus von Nazareth, Seine Zeit, sein Leben und seine Lehre*, Jerusalem 1952; *Von Jesus zu Paulus*, Jerusalem 1950; Klausner emphasized in a personal discussion that his third book reveals his real thinking about Jesus. **Flusser David**, *The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity*, Jerusalem 1958, and his Hebrew collection "Jewish Sources in Early Christianity", *Studies and Essays*, 1979 דפוס שמגר ת"א .

<sup>3</sup> **LWB-Studien**, *Die Bedeutung des Judentums Für Leben und Mission der Kirche*, Bericht, April 1983, pp. 9-17.

challenge has not yet been fully realized in Christian theology.

Jewish commentaries are mostly written in the so-called **RaSHI characters**. It has blocked the entrance to rabbinic studies. Also this field of research is a kind of untilled virgin soil. Due to this we are making in our query as the rabbis say, a "Nahson's leap", the first one to jump into the Red Sea at Moses' command. It is a common assumption that the Messianic idea would not be accepted in Jewish thinking. Still it is written in the Talmud that "*all the prophets prophesied only for the days of the Messiah*".<sup>4</sup> It is surprising and even stirring to see how much we can learn as Christians of our own roots in the oldest normative Jewish writings. An old Hebrew saying goes, "*I did not seek, and I did not find - then I sought, and I found*".<sup>5</sup> Another byword states, "*When we reveal one measure of our palm, another two palms are still hidden*"<sup>6</sup> - in other words, when we look into one issue, there are two new challenges behind it which we would not have noticed without looking at the first.

Rabbinic literature contains an abundance of esoteric Messianic interpretations similar to those which are familiar to us from the New Testament. Already as such Midrash Ruth also reflects Jewish thinking and the main Messianic expectations among the rabbis. But after the second look it reveals the "two-fold palm" with many new problems. In fact these problems excite three main puzzles. 1. The first requirement is to know the inner affiliate of Midrash Ruth with other Jewish writings. This demands a special method which fits to the literary genre of equivalent sources. 2. There is also a need to analyze the various concepts of Midrash Ruth and their religious meaning in that frame of reference. 3. One must also be critical to previous studies and ostensible experts in the field - due

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<sup>4</sup> **Berakhoth** 34b.

<sup>5</sup> **Megillah** 6b, יגעתי ומצאתי

<sup>6</sup> **Berakhoth** 23b, מגלה טפח ומכסה טפחים

to the fact that the final evaluation on this ticklish sphere can be given only on an unbiased base. All this must be taken into account when we deal with our topic and its derivation.

To whom the words of dedication may be given is also an inseparable part of dissertations of this kind. I am thankful for the privilege having dealt personally on the path of my life with personalities like **Joseph Klausner, Martin Buber, David Flusser, Myron Bialik Lerner, Dr. Shalom Ben-Chorin and the Swedish Professor David Hedegård**, an expert in Jewish prayer literature. Sometimes the written opinions of well-known scholars lacking a personal acquaintance remain somewhat pale and resemble a kind of dead mummy without flesh and blood. The late Orthodox rabbi **Yechiel Goldin Ben Abraham** sold me at a reasonable price the main books of his Hebrew library before passing away in the late sixties. After coming to Christian conviction he had to take a solitary role and I was, in a minor part, his personal consolation and student - on the back of his photograph he wrote his dedication, "to my brother in the Messiah, Rabbi R. Santala with love from Rabbi Y.G. Ben Abraham".

I also spent numerous weeks in the **French library of the Catholic Brotherhood** in Jerusalem and in the **Ecumenical Centre of Tantur** while writing in Hebrew about the Messiah in the Old and the New Testament in the Light of Jewish Literature. The library of **the Hebrew University in Jerusalem** was somehow remote because of its new ADP equipment. Thanks to my son-in-law and grandchildren that this grandpa is now able to grapple with these challenges. Earlier I had to make the notes on my card-index in stenography - now all kind of CD Rom's, the Internet and e-mail services contribute to the research workers in their study. In this regard the philosopher's stone has been mostly in the hands of my close friend, the computer "freak" **Pentti Vataja**, who has saved me from many eclipses of the monitor.

For fun I call him by the name that occurs in Midrash Lamentations

I:31 and Midrash Eccl. Rabbah VII:19 **Ben Battiah** בַּתִּיָּה, the nephew of R. Johanan Ben Zakkai. There were in Jerusalem "four councillors, viz. Ben Zizith, **Ben Gorion**, Ben **Nakdimon** and Ben Kalba-Shebua, each of them capable of supplying food for the city for ten years".<sup>7</sup> This Battiah or Vataja "was a chief of the zealots and arose and burnt the storehouses" - so I'll be careful with mine also! Nakdimon or **Nicodemus** is known to us from the New Testament and the name Ben-Gurion from the famous David, the Prime Minister of Israel, whose former name was Green - an impossible title for an experienced politician!

The tenet in the so called "dominant theology" tends to disparage the meaning in Jewish writings. It is not conversant with Hebrew sources and Medieval Rashi commentaries. I was confronted with the proposal to abandon my theme of the Messiah and his meal and to concentrate on the similarities in Midrash Ruth and the Gospel of Matthew - a factitious and irrelevant suggestion. We often collide with this dilemma in Rabbinic and Midrashic studies.

The proofreading of this study has been kindly done by Ph. Dr. **Lloyd Swantz** in a way that all the prepositions, articles and particles would be in their proper positions - an accomplishment which is not easy at all in the eyes of a Scandinavian Viking.

Above all, my humble gratitude redounds upon my dear wife **Kerttu** and her fifty years of honest, loving and diplomatic alignments in practical theology, whenever needed. "Love rejoiceth in the truth", and love it has been. Conventional thinking does not promote research nor life. In the study of Midrashic literature new dimensions are needed. Plato has said that "the beginning is the most important part of the work". May God bless this start and the whole study that it might provide spiritual edification and stimulation as is the general purpose of the Midrash.

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<sup>7</sup> The expression is also used of Elimelekh in Midrash Ruth.

# I INTRODUCTION

## **The formulation of the problem and its methodological aspects**

The aim of this study is to examine the Messiah and his meal in Midrash Ruth Rabbah. Midrash Ruth has a three-dimensional message: the description of the events in Ruth Rabbah linked with the period of the judges, the special moral codes required by the Midrash and the picture of Messianic meal in eternity. All these views are enshrined in a many-faceted nature. There is a danger to fall into a kind of scientific snobbery giving the impression that one could master the immense Rabbinic literature and find an answer to all the problems. Being too "academic" does not fit to Midrashic studies which always includes a narrative, practical and explanatory approach.

Our object is limited principally to Midrash Ruth but behind the Jewish Messianic expectation there is a wider spectrum. Every single concept, story and parable in our Midrash awakens new perspectives and questions. They are opening a window to captivating unknown landscapes. These new spectacles reveal old discoveries and visions which are relevant both to Jewish and Christian readers.

If we are *mapping out the various fields of problems* and challenges, some of them raise clearly to the surface: How and why does the Midrash use the Old Testament verses in arguing its claims? What position does the Messianic expectation really have in Jewish thinking? Why are the rabbis speaking about the Messianic meal? What do the special concepts of Midrash Ruth mean in this context? Is that possible to see also the "extratextual reality" of the text which would reveal the reason for the special exegesis of the compilers? And how has the Jewish self-understanding related the various aspects of Midrash Ruth to its own Torah interpretation in a wider span of time? We endeavor to observe all these and

some other questions.

*The use of the Old Testament in Midrash Ruth* forms the principal basement for our study. One of the leading authorities in Jewish studies, professor **Jacob Neusner** deals with this subject in his book "The Midrash Compilations". He uses the heading "*Writing with Scripture*":

In Ruth Rabbah the compiler is "engaged in dialogue with the Scriptures of ancient Israel - the Scripture provided the language, the vocabulary, the metaphors. But the authors supplied the syntax, the reference point, the experience that formed the subject of the writing". "The Scriptures raised questions, set forth rules of thought, premises of fact and argument." However the Midrash "does not bear any literary or rhetorical resemblance to Scripture". *It "has condemned ethnocentrism and favored a religious, and not an ethnic, definition of who is Israel".*<sup>8</sup>

This "condemnation" of ethno-centrism is not a rare feature in the Jewish literature. It is reflected in the Hebrew book of **Yair Hofman** dealing with the "Prophecies about the Gentile Nations in the Bible".<sup>9</sup> There he argues according to the presentation of the publisher, that the purpose of the Old Testament is not primarily a fruit of national interest but rather "*an evidence of universal message of God based on the faith of the prophets*". This was illuminating the special nature of the Israeli prophets in quite a new light. Midrash Ruth gives some new elements to this universalistic emphasis.

**Neusner** summarizes his word about the use of the Bible in the above mentioned sub-article "Writing with Scripture" as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> **Jacob Neusner**, *The Midrash Compilations of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries, An Introduction to Rhetorical, Logical and Topical Program, Volume III*, Scholars Press, Atlanta Georgia 1989, pp. 135-136.

<sup>9</sup> **Yair Hofman**, 1977. הנבואות על הגויים במקרא, דפוס אורלי, ת"א, הופמן יאיר.

"Indeed, among all the Midrash compilations, *I can find none that gives us a better view of what it means to write with Scripture than Ruth Rabbah.*" Neusner mentions also, that "the ancient rabbis read Scripture as God's personal letter to them". And he adds: "If I may express what I conceive to be their conception of matters; we are not wiser because we know more, but in the pages of Scripture we may become wiser by understanding better what we know. All of this is meant to be captured by the phrase, 'writing with Scripture'." "As soon as an authorship does more than repeat what it finds in Scripture - and that *authorship that merely apes or copies is no authorship at all* - we enter the realm of those who write with Scripture."<sup>10</sup>

The *second starting-point* in our study in addition to the abundant use of the Scriptures is to become acquainted with the *plain content* of Midrash Ruth Rabbah. It leads us to penetrate into one of our *principal interests*, the eternal perspective of the Messianic banquet in Midrash Ruth and in other Jewish writings. *Some features in Midrash Ruth are very similar to the teachings of the New Testament.* One of the problems in this context concerns Rabbi **Elisha Ben Abuyah** in **Parashah VI,4**. He is considered as a kind of arch-apostate in the Talmud.<sup>11</sup> This also justifies the use of the New Testament in our study the same way as the Jewish scholars increasingly do. Midrash Ruth raises a question whether this story would be an attempt to hem in the "minim", including the Hebrew Christians and other secterians, back to the synagogue. The main Sages in Midrash Ruth were living as we shall see in Sephoris or in Tiberias, places where the disputations with the "minim" were most heated.

Midrash Ruth presents also as a central theme the task of "a celestial scribe" mostly called as Metatron who records the merits of Israel

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<sup>10</sup> The above book of Neusner pp. 137 - 138.

<sup>11</sup> See section III,2,8 in our study.

together with Elijah in the heavenly accounting in order to see whether she would be worthy to see the days of the Messiah. The role of Metatron along with other similar Messianic speculations belong closely to our investigation of Midrash Ruth. *Without a careful and detailed analysis of these enigmatic notions we do not find the correct setting of various ideas in the Jewish selfunderstanding.*

**Jacob Neusner** gives an unambiguous declaration about *the message of Midrash Ruth*. He writes:

"To speak of 'messages' in the Midrash compilation, Ruth Rabbah, simply is misleading. *Our document has **only one message**, which is expressed in a variety of components but single and cogent - the Messiah out of Moab.*" "Our sages impose upon the whole their distinctive message, which is the priority of the Torah, the extraordinary power of the Torah to join the opposites - Messiah, utterly an outsider - into a single figure, and, as I said, to accomplish this union of opposites through a women. The femininity of Ruth seems to me as critical to the whole, therefore, as of the Moabite origin: the two modes of them (from the Israelite perspective) abnormal, as an outsider, as against an Israelite, woman as against man, therefore are invoked, and both for the same purpose, to show how, through the Torah, all things become one. *This is the message of the document, and I think, seen as a whole, the principal message, to which all the other messages prove peripheral.*"<sup>12</sup>

This Messianic message of Midrash Ruth is unique of its nature, and it is one of the objects in our study.

An additional full "palm" of problems will be revealed when we deal with the *various Messianic concepts in Midrash Ruth* and their

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<sup>12</sup> **Jacob Neusner**, *The Midrash Compilations*, pp. 148-149.

meaning in the frame of Jewish reference.<sup>13</sup> The inner weight of each and every item of Midrash Ruth can be evaluated only *in the light and context of other Midrash compilations and other normative Jewish sources*. This in mind we shall present first the fundamental features of Midrashic literature as such and its general stylistic literary rules.

## II FUNDAMENTAL FACTORS IN MIDRASHIC LITERATURE

### II,1 The concept of Midrash and its relation to Peshet and Targum

Probably the best definition of Midrash is given by **Renée Bloch** in her article in *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*. According to it rabbinic Midrash is a *homiletic reflection or meditation on the Bible* which seeks to *reinterpret or actualize* a given text of the past for present circumstances. It penetrates to the text and makes it relevant for the contemporary situation.<sup>14</sup> With this in mind Midrash represents a kind of modern thinking of its own period.

**Gary G. Porton** makes, about twenty years later when the Midrashic studies had already advanced, an exceedingly remarkable

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<sup>13</sup> Our **transliteration** of the Hebrew concepts is given according to the English pronouncing. The more problematic characters are marked for the legibility of the matter as follows: ה = **h**, ח = **h**, כ = **kh**, ק = **q or k**, ט as **t** and ת mostly as **th**.

<sup>14</sup> **Renée Bloch**, *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément* 6, 1957, pp. 1263-1281.

*summary about the definitions of Midrashim.* He writes that the purpose of the Midrash had a religious rather than purely scholarly aim, and it endeavored not so much to seek the original meaning of the text as to find religious edification and moral instruction. According to his estimation **Zunk** argued that Midrash was basically a teaching about God; **Bloch** wrote that "Midrash allows God to speak to the people"; **LeDéaut** has written that "Midrash in the Jewish world designates above all an attitude, the concrete translation of the way in which the relationship between Scripture and the people of God was conceived in Israel" and **Sanders** wrote, that "Midrash at least means the function of an ancient or canonical tradition in the ongoing life of the community which preserves those traditions and in some sense finds its identity in them".<sup>15</sup>

**Addison G. Wright** mentions that "in the studies of Midrash written before Bloch's article there had been no real attempt carefully to define Midrash as a literary form".<sup>16</sup> Also in the Christian theology there is a growing interest to use the literary techniques of the old synagogue for literary criticism.

Addison G. Wright characterizes the situation stating, that one of the prominent characteristics of biblical studies in this century has been the careful and explicit attention given to the classification of literary genres. Literature has been classified into genres for various purposes at least since Plato and such classification has become a standard technique for the study of literature in some schools of literary criticism and has found its way into biblical criticism especially through the work of Gunkel and Lagrange. However, we must point out that it ought to be only an aid and not a master. It

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<sup>15</sup> **G. G. Porton**, "Defining Midrash", N. Y. 1981, in the Study of Ancient Judaism I: Mishnah, Midrash, Siddur, ed.by J. Neusner, p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> **Addison G. Wright**, The Literary Genre Midrash, Albe House, New York 1967, p. 22. We are not dealing in our study with the potential re-writing of the texts in the phase of their composition but rather with the literary and conceptual features.

requires also an extensive knowledge to see the essence of the matter, **את הנולד**. No work of literature can be understood correctly unless it is put into its proper literary focus in this way. That is also the way to approach our special theme about the Messiah and his meal without making too hasty conclusions.

**The name Midrash** derives from the root **דרש** which in the Bible means mainly "to search", "to seek" or "to examine". The noun Midrash occurs only twice in the Bible.<sup>17</sup> In the time of the Second Temple the word was first employed in the sense of education and learning generally. The synagogue was called as "a house of learning", **בית המדרש**. The discoveries at **Qumran** have raised the question of Midrash in a new and somewhat confusing light. In the beginning the new concept **פשר** was identified with **מדרש**. In Qumran the word **דרש** appears about five times signifying a kind of "juridical investigation" or "study". The most common concept **פשר** is a generic name for "interpretation or exposition" and it has very little to do with the genre of Midrash.<sup>18</sup> Among the scholars today the term Midrash has become a technical literary term to designate a literary genre alone. There is exegesis of the **דרש** type in the Talmud also and yet the Talmud is not called a Midrash by the rabbis. We must differentiate between all these terms.

**"Peshar"** or **פשר in Qumran literature** is a kind of paraphrase of the biblical text and not a homiletic expansion of a biblical book or its part for the purpose of edification.<sup>19</sup> **"Peshar"** *does not cite other biblical books or the opinions of teachers the same way as the Midrash does.* And the Qumran literature is less detailed and developed than that of the Midrash. In Qumran literature both "raz" **רז** or "secret" and "peshar" **פשר** appear in the same context. The

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<sup>17</sup> II Chron. 13:22 and 24:27.

<sup>18</sup> **M.P. Horgan**, Pesharim, Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books, Washington Cath. Bibl. Ass. 1979.

<sup>19</sup> **Addison G. Wright**, Midrash, The Pesharim p. 81.

first stage of divine revelation was imparted to the biblical writer, but it remained a mystery and secret until the second stage, the interpretation or "pesher" was imparted to the Teacher of Righteousness and his disciples.<sup>20</sup>

The "**Pesher**" *tries primarily to actualize biblical texts and make them meaningful for the limited Essene groups; "Midrash" endeavors to make the story of the past more vivid to the whole Jewish community.* There is in Qumran literature also a kind of brotherly communion which illuminates the difference and special nature of Messianic meal in the intermediate stage of our era.

**Even the difference between the Aramaic targums and the Midrash** is notable. The targums render a translation and some expansions of the text. They reflect the synagogue homilies which followed the daily readings. The Targums explain mostly *separate concepts giving incidental material.* The Midrash on the other hand gives homiletic material scooping it from biblical and rabbinical texts. The Talmud states as follows: *"The whole Torah in its entirety is in Hebrew, but certain things from the Targum also belong to it."*<sup>21</sup>

Only the **Targum of Onqelos** received the synagogue's official approval. It contains expository material on the whole Pentateuch and dates from the 2nd century C.E. and onwards. The Targums which go under the name of **Jonathan Ben Uzziel** were written later on the basis of a tradition which was handed down from one generation to another, although Jonathan himself lived very near to Jesus' time. The Targum of Jonathan contains material which, according to some scholars, dates from as far as the 2nd century B.C. and is thus partly older than the Targum Onqelos.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Encyclopaedia Judaica XIII, pp. 331-333.

<sup>21</sup> **Masechet Soferim** 1a.

<sup>22</sup> **Addison G. Wright**, Midrash p. 23. See also **footnote 23**.

**The significance of Targum** is very prominent from the perspective of our study. Just as in the Midrash literature the hand of the censor is not obvious in the Targums. This is further illustrated by the fact that, according to counts made, 72 OT passages are explained in the Targums as applying to the Messiah. *More than the other Targums, the tradition associated with the name of Jonathan highlights the Messianic concept*, and for this reason we will describe him in the light of the Talmud. It dedicates a prominent amount to the reason why Jonathan Ben Uzziel was abandoned by the synagogue as an accepted and authorized teacher for the Torah.<sup>23</sup>

**Jonathan** was the greatest pupil of the elder Hillel before the destruction of the Temple. One traditional account relates that Hillel had 80 pupils:

"40 of them earned the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, just as Moses did; 30 that the sun would stand still above them, as in the time of Joshua the son of Nun; 20 were average; but the greatest of them was Jonathan Ben Uzziel, and the least Johanan Ben Zakkai - and let it be remembered that the latter was the creator of the renaissance of the Torah in Jamnia immediately after the destruction of the Temple."<sup>24</sup>

Jonathan translated the prophets into Aramaic, accompanied with brief explanations. His work of course aroused opposition from the

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<sup>23</sup> The literature which deals with the matter: **John Bowker**, *The Targums and Rabbinic Literature, An Introduction to Jewish Interpretation of Scripture*, Cambridge 1969; **S.H. Levey**, *The Messiah, An Aramaic Interpretation, The Messianic Exegesis of the Targum*, Cincinnati 1974; **H.L. Strack**, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 1st ed. Berlin 1887, 6. Aufl. München 1976; **B. Pick**, *Old Testament Passages Messianically Applied by Ancient Synagogue*, Hebraica 1885-1888.

<sup>24</sup> Page 518 in the Hebrew reference work of **Mordekhai Margalioth** on the "Wise" of the Talmud, Tel-Aviv 1964.

Sages of the time, as they felt that the Hebrew original would thus be forgotten. But, in his own words, Jonathan went ahead so that doctrinal disputes would not multiply in Israel. It is remarkable that the synagogue accepted **Onqelos'** work for the normative use even though he was a "ger" or proselyte.<sup>25</sup> Jonathan's specifically Messianic emphasis was one of the reasons that his translation was not accepted.<sup>26</sup>

**Talmud Megilah 3a** explains the exact reason why Jonathan Ben Uzziel was not accepted by the rabbis. It tells about "the voice of revelation" **בת קול** which reproached him from heaven because he "revealed the secrets of God", although not for his own glory - "and when he wanted to reveal targum of the Hagiographa **כתובים** there came a **בת קול** and said to him, *it's enough דיין!* *What was the*

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<sup>25</sup> May it be said, that there is a certain confusion in using the names of various Targums. The two principal Targumim are thus **Targum Onqelos** to the Pentateuch, which originated in Palestine before being used in Babylonia at the end of the third century where it soon won high esteem. **Targum Jonathan** on the Former and Latter Prophets ( **TJon** ) was in use in Babylonia in the early fourth century. Even a part of Targum to the Torah came to be called by the name of Jonathan, but it is now commonly called as **Targum Yerushalmi or pseudo-Jonathan** ( **TPsJ** ) to distinguish it from the Targum on the Prophets. In Jewish commentaries the Sages differentiate between Targum Onqelos, Targum Jonathan and Targum Yerushalmi. The confusion in the use of the names derives from the fact that the Hebrew abbreviation T.Y. (ת.י.) can indicate both the Targum of Jonathan and Targum Yerushalmi.

<sup>26</sup> There is an interesting discussion in the Talmud on this matter. "The Targum of the Pentateuch was composed by **Onkelos** the proselyte under the guidance of R. Eleazar and R. Joshua. The Targum of the Prophets was composed by **Jonathan ben Uzziel** under the guidance of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, and the land of Israel (thereupon) quaked over an area of four hundred parasangs by four hundred parasangs, and a Bath Kol came forth and exclaimed, 'Who is this that has revealed My secrets to mankind?' Jonathan ben Uzziel thereupon arose and said, 'It is I who have revealed Thy secrets to mankind. It is fully known to Thee that I have not done this for my own honour or for the honour of my father's house, but for Thy honour I have done it, that dissension may not increase in Israel.'" **Megillah 3a**.

*reason? - Because the latter days of the Messiah קץ משיח are foretold in it."* Behind the restraint of the rabbis in eschatological matters is a certain disappointment. This is reflected also in Midrash Ruth. The Messiah had to come according to Daniel 9:24-26 before the destruction of the second Temple but apparently from the standpoint of rabbinic thinking he did not.

It is important for us to know the **principal tendencies** in Jewish writings. One of them is the *common inclination to avoid Messianic interpretations although in the old medieval legends the eschatological view and Messianic exegesis is more notable.*<sup>27</sup> This negative attitude in the matter originates from the bitter history between the church and the Jewish people. The theology of Judaism - if there is any such kind of uniform thinking - reasons mainly with the knowledge of God and his will afforded by God's self-manifestation in the Torah, both oral and written. But Christian and Jewish exegesis are still treating partly the same topics. In this sense they can complete one another and increase the knowledge of our common inheritance.

We are aware of the tension in the Messianic interpretations in this matter. **Myron Bialik Lerner** wanted primarily to demonstrate the existence of different strata and traditions behind Midrash Ruth dealing thus so little with the special Messianic parashiyoth in his academic dissertation. **Jacob Neusner** and his colleagues are doing now a comprehensive and systematic project to translate and study all the material of Midrash Rabbah, but even in this plan the

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<sup>27</sup> The collection of different articles given by **Raphael Patai**, *The Messiah Texts, Jewish Legends of Three Thousand Years*, Detroit 1979, does deal also with the Messianic Banquet (pp. 235-246) or the Sufferings of the Messiah (104-121), but these stories are mostly legends and not original sources appropriate to our study. The Hebrew collection with three Volumes, Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem 1976, *התלמודית והמדרשית*, leans more on Talmud and Midrash. The Hebrew and German edition of **Adolph Jellinek**, *Bet ha-Midrash* in six volumes, Jerusalem 1967, has the widest collection of these legends.

Messianic aspect seems to play a minor role. **Addison G. Wright** omits totally in his extensive book "The Literary Genre Midrash" the role of Midrash Ruth Rabbah. And yet there we do find all the typical literary features related to old synagogue sermons. The main aspects of Messianic expectation are embedded there like precious jewels in the ocean. Also the late Swedish Prof. **Tryggve Kronholm** leaves the Messianic message untouched in his portrayal of Ruth Rabbah.<sup>28</sup>

**Renée Bloch** attempted to elaborate a new synthesis of all Midrashic texts. But her tragic death in 1955 prevented her from doing more than grapple with the preliminaries. There is a real need to delineate the primary characteristics also *from a Christian perspective*. The aim of Midrash is to comment on the Scriptures and to make them relevant to the contemporaries of each time. Midrash has primarily a religious and edifying purpose and not only a speculative one. The rabbinic sources are giving different interpretive alternatives to a given text and they do not inevitably fix the opinion of the student to one limited explanation. We endeavor to penetrate in our study to the common inheritance of the Jewish and Christian theology.

## II,2 Midrash Ruth and its position in Midrashic literature

In this section we shall try to give the facts about Midrashic literature in the right proportionate measure. This is only a kind of preliminary procedure. *From the point of view of the period of the arrangement and collection* the aggadic Midrashim have been divided into three groups: *early, middle and late*. This commonly

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<sup>28</sup> **Tryggve Kronholm**, The Portrayal of Characters in Midrash Ruth Rabbah, Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute 1983/12, pp. 16-54.

accepted way of division is given in the Encyclopaedia Judaica by Dr. **Moshe David Herr** of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup> *It serves best in defining the principal stylistic differences between the various layers of the Midrashic literature.* The determination of the time of the editing and arranging of the various Midrashim is by no means a simple matter. It is nearly impossible to determine with even approximate certainty the period when a Midrash or aggadic work was compiled. However, it is possible to arrive at a *relative date, that is, to determine the relation of a particular Midrash to others.* To do this one cannot rely on the historical allusions alone or merely on the names of the sages mentioned in the Midrash, nor can one rely on the first mentions of the Midrash and its first citations, since *all the Midrashim contain much material from different and extended eras.*

The best and probably the most reliable method for determining priority or lateness among Midrashim is *the relationship between the various Midrashim*, the use one makes of another as well as their relationship to other sources. There are also other additional indications for this kind of comparison like the literary forms, language and style. In the case of Midrash Ruth it is apparent that all these features are linked to a certain early period.

## II,2,1 The early Midrashim

This group of Midrash differs clearly from those of the middle period. Sometimes they are called "Classical Amoraic Midrashim". These seven early Midrashim are: *Genesis Rabbah; Leviticus Rabbah; Lamentations Rabbah; Esther Rabbah I; Pesikta de-Rav Kahana; Song of Songs Rabbah and **Ruth Rabbah.***

The most developed and perfect literary forms and constructions are

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<sup>29</sup> Encyclopaedia Judaica XI, pp. 1507-1514.

already found in these oldest aggadic Midrashim. This proves the literary crystallization of many preceded generations mostly of the Amoraic period. Midrash Rabbah has usually *a classical proem* at the beginning of the whole Midrash or even of each chapter. It served fundamentally as the introduction to a homily delivered in public. **The classical proem** is a prelude to a homily on a certain verse by citing a verse from another source and connecting it with the chief verse of the homily. This kind of proem is yet scarcely found earlier in the Tannaitic literature. *It was mostly developed and perfected in the time of the Amoraim between 200 and 500 A.D.* It was given to attract, stimulate and arouse the curiosity of the audience and *to emphasize the unity of the biblical books*. The Midrash actually follows the method of preachers. Midrash Rabbah consists of a collection of *homilies, sayings and aggadot of the Amoraim* revealing the rich world of thoughts and rabbinical interpretations. *They are written in Galilean Aramaic and rabbinical Hebrew with some Greek addenda.*

It seems that these early Midrashim, which are not mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud, were *edited in the Land of Israel* in the fifth and sixth centuries C.E. Two types can be distinguished: *exegetical and homiletical*. **Exegetical Midrashim** like Genesis Rabbah or Lamentations Rabbah and Ruth Rabbah are interpreting only one book of the Bible. They contain *comments on the whole book, each chapter and every verse, and at times even on every word in the verse*. We are explaining the reason to it when we are dealing with the methods of Midrash. **The homiletical Midrash** takes usually *only the first verses in the weekly portions of Torah or prophetic readings* expounding its practical meaning. In homiletical Midrashim each chapter constitutes a collection of homilies and sayings. They are combined into one long homily on the specific topic.

**Early and later Midrashim differ** a lot in their character. In the Midrashim of the middle period *a decline is already discernible in the developed literary constructions and forms*, especially in the

poem. However, it is only an inferior and *artificial imitation*. After the Muslim conquest the apocalyptic literature, which had been disregarded by the talmudic rabbis particularly because of the controversy with Christianity, became more apparent influencing in the Midrash both in content and form. There is a notable increase in homilies which refer to angels, demons, the garden of Eden, hell and apocalyptic items. This does not belong to Midrash in its earlier stage. The authors who were the narrators, gave their own seal to the compilation. In addition there is also a difference in language. The Galilean Aramaic of the early Midrashim progressively disappears, as does rabbinical Hebrew. Instead there is progressive use of artificial Hebrew, apparently pure and polished and becoming freer from the influence of Aramaic language.

In the light of these characteristics given by Moshe David Herr it seems obvious that Midrash Ruth points to the category of the earliest Midrashim being written in rabbinical Hebrew and having pure classical poems and a typical use of the Scriptures.

## **II,2,2 The middle Midrashic period**

**The middle period between 640 - 900 C.E.** consists of more than 20 different Midrash compilations. Characteristic to them is the role of private compilers. *All these are homiletical by nature.* The most important and popular Midrashim from this period is the "**Tanhuma Midrash**" (**Yelammedenu**) **group** of eight compilations where the old and the new material is used indiscriminately. **Rabbi Tanhuma Bar Abba** to whom the Tanhuma Midrash has been ascribed was a Palestinian Amora acting in the second half of the fourth century. His principal teacher in halakhah and aggadah was **Rabbi Huna** (ca 320-350 A.D.), a central figure in Midrash Ruth also. Tanhuma is noted especially for the poems with which he introduced his discourses. The phrase "*R. Tanhuma began his discourse with this biblical text*" occurs frequently in Midrash, particularly in Pesikta Rabbati, one of

Yelammedenu Midrashim. When he was asked questions he did not answer immediately; after a long silence he quoted a biblical verse connecting it with the item concerned.

### II,2,3 The later Midrashic period

**The late period of Midrashim** has a great practical value for every Torah student of modern times. This school between **1000 and 1200 C.E.** and especially the series related to **Moshe ha-Darshan** means a turning-point in Midrashic compilations. In these Midrashim there is hardly a trace or even an imitation of the classical proem and the Hebrew is completely of medieval times.

For our study the following phase between **1200 and 1550 C.E.** is also meaningful. The Jewish scholars in various countries assembled anthologies from various Midrashim and aggadic works. To these belong e.g. **Yalkut Shimeoni** to the whole of the Bible assembled in Germany and **Yalkut Makhiri** to various biblical books. When we are asking whether a certain Bible verse is mentioned in Talmud the quickest shortcut is to check it in Yalkut.<sup>30</sup>

*Another way to scrutinize and balance the various Midrashic compilations is to emphasize their nature as halakhic or haggadic as well as exegetical or homiletical and outlining them in the line of their presumable place of origin.* This is evident also in our division in accord to the time of their composition. The position of Midrash Ruth in Midrashic literature has to be seen in this factual connection. It represents *exegetical Midrashim* commenting upon the whole book of Ruth, each chapter and almost every word and verse. And it has all the Midrashic stylish features typical for the earlier period.

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<sup>30</sup> The CD-Rom of Soncino Classics Collection does not show the Bible verses related to Talmudic discussions the same way as the Yalkut does.

## II,3 The literary methods of Midrash

The sphere of rabbinical literature and its methods is so many-faceted that it is impossible to give precise definitions and condensed answers where exactly the *borderlines* between various sectors are. From the perspective of our study on Midrash Ruth certain definitions remain still to be done.

First of all if we are inspecting rabbinic literature, it can be divided to two different categories (Gattungen), **Mishnah and Midrash**. The concept **משנה** derives from the verb "to repeat" - certain rabbinical teachings were repeated and accepted by the honored rabbinistic authorities until they became normative rules for religious behavior. These ordinances were collected and written to so-called "**halakha**", which defines "how to walk" according to the Jewish law. This word derives from the word "to walk", **ללכת**. Halakha is *mostly collected without a reference to those Bible verses they are related to and gives rather the names of the rabbis who recommended their use*. The Midrash leans more on the specific verses in the Scriptures.

According to **the content** rabbinic literature can be divided to **halakha** and **haggadah**. Halakha ordinances build the backbone for Jewish behavior. The expression haggadah originates from the word **להגיד**, which means "to tell" the traditional thinking for the next generation. Haggadah is *based mostly on the Scriptures*. It is supported with biblical texts and many times it is even forcing the reader upon the artificial meaning of the interpreter. Haggadah comprises independent material like comparisons, legends, historical anecdotes and stories about various rabbis. **Midrash literature** *contains both halakhic and haggadic material, but its fundamental feature is always the close and inseparable liaison with the given item and biblical text*. The later medieval Midrashim are dealing almost exclusively with halakhic material.

The literary methods of Midrash include *both general Rabbinic regulations as well as pure classic literary genre of Midrash.*

### II,3,1 Common Rabbinic regulations

**Rabbinic manner of exegesis** illustrates *the nature of Jewish literary records at the turn of the Christian era.* The basic rules which were formulated in the Jewish academies developed different ways of studying the Torah. *The same methods which we find in Midrashic literature blossomed already in the first and second century C.E. in the so-called Tannaic period between 40 and 200 and also among Amoraic teachers 200 - 500 C.E.* The earliest pedagogical regulations were drawn up in the schools of **Hillel** and **Shammai**, the later scholars followed the instructions of **Akiba** and **Ishmael**. In fact, R. Ishmael had thirteen hermeneutic rules in all. Many of them were commonly accepted by others also. According to tradition R. Ishmael **ישמעאל** followed the footsteps of R. Nechunja Ben Haqana **נחוניא בן הקנה** (80-110 C.E.) reasoning Torah "**kelal u-ferath**", **כלל ופרט** proceeding "*from general to particular*" and "he gave this method to his pupil R. Ishmael". Rabbi Akiba **עקיבא בן יוסף** followed R. Nahum Gam Zo **נחום איש גז** or **זו או גמזו** from the same time and they used the method "**ribuyin u-mi'utin**", **רבוין ומיעוטין** which means a kind of *expansion and limiting* the matter.

Rabbi Gamaliel's grandfather **R. Hillel** was living a little before Christian era and the Tannaic period. He gave more than the others for the expansion of literary methods and he can be considered as the father of hermeneutics.<sup>31</sup> He taught **seven** ways of study, so called "**middoth**" **מידות** or "*ways of measurement*", in which the text was to be handled.

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<sup>31</sup> **Hermann L. Strack**, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, München 1976, pp. 96-99.

**Hillel's first rule** was "*qal va-homer*", קל וחומר that is, drawing conclusions from the "lighter" or smaller matter to broader contexts. Jesus, too, employed this mode of thought when he spoke of the birds of the air that God takes care of - and are we not of far greater value? Or "he who is faithful in a little is faithful in much".<sup>32</sup>

**Hillel's second "*middah*", "*gezera shavah*",** גזרה שווה aims to analyze similar expressions and the inner causes of the same matter. The most convenient way to demonstrate this is to remind the words of Paul in Rom. 4:1-5 when he speaks of Abraham, who was not justified on the basis of works; this applies to everyone else as well. Verses 9-12 relate that Abraham was justified while he was uncircumcised and received "circumcision as a seal of this justification through faith"; this too applies to everyone. We shall see these features in Midrash Ruth later on.

**Hillel's third principle, "*binyan av mikatuv ehad*",** בנין אב מכתוב אחד means the *grouping of Bible verses, opinions and facts into one "building", like a family*. It became a common feature for all the later Jewish writings. Midrash literature may have in one chapter as many as one hundred different initial words of Old Testament verses and the abbreviation "*va-gomer*" וגו' or "*and so on*", and the reader was supposed to repeat the entire context by heart. With these united families it sufficed to state the main idea of the verse, and it could be combined with other Bible passages in the name of the same prophet. This is what Paul did in his letters too.

**The fourth rule of Hillel, "*binyan av mishnei ketuvim*",** בנין אב משני כתובים is similar to the third principle. It shows the cause and

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<sup>32</sup> The same rule can be found indirect in Gen. 44:8 and Deut. 31:27. **Genesis Rabbah** 92:7 enumerates ten Pentateuchal cases where qal va-homer is used in plural mixing Hebrew and Aramaic as קלים וחמורין or *galim va-hamurin*. See also Matthew 6:30 and Luke 16:10-12.

the argumentation *based on two Bible verses*, because "at the mouth of two witnesses - shall the matter be established" ( Deut. 19:15).

**In his fifth rule, proceeding "from general to particular and from particular to the general"**, כלל ופרט ופרט וכלל, Hillel taught that one should proceed from common principles to special claims and vice versa. Jabob Neusner prefers to say a bit similarly that we ought to advance "from the parts to the whole and from the whole to the parts" seeing the inner interplay in matters under the research.

**Hillel's sixth principle** was to find "*similar features in other connections*" כיוצא בו במקום אחר, a kind of associative method common in Jewish thinking.

**The seventh rule of Hillel** concerned practical and spiritual "*conclusions*", דבר הלמד מענינו, one of the main methods in Midrash too. In addition to all this we must remember that Rabbi Ishmael had **thirteen**, R. Eliezer Ben Josi Ha-Gelili **thirty-two**, some had **forty-nine** or even **seventy** different criteria for evaluation.

On the whole we must remember the wellknown story of the four rabbis who went into a "**garden**", Heb. "**PaRDeS**" פּרדס.<sup>33</sup> The consonants of Pardes refer as a mnemonic to four words: "pshat", "remez", "drashah" and "sod" פשט, רמז, דרשה, וסוד. Practical approach to a problem for the rabbis meant that they first asked

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<sup>33</sup> This story in **xagigah** 14b in Talmud tells about four men who entered the celestial 'Garden', namely Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, "Aher", and R. Akiba. Ben Azzai cast a look inside and died, Ben Zoma looked and became demented, Aher mutilated the "shoots", an esoteric expression about **Rabbi Elisha Ben Abujah**, whose apostasy caused for many "shoots" in the celestial Garden to die. This "Aher" or "the other one" whose name was not permitted to be pronounced anymore in the lips of Israel is also a center figure in Midrash Ruth. Only R. Akiba saw the holyness of God and departed unhurt. Especially in kabbalistic literature this type of old hermeneutics is very popular.

what is the "pshat" - the "simple" meaning. Second, they wanted to find out what "remazim" or "references" the word could be connected with. Third, they wanted to find out the "drashah" or "sermon" in the message. In addition, there were in the text also certain "sodot" or "secrets".

**The N.T. contains some of the stylistic devices of Midrash literature too.** By quoting the words "**al tiqra**" אל תקרא or "*do not read in that way but in this way*" the precise meaning of a term or its grammatical form was highlighted. The Christian reader understands it better if we show some examples of these Rabbinic rules from the New Testament as Jewish scholars also increasingly do. In Galatians 3:16 we read: "Now the promises were made to Abraham and his offsprings. It does not say, 'and to offsprings', referring to many; but, referring to one, 'and to your offspring' (Greek, τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ), which is Christ." "**Tartei mashma**" תרתי משמע or "*the double meaning*" of a term reflects the same attitude. In addition, one should study what happened "*earlier and later*", "**muqdam u-meuhar**" מוקדם ומאוחר - thus, for example, Abraham was justified because of his faith 430 years before the law was given (Gal. 3:17). A possible **change of word root** is also taken into account, although Torah copyists are to this day required to reproduce the text exactly down to the smallest detail, otherwise the entire scroll being copied must be burnt.

### II,3,2 The special characteristics of Midrash

**The special characteristics for the literary genre Midrash** are combined with the common Rabbinic stylistic expressions. But particularly *in the introductory artistic poems* the beauty of Midrashim is mostly apparent. The classical poem or "**petihta**", פתיחה serves as we have said earlier like a prelude and introduction attracting to listen the main message of the sermon. Second, one had to interpret as it is often expressed *all the minute details in Scripture*, כל תיבה וכל אות שבתורה. This principle was

based to some extent on the conviction that the Torah is a divine book and that it does not speak in human language. Unlike the language of men, God's word has many meanings for he can say many things at once.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the rabbis taught that "*a biblical verse never loses its literal meaning*" פשוט regardless of how the verse may be employed in rabbinic interpretation. This principle affirms that the literal meaning is stable and primary and that the rabbinic interpretations are added matters and secondary in their nature whatever the predecessors may have done with it.<sup>35</sup>

It was commonly accepted as a precept for the Midrash that *every single detail of God's revelation, the Torah, should be interpreted, and every detail explained in relation to the matter in hand and also as an independent unit, for the Torah never loses its "literal meaning"*. Every statement should be also confirmed by a passage in the Old Testament, because the human opinion has no value as evidence. Midrash often repeats the Aramaic saying, "*ha be-ha talya*" הַא בְּהַא תְּלִיָא that is "*this depends on that*" - thus *inner bridges* were constructed to connect the subject with the message of the Bible. *This demands the use of a kind of associative method suitable to Midrashic studies.*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Addison G. Wright, *The literary Genre Midrash*, p. 62.

<sup>35</sup> S. Rosenblatt, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Mishnah*, Baltimore 1935 and Heinemann, *Aggadah* 129-130, 136, 153-156.

<sup>36</sup> See also Jurgrau Max, *Targumic and Midrashic Methods of Interpretation*. Bar/Ilan 12, 1974, p. 179-199 (Hebr.). Hans Walter Wolff is stating well in his "*Hermeneutics of the Old Testament*", page 160, that "Every method of exposition, which by some principle would make itself master of the text and its context instead of **entering into the service of the text**, is to be rejected". The Rabbinic rules of exposition seem to serve best to the associative nature of Jewish literature.

## II,4 Choosing a proper method for Jewish studies

Every scientific research requires its own tools. A carpenter, too, uses different saws, drills and planes, depending on the nature of the work. When I was invited to lecture on rabbinic literature in the United States or to deliver eighty hours of study at the Free Evangelical Academy in Basel, the question of method often came up. How could one *listen to the sources* in the right way and search for the references in the text and for the conceptual connections according to the "*Hillelian method*"? Especially during the lectures in Basel an answer seemed to be found. In both Old Testament and New Testament studies we must be aware of the nature of the subject under investigation and of the rules which prevailed when these sources and the New Testament were written down.

### II,4,1 The characterization of Greek wisdom and biblical thought by Thorleif Boman and Shalom Ben-Chorin

Thirty years ago the Norwegian scholar **Thorleif Boman** published his doctoral dissertation entitled "*Hebrew Thought in Comparison with Greek*".<sup>37</sup> Four impressions of this book appeared in Japanese and various European languages. Boman emphasized that *hearing, action and the practical aspect* are typically Jewish, while the Greek thinking moves more in terms of "*conceptual, ideological problems*". "The Jews demand signs and the Greeks seek wisdom" (1st Cor. 1:22). In Hebrew there is no real verb "to be" in the same sense as in other languages. According to Hebrew we say "Me Tarzan, you Jane" when we mean "I am". Hebrew thought does not mean a static stationary situation but action and dynamism, of which

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<sup>37</sup> **Thorleif Boman**, *Das Hebräische Denken in Vergleich mit dem Griechischen*, Göttingen 5th printing 1968. See also his book "*Europas kultur og den jødiske arv*", Oslo 1972.

the Hebrew grammar provides an example. The first impression to the claims of Boman is predominantly positive.

The Greek philosopher and **the father of the topical method Aristotle** endeavored to see the ethical problems in the light of experience using the human sense (the Greek **νοῦς**) in his argumentation. And he was the first one who taught how to make *conceptual analysis in the light of semantic approach*. This is characteristic also of the rabbis in all their writings. The subtle Rabbinical analysis is partly rooted in the Greek philosophy using the same analytical tools which prevailed in the whole Roman Empire. There are still some different viewpoints in both of them, which can not be ignored in our methodological approach.

The famous writer **Schalom Ben-Chorin**, with whom I was also able to discuss research methods, wrote in one connection of *"the fundamental differences between Greek wisdom and biblical thought"*.<sup>38</sup> For him the Greek world attempted primarily to find the systematic philosophical regularities. This objective was dominant from Aristotle to Hegel. *It fitted the details to larger units, forcing them into predetermined categories. Hebrew thought proceeds from details to rules, from concrete observations to ideas. For this reason the Bible is not acquainted with dogmatic and systematic theology per se. Instead it has two basic characteristic objectives, narrative and law intended as guidelines for life.* The books of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets relate over and over again to the great deeds of God. Thus the historical facts are preserved unchanged, although their interpretation finds a new nuance according to the needs of each era. The holy law revealed in God's commandments does not change with fashion either. *By contrast with Greek systematization the Bible represents in the eyes of Ben-Chorin a kind of "associative thinking", where everything refers to the whole and everything depends on everything else.* This fits to

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<sup>38</sup> **Schalom Ben-Chorin**, *Jüdischer Glaube*, pp. 17-21, Tübingen 1975.

the Aramaic words repeated in Midrash, **הא בהא תליא** , this is connected with this. We must only find the associative and inner affiliates with the life and other Jewish writings.

One is tempted to insist that the characterization of Dr Thorleif Boman would be a little exaggerated and that Schalom Ben-Chorin would not do justice to the Greek thinking. But both of these scholars represent a wide reading and long experience. Their description can not be a mere caricature. In our study of Midrash Ruth we collide often with the difference of Western and Jewish thinking.

The research methods of the natural sciences and the humanities are regarded as differing fundamentally from each other. Religion, ethics and aesthetics often have to be content with narrative and hermeneutical or explanatory approaches. It includes always also an *informative message*. Methodology distinguishes between the "nomothetic" or "legislative" (Greek νομος) sciences and the ideographical sciences, that is, those relating to individual facts and ideas.<sup>39</sup>

#### **II,4,2 The topical method שטת המקור as expounded by Aristotle, Giovanni Battista Vico and Jacob Neusner**

The Greek philosopher **Aristotle** already formulated the so-called "**topic**" (Gr. τοπος, place) by which the "*leading points*" were to be sought e.g. in rhetoric, philosophy and in the study of legal problems - later on this was developed by the father of the philosophy of history, the Italian thinker **Giovanni Battista**

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<sup>39</sup> See e.g. **Wilhelm Dilthey**, Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften, Ges. Werke, Band 7.

(Giambattista) Vico.<sup>40</sup> *Therefore the humanities must cover the entire expanse of human thought and place the leading points in their rightful place. Only by making "topical" or in a way "topographical" comparisons can one appreciate the significance of details in the overall structure. This means adopting a wider holistic attitude. In this sense we should possess also as wide a basic knowledge of the foundations of Jewish faith as possible before we are able to make relevant deductions - otherwise we are going astray. The topical method demands wide background research and it requires an intertextual approach where different sources are placed in their own places and in the contexts where they originated.*

I found my "topical" approach in the early 80's. This way I became more and more convinced that only a wide study of the *original Jewish sources* can reveal the real nature of each idea in its own setting. In our research of Midrash Ruth this is also the only key to exhibit the hidden treasures in Jewish thinking. *The Rabbinic exegesis is altogether intertextual.* This is visualized in our Appendix 2 about Mikraoth Gedoloth and in the extract of the Talmud in Appendix 3. For that reason it must be dealt with observing the wider aspects of each dictum. Giovanni Battista Vico elaborated the topical approach to a methodological system in which

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<sup>40</sup> **Lothar Bornscheuer**, Topik, zur Struktur der gesellschaftlichen Einbildungskraft, Fr. am Main 1976, pp. 26-37. For **Aristoteles** (384-322 B.C.) the "methodos" in the topical approach meant "ein Hilfsverfahren" which helps to find the "Problemreflexion, Argumentation, Urteilsbildung und Schlussfolgerung". In his writing "topika" he dealt with the premises underlying the human knowledge. Bornscheuer calls the topical method as "*eine Methodenlehre des Forschens und Findens*", ibid. p. 19. **Giambattista Vico** presented in his main writing "Scienza nuova" a new way to argue about the fundamental facts in the history, "de nostri temporis studiorum ratione". Only *comparing linguistic and historical sources in the light of the corresponding period* it will be possible to obtain reliable knowledge. The search engine **www.google.com / "vico topos methode"** gives about 35 different articles and books where Vico and his method is dealt with.

the significance of details in the overall structure could best be found. We intend to do this in our analysis of Midrash Ruth.<sup>41</sup>

Some time ago I noted that **Jacob Neusner** mentioned also the concept "topic" although not in the same context as Aristotle or Giovanni Battista Vico. Year 1997 he writes:

"Nearly a quarter-century ago, *frustrated by an important and insoluble problem of critical research using Rabbinic literature as the principal source, I decided to turn from historical to religions-historical and therefore also literary work*, to investigate the character and history of the documents that purport to supply the facts out of which conventional history is to be constructed, and to utilize the results in the study of the history of the formation of Rabbinic Judaism as the documentary evidence yields that history."

The attempt to solve the underlying historical factors in using the Rabbinic literature as the principal source can really frustrate and it collides with "*insoluble*" problems. This is seen in our study too. Neusner clarifies his observations a little afterwards:

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<sup>41</sup> **Vico** is well known also in Japan, where his book *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* appeared in 1987. **Hakayama Noriaki** states that Vico identifies "the *doctrine of invention* with topical philosophy" and that "Vico considered that *topica precedes always critica*". "Argumente werden jedoch nicht zufällig aufgestöbert, sondern gezielt an bestimmten Plätzen gesucht (*sedes argumentorum*)". The topical approach is a kind of "*Erschliessungsinventar*" and "**Mindmapping**" which strives to bind "*die gefundenen Aspekte einer Argumentation miteinander*". Even **Karl Marx** was influenced by the historical theories of Vico. The topical method is described eg. in the books of **Clemens Ottmers**, *Rhetorik*, Stuttgart 1996 (Sammlung Metzler, Bd.283); **Breuer, Schanze**, *Topik*, München 1981; **Aristoteles**, *Topik (Organon V)*, übers. und hrsg. Eugen Rolfes, Hamburg 1968; **G. Battista Vico**, *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*, Dt-lat. Ausgabe, Darmstadt 1963 and **Lothar Bornscheuer**, *Topik, Zur Struktur der gesellschaftlichen Einbildungskraft*, Frankfurt/Main 1976.

"Now we know how to see the compilations whole and complete, so that we are able to *distinguish one document from another by appeal to objective facts concerning their respective characteristics in rhetoric, logic of coherent discourse, and topical program (topoi in the philosophical framework)*.<sup>42</sup> We therefore are able to define the *definitive indicative traits of documents*".<sup>43</sup>

**Jacob Neusner** describes the development of his own methods as follows: "In the 1960s I saw matters as essentially *historical problems*. In the 1970s I moved onward to a literary-exegetical program. The problem broadened for me in the 1970s, as I reached the conclusion that rabbinic writings had to be read, *each on its own*. That simple realization of the documentary character of the constituent parts of the canon of what we then called 'rabbinic' Judaism - carried forward the *analytical approach* to a category formation that was forming in my mind. In the 1980s I built upon the historical and literary results of the prior two decades work and *moved into the study of religion*. As the 1980s unfolded, I realized

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<sup>42</sup> The topical program in its philosophical settings in literature, music or ethics has been studied by **Pompa, Kugel, Boyarin and Faur**, but they are mostly giving unintegrated opinions, which are irrelevant to Midrashic studies. Leon **Pompa** acts as a professor of philosophy in Birmingham. In his book "A Study of the new Science", Cambridge 2nd ed. 1990 p. 190, he states that the topics is "*the art of knowing and being able to summon all the considerations relevant to the formulation of a true judgement*". Pompa "saved" the studies of Vico. He has however been criticized that he "narrows Vico in an unacceptable way and simply gets the text wrong" and "he has reconstructed Vico's arguments with a precision not to be found in Vico himself". James L. **Kugel** was dealing with ethics and was "eher eine Halbkugel". Daniel **Boyarin** and the professor Jose **Faur** from the Bar-Ilan University can not be considered as experts in Midrashic studies.

<sup>43</sup> **Jacob Neusner**, The Components of the Rabbinic Documents From the Whole to the Parts, III Ruth Rabbah, see the Introduction pages XVI and XXXIX, Univ. of South Florida 1997. The definition of the "**topical program**" where the "topoi" must be understood "in its "**philosophical framework**" corresponds to the aim of **Giovanni Battista Vico**, the "father" of the historical philosophy. He wanted to find the leading points in "rhetoric and philosophy" - almost the same as the "indicative traits" of Neusner, whatever he really meant with these words.

that I had reached *an inchoate and not fully articulated method pretty much of my own.*"

Neusner called it "systemic analysis" comprising the whole way of life. It "begins with the literary and goes then to a religious study". In this sense he speaks of "*intertextuality*" which means for him "*a relation of co-presence between two or more texts*". And "in that sense the rabbinic writings are wholly intertextual".<sup>44</sup>

These words written in 1988 are clarified year 1999 in his bibliography given by Neusner himself, where he divides his extensive works into seven phases:

1. "the pre-critical stage", 2. "the beginning of the critical enterprise", 3. "describing the canon, document by document" which comprises the stage of translation, form-analysis and exegesis, 4. "introducing the documents, comparing and contrasting the documentary components of the canon of the formative Judaism", 5. the stage of "religion, reconstructing and interpreting the history of the formation of Judaism", 6. "talmudic hermeneutics" and 7. "constructive and comparative theology from description to conviction etc".<sup>45</sup>

In principle as Neusner tells, "these writings, seen in order, indicate three stages in the formation of that Judaism, which are best characterized as *philosophical, religious, and theological*" and it comprises always a theological synthesis.<sup>46</sup> The methods of

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<sup>44</sup> **Jacob Neusner**, *Wrong Ways and Right Ways in the Study of Formative Judaism*, Preface XVII and pp. 34-36.

<sup>45</sup> **Jacob Neusner**, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70*, Part I, Scholars Press, Atlanta 1999, in his bibliography.

<sup>46</sup> **Jacob Neusner** is dealing with this matter widely in his book "*Rabbinic Judaism, The Documentary History of its Formative Age 70-600 C.E.*". These writings "seen in order" are for Neusner *Mishna, Talmud Jerushalmi and Talmud Babli* although their nature as such does not necessarily indicate different "philosophical, religious and theological" stages.

Neusner provide a useful "rear view mirror" to project my own endeavor in finding feasible tools for Jewish studies.

If we are looking through this rear view mirror, Neusner seems to have manifold goals: He turned "from historical to religions-historical" and "literary work"; he wanted to "distinguish one document from another" and to find "their respective characteristics" and the "topical program" where the *"topos"* had to be understood *in its philosophical framework*; and then finally he moved "into the study of religion" striving to build "constructive and comparative theology from description to conviction". This is a rather big bite for any theologian. And the use of his "canonical" sources includes a very extensive material from the Talmud to Jewish prayers in the Siddur. In his own presentation of Midrash Ruth, however, Neusner does not give quotations of these sources.<sup>47</sup>

In this sort of work there lurks for everybody the common danger, typical to all the Rabbinic studies, to jump from one item to another and so the puzzle of the integrated "full-length portrait" suffers. But all the Rabbinic studies are facing this problem. The question of the proper and balanced use of Jewish sources is actual in all this field - whether it succeeds to have distinctive marks of modern scientific approach is an other problem. It is commonly accepted that "the Rabbinic writings are wholly intertextual" as Neusner also has confirmed. However, this is *an obligatory inconvenience* which has to be challenged in our research also.

### **II,4,3 The present dilemma in Midrashic studies**

The essential problem between the scholars of Rabbinic studies is the question how to take a stand to the historical reliability of the

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<sup>47</sup> **Jacob Neusner**, *The Midrash Compilations of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries, An Introduction to the Rhetorical, Logical, and Topical Program*, Volume three: *Ruth Rabbah*, Atlanta 1989, pp.135-152.

sources as such. In Midrash Ruth it enables to see its historical exposure. **Neusner** had a heated debate with the Israeli Prof. **Ze'ev Safrai** in the Israeli journal "Zion" about this matter. The disputation concerned the critical utilization of Rabbinic sources for historical study.<sup>48</sup>

**Neusner** criticizes in the journal that "Safrai may serve as a reliable witness to the methods that dictate how historical study of Talmudic and Rabbinic writings is carried on in the State of Israel and its universities. It may be characterized very simple: it is simply intellectually primitive and historically uncritical. *Its questions are trivial, and its results, incoherent*". It *"produces neither consequential facts nor provocative hypothesis"*, and Safrai utilizes "almost all" Rabbinic texts pertinent to his subject.

The actual question is whether and how the heterogenous content of the Rabbinical documents can be used to construct historical reality. Therefore we cannot avoid the important methodological discussion between Neusner and Safrai. **Neusner** touches these things in the above appraisal about the method used by Safrai and his colleagues.

He argues that the "Talmudic history in this Israeli journal finds definition as the study of historical problems pertinent to a given *source* rather than to a chronological *period* to which that source attests". "The Talmudic history Zion begins in an assumption universally adopted by the scholars of the journal: whatever the Talmud says happened happened. If the Talmud attributes something to a rabbi, he really said it. If the Talmud tells a story, it stands for an actual event" - it is "what Safrai shows he thinks it is: solely the collection and arrangement of facts, the analysis of facts, the synthesis of facts".

**Neusner** concludes his criticism by speaking about the "yeshiva-

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<sup>48</sup> **Jacob Neusner**, *Judaism in Late Antiquity, Part Three: Where we Stand, Issues and Debates in Ancient Judaism, Volume One, Handbuch der Orientalistik*, Leiden Brill 1999. The **whole debate** is in pages 123-142 and 143-167.

world" of Bar Ilan University and their fundamentalism which gives in their studies only peaces of unintegrated information. This was perhaps most insulting to **Safrai**. In his answer he first comments to these remarks. Then he gives an extensive account about the actual dilemma of their mutual different approaches.

**Safrai** tells that Bar Ilan boasts in fact of a diverse range of teachers. Some regard himself as a "heretic", while others are convinced that he is a "fundamentalist". And he adds that "as researchers we should devote our energies to the subject under examination, not to stereotypes". If he has used the term "the Jerusalem study method", this has only been as a matter of "convenience", following Neusner's terminology. He himself has not studied in a yeshiva. After this he faces *the problem of dating the traditions and the reliability of the chain of transmission*.(ibid. pp. 155-167)

In this context **Safrai** emphasizes that the rabbis undoubtedly prided themselves on the accuracy of their transmission. The Rabbinic literature repeats *the obligation to properly attribute the teachings one relates*.

"The Tannaitic Midrash already presents this dozens of times as a part of the teacher-pupil relationship. The names of the transmitters were however corrupted at times. But these are not necessarily corruptions; they only constitute the possibility of corruptions. The phrase 'one says - and the other says' appears more than three hundred times in the Jerusalem Talmud and the Midrashim. But the Talmud adds also more than twenty times that 'we do not know who stated one opinion and who stated the other', with an attempt to reconstruct the proper attribution. This leads us to conclude that already in the beit midrash there was an awareness of problems in transmission and great care was taken in this matter."(ibid. pp. 156-157)

**Safrai** concludes this matter saying: "Conversely, what proof is there of general corruption in this system? Why should such a doubt-ridden argument be regarded as 'scientific'? Can such a

system-wide failure be proven? - The fears that have been raised of the corruption of the transmission systems are almost totally groundless." "The researcher must be aware of the problem, but the concept of dead-end criticism exists in no realm of academic inquiry. *The researcher must contend with the problem* but cannot refuse to make use of the material." *The main thing is that "the dictum possesses inner historical logic".*(ibid. pp. 158-159)

The obvious tension between those who are outside of Israel and might have some linguistic limits is expressed by Safrai as follows:

"I did not argue that anyone who did not study in a yeshiva is not qualified to engage in the Rabbinic sources. I merely sought to explain the difficulties entailed in gaining **accessibility** to these sources.<sup>49</sup> I provided an example of the linguistic difficulty of studying the Rabbinic literature for those fluent in modern Hebrew. Unfortunately, Neusner took it personally." - "A critical approach must lead to careful research and not to an excuse in futility - dead-end criticism. Most importantly, fundamentalism, which accepts the sources uncritically, is to be opposed - along with the scholar who is fundamentally critical and believes in criticism for its own sake".(ibid. pp. 166-167)

#### **II,4,4 Our methodological approach to Midrash Ruth**

Only in this point it is possible to draw a summary of the methodological trends in Midrashic studies and to define our own approach to it. The **main emphasis** of the Midrashic literature is its relation to the Scriptures. When Neusner speaks about "the dual Torah, oral and written", he presents his view of the Bible and Judaism emphasizing it in Italics: "*Judaism cannot be a biblical*

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<sup>49</sup> *The main difference between the Israeli schools and Neusner seems to be in the use of Medieval rabbinical sources.* With all respect to the profound Western theological education of Neusner in Harvard, Oxford and at JTS in New York, he does not however lean on the Medieval commentaries with their Rashi script -- but for those who have studied in "yeshiva" their use is a kind of "daily bread".

*religion because Judaism is one whole Torah of Moses, our Rabbi, revealed by God at Sinai in the two media of revelation, writing and memory.*" According to his words this is however "a debated issue between Judaism and Christianity".<sup>50</sup> Midrash itself represents as we have seen a comprehensive use of the whole Old Testament.

We have noticed in our investigation of the method of **Neusner** that he has characterized *the formation* of Rabbinical Judaism as "philosophical, religious and theological" and it always comprises "a theological synthesis". The intertextuality meant for Neusner "a relation of co-presence between two or more texts". His interpretation seems to signify a kind of *synchronic approach* dealing simultaneously with different aspects of the given text. **Safrai** for his part has an attempt to see the historical preconditions of the message in Midrash - its essential character has *a distinct diachronic quality*. Both of them work for the formation of religion trying to find a deeper Jewish self-understanding. And both of them are using in fact a method which connects various components of Jewish thought in a wide scale of the tradition.

The Greek systemizing which is not contradictory to Jewish analogical methods fits probably best to *logical analysis* - the Hebrew Rabbinical and Midrashic methods serve mainly for *sorting the message of various traditions* and their relation to the common Jewish spiritual inheritance. *In our intertextual and "topical" method, we strive to see the "leading points" and traits as well as the "inner affiliates" of Midrash Ruth Rabbah with the respective Jewish literature.* We have the same dilemma and challenge as Safrai seems to confront in his studies: the researcher must "contend with" and be aware of the problems and the long chain of traditions, but in the same time he cannot refuse to make use of the given material.

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<sup>50</sup> **Jacob Neusner**, Invitation to Midrash, The Workings of Rabbinic Bible Interpretation, pp. 264-267.

Neusner processes as a connoisseur of Jewish literature the whole span of rabbinic traditions. He is mostly tackling with various sources *on their own terms, trying to see their meaning in the formation of Judaism* - we are trying to concentrate to the message of Midrash Ruth *comparing its concepts and claims in small details to other relevant Jewish sources and mirroring it also to the common inheritance with Christian theology*. Both the Jewish and the Christian counterparts are concealing an unconscious apologetical trait which can not be totally avoided. Our research of *Midrash Ruth gives also a wider horizon to Jewish selfunderstanding*. We need there the topical method, although it is not the same as that of Neusners.

To find "the leading points" of the Midrashic presentation means kind of localizing the text to its particular point and proper setting. The English word "topical method" fits best to our approach - but the most convenient Hebrew equivalence for this concept would be **שטת המקום**. According to that Hebrew expression we are "placing" in our method the details of Rabbinic concepts and thoughts to the corresponding liaison with other Jewish writings -- **למקום את המנח** **למקומו המיעד**.

As the **first practical conclusion** of our intertextual method we are endeavoring to "*cover the entire expanse of human thinking*" as **Giovanni Battista Vico** characterized the topical method. In Jewish writings it means that *we must bridge the distance of old Rabbinical writings and its medieval interpretations. The only experts of Midrash as such and of the Talmudic world were living in medieval times*. The most handy implement in this kind of research is to lean on *the immense collections of Rabbinical commentaries* called as **Mikraoth Gedoloth**. Some of them consist of 42 various sources, *all of it however in RaSHI script*. They comprise the exact quotations of RaSHI, RaMBaM, RaMBaN, RaDaK and others with the mention of numerous Rabbinic collections building thus a

*completed frame of reference* for Jewish studies.<sup>51</sup> RaSHI for his part was very keen on the Midrash expositions in particular. We shall explain the background of these Sages in the context of our research. Every claim must be however checked in the original sources.

The **second practical conclusion** which is linked with the method of Midrash studies is bound with the *potential limits of the source material*. As the main sources we are using the so called **normative Jewish literature in its wider scale: the Scriptures, the Talmud, Midrashim, Targumim, the Zohar and Siddur**. Even the *Scrolls of Qumran and the Didache* contain many common Jewish components with the above material. We are not attaining inevitably the exact meaning of the interpretations which prevailed in the time of the compilation of Midrash Ruth - the normative Jewish literature however provides a relevant background for the underlying concepts in the enigmatic language of our Midrash.

In our **use of the secondary literature** we must take into consideration that the real interest of Rabbinic writings began from 1870's to the First World War, if not even a little earlier. In this **golden age of Jewish studies** there were famous scholars like Franz Delitzsch, Alfred Edersheim, Gustaf Dalman, Gottlieb Klein and others. Both Delitzsch and Dalman were prolific writers teaching also at the Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig, established in 1880 and renamed as "Delitzschianum" after the death of its founder. The

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<sup>51</sup> This is a selfevident fact even in the more modest studies. The German periodical *Friede über Israel* 4/2000 which deals with "Lernen im Judentum und Lernen vom Judentum", quotes the words of **Pnina Navé Levinson** from the book *Einblicke in das Judentum*, 1991, p. 166: "Judentum ist 'Bibel Plus' - und dieses Plus ist das Werk der Schriftgelehrten und Rabbinen. So hat Pnina Navé Levinson die klassische jüdische Hermeneutic beschrieben, die ohne die rabbinische Tradition nicht zu denken ist. In den kommentierten Bibelausgaben sind die Texterklärungen *der wichtigsten rabbinischen Kommentatoren des Mittelalters* abgedruckt." See the last Appendix.

best known Hebrew Christian Rabbis Josef Rabinowitz and Jehiel Lichtenstein had a close contact with both of them.<sup>52</sup> The main centers of Jewish studies were Germany and Great Britain. Most of the wide **rabbinic commentaries** were printed in Estonia and Latvia in 1880's and before the Second World War. Afterwards part of them were reprinted in Israel. We are justified to lean on these "secondary" sources too. In our own time we are experiencing again a new Renaissance in Jewish studies due to the immense technical progress in ADP equipments.

In Midrash we are dealing with **the teachings of the synagogue**. In analyzing the Messianic idea in Judaism we are trying to see the self-understanding of the Jewish people in the light of these sources, which is in no way homogeneous. **Neusner** has stated that in the category of *synagogue-writings* everyone agrees about *three main sources*: "*Targumim, Siddur and piyyutim*" - the Aramaic translations of Scripture called *Targumim* were meant to be for popular utilization in the synagogue; the prayer book *Siddur* and *Mahzor*, additional prayers for ordinary days and Days of Awe respectively were in the collective use by all; the *piyyut*, poetical medieval prayers, were written often by well known Jewish scholars. According to this it is justified to examine, in dealing with Midrash Ruth, also the Messianic emphasis in the Jewish prayer literature along with the actual normative sources.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The main books of **Jehiel Lichtenstein** were *Limmudei ha-nevi'im*, *hizzuk Emunat Emeth* and *Toldoth Jeshu*. The Hebrew magazine **Berith Am** edited by **Dalman** of which I have all the copies between 1897 and 1904 consists of articles which deal almost with every theme of Midrash Ruth too. Even the Hebrew collection of the magazine **Ir ha-Miklat** edited by **Alexander McCaul** (e.g. 1868-1871) deals with most of our problems.

<sup>53</sup> See **Jacob Neusner**, *Ancient Judaism and Modern Category-Formation - Studies in Judaism*, Univ. Press of America 1986; Chapter Three, Interpretation: The Category "Messianism", pp. 55-59.

### III MIDRASH RUTH RABBAH

#### III,1 The various manuscripts and their literary evaluation

**Myron Bialik Lerner** wrote his Hebrew dissertation about "The Book of Ruth in Aggadic Literature and Midrash Ruth Rabbah" in order to deal with the various manuscripts and to find if possible a critical edition for a proper "Grundtext". His research was supervised by Prof. **Ephraim Elimelech Urbach**. Serving first as a lecturer at the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary Urbach came to Israel in 1938 and became later professor of Talmud at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He specialized in *methodological theories* and their contribution to the development of the *halakhah*. In that sense Lerner was benefited by the supervision of Urbach and his methodological trends.<sup>54</sup>

For our special purpose the evaluation of various manuscripts is important only *in proportion to their wording in Messianic parashiyoth*. However the differences of these manuscripts are minor and insignificant. Lerner examined all the catalogues, microfilm collections and manuscripts to be found. As a conclusion for his study he defined the position of the manuscripts as follows: Only two complete sources of Ruth Rabbah were to be found, namely those of Oxford and Cambridge and one incomplete, that of Parma.<sup>55</sup> **Neusner** and **Rabinowitz** were using the so called Wilna edition which has become a kind of standard version. The text of Soncino Press, their CD-Rom for "Judaic Classics Library" and the

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<sup>54</sup> The extensive critical study of **Lerner** is not mentioned at all by **Neusner** or other western scholars due to the unfortunate fact that this Hebrew research can be found only from the academic libraries in Israel.

<sup>55</sup> MS Oxford, MS Cambridge Add. 495 and MS Parma 541.

"Jerusalem" Midrash Rabbah is based on it also.<sup>56</sup>

In general the possible fragmentary material is of inferior quality representing relatively late copies and having many scribal errors. It was difficult to decide on the proper Grundtext. And "after long deliberation" **Lerner** selected the **Oxford text** in spite of its late date (1513) and some "serious faults and disadvantages". This MS (manuscript) contains also dozens of original passages of the Midrash, not found in other copies. In those instances where there are obvious deletions in the Oxford MS, *the missing minor corrections were inserted to the critical sections of the dissertation with different brackets*. The critical apparatus of Lerner gives also variants from the texts of the ancient collections from Talmudic and Midrashic sources e.g. **Yalkut Shimeoni, Yalkut Makhiri and Yalkut Talmud Torah**. Jacob Neusner too relates his observations and comments to the same normative Rabbinical sources. The earliest known quotation of Midrash Ruth is found in the commentary of RaSHI to Ruth - typical for him because he loved to use both Targum and Midrash in his exegesis.

**In the Hebrew text the conceptual differences are not so notable.** They always increase in the phase of translation as we shall see when we are comparing the divergent English translations. The Hebrew concepts contribute also better to find the inner affiliates and equivalents with other Hebrew sources in our special theme. In order to emphasize the similarities of Midrash Ruth with other Rabbinic writings we are stressing the equivalent concepts generally in bold script.

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<sup>56</sup> The Midrash Rabbah with Wilna text in my home library is printed in Warsaw 1923 and it has probably become standard edition for other publications.

## III,2 The content of Midrash Ruth Rabbah

Midrash Ruth is most inspiring because of its structure as a typical old Midrash with classical proems and exegetical sharp observations. It gives for us an exciting half romantic old story of ancient times. No wonder that the Book of Ruth is very popular in the Far East as well as the Book of Jonah. According to the exegetical trait of Midrash Ruth it touches practically upon every verse and word in the text. We shall see now some special aspects which are to be dealt more closely in our conceptual analysis.

Midrash Ruth is rich in content but it has not yet arisen enough interest among scholars. That may be the reason why **Myron Bialik Lerner** utters in the beginning of his Hebrew doctoral dissertation that he made in his work "an attempt to save one of the principal Midrashim of the Bible". He wondered that until **S. Lieberman's** article in *Henoch Yalon Jubilee Volume*<sup>57</sup> practically no modern scientific attempt had been done to deal with the text of Midrash Ruth. He stressed that it is "probably one of the least quoted Midrashim". The study of Lerner was according to his own words also the first Midrash essay made in Eretz Israel.

### III,2,1 The content and the division of Midrash Ruth.

When we are intertwining the warp yarns of Midrash Ruth we can lean on some English and German texts.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps the most condensed picture of the content of our Midrash is given by **Jacob**

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<sup>57</sup> The Hebrew introduction in the dissertation of **Myron Bialik Lerner**.

<sup>58</sup> E.g. **Rabinowitz**, *Midrash Ruth Rabbah translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices*, London 1939, **Wünsche August**, *Der Midrasch Ruth Rabba, Das ist die Haggadische Auslegung Des Buches Ruth*, Hildesheim 1967 or **Neusner Jacob**, *The Components of the Rabbinic Documents III*, University of South Florida 1997.

**Neusner** in his appraisal of Midrash Ruth:

He explains that "Ruth Rabbah has *only one message*, expressed in a variety of components but single and cogent. *It concerns the outsider who becomes the principal, the Messiah out of Moab*, and this miracle is accomplished through mastery of the Torah. The main points of the document are these: **1.** Israel's fate depends upon its proper conduct toward its leaders. **2.** The leaders must not be arrogant. **3.** The admission of the outsider depends upon the rules of Torah. **4.** The proselyte is accepted because the Torah makes it possible to do so, and the condition of acceptance is complete and total submission to the Torah. **5.** *Those proselytes who are accepted are respected by God and are completely equal to all Israelites.*" *The Torah "makes the outsider into an insider, the Moabite into Israelite, the offspring of the outsider into the Messiah".*<sup>59</sup>

**If we consider in this context the teachings of the New Testament**, as is done to an ever-increasing degree by the Jewish scholars, even it turns over all the "dividing walls" between Jewish and Christian believers:

The keywords for this fact are e.g. in Acts 15:9, which emphasizes that God gave his Holy Spirit also to the Gentiles and "made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith" - likewise Galatians 3:7 and 27 speak of those who have been joined to the people of the Promise through baptism. By this "cleansing" they have become "men of faith" as sons of Abraham "for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave or free, there is neither male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*"

According to Midrash Ruth, however, *only the female member of*

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<sup>59</sup> **Jacob Neusner**, *The Midrash Compilations of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries*, Volume Three, Ruth Rabbah, pp. 148-149.

Moabites was accepted according to Torah to become an Israelite, not the males. And even this was due to Ruth's complete and total submission to the Torah.

**The story or commentary of Midrash Ruth** covers the whole of the biblical text. The only exception concerns the IV Chapter where the verses 16 and 17 are passed by. As in all the classical Aggadic Midrashim it contains **numerous proems**. They can be divided according to **Lerner** to certain categories as **1.** introductory proems at the beginning of the Midrash, **2.** proems at the beginning of the parashiyoth, **3.** internal proems and **4.** remnants of proems.<sup>60</sup> This serves like a backbone for the whole presentation. As a common denominator are the words, "And it came to pass in the days when the judges were judged", Judges 2:17. Several parashiyoth also employ a popular closing formula and the entire Midrash is designed to conclude with the special homily devoted to the Messiah and his origin.

**The division of Midrash Ruth** is as follows: **Parashah I** covers the Book of Ruth from the verses I: 1 - 2, **Parashah II** from I:3 - I:17, **III** from I:18 - I:21, **IV** from I:22 - II:9, **V** from II:10 - III:7, **VI** from III:8 - III:13, **VII** from III:14 - IV:15 and the last and the shortest **Parashah VIII** only two verses IV:18 - 19.

### **III,2,2 The Book of Ruth and the Targum.**

One of the main themes in Midrash Ruth ponders with **the Messianic item**. That is linked in **Targum** to the Book of Ruth only in verses I,1 and III,15. It emphasizes that there are going to be "*ten famines*" from the beginning of the world to the *coming of the*

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<sup>60</sup> See **Lerner** the Hebrew section pp. 47-51.

*Messiah*. It also mentions the same way as Midrash Ruth does, that from Ruth descend "six righteous men to the world with six blessings - David, Daniel and his three friends as well as the King Messiah". RaSHI reasons that it refers to Isaiah 11:2 that upon him is "the six-fold spirit of wisdom, and understanding, the spirit of counsel, and might, the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord".<sup>61</sup> The mystical number six, which is repeated over and over again in Midrash Ruth belongs thus to common tradition in Jewish thinking.

### **III,2,3 Ruth Rabbah compared with other Midrash Rabbah collections**

In order to see the *overall structure* in Midrash Ruth we are first inspecting the "*topographical*" landscape in *Midrashic literature as whole*. Only thereafter we are able to grasp the similarities in our Midrash being aware of *the approximate time when this kind of exegesis prevailed in the tradition*. In our analysis later on we are showing nearer the "topos" and the meaning of various concepts in each dictum. This way we are moving according to the fifth rule of Hillel, proceeding first "*from general to particular*", כלל ופרט.

We can not combine the special nature of Midrash Ruth to its own setting if we do not first know the *common traits* of other related Midrash Rabbah collections. That is the reason why we are dealing with these matters *before the nearer presentation of Midrash Ruth*.

One of these features is linked to the way *how the Bible quotations are used emphasizing with this method the authority of the Scriptures*. As an example of this *common feature* I may mention that when I once counted in Midrash Lamentations Rabbah the Bible verses which it uses in the first Parashah alone, I noted that it

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<sup>61</sup> The Hebrew Mikraoth Gedoloth Wilna 1922 pp. 475 and 484.

made a total of 310 passages. Second, *the role of prophetes is more dominant in Midrash than in other Jewish writings*. These two principles can be applied to Midrash Ruth too.

The third common feature apparent in other Midrashim is *the importance of Messianic expectation*. Some examples and parallels illustrate this link which is strongly emphasized in Midrash Ruth particularly. **Leviticus Rabbah Par. 34**, which is probably about **hundred years older than Misdrash Ruth**, uses the principle of "**qal va-homer**", קל וחומר drawing conclusions from the "lighter" or smaller matters to broader contexts. Using this stylistic device Leviticus Rabbah presents according to Soncino translation a question:

"If in the case of a person who shows kindness to one to whom he is indebted, we see how the Holy One, blessed be He, repays him; *how much more* עד כמה וכמה so in the case of one to whom he is not indebted! R. Simon in the name of R. Eliezer suggested another line of thought in this connection. He said: Who was it that showed kindness to one that needed kindness? *Boaz to Ruth; as is proved by the text, And Boaz said unto her at meal-time: gshi halom (Ruth II, 14), i.e. come over here; And eat of the bread (ib.), i.e. the bread of the reapers; And dip thy morsel in the vinegar (ib.), for it is the custom of the reapers to dip their bread in vinegar during the dry heat.*"<sup>62</sup>

This tradition of Leviticus Rabbah Par. 34 has probably caused the wider presentation of the same matter in Midrash Ruth as we can see in the sequel:

"But, surely, it is written, *And she did eat and was satisfied, and left thereof (ib.)*. R. Isaac observed: We might infer one of two things from this: Either a blessing rested in the hand of that righteous man [**Boaz**], or a blessing rested *in the bowels* במעיה של

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<sup>62</sup> **Leviticus Rabbah**, Par. 34.

אותה צדקת *of that righteous woman [Ruth]*. However, from the fact that it is written, *'And she did eat and was satisfied, and left thereof'* we know that the blessing rested in the bowels בתוך של אותה צדקת *of the righteous woman*. R. Isaac commented: The Torah teaches you a good rule of conduct, to wit, that when a person performs a good deed he should do so with a cheerful heart."

The continuation and later discussions of Leviticus Rabbah Par. 34 reflect the same tradition as Midrash Ruth. The theme appears almost verbatim in Midrash Ruth Par.V,6. Leviticus Rabbah puts it forth as follows:

"R. Kohen and R. Joshua son of R. Simon in the name of R. Levi said: In times past when a man did a good deed the prophet used to record it, but now *if a man does a good deed who records it? Elijah and the King Messiah, the Holy One, blessed be He, signing beside them*".

One of the common features in Midrash literature is the use of many **cryptic names** given to the Messiah by the Sages. They portray his nature and the common Messianic expectation. According to Prof. **S. Mowinckel**, they might strike one as odd - he considered them rather "enigmatic and half humorous".<sup>63</sup>

As an example of it there is a section in **Midrash Song of Songs Rabbah, Par. VII**. It has similar features as we shall see in Midrash Ruth when it ponders about the Messiah:

*"Thy forehead is like the tower of Lebanon. This is the Sanctuary.* - R. Johanan said: Jerusalem will in the time to come extend as far as the gates of Damascus, as it says, The burden of the word of the Lord. In the land of Hadrakh, [and in Damascus shall be His resting-place] (Zech. IX, 1). *What is 'Hadrakh'?* R. Judah and R. Nehemiah gave different answers. R. Judah said: It

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<sup>63</sup> **S. Mowinckel**, *He that Cometh*, p. 293.

is a place called Hadrakh. Said R. Jose b. Durmaskis to him: By the [Temple] service! I am from Damascus, and there is a place there called Hadrakh. R. Nehemiah said: *It is the Messiah, who is both sharp and soft (had we-rakh חד ורך) - sharp to the other nations and soft to Israel.* Another explanation of Hadrakh: *this is the Messiah who will guide (hadrich) all humanity in the way of repentance before the Holy One, blessed be He.*"<sup>64</sup>

**The Midrash of Songs Rabbah is approximately of the same period as Midrash Ruth** and they both belong according to the description of Encyclopaedia Judaica to the "Eschatological Midrashim".

**Lamentations Rabbah, Par. I** adds to the above discussion some other allegoric names:

"Israel is called *'the eye of the Holy One, blessed be He'*, as it is said, For the Lord's is the eye of man and all the tribes of Israel (Zech. IX,1). If it is possible to say so, the Holy One, blessed be He, said, 'Mine eye weeps for My other eye' (i.e. Israel). *Because the Comforter is far from me, even he that should refresh my soul. What is the name of King Messiah?* R. Abba b. Kahana said: **His name 'the Lord'**; as it is stated, And this is the name whereby he shall be called, *The Lord is our righteousness* (Jer. XXIII,6). For R. Levi said: It is good for a province when its name is identical with that of its king, and the name of its king identical with that of its God. 'It is good for a province when its name is identical with that of its king,' as it is written, And the name of the city from that day shall be the Lord is there (Ezek. XLVIII,35). 'And the name of its king identical with that of its God', as it is stated, 'And this is the name whereby he shall be called, **The Lord is our righteousness**'. R. Joshua b. Levi said: **His name is 'Shoot'**; as it is stated, Behold, a man whose name is Shoot, and who shall shoot up out of his place, and build the temple of the Lord (Zech. VI,12). R. Judan said in the name of R.

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<sup>64</sup> **Midrash Song of Songs Rabbah, Par. VII.**

Aibu: **His name is 'Comforter'**; as it is said, *the Comforter is far from me*. R. Hanina said: *They do not really differ, because the numerical value of the names is the same*, so that 'Comforter' is identical with 'Shoot'." (מנחם = 40+50+8+40 = 138; צמח 90+40+8 = 138) <sup>65</sup>

Lamentations Rabbah adds later on in the **first Parashah** to these enigmatic names of the Messiah some other features which resemble the concealed language of Midrash Ruth. The Midrash of **Lamentations Rabbah** is likewise as Leviticus Rabbah about **hundred years previous** than Midrash Ruth.

"**Lebanon** shall fall by a mighty one (Isa. X,34), which is followed by, And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a twig shall grow forth out of his roots (ib. XI,1). The school of R. Shila said: The **Messiah's name is 'Shiloh'**, as it is stated, Until Shiloh come (Gen. XLIX, 10), where the word is spelt שלה. The School of R. Hanina said: **His name is 'Haninah'** (חנינה a pardon), as it is stated, I will not give you Haninah (Jer. XVI,13). The School of R. Jannai said: **His name is 'Yinnon'** (ינן a sprout); for it is written, E'er the sun was, his name is Yinnon (Ps. LXXII,17). R. Biba of Sergunieh said: **His name is 'Nehirah'**, as it is stated, And the *light* (נהורא *nehorah*) dwelleth with Him (Dan. II,22), where the word is spelt nehirah. R. Judah b. R. Simon said in the name of R. Samuel b. R. Isaac: *King Messiah, whether he be of those still living or of those who are dead, bears the name of David*. R. Tanhuma said: I will give his reason, viz. *Great salvation giveth He to His king; and showeth mercy to His Messiah* (Ps. XVIII,51), and the text continues, *not 'and to David' but to David and to his seed, for evermore.*" (The rule of "al tiqra", אל תקרא !)

**Midrash Rabbah Ecclesiastes Par. I** reflects the same **eternal aspect and the same Messianic concepts** as Midrash Ruth does:

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<sup>65</sup> Lamentations Rabbah, Par. I.

"Another interpretation of *all the rivers run into the sea*: All the dead enter Sheol, but Sheol is never full; as it is said, The nether-world (Sheol) and Destruction are never satisfied (Prov. XXVII,20). Do You mean to say that once they die in *this world* they will never live again in the *World to Come*? Therefore the text states, *unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they can go again*; i.e. to the place where *the dead assemble in the World to Come they return and will utter a song in the days of the Messiah*. What is the reason for this statement? From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs (Isa. XXIV,16), and Thy dead shall live, my dead bodies shall arise, awake and sing (ib. XXVI,19)."<sup>66</sup>

Also the distinction used by Midrash Ruth between **the first and the last Redeemer** appears in **Ecclesiastes Rabbah** Par. I. Ecclesiastes Rabbah represents about **hundred years later** tradition than Midrash Ruth. The message of the First Redeemer who gives manna to his people is very essential in Midrash Ruth.

"R. Berekiah said in the name of R. Isaac: *As the first Redeemer was, so shall the latter Redeemer be* (one of the main items in Midrash Ruth too). What is stated of the former Redeemer? And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass (Ex. IV,20). Similarly will it be with the latter Redeemer, as it is stated, Lowly and riding upon an ass (Zech. IX,9). *As the former Redeemer caused manna to descend*, as it is stated, Behold, I will cause to rain bread from heaven for you (Ex. XVI,4), *so will the latter Redeemer cause manna to descend*, as it is stated. May he be as a rich cornfield in the land (Ps. LXXII,16). *As the former Redeemer made a well to rise, so will the latter Redeemer bring up water*, as it is stated, And a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim (Joel IV,18)."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> **Ecclesiastes Rabbah**, Par. I.

<sup>67</sup> The matter of water given by the Messiah is not found in Midrash Ruth.

In Talmud **Shabbath 113b**<sup>68</sup> there is also a similar interpretation for the Book of Ruth 2:14 as in Ruth Rabbah about the Messianic banquet in this world and the days of the Messiah. It is related to **R. Eleazar** (ר'אלעזר), a close friend of R. Meir in our Midrash. Even this can be considered as one of the main roots in the Tannaitic discussions before Midrash Ruth.

**The content of Midrash Ruth** becomes more clear if we are aware in advance of similar discussions from the same and older period. In these examples already we observe *almost the same Messianic content and literary style* which is characteristic to the Messiah parashiyoth in Midrash Ruth. However the bread and manna is not called elsewhere as the "bread of kingdom" and these discussions do not speak so strongly about the communion in the eternity as Midrash Ruth does. The story of Midrash Ruth is also more uniform and in that sense of its own class and level.

### **III,2,4 The moral conduct of the people of Israel in the dispersion**

If we try to make **a synthesis of the content and principal components in Midrash Ruth Rabbah**, there are still some additional aspects to be seen. The intertextual observation of these corresponding equivalents reveals the "leading points" in their correct historical setting. This is important also for our conceptual analysis when we shall deal with the Messianic parashiyoth of Midrash Ruth.

**The destiny of Israel depends upon her moral conduct.** This is reflected throughout the story of Midrash Ruth. Sometimes

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<sup>68</sup> **Shabbath 113b.** R. Eleazar (135-170 A.D.) stated that the eating related to the days of David and the fulfillment came by Solomon and Hezekiah and "in the Baraitha it was taught: 'And she ate', in this world; 'and she was sufficed', in the days of the Messiah; 'and she left over', in the future that is to come."

Midrash Ruth utters as we shall see in that context very harsh words about the moral of Israel. This is apparent also in other respective Jewish writings.

In **Talmud ḥagigah 5b**<sup>69</sup> on Jeremiah 13:17 we can read about the prophet's spirit "weeping in secret because of the pride" which will not give the glory to God, the result of which will be that "the Lord's flock will be taken captive". **Rabbi Shmuel Bar Yitshak** (290 - 320 A.D.) says that this is the result of "the pride of Israel, which is why the Torah will be taken away from them and given to the Gentile nations" - **אמר רב שמואל בר יצחק מפני גאוותן של ישראל** - **עובדי כוכבים ומזלות מהם ונתנה לעובדי כוכבים**. The expression **עובדי כוכבים ומזלות** or "worshippers of stars and fortune" is always related to the gentiles. Jesus too used this kind of severe language.<sup>70</sup> By "builders" in the parable of the "stone which the builders rejected" the Jewish scholars generally mean "teachers". Midrash Ruth speaks in the seventh introductory proem in its third and fifth parables about the scholars and teachers who were killed and how "God can not make His Spirit rest upon the world" without synagogues and schools. The disputes between the rabbis occurred among Jewish believers in their family environment. They were a kind of kitchen talks, sometimes very harsh indeed.

In Matthew 8:11-12 there is a similar severe word of Jesus which speaks about the *last Messianic banquet in eternity* stating: "I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness." Rabbi Shmuel Bar Yitshak belongs in this matter to same rough category with Jesus and Ruth Rabbah although they present a different religious structure. And **הא בהא תליא** as Midrash is repeating; these facts are somehow kindred with each other!

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<sup>69</sup> ḥagigah 5b.

<sup>70</sup> See e.g. Matthew 21:33-43 and 8:11-12.

The compilation of Ruth Rabbah was done in Erez Israel<sup>71</sup> and surely in the time of the dispersion. No wonder that it refers in its message and parables to this fact. In **Ruth Rabbah I;1** is the hint that the immoral conduct made the Holy Spirit to depart and that Israel will fall *"by the sword, and it is the cause of their exile from their land."* In **Ruth Rabbah I:4** there is also a moral instruction: R. Simeon Ben Gamaliel said, that *"even when it is difficult to obtain -- a Jew should not leave Palestine"*.

### III,2,5 The national disappointment expressed in Midrash Ruth and its equivalents in Jewish sources

**The national disappointment** is reflected in **Talmud** and in the Jewish prayer book **Siddur** as will be expressed in section III,2,6. The rabbis are very cautious when they speak about the "latter days", which are always related to the coming of the Messiah. The medieval sources afford always some additional interpretive keys for the Talmudic discussions. **RaDaK**, Rabbi David Kimḥi<sup>72</sup> - of whom it is said, that without him we will not find the correct way to interpret the Scriptures - states according to Mikraoth Gedoloth in connection with Isaiah 2:2 that *"everywhere the Last Days are mentioned reference is being made to the days of the Messiah"*. In his booklet "The Statutes and Wars of the King Messiah"<sup>73</sup> **RaMBaM** gives a detailed account of medieval Messianic expectation and presents his own sound general principle:

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<sup>71</sup> **Lerner** in Engl. Introd. XIII.

<sup>72</sup> Rabbi **David Kimḥi** (1160-1235) is very respected among the Rabbis. He has expounded e.g. Genesis, all the prophets, the Psalms and **the Book of Ruth**. His polemics against the Christians in the book **ספר הברית, וויכוחי רד"ק עם הנצרות**, Bialik Institute, Jerusalem 1974, is well known among the Jewish readers. The book about the censored extracts of the Talmud has also included his comments about the Christian faith, **תשובות הרד"ק להנוצרים**, Krakau 1893.

<sup>73</sup> רמב"ם, הלכות מלכים ומלחמותיהם, הוצאת ספרים אשכול ירושלים תשל"ב, ע. מט.

"We cannot know, in all these and similar questions, how they will be fulfilled since they are veiled even from the prophets. *Our teachers have no special doctrines on these matters*, they simply follow the particular learning of various verses, which gives no uniform doctrine. In any case, the main thing is not to make claims regarding the accuracy of the ordering of these doctrinal questions - as it leads neither to the fear of God nor to love. Let us not, therefore, think about the Last Days. The Wise say: '*Cursed be those who predict the End Times*'." This negative attitude has been developed due to the national disappointment in the matter.

The compiler of the main core of the **Talmud**, **Rabbi Judah**, who for this reason is generally honoured with the title of simply "Rabbi", as if no other were worthy to be compared with him, refers to Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 9:24-26 according to which the Messiah had to come before the destruction of the second temple. His conclusion was: "*These times were over long ago*".<sup>74</sup>

These two mutually exclusive points of view, that on the one hand the time of the Messiah's coming is past, and yet still he is awaited from day to day, co-exist side by side in remarkable harmony. There are passages in the Talmud which stress the complete surprise of the Messianic advent: "*Three things come without warning: the Messiah, hidden treasure, and a scorpion*".<sup>75</sup> Some of the scholars, such as R. Hillel, have said: "*There shall be no Messiah for Israel, because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah*".<sup>76</sup> According to some Israel will not have a king from the house of David "*until the dead rise again and the Messiah, the Son of David, comes*". "*But if Israel can keep the Sabbath commandments for two*

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<sup>74</sup> **Sanhedrin** 98b and 97a.

<sup>75</sup> **Sanhedrin** 97a.

<sup>76</sup> **Sanhedrin** 99a.

*Sabbaths, they will be immediately saved.*"<sup>77</sup> Behind all this humming and hawing, however, the Rabbis saw **the tradition of Elijah**, according to which the Messiah ought to have come after the 2000 years of the dominion of the Law, "*but on account of our sins, which were great, things turned out as they did*".<sup>78</sup>

There is thus in the Talmud an extensive discussion of the Messiah's coming, beginning with the assertion of 'Rabbi' that "*these times are long since past*".

**The seat of the problem** is whether the advent of the Messiah depends on repentance or observation of the Sabbath. Finally one of the Sages refers to the words of Isaiah 49:7: "they will bow down, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you". And **Rabbi Eliezer** fell silent, because "*this means that salvation will come in any case, even without repentance*".<sup>79</sup> Even this text, after which follows a discussion of the Lord's servant as a "covenant for the people", the Rabbis understood Messianically.

The national catastrophe and disappointment because of the destruction of the Temple and the dispersal of the Jews was for the Sages a setback for their nationalist beliefs, since the Messiah ought to have come during the time of the second Temple. Haggai 2:9 promises: "The glory of this last temple is to be greater than that of the first". Malachi 3:1 says: "Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come." **R. David Kimḥi** or **RaDaK** says, "*The Lord, the angel of the covenant, is the Messiah.*" Zechariah 11:13, when it speaks of the 30 pieces of silver which were cast into

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<sup>77</sup> **Shabbath** 108b.

<sup>78</sup> **Sanhedrin** 97a.

<sup>79</sup> **Sanhedrin** 97b.

"the house of the Lord" and to which reference is made in connection with Judas Iscariot, presupposes the existence of the Temple. Further, Psalm 118:26, the "royal hymn" **שיר מִתְרוֹנִיתָא** which according to the Rabbis will be sung to the Messiah when he comes, says: "From the house of the Lord we bless you". All this fits well to the retrospective understanding in Christian theology and is of course an interpretive problem in the Rabbinical writings.

### **III,2,6 The national disappointment in the light of the Siddur**

The national disappointment is reflected also very strongly in the Jewish prayer literature. We take only two examples. In the "**Book of Siddur**", **Daily Prayers**, there is a morning petition which is repeated in all the Hebrew publications. However in the popular Hebrew-English edition of **M. Stern** the translation about the Temple, which was destroyed "on account of our sins", is partly omitted due to its sensitive nature.<sup>80</sup> The emphasized words which are omitted of this English translation, resemble the aforesaid words of Talmud Sanhedrin 97a. The morning prayer of the Siddur runs as follows:

"God of the Universe, Thou didst command us to offer the daily sacrifice in its appointed time; and that the priests should officiate in their proper service, and the Levites at their desk and Israel in her status **במעמדם** *but now on account of our sins, which were great, the Temple has been destroyed, the daily sacrifices have been annulled*, and we don't have the priest in his office and Levite at his desk and Israel in her proper status; - therefore, let it be acceptable before Thee, O Lord, our God - that the prayers of our lips may be accounted, accepted and esteemed before Thee, **as if** we had offered the daily sacrifice in its appointed time."

In "**Siddur Beit Ja'acob**" given out in Warsaw 1884, a colossal

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<sup>80</sup> E.g. **M. Stern**, *Daily Prayers*, New York 1928, p. 26.

commentary on all the prayers of Siddur and their rabbinical interpretation, the phrase "as if" is quoted at least nine times stressing that a sincere prayer equals the service of the Temple.<sup>81</sup> Also in the popular Hebrew "Siddur Tefilah ha-Shalem" there is in the order of "Amirah" of the Passover sacrifice<sup>82</sup> the same pattern of the reason why the Temple was destroyed. The word order is exactly the same, "but now on account of our sins, which were great, the Temple has been destroyed, the daily sacrifices have been annuled". This "guilt" which is seemingly put on the shoulders of Jewish people has however in this context no connection with their counterpart, the Christian church. It is mostly based upon the decadence of the contemporary situation in the country.

When **Midrash Ruth I,1** speaks about the corruption as the cause of the exile, the whole message about virtues and good conduct receives a more concrete background from the above words of the Siddur. The time of judges resembled the situation in Palestine during the compilation of our Midrash, "but even if it was difficult to obtain - a Jew should not leave Palestine". This word has probably a link with the discussion about the two rabbis of Midrash Ruth, R. Jonathan and R. Hanina, who wanted to leave Israel after the rebellion of **Bar Kokhba**, but when they came to the border they were strongly affected and returned back to their homes. However the same **R. Jonathan** who interpreted Ruth 2:14 "in six ways", left in the end the country. This was presumably the reason that his name is mentioned only once in the Mishnah.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> סדור בית יעקב כמנהג אשכנז, בוורשא תרמ"א, pp. 71-72.

<sup>82</sup> סדור תפלה השלם, נוסח אשכנז, תל-אביב, ע. 526.

<sup>83</sup> **Aboth** IV,9. See the Hebrew "encyclopedia le-hakhmei ha-talmud ve-hagaonim" by **Mordekhai Margalioth** II, p.514. Jonathan was living in the fourth generation of the Tannaic period the same time with R. Meir, one of main figures in Ruth Rabbah about 135-170 A.D. It may refer to the oldest roots of this very tradition.

### III,2,7 The psychological and symbolic message of Ruth Rabbah

Midrash Ruth describes the characters of Elimelech, Ruth and Boaz attempting to persuade the readers psychologically. These principal actors of the Book of Ruth offer a good example of decent behavior before the eyes of God. Midrash strives to reflect the contemporary conditions from the time of Judges. However, there is also the warning of Naomi to Ruth in Par.II:22: "It is not the custom for Jewish maidens to frequent theatres and circuses" - or "to dwell in a house which has no mezuzah", the scroll attached to the doorpost in obedience to Deut. VI:9. The former hint might refer to the time of its compilation in the Roman period.

The words from the first proem in the beginning, "It came to pass in the days that the judges judged", are repeated **six times** in our Midrash. This helps to understand *the moral background* to which the homily is related. It was a time of idolatry and *corruption*, the judges held a brief for bias verdicts, they released the guilty and convicted the innocent. In **Ruth Rabbah I:1** there is a picture of their behavior: "The judge who perverts justice is called by *five* names, unrighteous, hated, repulsive, accursed and an abomination. And the Holy One, blessed be He, also calls him *five* names, viz. evil, despiser, a breaker of the covenant, an incenser and a rebel against God. And that is the cause of *five* evils to the world, in that he pollutes the land, profanes the name of God, causes the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence or the Holy Spirit) to depart, *makes Israel fall by the sword and it is the cause of their exile from their land.*"

The time of Ruth was also a time of **famine in symbolic meaning**. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days" (I Sam. III,1). "God therefore starved them of the *Holy Spirit*" - as it is said in the second of the seven introductory proems. In the seventh introductory proem we find then one of the lessons in our Midrash:

*"If there are no kids, there can be no goats. If there are no goats, there is no flock. If there is no flock, there is no shepherd - and if there are no synagogues or schools, the Holy One, blessed be He, so to speak, cannot make His Spirit rest upon the world."*

The starvation mentioned in the Book of Ruth I:1 belongs to those "ten famines" counted in Ruth Rabbah, which we saw already also in **Targum**. Midrash Ruth complains that Elimelech left too easy his home in Bethlehem although he did not really suffer lack of grain because he "was one of the notables of his place and one of the leaders of his generation". In **Ruth Rabbah I:4** and behind the whole story was as we saw the moral instruction: R. Simeon Ben Gamaliel said, that "even when it is difficult to obtain -- a Jew should not leave Palestine".

In this light **the behaviour of the Moabite Ruth was just contrary to that of Elimelech**. Both Ruth and Orpa were daughters of the Moabite King Eglon, and that was the reason that they succeeded to marry in a notable family from Betlehem.<sup>84</sup> But when their husbands died "Orpa" turned her back **את עורפה** to her mother-in-law whereas "Ruth" saw **ראתה** the blessing she had realized in the connection with the Jewish people. Orpa turned back to idolatry but Ruth remained faithful - the contrary of Elimelech. Ruth was a real beauty, but she was forty years old when she married with Machlon and "had not yet been blessed with a child". Boaz was now 80 years of age and had no children also.<sup>85</sup> Midrash Ruth uses the mystical **number six** mentioning that she spent in the night six hours at the feet of Boaz, although without any sexual intercourse. This moral conduct of both parties caused finally that Boaz became a "kinsman" who redeemed her for his wife (Ruth 2:20 and 3:12). It achieved also that Ruth became the ancestress of the Messiah.

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<sup>84</sup> E.g. Midrash Ruth of **Rabinowitz**, p. 19.

<sup>85</sup> Midrash Ruth of **Rabinowitz**, p. 47.

The romance between Boaz and Ruth leads in Midrash Ruth to manifold disputes about *the virtues of this couple and the coming of the Messiah*. According to the words of **Jacob Neusner** Ruth Rabbah had *only one message*, expressed in a variety of components but single and cogent. It concerned the outsider who becomes the principal, the Messiah - and this miracle was "accomplished through mastery of the Torah". The Whole Midrash directs thus the attention to Rabbinic hermeneutics or "was zur Thora hinzufügt". It reveals some common roots of the Jewish Messianic expectation which are emphasized also in Christian tradition.

**Midrash Ruth Rabbah is based on the use of Scriptures** the same way as Midrash Lamentations did. In the section of introductory proems alone Midrash Ruth has **26** quotations of **חומש** e.g. the five Books of Moses. **46** other citations are taken of the other sections of the Hebrew Bible for the most part of the prophets, a total of **72** Bible quotations.

### **III,2,8 The "hot potato": Elisha Ben Abuyah**

The Messianic appeal in Midrash Ruth is so strong and represents so many features similar to the New Testament that there is a reason to ponder why this matter is raised in our Midrash on the whole. The final answer to this will be in the end of our query. But already in connection with the content of our Midrash it is reason to present the name of **Elisha Ben Abuyah** in **Parashah VI,4**. Why did the story of this arch-apostate of the Talmud have more than ordinary interest in Ruth Rabbah?<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See **ḥagigah** 14b and 15b. According to the Hebrew commentary published by **Mordechai Margalioth** of the Sages of Talmud, **אנציקלופדיה**, מוסד הרב קוק, תל-אביב 1964 pages 105-109 and **אהרון** לחכמי התלמוד והגעונים, ירושלים 1987, pages 155-157.

According to the Commentary of **Mordechai Margalioth** Rabbi Elisha Ben Abuyah אלישע בן אבויה functioned in the third Tannaic generation between 110 - 135 C.E. and became a "min", a Hebrew Christian. Because of it, he is called sometimes as "Aher" or "the other one" without any name.<sup>87</sup> Rabbi **Aharon Heiman** tells in his Hebrew commentary<sup>88</sup> that Rabbi Elisha was "*a complete righteous man in all his ways and a devotee in all his deeds*". He was from Jerusalem and very wealthy. He lived in Galilee and met often his famous pupil the beloved **Rabbi Meir**.

Midrash Ruth deals at great length with this "hot potato" giving a lesson on the main lines of the common message. In the circumcision of Elisha the notables of Jerusalem including R. Eliezer and R. Joshua had after the meal a long discussion. "*They began with exposition of the Pentateuch and went on to the Prophets and from the Prophets to the Hagiographa*". A typical method of study in all Midrash compilations! The child was dedicated to the Torah. Talmud tells how Rabbi Elisha was riding once on the Sabbath in Tiberias by the school house where Rabbi Meir was preaching. When Rabbi Meir heard that his teacher was passing by, he went out and they began to discuss about his sermon.

Ruth Rabbah VI,4 explains that Rabbi Elisha noticed that they were escorted too far already. "At this point Elisha said to Meir: *Turn back!* He asked, Why? He answered: Up to this point is the Sabbath limit! He asked: Whence do you know? He answered: From the footsteps of my horse which has already traversed two thousand cubits. Meir said to him: *You possess all this wisdom and you will not return?*" These words are meant "in two meanings" as

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<sup>87</sup> Probably an abbreviation of מין אחר "another kind". Nowadays it is mostly understood as comprising three words, מאמיני ישוע הנוצרי "those who believe in Jesus the Nazarene". Jesus is called in Talmud usually only with the expression אותו האיש "that man" and Paulus with the expression "that pupil" אותו התלמיד.

<sup>88</sup> **Aharon Heiman**, Toldoth Tannaim ve-Amoraim I, pp. 155-157.

the Aramaic expression "tartei masma" תרתי משמע states. On the other hand, R. Meir had to turn back to the school, and on the other hand R. Elisha had to repent of his apostasy. This is affirmed in Midrash Ruth with two Bible verses: *"Return, O backsliding children (Jer. III,14). Return unto me, and I will return unto you (Mal. III,7) - all except Elisha Ben Abuyah, who knew My Power and yet rebelled against Me!"*

Our Midrash extends its story even more: "After some time Elisha Ben Abuyah was taken ill, and they came and told R. Meir: Elisha your master is sick. He went to him and appealed to him: *Return in penitence!* He said to him: Will they accept me after all this? He responded: Is it not written, Thou turnest man to contrition (Ps. XC,3), even when one's life is crushed. At that Elisha Ben Abuyah burst into tears and died. And R. Meir rejoiced and said: It appears that my master passed away in the midst of repentance."

The story of Midrash Ruth continues still on. **But the main message is clear.** If a famous apostate can repent and will be accepted how much more **עד כמה וכמה** the people of Israel if they come back to their God. **Mordechai Margalioth** ends his report on our "hot potato", the Rabbi Elisha, with a positive observation: "The tragic personality of R. Elisha caused discussions in old times and also in later epochs, and many Sages tried to defend him. This subject however arouses indignation from the Age of Enlightenment to our days."

In this phase of our study it is yet difficult to determine whether Midrash Ruth could have in this sense a real sympathy towards Hebrew Christians. Elisha Ben Abuyah was the spiritual father of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Meir understood that his teacher had repented and turned back to the faith of the official synagogue.

Among the "minim" the best known person is a certain **Jacob** who functioned about 100-120 A.D. and is unknown for Christian sources. We find him at **Sepphoris**, a centre of many Sages in

Midrash Ruth. He discussed with Jewish rabbis and healed the sick in the name of Jesus. He also disputed with R. Akiba, whom he met when he was walking up the main street in Sepphoris. The hypothetical theory about Christian interpolation in Midrash Ruth would be in those circumstances and in this atmosphere very improbable indeed.<sup>89</sup>

### **III,2,9 The six parables of the King and their equivalents in the New Testament**

A **Special attention** has to be given also for the many **parables** in Midrash Ruth which are resembling respectively to those in the New Testament. The concepts "king" and "kingdom" have an essential role in both of them and it is often linked with the Messianic vision. Already in the preliminary proems there are **six parables of the king** and his will:

1. "Israel could be compared with a **king's son** who goes into the market place and smites people, but he himself is not smitten. He insults but is not insulted etc". And the teaching is: "In that moment the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Ye are froward, ye are troublesome, ye are rebellious. Yet to destroy them is impossible, to take them back to Egypt is impossible and *to change them for another nation is impossible.*"

2. "A parable. A **king's friend** dwelt in a certain region, and for his sake **the king** was attached to that region. On a certain occasion barbarians came and attacked him, whereupon the inhabitants said: Woe unto us, that *the king is not attached to us as he used to be.*" The teaching here is that God's, the king's friend Israel must not doubt that God loves them in spite of their destiny. "So is this case. The whole world was created only for

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<sup>89</sup> **Midrash Rabbah Eccl.** I:8,3 and **Megillah** 23a. See also **B. Bagatti**, *The Church from the Circumcision*, Jerusalem 1971, pp. 94-111.

the merit of our father Abraham - they came to attack the eyeball of the world - but when those kings came and attacked him, all cried out" for help.

3. "A parable. There was a **prince** whose tutor wished to slay him. He said: If I kill him myself, I will forfeit my life. I will therefore deprive him of his wet-nurse and he will die of himself. - So did Ahaz calculate: If there are no children, there will be no adults. If there are no adults, there are no disciples. If there are no disciples, there are no sages. If there are no sages, *there will be no synagogues or schools and the Holy One, blessed be He, so to speak, cannot make His Spirit rest upon the world.* I will therefore seize the synagogues and schools; and of him Scripture says: Shut up the testimony, seal the instruction among My disciples (Isa. VIII,16)." Even this speaks as the rabbis often say בַּשְּׂפָה בְּרוּרָה e.g. in a clear language. If the Spirit of God is not resting upon his people they lose the instruction of Torah and the institution of synagogues.

4. "A parable. A **king** sent a proclamation to his country. What did the inhabitants of the country do with it? They took it, tore it up and burnt it. They then said: Woe unto us when the king hears of this!" This teaches us that Torah is the proclamation of God's will and its abuse is redounded at last upon the King of Kings.

5. "A parable. A **king had a vineyard**, and three enemies came and attacked it. One proceeded to cut down the bunches of grapes, the second to lop off the clusters and the third sought to uproot the vines themselves." Israel is of course the beloved vineyard of God (Isa. V,1). The explanation comes after some examples about the Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Haman, the three arch-enemies of the Jewish people. And it concludes: "*It refers to the scholars!*"

6. "A parable. A province owed **taxes to the king**. What did the king do? He sent a tax-collector to collect them. What did the people of the region do? They seized him, assaulted him and made him pay taxes saying: We have done to him what he sought to do to us. So in the days when the judges judged, when a man

had been guilty of idolatry and the judge wished to pass judgment on him, he came and flogged the judge saying: I have done to him what he wanted to do to me." All these parables emphasize the obedience toward the Torah teaching and God.

In the **New Testament** there are many similar metaphors. They bear a strong evidence that *the conceptual and ideological world of Midrash Ruth is the same as in the Gospels*. In Matthew 17:25 Jesus is asking his disciples: "From whom do **kings** of the earth take toll or tribute?" In Matthew 18:23 there is a parable: "Therefore the *kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king* who wished to settle accounts with his servants." Matthew 22:1-14 tells a long parable of a *"king who gave a marriage feast for his son"* - when those who were invited did not come, the invitation had to be brought to the outsiders into the streets "for both bad and good". In Matthew 25:31-46 is again a long story of the last judgment when *"all the nations" are gathered before the throne of the King* and those who have given food for hungry and thirsty and shelter for strangers and clothing to naked and who have visited sick and those in prison, are accepted to eternal life. Perhaps the most touching parable is in Matthew 21:33-41: "Hear another parable. There was a *householder who planted a vineyard*, and set a *hedge* around it, and dug a *wine press* in it, and built a *tower*, and let it out to *tenants*, and *went into another country*." Every word has a special meaning for Jewish readers. When the householder sent his servants to get his fruit, the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another and stoned another:

"Afterwards **he sent his son** to them saying: They will respect my son." "But they took him and *cast him out of the vineyard* and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" The answer of the audience was: *"He will let out the vineyard to other tenants* who will give him the fruits in their seasons." In Luke 13:6-9 we read: "And he told this parable: A man had a *fig tree planted in his vineyard*; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vine-dresser: Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit

on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground? And he answered him: Let it alone this year also till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down." With those three years Jesus probably had in mind the time of his own three years activity.

The common denominator of all these parables in Midrash Ruth has to do with the responsibility before the word of God the King.

### **III,2,10 The total lack of halakhic purification rules in Ruth Rabbah**

**Midrash Ruth Rabbah has no regulations of purification of any kind.** This total lack of religious ceremonies raises the question about the purpose of this compilation. The answer would probably be very simple. It is revealed by means of the words from the end of Ruth Rabbah II,14: *"For what purpose then was it written? To teach how great is the reward of those who do deeds of kindness."* The special ordinances given e.g. in Talmud Babli were of later origin than the common Midrashic emphasis in Palestine, which dealt more with the so called "**good deeds**", מעשים טובים as we shall see afterwards. That explains the emphasize of Midrash Ruth concerning the good deeds.

## IV THE TRANSLATION OF THE MESSIAH-PARASHIYOTH IN MIDRASH RUTH V,6, VII,2 AND VIII,1

In order to show the logic of the presentation the Bible text of Midrash Ruth is given with CAPITALS, the teachings of various rabbis in small letters, Bible quotations are *italicized* and some key concepts, which are meaningful from the point of view of our conceptual analysis, are emphasized underlined or in **boldface**.

There are only two English translations for Midrash Ruth Rabbah. Jacob Neusner mentions them in short.<sup>90</sup> The first translation into English is the excellent one of **L. Rabinowitz**, *Midrash Rabbah, translated into English with notes, glossary and indices under the editorship of Rabbi H. Freedman and Ph. D. Maurice Simon*, published in London 1939 by Soncino Press, Volume VIII. The **CD Disc of Davka Corporation** presents this Soncino Classic Collection. The text is based on the Wilna editions. The second is a form-analytical one of **Jacob Neusner**, *Ruth Rabbah, An Analytical Translation*, Scholars Press for Brown Judaic Studies, Atlanta 1989.

Both of these translations do have their assets and detriments. The language of **Rabinowitz** is outdated and his cross references are not at all relevant to the questions of our day or to the special emphasis of the Messianic idea in Midrash Ruth. **Jacob Neusner** gives a modern "dynamic" counterpart to the text using a very free hand. If the purpose of Midrash is "to reinterpret or actualize a given text of the past for present circumstances" as Renée Bloch has stated, then Neusner has really succeeded in his work. He has chosen the Wilna text for his translation. The only harm in both these works is the choice of the English equivalents for some Hebrew concepts. In the

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<sup>90</sup> The Components of the Rabbinic Documents, Part II, p. XLII.

Jewish Prayer Book Siddur for instance the central word of Ruth Rabbah מלכות has been always translated as "**kingdom**" and not "throne" like Neusner mostly prefers or "royalty" as Rabinowitz does. The excellent German translation of **August Wünsche**<sup>91</sup> uses in this connection the concept "Herrschaft" and "Regierung". For the typology, conceptual analysis and the inner affiliates with other Jewish writings these finesses are important.

The various manuscripts of Ruth Rabbah differ quite little from each other in their Messianic parashiyoth. The Hebrew Midrash Rabbah collection given out in Israel<sup>92</sup> is based on **Wilna edition**. We are following also the wording of other manuscripts given out by **Myron Bialik Lerner** in his dissertation. However the Wilna text which is the only known basis worldwide, offers the best common ground for our query. Our Bible text is taken mainly from the King James version and the text in the heading of each Parashah from the Revised Standard Version.

## The English translation:

### Midrash Rabbah - Ruth V:6

This section is related to Ruth 2,14

*And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here and eat some bread, and dip your morsel in the wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her parched grain; and she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over.*

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<sup>91</sup> **August Wünsche**, Der Midrasch Ruth Rabba, Das ist die Haggadische Auslegung des Buches Ruth, Hildesheim 1967.

<sup>92</sup> מדרש רבה, על חמשה חומשי תורה וחמש מגילות, הוצאת ספרים לוי אפשטיין, ירושלים תשל"ז, printed in Jerusalem 1976.

R. Jonathan **interpreted** this verse **in six ways** (פתר בה שית שטיף).<sup>93</sup>

**It relates to David.**<sup>94</sup> COME HERE you who are near to the kingdom קרובי למלכות, and the word here can only *relate to kingdom in the verse, That You have brought me here* (II Sam. VII, 18). AND EAT OF THE BREAD, it refers to the bread of kingdom. AND DIP YOUR PIECE OF BREAD IN THE VINEGAR refers to his sufferings, as it is said, *O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger* (Ps. VI, 2). AND SHE SAT BESIDE THE REAPERS BECAUSE the kingdom (המלכות, royalty, kingship), was taken from him for a time. As R. Huna said: All these six months that David was in flight from Absalom are not included in his reign because he atoned for his sins with a she-goat, like an ordinary person כהדיוט.<sup>95</sup> AND THEY REACHED HER PARCHED CORN which intimates that he was restored to the kingdom, as it is said, *Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed* (Ps. XX, 7). AND SHE DID EAT, AND WAS SATISFIED, AND LEFT THEREOF: this indicates that he would eat in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come.

**The second interpretation** (ד"א)<sup>96</sup> COME HERE etc., **refers it to Solomon**. COME HERE you who are near to the kingdom AND EAT OF THE BREAD refers to the bread of kingdom, as it is said, *And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine*

<sup>93</sup> Neusner translates this too freely, "R. Johanan 'interested' the phrase 'come here' in six ways". The word פטר means actually "to solve" and here mainly "to interpret". The Hebrew "come here" גשי הלום is in the Oxford version גושי הלום. "Of the bread" מן הלחם is translated in Neusners and in the Revised Standard Version "some bread". The "small bit" or "morsel" is in Hebrew פתך. In our conceptual analysis this is very important.

<sup>94</sup> The Hebrew expression with the abbreviation (הדא) ואין הלום אלא מלכות הה"ד (הוא דכתיב) "as it is written" or "relates", is repeated often in the text.

<sup>95</sup> The king atoned himself with a he-goat.

<sup>96</sup> Here is only an abbreviation, another thing = דבר אחר = ד"א

*flour, and three score measures of meal* (I Kings V, 2), AND DIP YOUR MORSEL IN THE VINEGAR refers to the stain in his deeds (לכלוך מעשים). AND SHE SAT BESIDE THE REAPERS means that the kingdom was taken from him for a time, as R. Yohai b. Hanina said: An angel descended in the likeness of Solomon and sat upon his seat (here על כסאו)<sup>97</sup>, while he went from door to door throughout Israel saying: *I, Koheleth, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem* (Eccl. I, 12). What did one of the housewives do? She gave him a plate of pounded beans, and hit him on the head with a stick saying, Does not Solomon sit on his seat (על כסאו) and yet you say: "I am Solomon king of Israel"? AND THEY REACHED HER PARCHED CORN; this indicates that he was restored to the kingdom. AND SHE DID EAT AND WAS SATISFIED AND LEFT THEREOF; he would eat in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come.

**The third interpretation (= ד"א)** of COME HERE refers it to **Hezekiah COME HITHER** you who are near to the kingdom (קרובי למלכות). AND EAT OF THE BREAD, the bread of kingdom (לחמה של מלכות). AND DIP YOUR MORSEL IN THE VINEGAR refers to his sufferings, as it is said, *And Isaiah said: Let them take a cake of figs*, etc. (Isa. XXXVIII, 21). AND SHE SAT BESIDE THE REAPERS, in that the kingdom (מלכותו) was taken from him for a time, as it is said, *Thus saith Hezekiah: This day is a day of trouble and rebuke* (Isa. XXXVII, 3). AND THEY REACHED HER PARCHED CORN indicates that he was restored to his kingdom (מלכותו), as it is said, *So that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from thenceforth* (II Chron. XXXII, 23). AND SHE DID EAT AND WAS SATISFIED AND LEFT THEREOF; he would eat in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come.

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<sup>97</sup> Neusner uses the word "throne" even here which is not necessary but rather confusing if we observe the concepts of the text.

**The fourth interpretation (= ד"א) of COME HERE etc., makes it refer to Manasseh.** COME HERE you who are near to the kingdom (קרובי למלכות). AND EAT OF THE BREAD, the bread of kingdom (לחמה של מלכות). AND DIP YOUR MORSEL IN THE VINEGAR, because his actions were sour as vinegar on account of his evil deeds. AND SHE SAT BESIDE THE REAPERS means that he was deprived of his kingdom (נוצדה לו מלכותו) for a time, as it is said, *And the Lord spoke unto Manasseh, and to his people; but they gave no heed. Wherefore the Lord brought them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks* (II Chron. XXXIII, 10 f.). R. Abba Bar Kahana said: It means, with manacles. R. Levi Bar Hayyatha said: They made a mule of bronze and seated him on it and kindled a fire underneath it, and he cried out, 'O idol so-and-so, O idol so-and-so, save me!' And when he saw that it was of no avail, he said, 'I remember that my father used to read before me the verse, *In thy distress, when all these things are come upon thee, He will not fail thee* (Deut. IV, 30 f.). I will call on Him; if He answers me, it is well; and if not, then it is all the same, and all gods are the same.' At that moment the ministering angels arose (= מלאי"ש)<sup>98</sup> and closed all the windows of heaven and appealed to God: 'Lord of the Universe! Will You accept in repentance a man who set up an idol in the holy temple?' He answered: 'If I do not accept him in repentance, I close the door in the face of all those who return in penitence' (בעלי תשובה).<sup>99</sup> What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He dug an opening for his prayer from under the Throne of Glory, where the angels could not reach. That is the meaning (= ההי"ד)<sup>100</sup>, *And he prayed unto Him; and*

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<sup>98</sup> There are two main groups of angels, "ministering angels" מלאכי השרת and so called מלאכי חבלה "destructive" angels. According to a popular rabbinical story all the ministering angels are defending us in the last judgment due to our **good deeds** and all the destructive angels are coming to accuse us due to our evil deeds.

<sup>99</sup> There is in Israel at present a strong religious movement בעלי תשובה of those who are "returning in penitence".

<sup>100</sup> This abbreviation of הוא הדין is not translated by Neusner in the text.

He was entreated (*wayye'ather* ויעתר) by him, and heard his supplication (II Chron. XXXIII, 3). R. Levi commented: In Arabia for 'athira' they say 'hathira' to 'dig'. AND THEY REACHED HER PARCHED CORN, i.e. he was restored to the kingdom (מלכותו), as it is said, And brought him back to Jerusalem to his kingdom (למלכותו). How did He bring him back? R. Samuel said in the name of R. Aba: He brought him back with a wind,<sup>101</sup> as we say 'who causeth the wind to blow'. AND SHE DID EAT AND WAS SATISFIED AND LEFT THEREOF: he would eat in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come.

**The fifth interpretation** (the abbreviation ד"א) **makes it refer to the King Messiah.** COME HERE you who are near to the kingdom (קרובי למלכות). AND EAT OF THE BREAD refers to the bread of kingdom (לחמה של מלכות); AND DIP THY MORSEL IN THE VINEGAR refers to his sufferings, as it is said, But he was wounded because of our transgressions (Isa. LIII, 5). AND SHE SAT BESIDE THE REAPERS, for he will be deprived of his kingdom (עתידה מלכותו ליצד ממנו) for a time, as it is said, For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken (Zech. XIV, 2). AND THEY REACHED HER PARCHED CORN, means that he will be restored to his kingdom, as it is said, And he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth (Isa. XI, 4). R. Berekiah said in the name of R. Levi: The future Redeemer will be like the former Redeemer. Just as the former Redeemer revealed himself, returned and was later hidden from them; and how long was he hidden? Three months, as it is said, And they met Moses and Aaron (Ex. V, 20),<sup>102</sup> so the future Redeemer will be revealed to them, and then be hidden from them.

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<sup>101</sup> The same root שׁוּב is applied to the concept of "restore" as well as to the blowing of the wind. In **Lamentation Rabbah** I,51 there is a remark about the Messiah that the Messiah had to come but "a whirlwind came and carried him off".

<sup>102</sup> In Ex. V,20 the exact reading is "six months".

And **how long will he be hidden**? R. Tanhuma, in the name of the rabbis, said: Forty-five days, as it is said, *And from the time that the continual burnt offering shall be taken away there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Happy is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days* (Dan. XII, 11-12). What are these extra days? R. Isaac Ben Qazarta said on behalf of R. Jonah: These are the forty-five days during which Israel shall pluck saltwort and eat it, as it is said, *They pluck saltwort with wormwood* (Job XXX, 4).<sup>103</sup> Where will he lead them? From the land of Israel to the wilderness of Judah, as it is said, *Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness* (Hos. II, 16); while some say to the wilderness of Sihon and Og, as it is said, *I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed season* (ib. XII, 10). He who believes in him will live, and he who does not believe will depart to the Gentile nations and they will put him to death. R. Isaac Bar Marion said: Finally the Holy One, blessed be He, will reveal Himself to them, and He will rain down manna upon them, And there is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. I, 9).

**The sixth interpretation** (דבר אחר = ד"א) **makes COME HERE** etc., **refer to Boaz** himself. COME HERE means approach here. AND EAT OF THE BREAD the bread of the reapers. AND DIP THY MORSEL IN THE VINEGAR, for the reapers had the habit of dipping their bread in vinegar. R. Jonathan said: From this we can conclude that dishes prepared with vinegar were brought into the granaries. AND SHE SAT BESIDE THE REAPERS, actually at their side. AND THEY REACHED HER PARCHED CORN (קלי) ; just a pinch between his two fingers (קליל).<sup>104</sup> R. Isaac said: From

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<sup>103</sup> **Rabinowitz** explains that "this verse is applied to the period immediately preceding the Messianic age, when owing to the great scarcity of food the faithful will eat saltwort". See also the signs of the Messiah in Talmud **Sanhedrin** 97a and 98a.

<sup>104</sup> There is a word-play with קלי "parched corn" and קליל "a little" since such a small portion satisfied her.

this we can conclude one of two things, either that a blessing reposed in the fingers of that righteous man [Boaz] or in the stomach of that righteous woman; but since it says, **AND SHE DID EAT AND WAS SATISFIED AND LEFT THEREOF**, it is more probable that the blessing was in the stomach of that righteous woman. R. Isaac b. Marion said: This verse can teach us that if a man is about to perform a good deed, he should do it with all his heart. For had Reuben known that Scripture would record of him, *And Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand* (Gen. XXXVII, 21), he would have brought Joseph on his shoulder to his father; and had Aaron known that Scripture would record of him, *And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee* (Ex. IV, 14), he would have gone out to meet him with timbrels and dances. And had Boaz known that Scripture would record of him, **AND HE REACHED HER PARCHED CORN, AND SHE DID EAT AND WAS SATISFIED AND LEFT THEREOF**, he would have fed her with fatted calves. R. Cohen and R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi: In the past when a man performed a religious duty (עושה מצוה), the prophet placed it on record; but nowadays when a man performs it, who writes it down? Elijah records it and the Messiah and the Holy One, blessed be He, subscribe their seal to it. This is the meaning of the verse, *Then they that feared the Lord spoke with one another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him* (Mal. III, 16).

### **Midrash Rabbah - Ruth VII:2**

This is related to Ruth 3,15

*And he said, "Bring the mantle you are wearing and hold it out."  
So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and laid it upon her; then she went into the city.*

**AND HE SAID: BRING THE MANTLE YOU ARE WEARING** (ib. 15). **BRING (הבי)** should be written (**הבה**) teaching that he addressed her in the masculine, that none should notice her. **AND**

HOLD IT teaches that she girded her loins like a man. AND HE MEASURED SIX MEASURES OF BARLEY, AND LAID IT ON HER. R. Simon said: Bar Qappara expounded in Sepphoris.<sup>105</sup> Is it then the custom of a king to betroth a wife with six grains of barley? Or is it the custom of a woman to be betrothed with six *se'ah* of barley?<sup>106</sup> R. Juda Bar R. Simon said: The meaning is that it was a reward, AND HE MEASURED SIX BARLEYS AND LAID IT ON HER, he was vouchsafed that there should arise from her six righteous men, each one of them possessing six outstanding virtues, viz. David, Hezekiah, Josiah, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,<sup>107</sup> Daniel, and the Messiah. **David**, as it is said, *Skilful in playing, and a mighty man of valour, and a man of war, and prudent in affairs, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him* (I Sam. XVI, 18); **Hezekiah**, as it is said, *That the government may be increased, and of peace there be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it, through justice and through righteousness* (Isa. IX, 6). *And his name is called Pele, Joz, El, Gibbor, Abi-ad, Sar-shalom* (ib. 5).<sup>108</sup> Some observe that *l'marbeh* (be increased) *is written with a closed mem*.<sup>109</sup> **Josiah**, as it is said, *For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out its roots by the river, etc.* (Jer. XVII, 8). **Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah**, as it is said, *Youths in whom there was no blemish, but fair to look on, and skilful in all wisdom, and skilful in knowledge, and discerning in thought, and such as had ability*

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<sup>105</sup> The **seat of Sanhedrin** was there in the time of Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi approximately 170 -200 AD.

<sup>106</sup> Six *se'ah* would have been a very heavy load.

<sup>107</sup> Who were regarded as one.

<sup>108</sup> In English: Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty, a Hero, everlasting Father and Prince of Peace, six qualities even there.

<sup>109</sup> According to **Sanhedrin** 94a God intended Hezekiah to be the Messiah, but the closed mem teaches that he was shut out from that honour because he had not sung God's praises.

(Dan. I, 4).<sup>110</sup> **Daniel**, as it is said, *A surpassing spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and declaring of riddles, and loosing of knots, were found in the same Daniel* (ib. V, 12, six virtues even here). The Messiah, as it is said, *And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, etc.* (Isa. XI, 2).<sup>111</sup>

### Midrash Rabbah - Ruth VIII:1

The section is related to Ruth 4,18

*Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron.*

R. Abba Bar Kahana opened his exposition with the verse, Be angry רגז but sin not (Ps. IV, 5). David said to the Holy One, blessed be He, How long will they rage against me and say, "Is he not of tainted descent? Is he not a descendant of Ruth the Moabitess?" *Commune with your own heart upon your bed* (ib.). You also, are you not descended from two sisters?<sup>112</sup> Look at your own genealogy and be still (ib.). And Tamar who married your ancestor Judah - is it not a tainted descent? But she was a descendant of Shem the son of Noah. Do you then have an honourable genealogy? R. Jacob Bar Abijah said: Fight against your evil inclination and sin not. The Rabbis explain: Anger against your inclination and sin not. THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF PEREZ (IV, 18). R. Abba said: Wherever the word *eleh* (these are) occurs, it invalidates the preceding; *we-elah* (and these are) adds to the preceding. (As it is in Genesis Rabbah Par. II to Gen. 2:4, 'These are the generations of the heavens'.) AND HEZRON BEGOT RAM (IV, 19). But was not

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<sup>110</sup> Six hidden virtues even here.

<sup>111</sup> The Spirit of the Lord consists of six virtues, *חכמה, בינה, עצה, גבורה, דעת*, like in the **Targum of Ruth III,15**.

<sup>112</sup> Rachel and Leah.

Jerahmeel the elder son, as it is written, *The sons also of Hezron, there were born unto him: Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai* (I Chron. II. 9)? Jerahmeel is omitted because he married a Canaanite woman in order to adorn himself with her, as it is written, *And Jerahmeel had another wife, whose name was Atarah* (I Chron. II, 26). AND RAM BEGOT AMMINADAB; AND AMMINADAB BEGOT NAHSHON, AND NAHSHON BEGOT SALMON (IV, 19, 20).

Why is he called Salmon? Because **up to him they formed ladders** (*sulamoth סולמות*) of princes, **from him onwards** they formed **ladders of kings**.<sup>113</sup> R. Isaac opened his exposition with the verse *Then said I: Lo, I am come* (Ps. XL, 8). David said: Then I had to recite a song when I came, since the word **אז** (lo!) refers to song, as it is said, *Then אז sang Moses* (Ex. XV, 1). I was included in the verse *An Ammonite and a Moabite shall not come into the assembly of the Lord* (Deut. XXIII,4), but I have come *with the roll of a book which is prescribed for me* (Ps. XL,8). 'With the roll' refers to the verse, *Concerning whom Thou didst command that they should not enter into Thy congregation* (Lam. I, 10). 'In the book' as it is said, 'An Ammonite and a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord' (Deut. XXIII, 4). And not only have I been allowed to enter, but in the roll and the book it is written concerning me. 'In the roll' means Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David; 'in the book'; *And the Lord said: Arise, anoint him; for this is he* (I Sam. XVI, 12).

R. Huna said: *It is written For God hath appointed me another seed* (Gen. IV, 25), that is, seed from another place, referring to the Messiah. R. Berekiah and R. Simon said: We may illustrate with a parable of a king who was travelling from one place to another,

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<sup>113</sup> According to **Rabinowitz** Salma ends the line of princes or judges; from Boaz his son begins the line of kings, since it was destined that Boaz and Ruth should be the progenitors of David and his descendants.

when a precious pearl fell from his head. So the king and all his retinue stopped there. All the passers-by asked, 'What are the king and his retinue doing here?' They discerned the reason and said, 'A pearl has fallen from his head.' What did he do? He gathered all the soil into heaps and brought brooms. He had one heap swept, but did not find it; a second heap, and he did not find it; but in the third, he found it, and they announced, 'The king has found his pearl!' So the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham, *Get thee out* (Gen. XII, 1). It was to thee that I looked forward. What need had I to record the genealogy of Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Nahor, and Terah? (I Chron. 1, 24). Only on account of thee, Abram, he is Abraham (ib.); And he found his heart faithful before Thee (Neh. IX, 8). So said the Holy One, blessed be He, to David, 'What need had I to record the genealogy of Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse? Only on account of thee; I have found My servant, David.'" Abraham was the pearl that God the King found.

## V INTERTEXTUAL AND CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF RESPECTIVE MESSIANIC PASSAGES

### *Specifications concerning Parashah V*

#### V,1 The numerical pattern "six", שית שטין

We have seen already in our preliminary survey some fundamental factors in Midrashic literature, the content of Midrash Ruth Rabbah, its Messianic nature and the special emphasis of the Messianic banquet in eternity. We have also found a proper method to discern "the leading points" and their affiliation according to the topical aspect. In order to define the "topos" or place of our theme in Jewish and Christian reference, we need in addition *a detailed intertextual and conceptual analysis*. These two approaches are near to each other like the two dreams of Joseph. The semantic inspection exposes the inner structure of each claim and their weight in the subject as such.<sup>114</sup>

**Myron Bialik Lerner** is stating that the "most characteristic of Ruth Rabbah is the unusual emphasis placed on the number six".<sup>115</sup> It is stressed in several major homilies as well as in its *external features* i.e. in the *six introductory proems* and the *original sixfold*

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<sup>114</sup> The Greek concept "**analysis**" means "breaking the matter into parts" in order to find its real nature. The word "**synthesis**" signifies "combining the elements together" deriving from the word "συνριθεμοι", making thus a "joint agreement". It is an equivalent for the word "**conclusion**".

<sup>115</sup> See the Hebrew dissertation of Lerner I, pp. 85-87. Similar reasoning can not be found in the New Testament or in the Scrolls of Qumran which represent an earlier stage of presentation.

*division* of the parashiyoth. The symbolic number "six" is to be seen in the *sixfold interpretation of R. Jonathan* Par. V,6 of David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Messiah and Boaz. It appears in Par. VII,2 about the *six righteous men*, the ancestors of the promised Messiah, viz. David, Hezekiah, Josiah, *Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah*, Daniel and the Messiah. It shows up in the *six qualities of the Messiah* in Isaiah IX,6. It is apparent also in the *six virtues in Daniel* V,12 (Par. VII,2). In Parashah VII,2 we find also the "*six measures of barley*" and the "*six grains of barley*". The number three, four and seven are emphasized in Ruth Rabbah too but number six is related to the Messianic expectation of Midrash Ruth. The last dominion will be in the hands of the "future Redeemer", the "second Moses", the Messiah. In our Midrash the Messianic salvation begins according to Lerner already by **Seth** the son of Adam, in Genesis IV,25. The name Seth שֵׁט ( שֵׁת = ששה ) refers here to number six being in Lerner's exposition of Ruth Rabbah also a hint to the Messiah.

### V,1,1 **Seth and other Messianic allusions in the Book of Genesis**

**Myron Bialik Lerner** touches this question very briefly in his Hebrew dissertation of Midrash Ruth. According to his words "there are **some** hints to the Messiah already in the Torah in the words of Adam and Eve when they called their son with the name **Seth** and in the seed of the first-born daughter to Lot" (in Gen.19:37). "*The King Messiah is the final purpose in the union of Ruth and Boaz.*"<sup>116</sup> *Thus Moab, the first-born son of Lot's elder daughter became practically the first ancestor of the Messiah.*<sup>117</sup>

There are however also many other hints to the Messiah **in Genesis**. We name only some of them from the very beginning of the book.

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<sup>116</sup> See **Lerner**, the dissertation Vol. I, p.115.

<sup>117</sup> Genesis 19:37 and **Lerner's** exposition in page 115.

From the perspective of our theme it is really a matter of weight because it shows how wide the Messianic expectation really was in Jewish thinking.

The Messiah is seen **in the creation account** e.g. in the words that the earth was "without form, and void".<sup>118</sup> In this description the Talmudic Sages scented the beginning of the plan of salvation for humanity telling about the tradition of Elijah that the third period of 2000 years is that of the Messiah and "God will restore his world only when the seventh millenium is over", **Sanhedrin** 97b. But the rabbis saw a reference to the Messiah also in the verse, "the *Spirit of God* moved upon the face of he waters". The **Midrash Bereshith Rabbah I,2** says in this context that, this was the "*Spirit of the Messiah*", as it is written in Is. 11:2, "And the *Spirit of the LORD* shall rest upon him".<sup>119</sup> **Yalkut Makhiri** relates it to Psalm 139:12, "Even the darkness is not dark to thee, the night is bright as the day". A couple of other writings like **Pesikta Rabbati** 33 mention that this refers to the "*anointed king*".<sup>120</sup> We must also bear in mind the Rabbis' view based on **Targum to Isaiah 9:5** that even the *names of the Messiah* were determined before the creation of the world, an item which is reflected often in Jewish writings.

God's first words in the Bible are: "*Let there be light!*" And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good." When we study the creation account closely we notice that it was not until the fourth day that God created the "two great lights", the sun and the moon. The Sages understood this too to be a Messianic allusion. The Midrash known as **Pesikta Rabbati**, which was read from the 9th century on in connection with feast days, is asking, "*Whose is this light which falls upon the congregation of the Lord?*" and

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<sup>118</sup> **T. Jer. Hagigah** II,1 and 10 explains that these words in the creation account will not be solved "until the Son of David will come".

<sup>119</sup> **Midrash Bereshith Rabbah** 1:2 and **Yalkut Makhiri** to Psalm 139:12.

<sup>120</sup> **Pesikta Rabbati** 33 and **Yalkut**.

answers, "*It is the light of the Messiah*".<sup>121</sup> The **Yalkut Shimeoni**, comprising Talmudic and Midrashic passages drawn up in the 12th and 13th centuries, adds this thought to the exposition of the verse: "*This is the light of the Messiah, as is written in Psalm 36:10, 'In your light, we see light'*".<sup>122</sup>

The Rabbis considered the Aramaic word *Nehora*, 'light', to be one of the secret names of the Messiah, since we read in the Aramaic part of the book of Daniel that, "He knows what dwells in darkness, and *light dwells with him*" (2:22). Furthermore, on the strength of the prophecies of Is. 42:6 and 60:1-3 the Messiah is seen as "the light of the Gentiles". Did not Jesus announce in John 8:12 that he was himself the "light of the world", and that "whoever follows me will never walk in darkness"? The Midrash understands the words of Daniel 2:22 Messianically: "'*And Nehora dwells with him.*' *This is the Messiah-King, for it is written: 'Arise, shine, for your light has come'*" (Is.60:1).

We can see from the above that the associative Jewish method finds Messianic allusions in places where Christians have not seen them. No wonder that also the Messianic meal will be seen by the compilers of Midrash Ruth in a wide scale and in a similar light. The above examples portray what Neusner meant with his expression "writing with the Scripture".

## V,1,2 The logic of the numeral six

The logic in the number six lies partly also in the fact that the word **יָהָיָה** "and it came to pass" relates in the Bible to misfortune. In the **fourth Petihta** there is a long discussion containing five passages marked by this word. This always meant "trouble" be it Abram, Ahaz, Jehoiakim, Ahasuerus or the judges. The sixth example

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<sup>121</sup> **Pesikta Rabbati** 62,1.

<sup>122</sup> **Yalkut Shimeoni** fol. 56.

signified "either misfortune or good fortune". The Hebrew character "ו" or "waw" has the number value "six". The letter is called as "וְיוֹ הַהֲפֹךְ" or "the letter which changes" the timing; in the biblical Hebrew it turns out the future tense to the past and the past tense to future.

Probably the *oldest reference to the symbolic meaning of number six* is to be seen in the **Targum** for Ruth III,15 where it is interpreted that from Ruth descend "six righteous men to the world with six blessings - David, Daniel and his three friends as well as the King Messiah." As we have seen in page 50, RaSHI reasoned that the six virtues of Messiah mentioned in Isaiah XI,2 are also related to it.

In this context we present first two similar models based on the number six and applied to Ruth 2:14.

a. The six figures:

1. It speaks of David	מדבר בדוד וגוי
2. It speaks of Solomon	מדבר בשלמה וגוי
3. It speaks of Hezekiah	מדבר בחזקיהו
4. It speaks of Manasseh	מדבר במנשה וגוי

All these figures were kings. The following two, the Messiah and Boaz are some kind of eschatological standard types. The literary expressions are the same:

5. It speaks of King Messiah	מדבר במלך המשיח וגוי
6. It speaks of Boaz	מדבר בבוז וגוי

The name of Boaz derives from the root "strength" or עוז . Boaz had enough power to fight against his "evil inclination" as it is emphasized in Ruth Rabbah. And because of that he is counted to

the ancestors of the Messiah. But even in this discussion about him the "*blessing was not reposed in the fingers of that righteous man*" Boaz but rather "*in the stomach (במעיה) of that righteous woman*", Ruth -- an esoteric expression hinting probably to the mystery of birth of the Messiah.

Another similar literary mold with sixfold distribution expresses even better the inner structure of Midrash Ruth. It leads us also to ponder over the Messianic meal and its eternal nature. Only after this short preliminary analysis we are able to specify the conceptual particularities of each matter.

**b. The Bible word and its explanation:**

The Bible word	The interpretation
1. Come here גשי הלום	near to the kingdom קרובי למלכות
2. Eat of the bread ואכלת מן הלחם	bread of kingdom לחמה של מלכות
3. Dip your morsel in the vinegar וטבלת פתך בחומץ	refers to sufferings or evil deeds אלו היסורין או לכלוך מעשים
4. She sat besides the reapers ותשב מצד הקוצרים	the kingdom was taken from him for a time נוצדה המלכות ממנו לשעה
5. And they reached her parched corn ויצבת לה קלי	he will be restored to the kingdom שחזרה לו מלכותו

These five sections are focused to explain the discussions between Boaz and Ruth. The further part concentrates mainly to the potential Messianic meaning of the story:

The Bible word

The interpretation

6. ותאכל	And she did eat	eating in this world אוכל בעוה"ז
ותשבע	and was satisfied	eats in the Messianic age אוכל לימות המשיח
ותותר	and left thereof	he will eat in the World to come אוכל לעוה"ב

In this second outline we are observing in a way the whole topographical setting of the 5th Parashah with all the landmarks in which the inner correlation helps to understand the various components of the Messianic banquet.

The sixfold pattern stands out very clear through all this Parashah. In **b3** the interpretation varies in turns meaning either "sufferings" or "evil deeds", **יסורין או לכלוך מעשים**. The explanation in **b6** is associated with a future banquet in eternity - probably a kind of eschatological Passover meal. *The same pattern b,1-6 is repeated as a literary stylistic device throughout the 5th Parashah.*

## V,2 "Come here" "near to the kingdom", גשי הלום קרובי למלכות

The word in **b1** is related to Ruth 2:12 and 13 where Boaz said to Ruth: "The Lord recompense you - under whose wings you have come to take refuge."<sup>123</sup> And she answered that "you have

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<sup>123</sup> See Isaiah 62:11 and its Messianic promise that "his reward is with him, and his recompense before him".

comforted me and spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants", **בְּאַחַת שְׂפָחוֹתַי**.<sup>124</sup> Our Midrash understands that she was very humble and did not come to take shelter "in the shadow of the *dawn*, nor in the shadow of the wings of *the earth*, not in the shadow of the wings of *the sun*, nor in the shadow of the wings of *the hayyot*, nor in the shadow of the wings of the *cherubim* or the *seraphim*"- a sixfold stylistic device here also. She wanted to take refuge in "the loving kindness of God" and his nearness.

1. Come here הלום	גשי	near to the kingdom למלכות	קרובי
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The expression "near to the kingdom" is repeated many times in various forms in the Talmud **קרוב למלכות, קרובין למלכות וקרובים למלכות**. Jesus was according to **Sanhedrin 43a** "near to the kingdom", **ישׁיו שקרוב למלכות היה**.<sup>125</sup> The above phrase in our pattern **b1** is addressed to David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Manasseh and the Messiah; the limited "Come here" only to Boaz. Coming "near" was important in Jewish thinking. The expression "to sacrifice" **להקריב** is derived from the root "**קרב**" which corresponds the word "near". It reflects our human need to come nearer to God. Moses said in Ex. 32:25, "Who is on the Lords side? Come unto me!" Also Jesus said similarly: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden - Let the children come to me - or If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink", Matthew 11:28, Mark 10:14 and John 7:37. This was the task of the first and the last Redeemer, if we express it in the language of our Midrash.

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<sup>124</sup> In the Revised Standard Version used by Jacob Neusner the important word "like" is missing.

<sup>125</sup> **Sanhedrin 43a** relates this tradition to R. Abbaye, an Amora of the second generation and mentions twice that Jesus was hanged "on the eve of Passover".

### V,3 "The bread of the kingdom", לחמה של המלכות

The expression **b2** is related to the meaning of the "bread" לחם in the Bible. The whole story about Ruth and Boaz happened in Bethlehem, the "house of bread" בית לחם where the Messiah was to be born as it is written in Micah 5:2.<sup>126</sup> Eating the bread relates again to the Messianic meal in b6 of our scheme. It represents "manna" given by the first Moses as we shall see in later context. The whole pattern here is

2. Eat of the bread הלחם	ואכלת מן	bread of kingdom מלכות	לחמה של
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The concept "bread of kingdom" shows the beauty of Midrashic language. Psalm 105:40 tells in the same eloquent way that the people were "satisfied with the bread of heaven", וְלָחֶם שָׁמַיִם יִשְׂבִּיעֵם. The word "to satisfy" is repeated over and over again in Midrash Ruth. It is commonly accepted in Jewish commentaries that the bread in Psalm 105 represents 'manna' like in Ruth Rabbah V,6 in the end of fifth interpretation. The Hebrew language uses three words about the so called "shewbread", לחם המערכת, לחם הפנים, ולחם התמיד which were put always for a week "upon the table of

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<sup>126</sup> This prophecy is accepted commonly as a Messianic prediction. **RaSHI** refers to it in connection with psalm 72 in his exposition of Micah chapter 5 verse 2, which says of the Ruler of Israel who will be born in Bethlehem that his "origins are from old, from ancient times". According to RaSHI he is "the Messiah, the Son of David, as Ps. 118 says, he is the 'stone which the builders rejected', and his origins are from ancient times, for 'before the sun was, his name was Yinnon' (Psalm 72:17)." **R. David Kimḥi** says unexpectedly: "It will be said in the Messianic age that his 'origins are from old, from ancient times'; 'from **Bethlehem**' means that he will be of the house of David, because there is a long period of time between David and the Messiah-King; and he is El (God), which is how he is 'from old, from ancient times'."

shewbread". According to our Midrash those who eat the bread of kingdom, will eat it "in this world" and "in the Messianic age" and "in the world to come" as our pattern **b6** it utters.

## V,4 "Vinegar" and sufferings, החומץ מסמל את היסורים

The most interesting message is linked with the words of "vinegar" which is related to "sufferings" or to "evil deeds". Good and evil deeds belong to a later discussion. Our mould **b3** speaks about the little bit of bread **פת לחם**, the "morsel" and the "vinegar" **החומץ**.

3. Dip your morsel in the vinegar וטבלת פתך בחומץ	refers to sufferings or evil deeds אלו היסורין או לכלוך מעשים
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The vinegar or "*homez*" was a kind of sour beverage composed of sour wine mixed with oil, a very refreshing drink which is still a favorite beverage in some Eastern regions. **Keil-Delitzsch** speaks of it in the extensive Commentary on the Old Testament. This "sour wine" refers repeatedly in Ruth Rabbah to sufferings or to the sin of the people. RaSHI explains that this beverage was good in the hot season.<sup>127</sup>

### V,4,1 The place of "vinegar and sufferings" as a whole

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<sup>127</sup> See the MALBI" M Commentary to Ruth II,14 and **Keil-Delitzsch**, Vol. II, pp. 479-482.

Our analysis of Midrash Ruth helps to see the weight of each matter in the right proportion. After that it is possible to define the subject identifying "the parts and their place in the whole" as Jacob Neusner expresses. It is helpful to note how the interpretation between the evil deeds and sufferings varies when it mentions the six main figures in Midrash Ruth:

"It speaks of David" - "this speaks of his *sufferings* as it is written in Psalm 6:1, Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger".

"It speaks of Solomon" - "this refers to the *dirty of the deeds*".

"It speaks of Hezekiah" - "it refers to his *sufferings*, as it is said in Isaiah 38:21, Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil etc.

"*It speaks of Manasseh*" - "refers to the *dirty of the deeds*, for his dirty deeds were like vinegar, on account of wicked actions". The key in the following discussion is in the story that Manasseh was taken "with hooks" to Assyria and if God will not "accept back those who return in repentance" he will "lock the door against them".

"It speaks of the Messiah" - refers to his *sufferings*, as it is said in Isaiah 53:5, But *he was wounded because of our transgressions*. The second meaning of those sufferings is linked with the verse in Job 30:4, "*They pluck saltwort with wormwood*". The key message after this is in the discussion concerning "*the first and the last Redeemer*" which will be considered later on.

"*It speaks of Boaz*" - for the reapers had the habit of *dipping their bread in vinegar*.

The focus hereafter is in the expression that the future blessing will be "*in the belly במעיה of that righteous woman*", Ruth and that the Messiah will "*seal the good deeds*" in his book.

The pattern b6 is repeated as whole, reminding us, that the Messianic meal in the World to come is an inseparable part for the compiler of our Midrash. This implies also the importance of suffering in the Jewish Messianic idea as such.

### V,4,2 The message of the true vine

We are still returning to our mold **b3** which relates to the "vinegar". This has an esoteric meaning regarding to the Messianic meal.

3. Dip your morsel in the vinegar וטבלת פתך בחומץ	refers to sufferings as is said אלו היסורין שנא' והוא מחולל מפשעינו
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In Christian theology we are confronted in the parable of "the true vine" in John 15:1-6 by a difficult puzzle. What are the underlying factors in it from the point of Jewish literature and why does the parable use the Greek word "true", αληθινη? Does it also have some hidden link with the Old Testament prophecies and the Messianic meal?

We shall deal with this more widely because the message of vine and vinegar is one of the most repeated items in the Jewish Messianic interpretations. It is always linked with the blessing of Jacob in Genesis 49th chapter.

Christian exegesis has considered Jacob's blessing messianically since the time of Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century. It mentions according to the Revised Standard Version in verses 1, 10 and 11 that *"I tell you what shall befall you in the days to come", "the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, untill he comes to whom it belongs; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Binding his foal to the vine and his ass's colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes."* The Jewish Messianic understanding of this text is founded on older material. **Targum Onqelos** says of Judah's sceptre that it will not depart *"until the Messiah comes, he who has the power to reign"*. **Targum Jonathan** puts it that the verse refers to *"the age of the Messiah-King, the King who will come as the youngest of his children"*. **Targum Yerushalmi** speaks of the *"time" when "the Messiah-King*

*will come*".

Ruth Rabbah uses three expressions in **b6** which all are related to the Messiah having also *an eschatological meaning*. The blessing of Jacob begins with a promise that he will tell what shall befall "in the last days" באחרית הימים. For the Rabbis anything to do with the End Times has a Messianic flavour to it. **RaDaK**, Rabbi David Kimḥi has reminded that *"everywhere the Last Days are mentioned reference is being made to the days of the Messiah."*<sup>128</sup>

The eschatological emphasis in Midrash Ruth is very strong indeed. It is therefore convenient to deal in this context with this item also. There is a word in the **Talmud**, that the prophets recorded out of the visions they received "only that which is needful for mankind", שהוצרכה לדורות.<sup>129</sup> Even **Midrash Rabbah** maintains that, "Jacob wished to reveal the end times, but they were hidden from him".<sup>130</sup> The Messianic idea is linked in Midrash Ruth and in other Jewish writings with this eschatological aspect.

And what significance does the image of "**vine**" have in the blessing of Jacob? **Talmud** and **Midrash Tanhuma** have devoted particular attention to the symbols of the donkey and the vine in this setting. The vine is most commonly understood to mean Israel, and the strange word here for 'donkey', עירה, 'his city', from the Hebrew עיר, in other words 'Jerusalem', where the Messiah is to arrive. Both of these words are also understood in their primary sense. When discussing the donkey, reference is made to Moses, "who took his wife and sons and put them on a donkey" (Ex.4:20) and likewise to the "*second Moses*", the Messiah, as "he is lowly and riding upon a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zech.9:9). Thus will the Messiah humble himself. This theme about the *second Redeemer*

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<sup>128</sup> **Mikraoth Gedoloth** in connection with Isaiah 2:2.

<sup>129</sup> See **Masechet Megillah** 14,a.

<sup>130</sup> **Midrash Bereshith Rabbah**, Par. 98.

appears strongly in Midrash Ruth too.

"**Our Rabbi Obadiah**"<sup>131</sup> describes Jacob's blessing as follows: "The Messiah will not come on a warhorse, for he is the King of Peace - On the other hand *'he will tether his donkey to a vine'*, which means that **his kingdom of peace** will reign in Israel, which is likened to a vine - And when it is made known that he comes in peace then will **the nations obey him** - And the weak, who are left behind, will hear him and return to him." In the **Talmud** it is said that *if someone dreams about a donkey, he may hope for the Messianic salvation*. It states also that, if someone *"dreams of a vine he may look forward to seeing the Messiah, for it is written: 'He will tether his donkey to a vine' "*.<sup>132</sup>

The Messiah depicted in Jacob's blessing is nevertheless **the Ruler of the nations**. We see in this a vision of a salvation which is *universal in its intent*. The Hebrew word for "ruler's staff", מַחֲקֵק, means literally "lawgiver" - this is linked in the above discussion with the Rabbinic emphasis that, "the Messiah will clearly elucidate the Torah". Then follows a shattering observation: "**Rabbi Hanin** (an Amora of the third generation in Israel about 290 - 320 AD.) *said that Israel will not require the teaching of the Messiah-King, because it is written in Isaiah 11:10 that 'In that day the Gentiles will rally to the root of Jesse', but not Israel.*"<sup>133</sup> In Midrash Ruth we can see similar signs of national disappointment and both the eternal and ecumenical aspects which are fulfilled in the Messianic banquet in the World to come.

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<sup>131</sup> **Mikraoth Gedoloth**, Sipureinu, the "explanation of Our Rabbi Obadiah", Amora of the fifth generation, active about 350 - 375 AD.

<sup>132</sup> **Berakhoth** 56a. The symbols of the donkey and the vine are further set in relief by the fact that in Aramaic both words are written exactly in the same way in the unpointed writing: hamara, 'donkey', and hamra, 'vine'. These Aramaic words do not, of course, appear in the Hebrew OT text.

<sup>133</sup> See **Midrash Bereshith Rabbah**, Par. 98.

The Jews have dreamed of the Messiah as a "*choice vine*", something which is brought out by the Hebrew word שֵׁרָקָה (Gen. 49:11), "a vine yielding purple grapes", the richest variety. The Messiah will cleanse his people with the "*blood of grapes*", an expression of vine which is used already in Ugaritic texts.<sup>134</sup> The "true vine" in John 15 can probably be related to the Blessing of Jacob. And all Israel will, on account of the blessing which Judah received, be called "Jews".<sup>135</sup>

The main thing, however, is that the Messiah will descend from Judah. Midrash Ruth Parashah VIII,1 emphasizes similarly the genealogy of the Messiah and so called "ladders of the kings". In this way Jacob's blessing already reflects all the shades of the Jewish Messianic expectation as if seen refracted through a prism. The Jewish mind is well versed in this kind of assosiative thinking. Our examples show at least that the concepts of vinegar and vine are related to the frame of Messianic reference.

## **V,5 Does Isaiah 53 speak of the personality of the Messiah?**

Parashah V in Midrash Ruth has in fact two astonishing features: the first one is the strong emphasis about the eternal nature of the Messianic meal; the second one relates to the use of the "Suffering Servant" in Isaiah 53.

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<sup>134</sup> **W.F. Albright**, The biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra, N.Y. 1963, p. 12.

<sup>135</sup> **Midrash Tanhuma**, Bereshith wayehi, 64.

**The key problem** here is in the expression of Midrash Ruth V,6 and its fifth interpretation about the Messianic nature of the words, "he was wounded because of our transgressions" והוא מחולל מפשעינו

The main question is whether this chapter speaks of an individual person or rather of a collective nation, Israel. It is mostly emphasized in the Jewish tradition that Isaiah 53 would be best interpreted **collectively**. The logical link with the collective understanding is mainly based on verse 8 in which we read: "*He was stricken for the transgression of my people*", מפשע עמי נגע למו . The Hebrew expression למו can be understood both in plural and in singular. The whole chapter presents however a contrast between him and us: "He was despised and rejected", "he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrow", "he was wounded for our transgressions" and "he was bruised for our iniquities" etc. If we interpret the word למו in plural, it would mean that Israel was "stricken" because of their own transgressions - a horrible thing which leads easily to side tracks!

The **first answer** to this hard nut to crack can be found *in the exegetical comparing of the oldest OT texts*. The Greek **Septuagint** offers only one alternative: απο των ανομιων του λαου μου ηχθη εις θανατον or "because of the iniquities of my people *he was led to death*". The text of Isaiah 53:8 in the Scrolls from **Qumran** Cave I is almost the same as the Masoretic one, מפשע עמו נוגע למו as the conventional text runs as follows: מפשע עמי נגע למו . The expression of "my people" is here in the form "*his people*" and the word "was stricken" is in the text of Qumran in the form נוגע or "*is stricken*" which means literally "*touches upon*" or "concerns" him. All the other corresponding verses in the Qumran text are speaking about "him" and "us" as is done in the Masoretic text.<sup>136</sup> May it be said

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<sup>136</sup> Appendix 5 and 6 show the Qumran and the Masoretic text as they are.

also that the English, German, French or Swedish translations are following the above interpretation.

The **second figure** of the Suffering Servant is linked with **Ephraim the son of Joseph**. In Jeremiah 31:9 and 20 he is called as "my first born" and "my darling child". He is seen in Jewish writings as a suffering Messiah. This item has to be dealt more closely not in order to solve the ultimate exegetical problem but rather in order to present the wide spectrum of thoughts which are concealed in this matter.

In the Jewish tradition the discussion about Ephraim the son of Joseph is always linked with Zechariah 12:9-14 and 13:6-7. We read there about him "whom they have pierced" and mourn for him, as one mourns for an only son - and they are asking, "what are these wounds" on your "back" (In Hebrew **בין ידיך**, "hands") . Regarding the words of Zechariah that "they will look upon me whom they have pierced", the Mikraoth Gedoloth explains that **RaSHI**, **RaDaK** and **Ibn Ezra** relate it to the Messiah son of Joseph, Ephraim. The Talmud agrees with this interpretation.<sup>137</sup> The story about Ephraim serves for the traditional understanding of the rabbis.<sup>138</sup>

The **Talmud** also contains a tradition regarding the history of this son of Joseph, according to which *the "sons" of Ephraim attempted prematurely to invade Canaan and met their deaths in the struggle*.<sup>139</sup> However, this Messiah, Ephraim the son of Joseph, did not suffer - he died in the battlefield. And the description of Isaiah

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<sup>137</sup> **Sukkah** 52b.

<sup>138</sup> Most scholars note that the first unambiguous mentions of this doctrine occur in Tannaitic passages of uncertain date as is done in **Sukkah 52a** or in **Pseudo-Jon. Ex. 40:11**. The genetic function of the doctrine is similarly unclear. Messiah ben Joseph has been mostly seen as a symbolic embodiment of the reunification with the ten tribes of Israel.

<sup>139</sup> See **Sanhedrin** 92b.

53 does not fit to it.<sup>140</sup>

The **third aspect** about the person of the Messiah in the earliest sources has been strongly disputed. **Joseph Klausner** has stated in his Hebrew edition about the Messianic Idea that *even though "we can find many prophecies from the prophetic age in which there are unquestionable references to the hoped-for deliverance, in all this there is not a single hint to a Messiah's person"*. After these words he, however, specified his claim saying that this concerns the time of Tannaim and that Christians tried to omit the national fulfilment of the Messianic expectation preserving only its spiritual nature. "The Tannaitic period did not even know the suffering Messiah", Klausner explains.<sup>141</sup> And when **G.H. Dalman** "made trouble" to show that the Suffering Messiah would be found also in the earlier phase of the Talmud, the origin of his sources were, according to Klausner, from the Amoraic era thereafter.<sup>142</sup>

Klausner dedicated only three pages to the Psalms quoting verses 14 to 17 from the Psalm 102. Even they did not hint to the person of the Messiah. Of the first century Rabbis he says that, *"they certainly believed in the possibility of a coming deliverance, but without any personal saviour"*. The concept of the "Son of Man" refers in his opinion only to the nation of Israel.<sup>143</sup> Klausner's attitudes were, however, a result of his being a supporter of "prophetic Zionism" represented by a Jewish philosopher Ahad Ha-

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<sup>140</sup> Regarding the words in Zechariah 12:9-14 and 13:6-7 often related to the Suffering Messiah that "they will look upon me whom they have pierced", **RaSHI, RaDaK and Ibn Ezra** say that it refers to the **Messiah Son of Joseph, Ephraim**. The Talmud agrees with this interpretation. Of the Suffering Servant's wounds "between the hands" **Ibn Ezra** says similarly that they are to be associated with the Messiah Son of Joseph. See **Talmud Sukkah** 52b.

<sup>141</sup> His Hebrew book about the Messianic Idea, p. 8.

<sup>142</sup> **Klausner** ib. p. 258 and **G.H. Dalman**, *Der leidende und sterbende Messias im ersten nachchristlichen Jahrtausend*, Berlin 1888, pp. 35-84.

<sup>143</sup> **Joseph Klausner**, *The Hebrew "Messianic Idea"* pp. 133-135 and 142.

Am, the leader of Hibbat Zion movement,<sup>144</sup> who anticipated the foundation of a prosperous welfare state on the earth. We shall revert to this subject later on in more detail when we deal with the claim about the Messianism without the person of the Messiah. The Targum and Midrash point always to the "Messiah-King" and not at all to some Messianic ideal, as we have already observed.

The Rabbinical interpretation about the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 as a nation has gradually received a commonly accepted and conventional nature. The Talmud itself does not speak in this context about the expiation of the sin by the Messiah.<sup>145</sup>

But what should we learn from the later Rabbinic sources which are considered legitimate and representative? We must remember that *in Jewish exegesis the later sources have often more weight than the earlier traditions although it must be argued by Talmudic sayings.* The old Jewish interpretation about the Messiah as Ephraim the son of Joseph or the people of Israel has become apparently a kind of "**evasive move**" to avoid the common Christian understanding.

Some of the Jewish scholars share the same impression of this delicate chapter. **Joel E. Rembaum** has an extensive article of the "Jewish Exegetical Tradition Regarding Isaiah 53" in which he openly deals with this matter. He is writing as follows:

"The commentators of the Middle Ages generally wrote comprehensive and systematic commentaries *on the complete Bible or on complete books or sections.* Thus, a commentary on

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<sup>144</sup> **Asher Hirsch Ginsberg**, 1856 - 1927; see *Judaica* II, 440 - 448.

<sup>145</sup> See **Lapide Pinchas E.**, *Jesus in Israeli School Books*, *Journal of Ecum. Stud.* X, 1973. The educational text-books in Israeli school-system present this popular explanation that Isaiah 53 speaks of the people of Israel, who have suffered on behalf of the other nations in order to atone for their sins. The prescriptions for the atoning sacrifices state however that the offering ought to be without blemish.

the book of Isaiah would automatically include a treatment of chapter 53. The non-legal midrashic works of the rabbinic period which were primarily oriented toward homiletical purposes, were not as focused as the medieval works, and were hardly systematic. The only complete interpretation of the Servant passage to come from the talmudic age is the Aramaic Pseudo-Jonathan translation. Here, too, the completeness is a function of the literary genre. Most of the ancient Jewish sources treat *selected segments of Isaiah 53* and reflect no interest in seeking a unifying concept for the entire passage." --- *"It is reasonable to view this relative silence as a form of Jewish self-censorship in the face of the Christian emphasis on the Christological meaning of such passages and as an attempt to control Messianic movements and speculation among Jews."* --- (See Efraim Elimelech Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975, 649-692). *"However, Urbach demonstrates how complex the rabbinic reaction to Messianic speculations was and how an anti-Christian polemical motive cannot be assumed to be an ever-present factor in the rabbinic thinking on this matter."*<sup>146</sup>

Isaiah 52:13-15 contains the most shocking paradox in the whole history of redemption: "See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him - his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness - so will he sprinkle many nations."

The **Targum** comments on this verse, saying that *"this is how my servant the Messiah will act wisely"*. On the other hand however it interprets the following verses as meaning Israel. The **Midrash Tanhuma** from the ninth century and the later **Yalkut Shimeoni** say that *"this is the King, the Messiah, who will rise and be greatly exalted, higher than Abraham, greater than Moses, above the*

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<sup>146</sup> **Rembaum Joel E.**, *The Development of a Jewish Exegetical Tradition Regarding Isaiah 53*, University of Judaism, HTR 75:3, 1982, p. 291. Let it be reminded also that **Urbach** is considered as an expert in methodological studies.

worshipping angels." **RaDaK** for his part concludes that *"this chapter depicts Israel in its dispersion"*. **Rabbi Elia de Vidas**, who was active in Safed in Palestine in the 16th century, says: *"Thus the Messiah suffered on account of our sins, and was wounded; He who does not wish the Messiah to be wounded for our transgressions may choose himself to suffer and carry his own sins."*<sup>147</sup>

The well-known **Rabbi Moses Alshekh** who was also living in Safed in the late 16th century wrote on Isaiah 53: *"Our ancient Sages have preserved for us the witness of tradition that this refers to the Messiah. For this reason we too, following them, should consider the subject of this prophecy to be David, the Messiah, who will appear in this way."*<sup>148</sup> In this sense however the rabbinic exegesis of various periods does not have a real consensus.

### V,5,1 Isaiah 53 in the Talmud

**The Talmud** also touches indirectly upon Isaiah 53. **The Masechet Sanhedrin** 97b ponders over when the Son of David is to come:<sup>149</sup>

The Messiah will come only in a generation which is either "totally righteous or totally sinful". If Israel is not righteous he "will come in poverty, riding on a donkey". And "Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi (220-250 A.D.) saw Elijah at the mouth of the cave of Rabbi Shimeon Ben Jochai and said to him (to Elijah, who knows the Messianic secrets), *"Will I get into the World to come?"* "If this Lord grants it," Elijah answered. Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi said, "I see two and heard a third voice. *When will the Messiah come?"* he asked again. "Go and ask of

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<sup>147</sup> See e.g. **A. Lukyn Williams**, *Christian Evidences*, pp. 169 - 172 and **Dalman**, *Der leidende und sterbende Messias*, pp. 35 - 39.

<sup>148</sup> **Alexander McCaul**, the Hebrew article on Isaiah 53, London 1899, p. 22.

<sup>149</sup> **Sanhedrin** 97b.

him yourself", Elijah answered. At that Rabbi Yehoshua asked, "Where does he dwell?" "At the Roman Gate!" "And what is the sign by which he may be known?" "He will be sitting with the poor and the sick, and all those whom he frees he binds at the same time; he will free one and he will bind the other."

**RaSHI** says of this strange conversation that the "Roman gate" means the so-called Paradise gate - probably a reflection of the fact that the Rabbis called *sheol*, *the Hades*, as "*Paradise*" and "*Abraham's bosom*".

When we deal with the Messianic expectation in Midrash Ruth, it is important to do "mindmapping" and see the *topos* of Isaiah 53 in its wide spectrum. **Sanhedrin** 97b is probably the only section in Talmud which combines the Suffering Servant of the Lord directly to the person of the Messiah. According to Isaiah 53:4 the word "*nagua*" נָגַע or "*stricken*" has led to the well known cryptic name of the Messiah, the "*Hivrah*" or "*leper*". There is a special section in the Talmud, *negaim*, concerned with the identification and isolation of leprosy. The Aramaic word *Hivrah* originally meant "white" and then later "leper", as this terrifying disease at a certain stage in its development forms something like a white film on the skin. As the Messiah, *Hivrah* identifies with the fate of the sick person.

On the pages which follow the **Masechet Sanhedrin** carries on this discussion. First the question is posed as to what should a man do to escape from the "*Messianic sufferings*". This concept חבלי המשיח does not inevitable mean "the sufferings of the Messiah" - it only tells us that *the believer is sharing a kind of Messianic birth pangs* when the kingdom of God comes upon the earth. According to Midrash Ruth we are hastening the days of the Messiah by reading the Torah and by mercy.

The very fact that the Messianic expectation of the earliest Midrashim and the Talmud associates it with chapter 53 of Isaiah, witnesses in any case to its Messianic character. It does not

necessarily relate to the person of the Messiah nor to his sufferings. But it always has a Messianic "feel" to it. No wonder that Midrash Ruth speaks of it also in connection with the Messianic banquet.

### V,5,2 Isaiah 53 in the Zohar tradition related to Midrash

The Zohar tradition, which is one of the comparatively less censored Rabbinic sources, offers its own material on the Messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53. **According to the Zohar**, the Messiah owned a little hut in the Garden of Eden called the "bird's nest", and when he lifted up his eyes and saw that "the patriarchs entered into the Temple of God, which had been destroyed" and that "Rachel had tears on her cheeks", *"then he raised his voice and wept so much that the Garden shook and all the Righteous who were there with him lamented and wept with him"*.<sup>150</sup> The mention of Paradise may well here too refer to the realm of death.

Related to the "Paradise" there is also a discussion in **Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah, Par. 12** of the fact that at the same time as Israel was building the Temple, *the Holy One commanded his angels to make "a booth in Paradise for the youth whose name is Metatron, so that he might transmit the souls of the Righteous to God in order to atone for the sins of Israel committed in their dispersal"*.<sup>151</sup> We shall discuss the subject of Metatron in **Midrash Ruth** when we deal with the Messiah who "seals" our deeds in his book.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> See **Zohar**, Jerusalem 1970, the "Sullam" exposition, Vol. IV, "on the Messiah's coming", p. 36.

<sup>151</sup> **Bamidbar Rabbah** Par. 12.

<sup>152</sup> The concept Metatron does not appear in the Messianic parashiyoth of Midrash Ruth as such, but it is mentioned repeatedly in connection with the heavenly scribe in the respective Jewish literature.

The Zohar is not a pure tradition from the first Christian centuries. However it received a place of honour beside the Talmud in both Eastern and Western Judaism. It mirrors the inner movements in the heart of Judaism. We shall see in addition a long quotation affiliated to this subject. One of the **Zohar's** thoughts on Isaiah 53 speaks about the Messiah as follows:

"The departed souls will arrive and tell the Messiah (about their lives), and when they describe to him the sufferings which Israel is undergoing in her dispersion, that they are guilty because they do not wish to know their Lord, he will raise up his voice and weep on behalf of those who are guilty of this, as it is written: *'He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.'* And then those souls will rise and stand up in their posts. There is a castle in the Garden which is called the *'house of the sick'*. In that day the Messiah will enter into that castle and will shout, *'May all the sickness and pains of Israel come upon me!'* and they will come. *If he did not relieve Israel's pains and take them upon himself, no-one would be able to suffer on behalf of Israel's oppression, of which it is written in the Torah: And it is written: 'In truth he did bear our sicknesses'.*"<sup>153</sup>

As we can see, both the Zohar as well as the Talmud are depicting the Messiah as a pre-existent figure who shares and carries the sufferings and even the sins of Israel in her dispersion.

The Soncino translation of the Zohar from **Section 2, page 212a**

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<sup>153</sup> See **Zohar**, Amsterdam Ed., Shemoth, p. 98. In the Hebrew version of the Zohar with the "**Sullam**" exposition given out by the Research Centre of Kabbalah in New York there are about 9 pages related to the coming of the Messiah in **Section 2 Shemoth 8a**, and it is also expounding closer the "bird's nest" or "the house of the sick" and the weeping of the Messiah. The above long discussion in the text is to be found almost verbatim in **Section 2 Shemoth 212a**. Both these descriptions are given by Rabbi **Simeon** and his son **Eleasar** who are considered the main teachers in the Zohar and were active **in the Tannaitic period between 150 and 200 A.D.**

uses in its interpretation about Isaiah 53 the word "expiation": *"There he calls for all the diseases and pains and sufferings of Israel, bidding them settle on himself, which they do. And were it not that he thus eases the burden from Israel, taking it on himself, no one could endure the sufferings meted out to Israel in **expiation** on account of their neglect of the Torah. So Scripture says; 'Surely our diseases he did bear'."*

The key words in the Zohar are stating after this description according to the Soncino translation as follows: *"As long as Israel were in the Holy Land, **by means of the Temple service** and sacrifices they averted all evil diseases and afflictions from the world. **Now it is the Messiah** who is the means of averting them from mankind until the time when a man quits this world and receives his punishment."*<sup>154</sup> The New Testament frequently interprets Isaiah 53 as referring to Jesus.<sup>155</sup> This seems to indicate that this chapter was treated Messianically at least by some Jews at the time when the New Testament was written.

Isaiah 53 is of course quoted in the Zohar also without mentioning the word Messiah. **Section I, page 140a** tells that *"God finds delight in the righteous, He brings upon them sufferings, as it is written: 'Yet it pleased the Lord to crush him by disease' (53:10)."* The discussion after this speaks of *"the supernal soul", "supernal essences" and "supernal symbolism"*, concepts which appear in the discussion about the "meal of the Messiah".

In the **Section III, page 218a** there is also a similar observation: *"When God desires to give healing to the world **He smites one righteous man among them** with disease and suffering, and through him gives healing to all, as it is written, 'But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities*

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<sup>154</sup> **Soncino Zohar**, Shemoth, Section 2, Page 212a.

<sup>155</sup> See eg. Matthew 8:17, Luke 22:37, Acts 8:32 or 1 Peter 2:22-25.

*and with his stripes we are healed' (Isaiah 53:5)."*<sup>156</sup>

All this indicates that the Suffering Servant points in the Jewish literature both to the nation of Israel, to the person of the Messiah and to the lot of the righteous man in this world.<sup>157</sup>

As we noted earlier both RaSHI, RaDaK and Ibn Ezra related chapter 53 of Isaiah to the Messiah, the son of Joseph, Ephraim. In fact, although **RaSHI**, Rabbi Solomon Yitzhaki (1040-1105), applied the Suffering Servant of the Lord to the Jewish nation, there were also other modes of interpretation among the Sages. The explanation of RaSHI was rejected as unsatisfactory by **Maimonides**, who lived between 1135 and 1204 and is still regarded by Jews as of highest authority. According to **R. Mosheh Cohen Iben Crispin** of Cordoba (fourteenth century) RaSHI "*distorted the passage from its natural meaning*" and in truth it was given of God as a description of the Messiah himself. In this interpretation "*the doors of the literal interpretation of this Parashah were shut in their face*".<sup>158</sup>

The natural meaning and the literal interpretation of Isaiah 53 seem to indicate that the chapter would be best understood in its wider

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<sup>156</sup> **Zohar, Bereshith**, Section 1, Page 140a and **Bamidbar**, Section 3, Page 218a.

<sup>157</sup> Even the **Wisdom of Solomon** speaks about the afflictions of a righteous man having some similar expressions with Isaiah 53, although not so much in its Hebrew translation - it has however no verbal quotations of the chapter. In our study we are dealing with clear references which are verbatim linked with the passages of Isaiah 53 and the wording in Midrash Ruth. The righteous man in the Wisdom of Solomon in **chapters 3 to 5** is suffering and mocked (5:3-5) but he reaches an old age while he "matured early" according to the text (4:13-14). These chapters resemble also the language of Psalm 2 or 22. In Psalm 2:7 e.g. **אך אלוהים ישחק למו** resembles W.S. 4:19 saying **אך אלוהים ישחק למו**. This is to be found in **כתובות אחרונים** published by **B. Kohen** year 1927 in Berlin pp. 46-58. See also **A. Laato**, A Star is rising pp. 336-337 and 343.

<sup>158</sup> **David Baron**, The Servant of Jehovah, p. 13.

context. In this light it is also not self-evident, that Isaiah 53 would in Jewish self-understanding speak only about the nation of Israel.

### V,5,3 Isaiah 53 in Jewish prayer literature

On the Great Day of Atonement the Jew feels that his sins must be forgiven before God. On that day even Isaiah 53 is sometimes mentioned. Although Isaiah 53 has been omitted from the annual reading of the prophets, so called *haphtaroth*, it appears in a remarkable prayer which is read in the Synagogue.<sup>159</sup> **The separate prayerbook** for the feast days, the **Mahzor Rabbah**, contains a literary prayer by **Rabbi Eleazar Qalir** which may be from the ninth or even from the sixth century AD.<sup>160</sup>

The prayer begins poetically: "At that time, before the creation, he already set up the oasis and the Yinnon" - the word 'oasis' נה refers to the Temple, and 'Yinnon' ינן to the Branch, the Messiah (Psalm 72:17 in Hebrew). The main body of the prayer reads as follows:

"Then, before the creation, he already set up the Temple and the Messiah (the Rabbis' interpretation) - the *Messiah our Righteousness* has turned away from us, we are shaken, and can find no-one who can *justify* us. The yoke of our sins and our transgressions is a burden to us; and *he was wounded for our transgressions, he suffered on his shoulders our iniquities*; there is forgiveness for our sins. *In his wounds we are healed*; it is time to create for ever a *new creation*. *Send him back from the circles*, bring him back from Seir, so that we might hear him in Lebanon a second time through Yinnon. He is our God, our

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<sup>159</sup> In **Yalkut Makhiri** to Isaiah 53 there is a note in brackets that "here is missing a little of the matter" relating to the verses between 52:13 to 53:12. See also appendix 6 in the end.

<sup>160</sup> This was the conclusion of **Aharon Mirsk** who, in his Hebrew book *Reshith ha-piut*, Jerusalem 1968, p. 87 places him in the 6th cent. AD.

Father, our King, he is our Saviour and he will liberate and redeem us for *a second time* and let us hear of his grace *a second time* in everyone's sight, as it is said: 'I will save you at the end as at the beginning so that I will be your God.'<sup>161</sup>

This prayer, which is couched in somewhat enigmatic language, says that the "**Messiah Our Righteousness**" has turned away from his people. Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon combines this Messiah-term with the Son of Man concept.<sup>162</sup> Although the person praying is shaken, he recognises that the Messiah has already carried his burdens. Therefore forgiveness is to be found through the fulfilment of Isaiah 53. In this way a "*new creation*" is effected. The "*circle*" idea is set out by the prayerbook itself as meaning "*the circles of the earth*". "*Seir*" is a secret name for Rome, the centre of Christianity, and in which, according to the Talmud, the Messiah sits "with the poor and the sick". "*Lebanon*" means the Temple, which "*whitens*" the people's sins by their sacrifices, as its root *laban* is the equivalent of "*white*". The one praying repeats that God will save his people a "*second time*". The whole prayer is best understood as "*ipso facto*".

There is a danger to insist that the prayer of Eleazar Qalir would be a clear allusion that Isaiah 53 would relate in a hidden way to the Christian understanding of the expiatory death of Jesus as the Messiah. We don't however know for sure what the poet of this old belletristic "piyyut" (Heb. פיוט) had in mind. It only assures that the message of the Suffering servant in Isaiah has been understood in the Jewish selfunderstanding as a Messianic prophecy.

#### V,5.4 Reflections on Isaiah 53 in the Middle Ages

There is in fact a lot of discussions about the Suffering Servant of

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<sup>161</sup> **Mahzor Rabbah** for the Great Day of Atonement, Eshkol Ed. p. 330. The form of the words is that of the Sephardic prayers.

<sup>162</sup> **Mikraoth Gedoloth** on Daniel 7:13.

the Lord in old Jewish sources which are not well known for Christian theologians. We mentioned at the beginning of this chapter the words of the famous **Moses Alshekh** that, on the grounds of the "witness of tradition" it is right to see the Messiah in the Suffering Servant of the Lord. He added further as follows:

"There are sufferings which are the result of sin and others which arise from love (יסורי אהבה המה), when a *righteous man* suffers for the sins of his generation - and here the innocent righteous man, who has committed no sin, is forced to carry the sins of all the evildoers, so that they might rejoice but he will be filled with sorrow, they will be preserved in health but he will be crushed and stricken - and *this testifies to the Messiah-King*, who will suffer for the sins of the children of Israel, and his reward will be with him as it is written in Isaiah 62:11"<sup>163</sup>

Our research includes as we have said always both hermeneutical and even "*informative*" approaches, and we are trying to cover the entire expanse of Jewish thinking in each matter. Only thereafter it is possible to make a relevant "linkage" to its "topos" in Midrash Ruth. If we follow the whole arsenal of normative Jewish sources it seems to signify that there is a notable reason to believe that Isaiah 53 speaks also of the person of the suffering Servant of the Lord although it does not always have the same emphasis as the Christian conventional theology has given to it.

**As a conclusion** for the above subject there are some important observations which give background on the discussions about the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. **Sanhedrin** 43a relates the tradition about Yeshu to **R. Abbaye**, an *Amora of the second generation* between 250 and 290 C.E.<sup>164</sup> It mentions twice that Jesus was hanged "on the eve of Passover". The Zohar combines Isaiah 53 to

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<sup>163</sup> See **Alexander McCaul**'s article published in Hebrew on Isaiah 53, London 1899, p. 22.

<sup>164</sup> **Sanhedrin** 43a and **Kjær-Hansen Kai**, *Studier i navnet Jesus* pp. 163, 191.

the person of the Messiah by two noted Rabbis **Simeon Bar Yohai** and his son **Eleasar** *from the Tannaitic period* between 150 and 200 C.E. **Simeon** or simply **Yohai** was the student of the outstanding Tanna Rabbi **Akiba** before 135 C.E.<sup>165</sup> In this sense they built in many things a commonly accepted tradition. The Rabbinic Messianic expectation has however often a wider span of thoughts than the commonly accepted interpretation gives to understand.

The explanation of RaSHI that Isaiah 53 would speak mainly about the Jewish people was rejected as unsatisfactory already by **Maimonides**. The various expositions of Isaiah 53 are mostly related to the Messiah as a person having often a twofold vision. **The Targum of Canticles** 4:5 and 7:4 for instance speaks typically twice about the "*two deliverer, the Messiah Son of David and the Messiah Son of Ephraim who resemble דמין Moses and Aaron*".<sup>166</sup> This reminds to us also the message of the two "Redeemers" in Midrash Ruth.

According to **R. Mosheh Cohen Iben Crispin** RaSHI "*distorted the passage from its natural meaning*" as in truth it was given of God as a description of the Messiah himself. In the interpretation of RaSHI "*the doors of the literal interpretation of this Parashah were shut*". Midrash Ruth does not fully solve this problem - it only relates the vinegar in the Messianic meal to the sufferings portrayed in the prophecy of Isaiah 53:5.

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<sup>165</sup> **Safrai** emphasized that the rabbis prided themselves on the accuracy of their transmission. If the tradition is attributed to a certain rabbi בשם אמרו there is mostly no justified reason to suspect its reliability. This concerns also the Zohar tradition of Isaiah 53. See pp. 40-41.

<sup>166</sup> **The Targum of Canticles** 4:5 and 7:4.

## V,6 To be "satisfied" ותשבע linked with eating "in the Messianic age" אוכל לימות המשיח

In order to observe the weight and the topical position of the Messianic meal in Midrash Ruth there is a need to show how the concept "to be satisfied" is located in proportion to the whole.

### V,6,1 A conceptual analysis of "eating to the days of the Messiah"

b The Bible word	The interpretation
6. And she did eat ותאכל	eating in this world אוכל בעוה"ז
and was satisfied ותשבע	eats in the Messianic age אוכל לימות המשיח
and left thereof ותותר	he will eat in the World to come אוכל לעוה"ב

These words in our pattern **b6** reveal also in a condensed way the meaning of the words "to be satisfied". All the **four** instances of **a,1-4** related to the kings are adding this threefold pattern of **b6**. In this sense it would be "*the meal of the king*". **A,5** to **6** which are introducing the eschatological figure of the Messiah and his ancestor Boaz are not speaking of the Messianic meal in eternity at all. Instead of using the pattern **b6** the Messiah section **a5** hints to the *former and future Redeemer* and *manna* which the Holy One "will rain down" upon his people. And **a6** mentions Boaz and the *future blessing* which will be "*in the stomach of that righteous woman*", Ruth. The **satisfaction and the final fulfilment** will be as a whole "in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come". The consistent biblical phrase ותאכל ותשבע ותותר, AND SHE DID EAT AND WAS SATISFIED AND LEFT THEREOF, is lacking in the Messiah section **a5** but it is mentioned twice in the

section of Boaz - appearing thus **six** times all together. In this way we can visualize in our analysis the message of Midrash Ruth "from the parts to the whole and from the whole to the parts" seeing the inner interplay approximately as it happens in the fifth principle of Rabbi Hillel, **כלל ופרט ופרט וכלל**.

The full Hebrew expression **אוכל בעוה"ז אוכל לימות המשיח אוכל לעוה"ב**, "he eats in this world, and **in the Messianic age**, and in the World to Come" has a peculiar nuance. Literally it would mean eating "to the days of the Messiah". The prefix "le" (ל) has about ten various applications, such as e.g. "to", "for", "in honour of" or it simply reveals a possessive case. This genitive form would mostly emphasize that the eating in the Messianic banquet would be done "in honour of the Messiah" - it is in this sense the "**meal of the Messiah**".<sup>167</sup>

The parallels about this world and the World to come are unambiguous. But why does Midrash Ruth speak of the eating "in the Messianic age"? Does this mean **a special era in salvation history** in its Jewish frame of reference? The answer might lie in some Jewish commonly accepted sources. We dedicate special space to this question.

## V,6,2 The tradition of Elijah and the Messianic age

The Jewish aspect of the salvation history is defined best in "*the tradition of Elijah*". It is described, as we have noticed already very

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<sup>167</sup> The **Medieval legends** also speak of a Messianic banquet where the pious will be entertained by God; and the sun, the moon and the stars are dancing with Him as they are eating the meat of Leviathan and the Behemoth.. This feast was celebrated by the followers of Sabbatai Zevi (died 1676) **at the outgoing of the Sabbath** and by Habad Hasidim in the end of 18th century **on the seventh eve** of the Passover. Midrash Ruth however has no traces of such legends. See **Raphael Patai**, *The Messiah Texts*, pp. 235-246, Detroit 1979.

briefly, in Talmud **Sanhedrin** 97a and 98b. According to the tradition of Elijah, the Messiah ought to have come after the 2000 years of the dominion of the Law, "but on account of our sins, which were great, things turned out as they did". We shall quote the whole discussion according to the Soncino translation. It begins with the words:

"R. Johanan (appr. 250-290 A.D.) said: *in the generation when the son of David (i.e., Messiah) will come, scholars will be few in number ...* Our Rabbis taught: in the seventh 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; in the second, the arrows of hunger will be sent forth; in the third, a great famine, in the course of which men, women, and children, pious men and saints will die, *and the Torah will be forgotten by its students*; in the fourth, partial plenty; 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; in the seventh, wars; and *at the conclusion of the septennate the son of David will come.*"

**Midrash Ruth** seems to be aware of the problem that the diminishing of the scholars and the rejection of the Torah are a serious sign of the latter days and is forecasting the coming of the Messiah. The Talmud and especially the later Midrashim speak in this context about "the footsteps of the Anointed one" **עקבות משיחא**.<sup>168</sup> In the above pages of Talmud Sanhedrin we read further:

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<sup>168</sup> The expression **חרפו עקבות משיחך** is taken from Psalm 89:52. **David Altschüler** tells in **Metsudat David** that the verse describes people who "reproach" the "footsteps of the Anointed One", the Messiah, because he "is delayed or is not coming at all". **Metsudat David** is to be found in **Mikraoth Gedoloth**. The Hebrew collection "**Bet ha-Midrasch**" of **Adolf Jellinek** comprises many medieval stories of the coming of the Messiah and his "footsteps" such as **לך טוב לר' שמעון בן יוחי, לקח טוב לר' אבות המשיח, ספר אליהו ופרקי משיח ונסתרות ר' שמעון בן יוחי, לקח טוב לר' אבות המשיח**; טוביה בר אליעזר על ברכת יעקב אבינו או מלחמות מלך המשיח; This collection has five parts and it is printed by Wahrmann in Jerusalem 1967.

"Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord, wherewith they have reproached *the footsteps of thine anointed*. It has been taught, R. Judah said: in the generation when the son of David comes, the house of assembly will be for harlots, Galilee in ruins, Gablan lie desolate, the border inhabitants wander about from city to city, receiving no hospitality, *the wisdom of scribes in disfavor*, God-fearing men despised, people be dog-faced, and truth entirely lacking, as it is written, Yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey. What is meant by 'yea, truth faileth'? - The Scholars of the School of Rab said: This teaches that it will split up into separate groups and depart. What is the meaning of 'and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey'? - The School of R. Shila said: He who departs from evil will be dubbed a fool by his fellow-men."

"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, the vine yield its fruit, yet shall wine be dear, and *the Kingdom will be converted to heresy* (שתתהפך כל המלכות למינות) <sup>169</sup> 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*."

"Our Rabbis taught: For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself of his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone (Deut. 32:36), and there is none shut up, or left: the *son of*

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<sup>169</sup> The Soncino translation explains these words in **Sanhedrin** 97a, that this "minuth" or "heresy" means here "the belief of the heretics" and that "this statement is a remarkable forecast of **R. Nehemia** (150 C.E.) of the conversion of Rome to Christianity under Constantin the Great in 313 C.E."

*David will not come until* denunciators are in abundance. Another interpretation (of their power is gone): *until scholars are few*. Another interpretation: until the last perutah (coin) 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 has 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: Messiah, a found article and a scorpion."

The discussion in Talmud Sanhedrin concludes with a remark to the salvation history saying: *"The Tanna debe Eliyahu teaches: The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; two thousand years the Torah flourished; and the next two thousand years is the Messianic era."*

According to Rabbis, this does not mean that the Torah should cease in the Messianic period, but it is mentioned merely in order to *distinguish it from the former one*. They explain that the Messiah will come within that period whatever it does mean.

When we understand the redemption history as different eras, the way the Sages are doing above, we can interpret mentions of the 2000 years of the Torah and the 2000 years associated with the days of the Messiah as more or less mutually exclusive - which is how **Joseph Klausner** understood it. In his book "The Messianic Idea in Israel", he explains that, *"the natural interpretation of this is that in the days of the Messiah, the Torah and the Commandments will lose their significance"*.<sup>170</sup> This would mean that in the Messianic age the Torah is not valid for salvation in the same way as earlier. The Messianic era will have its own Messianic laws. This is apparent in the light of the Talmud and some other sources.

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<sup>170</sup> **Joseph Klausner** in his Hebrew *Ha-ra'ayon ha-Meshihi be-Israel*, p. 289.

### V,6,3 The fate of the Torah in the Messianic age

However, the ancient Sages reject on the one hand the idea that the injunctions received from their fathers will cease to be valid, yet on the other hand they sometimes stress that the Messiah will give Israel a new Torah. **RaMBaM** states in the 8th and 9th of his 13 principles that the *"Torah which we now have, was given to Moses"* and *"This Torah will not be changed nor will the Creator - may he be blessed - institute any other Torah"*. He nevertheless explains in his work "Ordinances of the Kings" that the King anointed as Messiah will *"sit on his kingly throne and write for himself a Book of the Law in addition to the Law given to our Fathers"* and *"He will compel Israel to obey these commandments"*. Not even the NT speaks of the abrogation of the Torah but rather of its "fulfilment".<sup>171</sup> Could this mean the same as the words in **Pesikta Rabbati**<sup>172</sup> when it explains that *"The Torah will revert to its original state"*?

According to the Rabbis, the Messiah will be invested with such authority. **Yalkut Isaiah** states that, *"The Holy One - may he be blessed - will sit (in the Garden of Eden) and draw up a new Torah for Israel, which will be given to them by the Messiah."*<sup>173</sup> Even the fearful thought of "abrogation" appears in the traditions of the Wise: *"In the future the commandments will be annulled."*<sup>174</sup> In the **Midrash Mekhilta** from the time of the Tannaites - that is, from the first two Christian centuries - we find the statement that, *"At the end the Torah will be forgotten"*.<sup>175</sup> **R. Shimon Ben Eleazar**, who was

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<sup>171</sup> **Ha-RaMBaM**, Hilkhot Melakhim, XI and XII.

<sup>172</sup> **Pesikta Rabbati** 89,6.

<sup>173</sup> **Yalkut Isaiah** 26, siman 296.

<sup>174</sup> **Nidah** 61b.

<sup>175</sup> **Mekhilta**, Mash., piska 2. A halakhic Midrash of R. Simeon Ben Yoḥai.

active from ca. 170-200 AD, declares that, *"This is how it will be in the days of the Messiah; there will be no 'thou shalt' and 'thou shalt not' commandments (לא זכות ולא חובה)."*<sup>176</sup>

Midrash Ruth differs from the common Rabbinic discussions in this matter. It is at pains to speak of the "moral conduct" of the people, of the "good deeds" and of "the reward of those who do deeds of kindness". It omits however totally the practical halakhic ordinances and the potential fate of the Torah in the Messianic age as would have been expected of the compiler of the Midrash.

**RaMBaM** insists upon the natural character of the Messianic age in his booklet *Hilkhoth Melakhim XII*. He writes:

"Do not entertain the idea that the natural course of this world will change in the days of the Messiah, or that the laws of nature will be suspended then. No. The world will follow its own course" - העולם כמנהגו נוהג .

This would seem to imply that **the Messianic age ימי המשיח will be quite normal history** in which the Messiah will govern by his statutes which he has himself constituted. The Sages could hardly have meant that the Messiah would live for these 2000 years. Isaiah's prophecy about peace on Earth in which even the physical world will be renewed and where "the wolf will live with the lamb" (Is. 11:6) may, according to the Sages, apply to the 1000 year "shabbath". This picture of **a sabbatical age**, of which we catch glimpses now and then in the Rabbinic literature, brings to mind the vision of the millennial kingdom in Revelation chapter 20, where the phrase "1000 years" appears six times.

All this abstruse Rabbinical exposition shows that our saying in **b6** concerning the **Messianic age must be already adjusted also to**

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<sup>176</sup> **Shabbath** 130,a-b.

**the Messianic meal.** The descendants of Ruth and Boaz are satisfied of the blessing in the Messiah and they partake the Messianic banquet "in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in the World to come".

#### V,6,4 The interplay between לעייל and בעוה"ב

The minor differences in the abbreviations of pattern **b6** express apparently one and the same thing. Both expressions appear commonly in the Jewish literature. The first meaning of לעייל or לעתיד לבוא expressed here only in the context with David signifies exactly "him who is coming in the future" and the second expression בעוה"ב or בעולם הבא means "in the World to come". Often the phrase לעייל relates simply to the Messiah, him "who is coming in the future" - and that way it is mostly understood by the Sages. Thus the eating "for him who is coming in the future" and eating "in the World to come" has practically the same semantic meaning.

The above concepts belong to the interpretation for the word "and left thereof" or ותתר . In the book of Ruth II,14 even this expression is linked with the "satisfaction": SHE DID EAT AND WAS SATISFIED AND LEFT THEREOF . But what does this loose phrase mean and what are its other "leading points" in our internal inspection in the light of the message in Midrash Ruth?

**b,6,3** The Bible word

The interpretation

ותתר	and left thereof	"for the Coming one" or "in the World to come" לעייל או עוה"ב
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To put it short this would mean that even the "leftovers" of the Messianic banquet are satisfying the participants later on. In the Christian Church there was an old custom that the deacons brought

the leftovers of the Holy Communion for those who were of some reason absent from the ceremony.<sup>177</sup> The fulfilment which is left of the Messianic banquet will however come finally true "in the World to come".

## V,7 The first and the last Redeemer

### הגואל הראשון והגואל האחרון

The message about "the first Redeemer" Moses and "the last Redeemer" the Messiah will be more relevant if we look to the fifth section **a5**. It mentions repeatedly as follows:

**The last Redeemer will be like the first Redeemer.** Just as the first Redeemer **revealed** himself, **returned** and was **hidden** from them - so the last Redeemer will be **revealed** to them, and **then be hidden** from them. - And how long will he be hidden?

כגואל הראשון כך גואל האחרון. מה הגואל הראשון נגלה וחזר ונכסה מהן - אך גואל אחרון נגלה להם וחזר ונכסה מהם

The Messianic concept has created its own figurative language. One of the most frequently used parallels is the likeness of the Messiah to *the "first Saviour", Moses and the last Saviour, the Messiah*. Amongst Christians a similar parallelism appears as early as in Jesus' statement that, "If you believed Moses you would believe me, because he wrote about me" (John 5:46). Those who listened to him sometimes exclaimed, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and about whom the prophets also wrote" (John 1:45). When speaking of the Messiah, Christian

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<sup>177</sup> **Justin the Martyr** mentions it in Apology I,65. See also **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, London 1994, sect. 1336.

theologians sometimes use the concept *Moses redivivus*, 'Moses who was brought back to life', or the 'new' Moses. This notion is derived from a verse to which both Peter and Stephen refer in the Acts of the Apostles (3:22 and 7:37). There they quote the fundamental verses related to this concealed question:

In Deut. 18:15 and 18-19 it is stated: "*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him - 'I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth - If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.'*"

### **V,7,1 The Rabbinic exposition of these concepts**

The prophecy above emphasizes the fact that the promised prophet will speak in the name of God and with his authority. Most of the Jewish commentaries reckon that reference is being made here to Joshua the son of Nun or to the 'prophet of the nations', Jeremiah. It seems, however, more reasonable to consider, as **Rabbi Levi Ben Gershom**<sup>178</sup> has said, that these verses speak of the Messiah:

"Truly, the Messiah is such a prophet, as the Midrash states, 'Behold, my servant will prosper'(Is. 52:13) - By means of the miracles he performed Moses succeeded in getting only one nation to serve God, but the Messiah will cause all the peoples on earth to serve him."<sup>179</sup>

**Targum Jonathan** attaches an interpretation to this verse which is worthy of consideration also in the context with Midrash Ruth:

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<sup>178</sup> **Levi Ben Gershom**, 1288-1344, is known by his acronym RaLBaG and of his many commentaries on the O.T. Scriptures.

<sup>179</sup> **David L. Cooper**, *The Messiah, His Redemptive Career*, p. 15.



"future" is very logical indeed. If there are various periods in the history of salvation it would fit well to this context. It reflects also the eschatological nature of Midrash Ruth.

## V,8 "The kingdom taken from him for a time", נוצדה ממנו המלכות לשעה

The internal structure and its small units uncover often the relevance of the whole theme. When we speak of the odd expressions in its various forms about the kingdom "taken" or "reprived" from the Messiah "for a time" we enter into a concealed realm of the Messianic mystery. Let us therefore see the various patterns of this matter in Midrash Ruth.

### V,8,1 The potential denial of the Messiah for a time

We have seen that the national disappointment in Ruth Rabbah I,1 reflects the moral conduct of the people in their dispersion. It has aroused suspicion whether the situation will ever be restored. Our Midrash gives its own answer to the problem. It interprets it as follows:

she sat beside the reapers ותשב מצד הקוצרים	the kingdom <b>taken from him</b> for a time מלכותו לשעה שנוצדה לו
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The meaning of the second pattern is a bit similar:

they reached her parched corn ויצבט לה קלי	he was <b>restored to his</b> kingdom שחזרה לו מלכותו
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"Parched corns" or קלי are roasted grains of wheat, which are still eaten by the reapers upon the harvest field and also handed to strangers.<sup>183</sup> These two patterns above are repeated through and through six times in **a,1-6** indicating that the Messianic fulfilment is bound to its own laws. This secret becomes more apparent in section **a5** about the Messiah himself. According to Midrash Ruth he will be "*wounded* for our transgressions", he will be "*deprived of his kingdom for a time*" and he will "*be restored to his kingdom*".<sup>184</sup> In this context also the message about "the first Redeemer" Moses and "the last Redeemer" is more relevant.

These enigmatic words are explained in Midrash Ruth by "**Rabbi Tanhuma** (see page 78) in the name of the rabbis" with the verses of Daniel XII,11-12 related to "*the time that the continual burnt offering shall be taken away*" - in other words like it is written in Hoshea III,4: "The children of Israel shall dwell many days *without king or prince, without sacrifice* etc.". In this light also the words in the Jewish prayerbook Siddur that "*now on account of our sins, which were great, the Temple has been destroyed, the daily sacrifices have been annuled*" receive an other dimension.

The potential denial of the Messiah is emphasized by the word "*for a time*". Would that mean the so called "*Messianic age*" or "*the time of the Gentiles*" as we read in Luke 21:24, "and Jerusalem will be *trodden down* by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled"? Romans 11:25 speaks similarly of the "full number of the Gentiles" who are going to be saved before the Messiah is "returning" a second time. The wording in Midrash resembles the

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<sup>183</sup> **Keil - Delitzsch** Commentary on the Old Testament II, p. 479.

<sup>184</sup> **Joel E. Rembaum** reminds in his article of "Exegetical Tradition Regarding Isaiah 53" that according to RaSHI the people were "cut off from the land of the living" (53:8), that is, "exiled from the land of Israel, because of their transgressions", p. 295. Similarly the "anointed one" was "cut off" in Daniel 9:26 although the Hebrew concepts נגזר and יכרת משיח are not the same.

verse in Isaiah 63:18: "Thy holy people possessed thy sanctuary a little while; our adversaries have trodden it down."

There is a long discussion in **Midrash Lamentations Rabbah I,51** which *attempts to explain the reason* of this national disappointment. It first mentions many concealed names of the Messiah coming to the concept "Nehirah" in Daniel II,22:<sup>185</sup>

"And the light (nehorah) dwelleth with Him' - King Messiah, whether he be of those still living or of those who are dead, bears the name of David - Great salvation giveth He to His king; and showeth mercy to His Messiah (PS. XVIII, 51), and this text continues, not 'and to David' but to David and to his seed, ועשה ולדוד ולזרעו עד-עולם חסד למשיחו לְדוֹד וְלִזְרַעוֹ עַד-עוֹלָם for evermore - *Misfortune has dogged him*. From the time (you left) there have been strong winds and a whirlwind came and carried him off."

Rabbis elucidate this in the Soncino translation as follows: "*The fact that the storm carried him away was evidence that the child was to be used for a supernatural purpose.*"

Midrash Ruth gives a peculiar bypath for the Messianic expectation of the synagogue when it diverts the attention to this potential rejection of the Messiah "for a time". The matter is repeated over and over again. But in the second breath it reiterates always that his kingdom will be "restored" to him again.

The basis for all this discussion is in the words of Ruth 2:14, ותשב מצד הקצרים , SHE SAT BESIDE THE REAPERS. In our Midrash it is written either as ותשב מן הקוצרים or ותשב מצד הקוצרים, that is "of" the reapers or "on side of" them. This indicates that the Messiah was forced aside.

The words נוצדה ממנו המלכות לשעה the kingdom was taken from

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<sup>185</sup> **Lamentations Rabbah I,51** and Daniel II,22.

him *for a while* is repeated five times and the expression **חזרה לו מלכותו**, he was restored to his kingdom also five times. And when our Midrash speaks about the Messiah in **a5** it emphasizes the future promise **בסוף הקב"ה נגלה עליהם ומוריד להן מן ואין כל חדש תחת השמש**, Finally the Holy One, blessed be He, will reveal Himself to them, and He will rain down manna upon them, *And there is nothing new under the sun* (Eccl. I, 9).

### V,8,2 The potential second advent of the Messiah

But how is he going to come and how is the restoration of his kingdom to be fulfilled? Does the Rabbinic literature hint to the "second advent" of the Messiah? The words of **Ecclesiastes Rabbah** Par. I about the way how the Messiah will come, do not presume a second advent: *"Similarly will it be with the latter Redeemer, as it is stated, Lowly and riding upon an ass (Zech. IX,9)."* It concerns rather an alternative which depends on the moral conduct of the people as is stated in **Sanhedrin 97b** - whether they are *"totally righteous or totally sinful"*. There are still some enigmatic hints which presuppose a sort of second coming of the Messiah. We are presenting only two aspects of the problem. The first perspective concerns the Jewish prayer literature in which the potential twofold advent of the Messiah is assumed. This source is treated by the scholars together with Mishnah and Midrash because it leans partly on the same traditions.<sup>186</sup>

The **Jewish prayerbook Siddur** speaks several times about *"the two days of the Messiah"*. When we look for the roots and reflections in the respective Jewish literature it always leads us to see the Jewish prayer literature. Siddur has three prominent

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<sup>186</sup> The article of **Gary Porton**, "Defining Midrash", edited by **Neusner** in *The Study of Ancient Judaism I: Mishnah, Midrash, Siddur*, deals with the Siddur together with Mishnah and Midrash. See also **Sanhedrin 97b**.

petitions, one in the regular morning prayers and one in every morning and evening in Sabbath. The frame of this prayer is the same: "יהי רצון מלפניך - שנשמור חקיך בעולם הזה ונזכה ונחיה ונירש" "טובה וברכה לשני ימות המשיח ולחיי העולם הבא", "May it be thy will - that we would keep thy statutes *in this world* and merit, and live, and inherit goodness and blessing in *the two days of the Messiah* and *in the World to come*".<sup>187</sup> In the Hebrew-English Daily Prayers of **Dr. M. Stern** this sensitive traditional expression of the two Messianic days has been totally omitted. It is replaced with the words, "in the days of the Messiah". The same way the expression in the morning prayer of the Siddur about sacrifices which have been annulled "on account of our sins, which were great", were also omitted by Dr Stern.<sup>188</sup>

May we inspect in this light again pattern **a5** in Midrash Ruth. There is an enigmatic expression: "The future Redeemer will be like the the former Redeemer. Just as the former Redeemer *revealed* himself, *returned* and was later *hidden* from them; and *how long* was he hidden?" Even Rabbi Tanhuma, the "seal of Midrash" as he has been called, was asking, *how long will he be hidden?* The shocking question of our Midrash "how long" is a real riddle. Does the compiler of the Midrash try to explain that the Messianic hope is not yet extinguished? In any way the second advent of the Messiah seems to be apparent for the compiler of Midrash Ruth. This would be "the second day of the Messiah" as expressed in Siddur - if not in this world then in the World to come! The Siddur uses namely the pattern of our Midrash speaking of "this world" and of "the World to come".

The other aspect of the potential second advent of the Messiah is related to the **Son of Man and its Jewish reference**. For the Christian Church the second coming of the Messiah is based on the

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<sup>187</sup> See the Hebrew "**Siddur Tefillah ha-Shalem**" pp. 105, 273 and 331.

<sup>188</sup> See e.g. pages 77 and 224 and page 26.

prophecy of Daniel VII,13 where we read: "*Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a Son of Man, and - to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*"

The concept "Son of Man", which was called in question as a Messianic and Davidic epithet by **Joseph Klausner**, speaks of a figure who will come "with the clouds of heaven". In his Hebrew book about the Messianic idea in Israel he is stating verbatim: **באמת אין בדניאל שום משיח אישי: עם ישראל כולו הוא משיח, שישלוט בכל העולם כולו שלטון-עולם --** "*truly, there is no personal Messiah in Daniel: the people of Israel is the Messiah as a whole, which will reign over all the world by an eternal government*".<sup>189</sup> Klausner as well as **Antti Laato** are relating the concept of Son of Man mostly to the book of 1 Enoch 48 and 62 chapters.<sup>190</sup>

**RaSHI** explains quite straightforwardly about the Son of Man that "*He is the King Messiah*". The **Metsudat David** similarly understands that "*this refers to the Messiah-King*". **Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon** (882 - 942 AD), considered one of the foremost teachers of his time, explains as follows:

*"He is the Messiah Our Righteousness; and is it not of the Messiah that it is written, 'he is humble and rides on a donkey'? He will come humbly, not proudly on horseback. Regarding the 'coming with the clouds', this concerns the host of the heavenly angels; and here is the greatness which the Creator will grant the Messiah."*<sup>191</sup> According to this quotation the second advent of

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<sup>189</sup> **Joseph Klausner**, *The Messianic Idea in Hebrew*, page 142.

<sup>190</sup> **Antti Laato** gives an extensive study about the matter in his book *The Star is Rising* in pages 261 to 269. This however does not belong to our query in that extent.

<sup>191</sup> **Mikraoth Gedoloth** corr. sect. and **Sanhedrin** 98a.

the Messiah may be partly linked with Daniel VII,13.

### **V,8,3 The 'kingdom', one of the favorite concepts of Midrash Ruth**

We have seen already that our Midrash speaks about the kingdom taken from the Messiah and restored to him, about being near to the kingdom, coming to the kingdom, about the "seat" of the king, the bread of kingdom and even six parables about the king and his will. According to Daniel the Son of Man will receive the dominion, glory and kingdom and his kingdom will not pass away. But do we have other additional reflections of this king and his "seat" or throne?

The word kingdom is a kind of "common denominator" in the book of Daniel. According to the verse 2:44 "the God of heaven will set up the *kingdom*, which shall never be destroyed". Chapter 4 verse 37 tells that Nebuchadnezzar gave honor to the "King of heaven", and he prayed and recovered from his mental illness. The compilers of the homily in Midrash Ruth were similarly waiting for the fulfilment of Messianic kingdom.

According to the translation given by **Neusner** the word kingdom is translated systematically with a counterpart "throne" - altogether **nineteen times**: "the bread of the throne", "he was taken from the throne" or "was restored to the throne". Considering the content of Midrash Ruth it might be justifiable. However the word מלכות which appears here in our section 18 times means in other Jewish contexts mostly "kingdom". Midrash Ruth uses only once the Hebrew word "seat" or כסא in 5b - and even that is "throne" in the above translation. This arouses a question whether the Jewish literature speaks also elsewhere of the "seat of the Messiah".

#### V,8,4 The heavenly "seat" in the light of Psalms 2 and 110

The celestial status of the Messiah is reflected in Rabbinic discussions in regard to the Psalms. The concept "seat" or "throne" is seen particularly in **Psalm 2 and 110** which are closely linked together. They have been considered almost as a pair both in Christian and Jewish exegesis.<sup>192</sup> The Messianic tone of the **second Psalm** is in the following words:<sup>193</sup>

"Why do the nations rage - against the LORD and against his Anointed One. 'Let us break their chains', they say, 'and throw off their fetters.' - 'I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.' I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.' - Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way."

When we read the Midrash's exposition of Psalms we cannot but be amazed at the sheer volume of explanations which the ancient scholars draw out of them. Nevertheless, the same verses which are quoted in the second Psalm are generally accepted as Messianic references. The **Midrash of Psalms** speaks firstly of the "*one who is to come*", the "*Messiah-King*", before whom all will bow down, as it is said in **Isaiah 49:23**, "They will bow down before you with their faces to the ground". There are in the Midrash **five prominent OT passages** associated with the phrase "I will proclaim the decree of the LORD" which, particularly for Christians, have a special message. The Midrash of Psalms sets them out as following:

"The decree is that of the prophets, because **Is. 52:13** says 'My

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<sup>192</sup> Hebrews I,5 and 13, V,5 and 5 or VII, 17 and 21.

<sup>193</sup> Psalm 2:1-11.

servant will prosper' and **Is. 42:1** adds 'Here is my servant whom I uphold'; It is the decree of the Psalms, as **Ps. 110:1** says 'The LORD said to my Lord, *Sit at my right hand*', and **Ps. 2:7** says 'He said to me; You are my son'; and also elsewhere it is written (**Dan. 7:13**), 'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of man, coming with the clouds'. The LORD said 'You are my son'. The decrees are those of the king, *the king of kings*, that this would be done to the Messiah-King - ".

Following this the Midrash states further that: "Rabbi Huna says: *The sufferings of the world are divided into three lots; the first lot was granted to the patriarchs and to different generations, the second to the generation of destruction, and the third to the Messianic generation.*" The Midrash also says that Psalm 2 speaks of Solomon, King Ahaz and the Messiah: "Ahaz, because **Isaiah 7:11** says, 'Ask the LORD your God for a sign' ", and *"the Messiah, because it is written, 'I will make the nations your inheritance'* - And **Psalm 21:5** says, 'He asked you for life, and you gave it to him'."

Even here we can see as it is expressed in Midrash **הא בהא תליא** or as Neusner loves to say "Writing with the Scripture".<sup>194</sup> We do not draw the conclusion of these similarities, that Psalm 2 would be an implicit evidence for the miraculous birth of the Messiah. In our

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<sup>194</sup> Traditionally, the Jewish interpretation of Psalm 2 can be divided into 3 streams: **a) RaSHI** explains that "Our Rabbis have taught that this concerns the Messiah-King, and in harmony with this interpretation it can be applied to David himself" - **b) Ibn Ezra** reckons that the Psalm refers to the "anointing of David as king, for which reason it is written; 'This day I have begotten you', or else it concerns the Messiah" - **c) The popular expositions, such as the Metsudat David,** are inclined to stress that the words 'you are my son' are intended as a reference to Israel. Indeed, we have seen already that the suffering servant of Is. 53 has been explained often as an illustration of the oppression of Israel. **RaMBaM,** however, makes it clear that the Rabbis do not have a common theological interpretation; they follow rather "the peculiar emphasis of individual verses, for which reason their teaching on these matters is somewhat inconsistent", "Hilkhot melakhim" p. 48.

**conceptual analysis**, however, the use of the Scriptures in the Rabbinic exegesis combines approximately the same verses in its presentation of the Messianic idea as the Christian traditional theology often does. The Hebrew Commentary of **M.D. Kasutto** characterizes the 2nd Psalm as follows:

"This Psalm is addressed as a song to the king, anointed by God, who overcomes all his enemies, because the Lord supports him. It may be that this is related to *a certain king or the kings of Israel in common, or to the King Messiah in the latter days.*" "In the verse 'You are my son, today I have begotten you' the word 'to day' is emphasizing, that 'the anointed of God' *does not see himself as the Son of God as such*, as is declared according to the faith of the nations, but rather as the son of God in a spiritual sense."<sup>195</sup> The Midrash was stating: "אין אומר בן לי אלא בני אתה"

These observations must be evaluated in the light of the Talmudic discussions about the same thing and taking advantage of the cryptic references in the literature of the Zohar.<sup>196</sup>

The picture of him who is "sitting at the right hand" of God **in Psalm 110**, which as we observed earlier has often been considered a "twin" to Psalm 2, is also understood as a Messianic interpretation by the Sages, to the extent that there is in that sense no essential disharmony between the Christian and Rabbinic exegesis of both parties. The "**seat**" and "**throne**" in Midrash Ruth receives new light of this bypath. The keyword in our Psalm is, "*Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.*"

Jesus cited this Psalm when he set the Pharisees a difficult question which none were able to answer.<sup>197</sup> He said: "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he? The son of David, they replied.

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<sup>195</sup> The Commentary of **M.D. Kasutto**, תהלים , pp. 10-11, Tel-Aviv 1978.

<sup>196</sup> **Avodah Zarah** 3b and **Sukkah** 52a.

<sup>197</sup> See Matthew 22:42-46.

He said to them, How is it then that David, *speaking by the Spirit*, calls him 'Lord'?"<sup>198</sup> For he says: "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet. If then David calls him 'Lord', how can he be his son?"<sup>199</sup>

The **Midrash on the Psalms** claims of the verse 'Sit at my right hand', that *"he says this to the Messiah; and his throne is prepared in grace and he will sit upon it"*. Talmud refers to Psalm 110 when discussing Zechariah 4:14, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth", and states: "By this is meant *Aaron and the Messiah*, and I do not know which of them I should prefer. When it is written, 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest for ever', we know that *the Messiah-King is more agreeable than the Priest of Righteousness*."<sup>200</sup>

Right up to the Middle Ages the Rabbis continued this discussion. Rabbi **Shimon the Preacher** (ha-Darshan), who lived towards the end of the 12th century and collected Talmud's old legends and its preaching, summarises the traditional understanding of the status of the Messiah as follows:

"Rabbi Yodan says in Rabbi Aha Bar Hanina's name that *The Holy One will set the coming Messiah-King at his right hand and Abraham at his left*'; and so Abraham's face will become white

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<sup>198</sup> The literary device "speaking in the Spirit" is used in Midrash Ruth too.

<sup>199</sup> The best known expositions which we have been following are comparatively late expressions of the Rabbinic perspective. To take two examples; **RaSHI**, Solomon Yarchi, died in 1105 AD and **Ibn Ezra**, the son of Abraham Meir, died towards the end of the same century. If in them, despite all their opposition to Christianity, we still find some mention of the Messianic character of a certain passage, it will have particular weight as a witness to the case. Psalm 110, they say, refers primarily to Abraham. **RaSHI** states of the Psalm that it is right to interpret it as touching Abraham, "but there is a difficulty in the fact that it speaks of Zion, which was the city of David".

<sup>200</sup> **Aboth de-Rabbi Nathan**, Perek 34 in the beginning. **Midrash Tehilim** relates Zechariah IV,14 also to the Messiah.

with envy, and he will say, 'The son of my son sits on your right and I must sit on your left?' Then the Holy One will appease him by saying, 'Your son is on your right and I am on your right.'"<sup>201</sup>

The Rabbis say in their discussions that, according to Psalm 72:17, the Messiah was granted this position before the creation. It is remarkable that the idea of the Messiah's special status also comes to the fore in the Rabbis' exposition of Psalms.<sup>202</sup> It is important to observe these central tenets of Christianity set out scattered in Midrash Ruth and in Jewish exegesis of Psalm 2 and 110.<sup>203</sup> This will also clarify the concept of the "seat of the Messiah" in our text.

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<sup>201</sup> **Yalkut Shimeoni** Ps. 110, **Nedarim** 32,b and **Sanhedrin** 108b. The subject is also touched upon in the following books: **David M. Hay**, *Glory at the Right Hand*, Psalm 110 in Early Christianity, New York 1973; **Jacques Dupont**, *Assis à la Droite de Dieu, L'interprétation du Psaume 110,1*, Vaticana 1974, pp. 340-442.

<sup>202</sup> Of these are primarily worthy of mention **a)** Psalm 16:11 which says: "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy on your presence, with **eternal pleasure at your right hand**. **b)** Psalm 18:36 promises: "You give me your shield of victory, and **your right hand sustains me**." The Midrash explains this Davidic hymn, saying that, it **refers to the "coming of the Messiah"**, and adds: "If deliverance were to come in one wave men would be unable to stand such a great liberation, and so it will be accompanied by great sufferings". **c)** The third isolated reference to the status of the Messiah is found in Psalm 80, in the 18th verse of which the Rabbis perceive the Messianic motif: "Let your hand rest on the **man at your right hand**, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. Verse 15 speaks of the **"vine" which the "right hand" of God has planted**. Ibn Ezra explains this as being an analogy in which "that which is compared concerns Israel and the Messiah, the son of Ephraim". As we have already seen, the idea of the suffering Messiah is connected in Judaism with this son of Joseph, Ephraim.

<sup>203</sup> The words of the **"right hand"** of God, the **"sustaining of the right hand"**, and the **"man at your right hand"** are linked in some way with the Messiah, and are to be taken in conjunction with Psalm 110. These Rabbinic interpretations give their own intelligible explanation to the intellectual background of the Apostles' Creed, in which we confess that we believe in Christ who "sits at the right hand of God, the omnipotent Father". See also the Messianic interpretation of **R. Akiba** to Dan VII,9 of the **"thrones"**, page 159 in our presentation.

### V,8,5 The vision of the kingdom in the Siddur

The item of kingdom has a central position in Jewish prayers also. It can be seen for example in the long morning prayer of **Siddur** where the expression "**our Father, our King**" אבינו מלכנו *is repeated 49 times*. It begins with the words, "Our Father, our King! we have sinned before Thee". Then it speaks about the "*book of merit*" as follows:

"Our Father, our King! Write us in the book of redemption and salvation - in the *book of merit* - in the book of forgiveness and pardon. Our Father, our King! Exalt the horn of Thine Anointed - remember that we are but dust" etc.<sup>204</sup>

The petition is in the form כתבנו "**write us**" or חתמנו "**seal us**" like in **Midrash Ruth**. The expression of the "horn of the Anointed One" הרם קרן משיח is related to the Messiah many times in the Siddur.

The former Chief Rabbi of Stockholm **Gottlieb Klein** wrote in his time two separate studies about the Jewish prayers in the New Testament. In Klein's words Jesus had a Messianic feel in his prayer "Our Father" - "all the hopes and expectations of Jesus' ardent heart were cast in a unified substantial form in this prayer."<sup>205</sup> This prayer fulfils certain requirements characteristic of Jesus' own time. Every prayer in that day had to comprise *seven requests*. On the other hand it had to be of a *tripartite structure* consisting the *praise to God* or the "*shevah*" שבה, the *individual's own pleas*, the

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<sup>204</sup> **Siddur** Tefillah ha-Shalem pp. 83-86. In the page 97 the words "Our Father who art in heaven" are repeated four times.

<sup>205</sup> **Gottlieb Klein**, Är Jesus en historisk personlighet, pp. 38 - 39. See also Fader vår, ett bidrag till kännedom om urkristendomen.

תפילה and the הודיה *thanksgiving* which concluded the prayer.

In the first section or the "shevah" there is a twofold petition, *"Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come"*. In **Klein's** opinion the prayer taught by Jesus made veiled reference to the belief in the resurrection. In the page 39 he writes:

"There is an old Midrash which says that, The Holy One, may his name be exalted, will let the dead rise into this world, so that his great name will be sanctified. Therefore all should pray, *'Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come'*, because the resurrection will follow as the fulfilment of these prayers - Here we have a Messianic prayer, which only Jesus in his time could have prayed. It is the most personal thing we own from Jesus. His longings and aspirations are immortalised in it, and the spirit which will realize that prayer has performed miracles in the hearts of men."

The last section, the thanksgiving, reminds us again of the kingdom: *"For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever."* The **Siddur prayer-book's Aramaic qaddish sections**, which appear at many points throughout the book, resemble the "shevah" part of the Lord's prayer: *"Magnified and sanctified be his great name in the world which he hath created according to his will. May he establish his kingdom in your life-time, and in your days - and say ye, Amen."* The congregation respond to the Rabbi's recitation with, *"Let his great name be blessed for ever and ever, amen."*

The concept "kingdom" is very important in Midrash Ruth. In the Messianic age it will be established again. It will be actualized also "in the world to come". The kingdom was to be "reprived" however from the Messiah "for a time" as we have seen from different perspectives. This concealed Messianic realm belongs however

to the main themes in Midrash Ruth.<sup>206</sup> And the message of resurrection is linked with the Messianic hope in Jewish prayers.

## V,9 The "blessing in the stomach" of Ruth, הברכה במעיה של אותה צדקת

One of the most peculiar thoughts in Midrash Ruth is in the discussion about the words of Rabbi Jonathan concerning the word-play קלי and קליל, "parched corns" and "a small measure" or "just a pinch" between the fingers of Boaz.

"Rabbi Isaac said: From this we can conclude one of two things, either that a blessing reposed **in the fingers of that righteous man [Boaz] or in the stomach of that righteous woman**; but **it is more probable that the blessing was in the stomach of that righteous woman**".

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<sup>206</sup> While discussing **Klein's reference to the resurrection**, it is worth noting the interpretation of the "Seal of the Midrash", **Rabbi Tanḥuma**, on Abraham in Genesis 12:1, "Leave your country and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you". - "What does this mean? It means that first will be the blessing you receive and then mine: firstly we pronounce 'the shield of Abraham' and then '**the resurrection from the dead**'. This refers to the Rabbinic exegetical principle that one should always begin with God's promise to Abraham and conclude with the resurrection. The phrase has an immediate point of contact with the weekday morning prayer, in which is said "Blessed art thou, O God, the shield of Abraham: thou, O Lord, art eternally strong, **thou raisest the dead** and art strong to save. Thou shakest the living with thy grace, raisest the dead in thy great mercy, givest strength to those who stumble, healest the sick, freest the prisoners and perfectest the trust of those who lie in the earth - **thou art the king** who bringeth down to the grave, maketh alive and maketh thy salvation to flourish." We may notice further also that the **Yalkut Shimeoni** says of Abraham's blessing that it is the "language of redemption" and implies the future redemption of Israel. It is no wonder that Klein saw in Lord's prayer the Messianic theme and certain emphasis relating to the resurrection belief.

According to **R. Isaac b. Marion** in the fifth interpretation of Ruth Rabbah V,6 this verse would relate mostly to good works. Even a small amount of charity, "just a pinch" in the fingers of Boaz, can benefit to a big merit. It was to be seen in the posterity of Ruth and Boaz when the Messianic hope had to be fulfilled. That is the reason why the Midrash emphasizes that the good deeds are recorded in the heavenly court. However it develops afterwards another line of logic speaking of the genealogy of the Messiah.

The concept "her stomach" or **מעיה** means in the Bible primarily the posterity. The word is used in Isaiah 48:19, "your offspring would have been like the sand and *your descendant* **מַעֲיָךְ** like its grains". The expression **יָצָא מִמְעֵיךְ שֶׁל** or "was born of" is expressed in the words for David in 2 Samuel 7:12 "I will raise up your *offspring* **זֶרַע** (*seed*) after you, who shall *come forth from your body* **מִמְעֵיךְ** and I will establish his kingdom". In this sense this expression is very logical indeed. But why did the compiler of Midrash Ruth enter to this enigmatic item?<sup>207</sup> Does it have a special correlation with the Messianic expectation and with the birth of the Messiah?

The words **מעיה** and **זרע** are kind of synonyms. A woman does not have "seed" - thus the nearest equivalent for this concept would be **מעיה** or the "stomach", a picture of "womb" or "uterus". The word "seed" is used Messianically in Rabbinic sources related to the seed of the woman and the seed of Abraham. This is inherited from Gen. 3:15, often called as "proto-evangel". As a Christian

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<sup>207</sup> The Catholic Scriptural and Rabbinic Scholar **Anthony M. Opisso** is relating Midrash Ruth in his article "Perpetual Virginity of Mary" to numerous Talmudic discussions. The word about her "womb" **מעיה** represents a kind of euphemism. According to Opisso Mary was not "consummating" her betrothal to Josef. Abstaining from sexual intercourse after the heavenly calling is combined in the Talmud with Moses, the seventy elders, Elijah, Elisha and to some Jewish pious women. Even **Timothy F. Kauffman** has written about this item in his article "Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit". See also [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

explanation it is found from the time of Irenaeus in the second century. The NT does not refer directly to it - if not in Romans 16:20 according to which "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet". The Aramaic Targum tradition, however, finds a central Messianic prophecy even here.<sup>208</sup>

The Proto-evangel reads: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." The Targum of **Jonathan Ben Uzziel** states here that if the woman's offspring observe the Law they will be in a position to crush the serpent's head: "*And they will finally make peace in the days of the Messiah-King*". The Targum plays on the words עקב, 'heel', and עיקבא, the "end". The **Jerusalem Targum** calls attention to the endtimes when it interprets the verse as, "*They will make peace in the end, at the close of the end of the days, in the days of the Messiah King* בסוף עקב יומיא בימוי דמלכא משיחא". The Aramaic word for "making peace", שפיוקא, resembles the Hebrew word for "crush", גָּשַׁף.<sup>209</sup> The closest correlation in Midrash Ruth for the word "stomach" is really the "seed". And that is in any case related in Christian and Jewish exegesis to the Messiah.

The question remains whether these words מעיה and זרע do really

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<sup>208</sup> The subject has been dealt with by e.g. **Eugen Hühn** in his book "Die Messianischen Weissagungen - bis zu den Targumim", Leipzig 1899, p. 135.

<sup>209</sup> This is in keeping with **verse 16 of Psalm 22**, which in Christian exegesis is understood as a prophecy of the Messiah. In many languages this verse has been translated, according to the most probable reading of the original, that "They have pierced my hands and feet". Similarly **Zechariah 13:6** in Hebrew reads: "'What are those wounds between your hands?' and he will answer, 'They were struck into me in the house of my friends'." The most common understanding of this verse among the Rabbis is illustrated by the so-called '**Jonathan's interpretation**': "'They will be healed (from the bite of the serpent)' means that they will receive an antidote; 'Make peace' means 'peace and security'; and 'He will be their healer in the future, in the days of the Messiah' that there will be peace and rest."

have any correlation with the birth of the Messiah. And does the birth of the Messiah hide in this sense any supra-historical features? We have already seen how the **Targum Jonathan** attaches an interpretation to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18 which from the point of view of Christian theology is of great importance: "*The Lord your God will raise up from your midst a prophet by the Holy Spirit* **וְיָקִים לְכוֹן יְיָ קוֹדֵשׁ אֱלֹהֵינוּ** *who will be like me*", and, "*A prophet I will raise up from amongst your brethren, through the Holy Spirit* **אֶקִים לְהוֹן מִבְּנֵי אַחֵיהֶם דְרוֹחַ קוֹדֵשׁ**". The interpretive problem of the two prepositions **ב** or **ד** is not here one of the primary questions. Even the "**Interpretation of Jonathan**" adds to this the third time, that this will be actualized **בְרוּחַ קוֹדֵשׁ** .

The famous Judaist **Hermann L. Strack** initiated in 1911 an important discussion of the so-called Sadducean documents from Damascus, which speak at length of a "teacher of righteousness" and the "Holy Spirit". In these literary finds - which actually belong to the same genre as the Dead Sea Scrolls - there is an account of God concealing himself and rejecting the remnant of Israel: "And he will raise up for them a Teacher of Righteousness to lead them in the way of their hearts." The Messiah is referred to here by the name 'the Branch': "And he will teach righteousness in the last days". Of him it is said that God will "*make his Holy Spirit known to them through his Messiah, and he will be the Truth.*" Reference is made four times to the "Messiah of Aaron and Israel". The "Messiah of Aaron" means his priestly role, and the "Messiah of Israel" his kingly status.<sup>210</sup>

The common Commentary of **Paul Billerbeck** and **H. L. Strack** however insists in an unconditional way about **רוח הקודש** that the New Testament in Matthew 1:18 describes primarily the "*creative power of God*" and "it seems that the **רוח הקודש** does not appear in the same sense in the early Rabbinic literature". The Holy Spirit

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<sup>210</sup> See **G. Margoliouth**, *The Two Zadokite Messiahs*, J.T.S., pp. 446-450.

was rather "a spirit of prophecy and inspiration". "And nowhere comes efforts to see in this divine spirit the creative lifepower (Lebenskraft) of God." The above exegesis of Targum Jonathan, which was presented afore, has not been dealt in the Christian theology.<sup>211</sup> And this might however give some new light about the traditions of the birth of the Messiah.

The **Dead Sea Scrolls** contain a section which brings to mind the above observation. Speaking of the "godly men" in the Essene community we read that, "*When God begets the Messiah, with them will come the Priest, head of the whole congregation of Israel and of all the elders of the sons of Aaron - And they will sit before him, each man according to his dignity. And the last to sit will be the Messiah of Israel.*" Dr. **R. Gordis** says that *if this excerpt is taken seriously it will be "highly important as a source for the concept of a Divinely begotten Messiah"*.<sup>212</sup>

The above reading is confirmed lately by computer image enhancement as we shall see when we are considering the text as a whole. The word "yolid" יוליד which appears in the text means in its primary sense to 'beget'. The Targum's mention of the prophet who will be raised up through the Holy Spirit is more important than the Dead Sea Scroll excerpt because it relates directly to the exegesis of the Old Testament. **The Targum uses the word "aqim" אקים**, "*I will raise up*", for the begetting of the prophet like Moses. This is all set in relief by the saying in Psalm 2:7: "You are my son; today I have begotten you" בני אתה אני היום ילדתיך . This verse - which the Rabbis considered a Messianic prophecy - contains the same term as in the Dead Sea Scrolls for "beget" יוליד. The verse was also of central importance in the early church (Acts 13:33, Heb. 1:5 and 5:5).

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<sup>211</sup> See **Strack - Billerbeck**, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, I, p. 48.

<sup>212</sup> **R. Gordis**, The begotten Messiah in the Qumran Scrolls, Vet. Test. 1957, pp. 191-194. Fragment I QSa, Coll. 2,11-15.

The discussion in the Dead Sea Scrolls is particularly remarkable because it describes a future festive banquet which is related with the arrival of the Messiah. The congregation of Qumran believed that in the Last Days two "messiahs" or "Anointed Ones" would emerge from their own ranks, one a priest, the other one a royal commander for the armies.<sup>213</sup> We are touching this important item in connection with the Messianic banquet in Midrash Ruth later on.

To put it short: the small units of this concealed message are scattered to many details in Midrash Ruth. As we have already noticed in Targum Jonathan the Second Moses, Messiah, was to be raised "by the Holy Spirit". According to the Qumran scrolls, God will "beget" the Messiah. In Midrash Ruth section VII,2 he is linked with "a closed mem". According to section VIII,1, he will also be "a seed from another place". All this is concealed behind the enigmatic discussions of Midrash Ruth and will hopefully be exposed in the further procedure.

## V,10 Recording of good deeds, אליהו כותב ומלך המשיח והקב"ה חותמים את המעשים הטובים שלנו

One of the main themes in Midrash Ruth is the strong emphasis on proper moral conduct and **the importance of good deeds**. Only by the merits of their high ethical standard Boaz and Ruth were

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<sup>213</sup> See M. Wise, M. Abegg & E. Cook, The Dead Sea Scrolls, a New Translation, pp. 143-147. When Martin Abegg of the Hebrew Union in Cincinnati carried out the reconstruction of the texts of Qumran with the aid of a desktop computer it was like "a bombshell" and triggered off many new conclusions, see *ibid.* page 8.

accepted to be ancestors for the Messiah. This is also the reason why the merits of Jewish people are recorded in the heavenly accountancy. In this context **the role of Elijah and the heavenly scribe** mostly called as "Metatron" is in a central position in Midrash Ruth as well as in the respective Jewish literature.

### **V,10,1 Good deeds in the Jewish and Christian context**

The New Testament uses almost the same expressions of good deeds as the Rabbinic literature does. Western theology seldom realizes how important it is to distinguish between the so called "works of the law" **εργα νομου** and "good works" **εργα καλα**. In his prison epistles Apostle Paul encountered a new problem in the congregation. When grace became the only basis of salvation, some of the members forgot the need of practical love expressed by good deeds. Paul uses two Greek adjectives for this, *erga kala or erga agatha*, **εργα καλα** or **εργα αγαθα**. The Hebrew equivalents are **מעשים טובים** and **גמילות חסדים**.

Paul writes in his epistles, that "We are his workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*". Christ has redeemed us "to purify for himself a people who are *eager for good works*". "I want - those who believe in God to devote themselves to *doing good works*." "Our people must learn *to devote themselves to doing good works*." "If a man cleanses himself", he is "useful to the Master and *prepared to do any good work*". And "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be *thoroughly equipped for every good work*".<sup>214</sup>

In Rabbinic literature the corresponding terms occur in hundreds of

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<sup>214</sup> See Eph. 2:10, Titus 2:14, 3:8 and 3:14, 2 Tim. 2:21 and 2 Tim.3:16-17.

discussions. They teach that "*man was created only to good works*"; the benefactor does "*the deeds of God*"; thus *he fills "the whole world with the love of God"*; and he should do them "*from a generous and loving heart*" and "*in secret*". When, for example, some of the pious did their shopping in the market, they always set aside half of it for the poor. Some forbade taking contributions from foreigners, because this increased their merits.<sup>215</sup> Hillel and Gamaliel extended works of love even to the Gentiles "*to maintain peace*". The model for this attitude, according to the Rabbis, was Abraham, who entertained foreigners and who had in his tent, as a sign of hospitality, "door-openings to the four points of the compass". Good works included visiting the sick, lodging foreigners in homes, supporting young bridal couples, attending weddings and funerals and, for instance, giving speeches of consolation even to the Gentiles, as Gamaliel, the teacher of Paul taught.<sup>216</sup>

The good deeds in Jewish and Christian reference are **based practically on the same rules**. God has "created us for good deeds" as both parts emphasize. They are not counted to the "works of the law". They rather reflect the human natural attitude of the believers. In Paul's time it was very common to give tithes to synagogue work. In addition, there were precise instructions for mammon set aside "for deeds of love" or  $\alpha\gamma\alpha\theta\alpha$ . Genesis 28:22

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<sup>215</sup> **Strack - Billerbeck**, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament IV,1, Die altjüdischen Liebeswerke pp. 559 -610.

<sup>216</sup> In Deut. 6:4-9 the word that we should love God in all our strength is replaced in **Targum Onqelos** with the word "nikhsekh", that is "with your property" and in the **Targum of Jonathan** with "memonkhon" or "with your mammon". It meant good works in practical life. The custom described in the Essene **Damascus Document XIV:10-15** of setting aside "two day's pay monthly" for distribution to the poor may also be of the same origin. In the Tempel period there was elected for it in different localities a "havurah" or "hever ir", that is, "city delegates" or a "group" which carried out the collection of relief money. And in the Temple itself there was a "quiet room", where one could donate his contribution anonymously.

tells how Jacob promised to give tithes to God, if he had bread to eat and clothes to wear; the original text twice uses here the words "*aser a'asrennu*" עֶשֶׂר אֲעָשְׂרֶנּוּ , "I separate ten as a tithe". It was interpreted as meaning that one could give two tenths. However love has no limits and we ought to be "*thoroughly equipped for every good work*".

## **V,10,2 Elijah the celestial scribe**

In Midrash Ruth we are dealing with the concealed message of Jewish Messianic expectation. It culminates in the picture of the Messianic meal in eternity - but behind this message the text hides some odd components which must be carefully analysed. In the **sixth interpretation of the Parashah V,6** there is the question about "good deeds" which are recorded in the heavenly accounting by Elijah. It calls forth many enigmatic discussions from the Jewish literature.

There is a huge amount of Rabbinical literature in Talmud and other Jewish writings about the role of Elijah as a celestial scribe and as a precursor of the Messiah. These discussions are mostly linked with the pseudonym "**Metatron**". That is based on Elijah and his miraculous translation to heaven in a "chariot of fire" according to II Kings 2:11 and upon the prophecy that Elijah would be sent by God before the coming of the Day of Lord and that he may turn in the Messianic age "the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers", Malachi 3:23. In these sources Elijah is both the herald as well as an active partner of the Messiah. In the time of the second Temple it was taken for granted that Elijah was to be the predecessor of the Messiah as we see also in the New Testament.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Matthew 11:10, 17:10 or Mark 9:11.

In Talmud **Sukkah** 5a there are attempts to deny that Elijah had ever gone up to heaven. "*R. Jose stated, Neither did the Shekhinah ever descend to earth, nor did Moses or Elijah ever ascend to Heaven, as it is written, 'The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth hath He given to the sons of men'.*"<sup>218</sup> It is a kind of protest to the manifold disputes about the heavenly status of Elijah. He received 60 lashes as a punishment of his pride - similar things are reported about Metatron also. Still he has a certain halakhic position as a heavenly scribe in his own court.<sup>219</sup> And he knows the secrets of the Messiah.<sup>220</sup> Midrash Ruth strives to explain how the merits of righteous people are recorded in the heaven. And the role of Elijah is fit to this task. The section **a6** expresses it followingly:

The good deeds - who writes it down? <b>Elijah records it .</b>	ועכשיו כשאדם עושה (מצוה) מי כותבה -- אליהו כותבה
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The book of **Malachi** 2:14-16 tells that the people of Israel were serving the LORD with deception like Midrash Ruth is describing the times of judges. They brought "blind, crippled and diseased" animals for sacrifice, and they had forgotten to give tithes to the Lord. Worst of all was that they had "violated the covenant with Levi" and forgotten their call as a priestly nation. Many had divorced their wives: "Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his - 'I hate divorce', says the LORD".

It is into this kind of situation that the Messiah was to come: "See, I will send *my messenger*, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the LORD you are seeking will come to his temple; *the*

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<sup>218</sup> **Sukkah** 5a.

<sup>219</sup> **Abodah Zarah** 36a.

<sup>220</sup> In one of these stories Elijah knew where to find the Messiah. He was sitting among the leprous before the gates of Rome in **Sanhedrin** 98a. The saying that "when Elijah comes, he will tell us all", is repeated many times in Talmud, e.g. in **Berakhoth** 35b, **Menahoth** 45a and **Bekhoroth** 24a.

*messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the LORD Almighty." The phrase "the LORD Almighty" יהוה צבאות is repeated 20 times in Malachi. "But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites", Malachi 3:1-3.*

**RaDaK, Rabbi David Kimḥi**, says of the "Lord" who will come to his temple that, "He is the Messiah-King and the Angel of the Covenant". **Metsudat David**<sup>221</sup> distinguishes between the Angel of the Lord and the Angel of the Covenant: "The Lord is the Messiah-King, for whom the eyes of everyone wait and long and wish to come, but by the 'Angel of the Covenant' is meant Elijah." The final passage of **Malachi** mentions Elijah and the Lord in the same context: "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers", verses 4:5-6.

In **Micah** 2:13 there is a similar interpretation about the word הפורץ לפניהם "one who breaks open the way". The word פורץ and Perez פרץ, one of the main figures in Midrash Ruth, are of the same root. Elijah is the "breaker" who will come before the Messiah. Again even here **RaDaK sees Elijah, and in the "King" of the following words there is the Branch, the Son of David.** **Metsudat David** says that "Elijah will come before the Deliverance to turn Israel's hearts to their fathers", and in the King of Micah 2:13 it sees "the Messiah-King". The Midrash makes its own contribution to the vision of the Messiah in **Malachi**. The verse 4:1 says: "Surely the day is coming: it will burn like a furnace". On this the Midrash says: "When He who is to come finally arrives the Holy One will reveal his fire from its vessel, burning up sin, as it is written: 'The

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<sup>221</sup> The popular 17th century Jewish exposition of the Prophetic and Historic books in **Mikraoth Gedoloth**.

day that is coming will set them on fire'."<sup>222</sup> Malachi 4:2 promises that one day "the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings". The Midrash speaks of the *"rising of the sun when the Messiah comes, as it is written: 'To you who revere my name will dawn the sun of righteousness and healing'."*<sup>223</sup>

As we have noticed the Rabbinic exegesis comprises many artificial dubious features which are not always originated from the Bible. It does not represent a linear and logical thinking. Every small matter has however an inner meaning and the warp yarns are overlapping within each other, interlocking to the main theme and producing different layers. Good deeds are recorded by a celestial scribe. Midrash Ruth ponders whether this would be done by Elijah in his new heavenly status.

### **V,10,3 Elijah and the Messiah in the Jewish prayer book, the Siddur**

In this context we are asking whether there are some references about Elijah and the Messiah in the Jewish prayer-book Siddur also. **David Flusser** gives his impressions about Midrash and the Jewish prayers in his book "Jewish Sources in Early Christianity". He is making there the following statement:<sup>224</sup>

"The Midrash has originated in a period earlier than the rise of Christianity, but our great collections of Midrashim are rooted in the period of early Christianity." - "Jesus himself had a profound Jewish education, and it is obvious that he was familiar with numerous Midrashim." - "In Jewish apocryphal literature and in medieval Jewish literature we find many different conceptions of the figure of the Messiah - In the Midrashic literature, the ways of

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<sup>222</sup> **Midrash Bereshith**, Par. 6.

<sup>223</sup> **Midrash Shemoth Rabbah**, Par. 31.

<sup>224</sup> **David Flusser**, Jewish Sources in Early Christianity, pp. 55-63.

the Messiah acquire a dimension which is beyond everyday life and passes human understanding. *In Jewish prayers, the word Messiah does not appear, and the expressions used are such as 'the Branch of David'.*"

However in spite of the statement given by Flusser we shall see in this context of Midrash Ruth and later on that there are yet many prayers both in Siddur and other prayer collections which are clearly speaking of the Messiah.

Numerous prayers in **the Siddur** mention the names of Elijah and Messiah. The Jews always remember *Elijah as the herald of Messiah's coming* at the Passover meal in connection with the so-called "cup of blessing" or "third cup". At the Sabbath afternoon meal, popularly called the "Messiah's meal", reference is still today made to the name of *Elijah side by side with the Messiah*. In the beautiful prayer composed by **Elazar Qalir** we read: "I rejoice and make merry in my heart - argue my quarrel, and bring the Redeemer to Zion. *Let the Branch sprout, Elijah and the Messiah-King.*"<sup>225</sup>

In the Feast of Tabernacles there is in so called "seder hakafoth" of Siddur a prayer which repeats the name of Elijah eleven times. It mentions first the Aramaic concept "*David malkha meshiha*" and pleads: "*May Elijah come and bring good tidings, may the Messiah our Righteousness the son of David our Redeemer come*" ... "*Abraham our father will rejoice ... David the King Messiah will rejoice with us.*" Even here Elijah appears together with the Messiah.<sup>226</sup> Midrash Ruth presents Elijah also as a heavenly scribe.

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<sup>225</sup> **Siddur Tefillah ha-Shalem**, pp. 340-341.

<sup>226</sup> **Siddur Beit Ja'akob**, Volume II, p. 173.

### **V,10,4 Penuel, the Angel of the Lord, the Angel of the Covenant, the Prince of the Countenance and the Lord of the Covenant**

In Genesis 32 we read of how Jacob wrestled by the Jabbok stream with a certain "man", from whom he asked his blessing. Jacob received the new name Israel, which means "he struggles with God", since he had "struggled with God and with men" and won.

Jacob named the place Peniel, meaning *'face of God'*, and he said, "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been spared". The two names Penuel and Peniel פנואל ופניאל are used in this mysterious nocturnal appearance, Genesis 32, verses 29 and 30. Midrash Rabbah commenting on this says that Jacob "saw the face of God in the Holy Spirit" בשכינה.

The account of Jacob's wrestling with the angel gave rise among the Sages to thoughts which have a direct bearing on their understanding of the Messiah. **Targum Onqelos** states that actually Jacob saw the "*Angel of the Lord*". Isaiah 63:9 also presents a mystical enigma, which in a certain way is connected with the Jabbok river account. Isaiah says: "In all their distress he too was distressed, and *the angel of his presence* מלאך פניו saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old."

The Rabbis say that this "*angel of his presence*" means the "*Angel of the Covenant and the Prince of the Countenance*". In Hebrew the phrase is Sar ha-Panim שר הפנים, literally '*the Prince of the faces*' or '*countenance*'. Rabbi **David Qimhi** says of Mal. 3:1, the Lord who will "suddenly come to his temple", that "*this Lord is the Messiah-King, and he is the Lord of the Covenant*". Midrash Ruth combines Elijah with the task of Metatron and thus also with these enigmatic heavenly emissaries. But how does the concept Metatron fit in Jewish selfunderstanding to the common Messianic idea? And what is his identity and the main task?

## V,10,5 The Messiah as the Prince of the Countenance and the Metatron in the Siddur

The Jewish prayerbook, the **Siddur ha-Shalem**, contains a New Year prayer in connection with the sounding of the shofar horn, a remarkable prayer, which speaks of "*Jesus, the Prince of the Countenance*". I know of two separate occasions concerning this prayer, where some young men on asking who this Jesus actually is were driven out of the Synagogue. The prayer reads:

"May it be Thy will that the blast from this horn should carry to the tabernacle of God by the instrumentality of our delegate **Tartiel**, whose name **Elijah** - may his memory be blessed - has given to him, and through **Jesus the Prince of the Countenance** and the **Prince Metatron**, and may grace be our part. Be Thou blessed, Lord of grace." The name 'Jesus' appears in this prayer in its unabbreviated Hebrew form **ישוע**, which means a 'saviour'.<sup>227</sup>

We can observe here that the Siddur identifies Elijah, the "delegate Tartiel", "Jesus the Prince of the Countenance" **ישוע שר הפנים** and "Metatron" **מטטרון** with each other. The origin of the name Tartiel **טרטיאל** is not known, but one conjecture suggests that it is derived from the Aramaic words "tartei El" **תרתי אל**, or "God's other form" in which he reveals himself - even though when it is changed into a title the letter tau is always changed into the "other T" of the Hebrew alphabet, "tet" or **ט**. The strange name "Metatron" derives from the Greek "metathronios" **μεταθρονιος**, that is, "the one who sits on the throne". **Targum Jonathan**, on Gen. 5:24 in which we

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<sup>227</sup> The prayer runs with all the abbreviations and brackets in Hebrew as follows: **ייהי רצון מלפניך שתקיעת תש"ת שאנחנו תוקעים תהא מרוקמת בריעה על ידי הממונה (טרטיאל) כשם שקבלת על ידי אליהו ז"ל (וישוע) שר הפנים ושר (מט"ט) ותמלא עלינו "Siddur ha-Shalem p. 400 and Siddur Shirah Hadashah p. 415. See Appendix number 7.**

read of the translation of **Enoch** how he walked with God and then "was no more", says that "*He ascended to heaven and God called him by the name Metatron, the Great Scribe*".<sup>228</sup>

### V,10,6 The heavenly scribe in the light of Talmudic literature

Stockholm's erstwhile chief Rabbi, **Professor Gottlieb Klein**, in a work published in 1898, sets forth **Metatron's main features** as portrayed in the Jewish literature:

"Metatron is the nearest person to God, serving him; on the one hand his confident and delegate, on the other hand the representative of Israel before God - Metatron is also known as Sar ha-Panim, the 'Prince of the Countenance' or just as 'the Prince', and he sits in God's innermost chamber (penim). The numeric value of 'Metatron' is the same as that of Shaddai, 'the Almighty'. He is therefore the delegate of the Almighty."<sup>229</sup>

Shaddai equals the number  $(10+4+300) = 314$  and Metatron in the

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<sup>228</sup> The concept Metatron appears **38 times in Zohar** according to the search program of Soncino Classics Collection. Rabbi **Akiba** gives us some of Metatron's titles, which reveal his nature. In Hebrew they are מטטרון מלאך שר הפנים, מלאך שר התורה, מלאך שר הגבורה, מלאך שר הכבוד, מלאך שר ההיכל, מלאך שר מלוא שר המלכים, מלאך שר הרוזנים, מלאך שר השרים וגו. The book of **Rabbi Tzvi Nassi**, lecturer in Hebrew at Oxford University, "The Great Mystery", Yanezt Ltd Jerusalem 1970, gives the Hebrew or Aramaic equivalents of a wide discussion in this matter: "The Qabbalists call the second Sefira (or Number) Metatron, the Keeper, which is an inferior name to his name the Son of God." "Metatron, the Keeper of Israel, the Prince of God's countenance, is called the little or lesser God", אדני הקטן. See eg. pages 64, 70 and 90. These concealed Qabbalistic discussions do not add anything to Christian theology. However they confirm the fact that the secret of Trinitarianism has its own background. And Midrash Ruth touches on this mystery when it speaks of the heavenly scribe. This is also reflected in the Jewish prayer book, the Siddur.

<sup>229</sup> **Gottlieb Klein**, Bidrag till Israels religionshistoria, p. 89.

same manner (50+6+200+9+9+40) = 314. Klein also writes at length about how it would appear that in Judaism Metatron is often identified with the Greek "Word" or Logos λογος, and he shows that there are five such intermediaries in the Talmud: "1. Metatron, 2. The Word of Yahweh, Mimra or Logos, 3. God's hovering glory, the Shekhinah, 4. God's Holy Spirit, Ruah ha-Qodesh and 5. the Voice from Heaven, Bath Qol, lit. 'daughter of a voice'."<sup>230</sup>

Metatron functions primarily as an **intercessor**. The Talmud says that the angels understand only Hebrew.<sup>231</sup> Only Metatron, the defender of Israel, may approach the throne of God, when he enters Israel's good deeds into the accounts.<sup>232</sup> When Israel's Ark of the Covenant was being built the angels received the commission to build in heaven an abode for "the youth whose name is Metatron, in which dwelling he will bring the souls of the Just to God to atone for Israel during the Captivity".<sup>233</sup> This 'atonement' idea appears in the supplement to the Siddur prayerbook, where it is said that in this way the blast from the horn and the prayers rise *"before the throne and speak on our behalf, atoning for all our sins"*.

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<sup>230</sup> **Gottlieb Klein**, Bidrag till Israels religionshistoria, p. 89. In Klein's opinion it was precisely this Aramaic word 'Mimra' which gave the grounds to the belief that Christ is "the Word or Logos of God become flesh". The Jewish philosopher **Philo**, who lived about the same time as Jesus, considered the Logos to be God's delegate, his emissary and angel who "prays as High Priest before God on behalf of the world". The 'Mimra' concept associated with God and his manifestations appears **596** times in the Targums - but not once in the Talmud. Targum Onqelos uses the word **176** times, Targum Yerushalmi **99** times, and Targum Jonathan **321** times. Over half of these references to the 'Mimra' approach it as if it were "personified". The absence of 'Mimra' from the Talmud may be a reaction to the first Christians' interpretation of it as indicating Jesus. There are strong grounds for understanding 'Mimra' to mean the same as the New Testament's 'Logos'? See **Alfred Edersheim**, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. I pp. 46 - 48 and Vol. II, pp. 659 - 664.

<sup>231</sup> **Shabbath** 12b.

<sup>232</sup> **Bamidbar Rabbah** X,21.

<sup>233</sup> **Bamidbar Rabbah**, Par. nassa 12.

The most important points of contact with this cryptic name created by the Rabbis are the "angel of the covenant" and the "angel of the Lord". In Judges ch. 6 there is an account of how the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon. We read that "The Lord turned to him and said," and "The Lord answered him". The Rabbis identify the angel with "the Lord". Gideon exclaims, "Ah, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!", verses 14,16 and 22. But what, in the opinion of the Rabbis, is so exceptional in this angel of the Lord?

When the most famous Rabbi of the Middle Ages **RaSHI** considered this issue he referred to the words in Exodus 23:20-21: *"See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way - Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him - since my name is in him."* RaSHI suggests that the words at the end of the verse *"my name is 'in him' mean 'He and I have the same name'."* *"And our Rabbis have said", he continues, "that this is Metatron, whose name is the same as the name of the LORD"*. He also adds that the numerical value of 'Metatron' corresponds to that of 'Shaddai', the name of the Almighty. It was of him Moses was speaking when he said, in Ex. 33:15: "If your presence **אם-אין פניך הלכים וגו** does not go with us do not send us up from here." **RaMBaM** sees here and in the preceding verses Metatron and the Angel of the covenant. Small wonder that as early as in the Talmud we find the simple statement that Metatron is also the Prince of the Countenance.<sup>234</sup>

These discussions may lead us to strange territories indeed, but they illustrate the often irrational roots of Messianism in Jewish sources. The Messiah is in the **Zohar** according to exact quotations of Rabbi

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<sup>234</sup> **ḥagigah** 13a. In **Exodus Rabbah XVII:4** the "prince of the world" is according to Soncino translation "generally identified with Metatron" and "the Time to Come when He will judge His world standing up" as is written in Zech. XIV:4 relates to "the Messianic era".

Tzvi Nassi, *God's "other mode of manifesting himself"*; he sits "upon the throne" and acts as our advocate; he is indeed Lord, and *God's "name is in him"*; in the Messiah we can see the face of God. And according to Midrash Ruth he is functioning as a celestial scribe recording the good deeds of Israel.<sup>235</sup>

### **V,10,7 Why does Midrash Ruth deal with the disputation concerning the heavenly scribe?**

As we have noticed of Midrash Ruth, it speaks of the "throne" or the "seat" of the Messiah. This discussion is very delicate in its nature. When our Midrash relates this to the celestial scribe, it is linked with the extensive disputations about the task and the position of the Messiah. The criticism was probably directed against the heretics who claimed that this would support the Christian teachings of the trinitarianism or at least a kind of dualism. Let us show only two remarks.

This whole esoteric discussion dates from the Tannaitic period on. In the Babylonian Talmud Metatron is described in three central disputations.<sup>236</sup> The first two relate to the **polemics against the heretics**. The "hot potato" of Midrash Ruth, the Tanna **Elisha Ben Abuyah**, is mentioned in **ḥagigah** 15a. He saw Metatron seated and said, "perhaps there are two powers", as though indicating that Metatron himself was a second deity. The Talmud however explains that Metatron was given permission to be seated only as a heavenly scribe recording the good deeds of Israel. Apart from this the Talmud states that it was proved to R. Elisha that Metatron could not be a second deity by the fact that he received 60 blows

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<sup>235</sup> One of the main sources of this discussion is the Zohar. May it be noted that the word Messiah appears there 127 times, the combination King Messiah 17 times, **מלכה קדישא** which relates to the Messiah 121 and Metatron 38 times. In the Talmud the word Messiah is repeated 155 times.

<sup>236</sup> **ḥagigah** 15a, **Sanhedrin** 38b and **Avodah Zarah** 3b.

with fiery rods demonstrating that he was not a god but an angel. These discussions led to dangerous grounds particularly among the Karaite circles. The words in **Sanhedrin** 38b about Metatron "whose name is like that of his Master" were understood in a puzzling and confusing way; he became a "lesser YHWH" יהוה הקטן or "the lesser Lord" אדני הקטן.<sup>237</sup>

Even the second Talmudic disputation is criticizing the heretics. This discussion is related to Daniel VII,9. It begins with a half jesting claim of Rab Judah in Rab's name that "*Adam was a min*" - because he broke the covenant.<sup>238</sup> Then comes a discussion of the "seats of God" and about Metatron. The text in **Sanhedrin** 38b runs followingly:

"As I looked, *thrones* were placed and one that was Ancient of days took his seat".<sup>239</sup> "Why were these necessary? To teach R. Johanan's claim; viz.: The Holy One, blessed be He, does nothing without consulting His Heavenly Court - but how to explain Till thrones were placed? - *One throne was for Himself and one for David (the Messiah)*. Even as it has been taught: One was for Himself and one for David: *this is R. Akiba's view*. R. Jose protested to him: Akiba, how long will thou profane the Shekhinah? Rather, one for justice, and the other for mercy."<sup>240</sup>

We have been proceeding according to the Hillelian method כלל ופרט ופרט וכלל from the whole to the parts and from the parts to the

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<sup>237</sup> Metatron was called also as "the angel Yahoel" and the expressions "the greater Yaho" and "the lesser Yaho" passed into Gnostic literature. See **Encyclopaedia Judaica XI**, pp.1443-1446.

<sup>238</sup> **Sanhedrin** 38b.

<sup>239</sup> In Daniel VII,9 the thrones are in plural forms.

<sup>240</sup> Rabbi **Akiba** gave seemingly his hand for the traitors of the accepted Jewish faith and received this reprimand. The following discussion then quotes the words of Moses, "Come up unto me!" and adds that "It was Metatron, whose name is similar to that of his Master, For my name is in him." This concealed pseudonym is related in some writings to the Messiah.

whole. By this analysis the various components of Midrash Ruth have found their proper place. Elijah and the Messiah are authorized to act as celestial scribes. But the Messiah records and also **seals** good deeds **with the Holy One**. This is the heart of the matter: **אליהו כותב ומלך המשיח והקב"ה חותמים את המעשים הטובים שלנו**. The text itself is so condensed that we ought to ask its concrete "inner affiliation" in the light of the Bible. The whole phrase runs as follows:

"In the past when a man performed a religious duty (עושה מצוה) , the prophet placed it on record; but nowadays when a man performs it, who writes it down? Elijah records it and the **Messiah and the Holy One, blessed be He, subscribe their seal to it**" אליהו כותבה ומלך המשיח והקב"ה חותם על ידיהם

According to "**R. Akibas view**" the Messiah has a special position in the side of God Himself. But is the authority of the Messiah based on the Scriptures? The word in Daniel VII:13 gives a possible answer to it. It emphasizes that *"to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him"*. The New Testament argues this authority of the Messiah very simply. John 5:27 refers to Daniel VII:13 saying about Jesus: "God has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man." Even the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 is based on these words in Daniel. *According to RaSHI, Metsudat David and Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon Son of Man is the King Messiah*. Midrash Ruth tells that the Messiah functions as a heavenly scribe weighing the deeds of Israel together with the Holy One. All this strange logic is reflected in the old Rabbinic writings.

## *Specifications concerning Parashah VII*

### **VII,1 A concealed solution to the Messianic mystery**

**The seventh Parashah** of Midrash Ruth forms a logical bridge to our pattern from **a5** to **a6** and their message about the posterity of Ruth and Boaz. It first mentions "six righteous men, each one of them possessing six outstanding virtues". The last one, the Messiah, will have six features which are reflected already in his symbolical names according to the prophecy in Isaiah IX. Even Daniel I:4 stated of the three young companions of the prophet that they possessed six high moral values. And about the Messiah was told in Isaiah XI:2 that "the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding" etc. The compiler of Midrash Ruth then turns again to the secret of the Messiah. It takes up the enigmatic words in Isaiah IX,6 **לְסוֹרֶכֶה הַמְּשֻׁרָה וְלִשְׁלוֹם אֵין-קֵץ** "of the increase of his government there will be no end". And Midrash Ruth remarks that *"some observe that l'marbeh (of the increase) is written with a closed mem"*.

Already in connection with the sixth interpretation in **a6** we spoke about the concept "stomach" or **מעיה** which means primarily the posterity. We quoted the verse in Isaiah 48:19 and the Messianic promise of 2 Samuel 7:12, "I will raise up your offspring **זרעך** (seed) after you, who shall *come forth from your body* **ממעידך** and I will establish his kingdom".

But why does the compiler of Midrash Ruth combine the enigmatic item of the blessing in the "stomach" of Ruth to Isaiah IX,6? Does it have a special correlation with the Messianic expectation and with the birth of the Messiah? Now finally the puzzle of the *"closed mem"* intends to explain this mystery. In addition to this the section

VIII,1 speaks in riddles saying that he will also be "a seed from another place": "R. Huna said: *It is written For God hath appointed me another seed* (Gen. IV, 25), *that is, seed from another place, referring to the Messiah*". All this is concealed behind the discussions of Midrash Ruth.

## VII,2 The secret of the "closed Mem", הסוד של המ"ם הסתומה

The Rabbis say in one voice that the whole prophecy of Isaiah IX relates to Hezekiah. But it is strange that the child should be Hezekiah, because he was already nine years old when his father Ahaz came to the throne, and our verses plainly describe the joy at a newborn child when the prophet wrote his words. However it surely speaks of the Messiah, **משיחא דשלמא**, as the Targum confirms.<sup>241</sup> Even the **Midrash on Deuteronomy I:20** speaks of the Messiah in the same context:

"Jacob said to Esau: 'I have yet to raise up Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah', of whom Scripture says, Children in whom was no blemish (Dan.I, 4). Another explanation: He said to him: 'I have yet to raise up the Messiah', of whom it is written, For a child is born to us (Isa. IX, 5)."<sup>242</sup>

The incontrovertible conclusion of the Sages in the Talmud is, that the word **לסרבה** "the increase" is written with a *closed mem* and not a normal open one because the **ס** here refers to the secret of the Messiah. The tradition is recorded in the name of **Rabbi Bar Qaparah**:

"The Holy One wished to make Hezekiah the Messiah and Sennacherib Gog and Magog. But the attribute of judgment

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<sup>241</sup> **A. Lukyn Williams**, *A Manual of Christian Evidences for Jewish People* with a Preface by H.L. Strack, London 1911, p. 157.

<sup>242</sup> **Deuteronomy Rabbah I:20**.

pleaded against it, and said, David the king of Israel repeated so many songs and praises, and thou hast not made him the Messiah; and yet *thou art thinking of making Hezekiah the Messiah*, for the sake so many miracles have been performed, and who, nevertheless, has not repeated one song of praise! *So that council was closed, and hence the closed mem.*"<sup>243</sup>

The Christian Kabbalists have insisted in the Middle Ages that Isaiah IX,6 would signify the closed womb of the virgin from which Jesus had issued.<sup>244</sup>

Even in this discussion about the closed mem Midrash Ruth is probably defending the commonly accepted theory about the delay of the day of Messiah. This might be directed against the heretics in this delicate question. However the logic of the argumentation here, as we saw, is not watertight. It remains to be remembered that the birth of the Messiah was to be somewhat mysterious. He was to be raised "by the Holy Spirit" **דְרוּחַ קוֹדֵשׁ** in accord to the wording in Targum Jonathan; there was however a national disappointment as the compiler of the main core of the Talmud, **Rabbi Judah**, stated: "*These times were over long ago*". As regards to his origin, he was to be "before the stars and zodiacs". But now the Messianic secret is according to Midrash Ruth connected with "the closed mem" and the king Hezekiah.

In the **Zohar** there are at least **six discussions** about the closed mem. They all are related to the story in **Sanhedrin 94a** about the Holy One, who "wished to appoint Hezekiah as the Messiah". Four of them are bound to the **Song of Solomon IV,12**, "*A Garden locked is my sister, my bride; a garden locked, a fountain sealed*". Rabbi Yitzhak said that this would happen "in the time of the Holy

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<sup>243</sup> **Sanhedrin 94,a** and e.g. **Yalkut Isaiah** in the corresponding context of Isaiah IX.

<sup>244</sup> See **Yehuda Liebes**, *Studies in the Zohar*, "Christian Influences on the Zohar", pp. 139-161, State University of New York 1993.

King" **בשעתא דמלכא קדישא** , as we can see in the Zohar.<sup>245</sup> In fact this would mean that the Holy King, the Messiah, is somehow related to this "locked garden".

But what does the concept "stomach" **מעיה** really mean? It is not been declared in Midrash Ruth at all. Would it have a correlation with the "womb" or uterus? Would it point to the birth of the Messiah? The discussion about the closed mem and the Messiah is as we have seen essentially linked with the "locked garden and sealed fountain" in the Song of Solomon. What would this hidden hint mean then applied to Midrash Ruth?

### **VII,3 The Song of Songs as a key-text for Messianic interpretation**

The **Song of Songs** is mentioned as regards to the coming of the Messiah at least **16** times. **In the Targum** there appear **seven** various discussions. Verse **I,8** relates to "the fairest among women" who is going "by the footsteps of the flock" - the fair virgin will "guide her offspring" "in the captivity until the time that I shall send King Messiah" **בגלותא עד זמן דאשלח מלכא משיחא** . In **I,17** the verse speaks of the "house of cedar" - the Targum explains "how beautiful is the house of the sanctuary of the Lord" "in the days of the King Messiah" **ביומי מלכא משיחא** . **IV,5** relates to the "two breasts" of the bride - the Targum expands the item to the "two deliverers, the Messiah Son of David and Messiah Son of Ephraim, who are like Moses and Aaron" **משיח בר דוד ומשיח בר אפרים דמין למשה ואהרן** . **VII,14** relates to the "fragrance of the choice fruits" - "when it shall please the Lord to redeem his people from captivity, it shall be said to King Messiah; Now the end of the captivity is come" **ותאמר** **למלכא משיחא כבר שלים קץ גלותא** . **VIII,1** in the Targum promises: "At that time shall King Messiah be revealed to the congregation of

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<sup>245</sup> **Zohar**, Vol.C, VeTosfoth 66b and 307a.

Israel" - בההיא זמנא אתגלי מלכא משיחא . VIII,2 tells, that "I would lead thee into my mother's house" - the Targum explains: "I will lead thee, O King Messiah to the house of my sanctuary" אנהגך . VIII,4 exclaims: "I charge you, O daughter of Jerusalem" - Targum: "King Messiah shall say, I adjure you, O my people of the house of Israel" השבעתי יאמר מלכא משיחא . All this proves that the Song of Songs can also be considered as a base for the Messianic idea.

The hand of the compiler in the Midrash literature is usually more free to express the delicate opinions than that of the Targum. We have tried to make our analysis according to the weight of each concept in proportion to the whole. How does then the **Midrash of the Song of Songs** reflect the Messianic hope? According to the study of the famous **Dr B. Pick** there are **eight** different discussions in Midrash of the Song of Songs related to the Messiah.<sup>246</sup>

The **Midrash to the Song of Songs** speaks of Messiah in II,8: "The voice of my beloved; behold, he comes" - "this is the King Messiah". II,9: "My beloved is like a gazelle; he stands behind our wall" - "*the first Redeemer will appear before them and then disappear: so is also the last Redeemer*" etc. II,10-12: "my beloved speaks and says to me: Arise my love." - "My beloved spoke i.e. Elijah; and said unto me, through the King Messiah." II,13: "The vines are in blossom" - "The days of the Messiah will be preceded by a great plague". III,11: "on the day of his wedding" - "This denotes the days of the Messiah." IV,16: Awake, O north wind" - "This refers to King Messiah, who is in a northern region, that he may come and rebuild the sanctuary, which is to be in the south." VI,10: "Who is this that looks forth like the dawn" - "*This signifies the redemption of the Messiah.*" In fact the picture of the "dawn" is related in the Jewish prayer book many times to the Messiah. The last example relates to VII,6: "How fair and pleasant you are" - "*how fair in the world to*

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<sup>246</sup> **Bernhard Pick**, Old Testament Passages Messianically Applied by the Ancient Synagogue III, Hebraica 1886, pp. 31-34.

*come, how pleasant in the days of the Messiah."* Here we grasp some common motifs with Midrash Ruth.

There is in addition a discussion in the Midrash which could be in the list of **Bernhard Pick**. All this confirms the impression that Song of Songs offers important material for the Messianic idea. V,2 is saying: "I slept, but my heart was awake. Hark! My beloved is knocking." The Midrash has an interesting point of view:

*"My heart is awake for the redemption. I am asleep in respect of the redemption, but the heart of the Holy One, blessed be He, is awake to redeem me - R. Jassa said: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: 'My sons, present to me an opening of repentance no bigger than the eye of a needle, and I will widen it into openings through which wagons and carriages can pass'." In the following discussion this is combined with the Messianic expectation; "R. Levi said: Were Israel to practise repentance even for one day, they would be redeemed, and forthwith the Son of David would come."<sup>247</sup>*

In soccer we throw a coin in order to see whether it would be "heads or tails" - the reverse side or the "tail" has the number and the head shows the picture. The main picture in our study concerns the Messianic idea as such in Midrash Ruth. We have seen the manifold nature of that expectation even in the Targum and

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<sup>247</sup> **Midrash Rabbah**, The Song of Songs V:3. In Hebrew the above verse is קול דודי דופק "the **voice** of the beloved one is knocking". God is not using coercion or compulsion - he is drawing us to himself with his tender voice. Midrash IV,22 is stating, "**A garden shut up is my sister my bride**" and the beloved is our "bridegroom". The bridegroom is knocking behind the door. Probably it is this verse which has given the background to **Revelation 3:20**: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any one hears my voice and opens the door, **I will come in to him and eat with him**". The special source for Song of Songs in the commentary of MaLBIM שיר השירים על מגילת המור על מגילת שיר השירים speaks in connection to the "seal upon our heart" "which many waters can not quench", verses VIII,6-7, that even the "sufferings of the Messiah will not achieve that this love would extinguish in our hearts".

Midrash. But the same coin has also the other side, the fulfilment of the Messianic message in the celestial meal described in Jewish literature.

### *Specifications concerning Parashah VIII*

In the eight section, Parashah VIII, of the Messianic message in Midrash Ruth there are **four basic items with their side tracks**. It **first** speaks of the "tainted" origin of David and Tamar the ancestors of Ruth and other biblical characters and about the "evil inclination" of mankind. **Secondly** it touches the wide discussion about Perez in the Rabbinic literature. **Thirdly** it deals extensively with the "ladders of princes" and "ladders of kings" which are leading to the fulfilment of Jewish Messianic expectation. Then **at last** the message of the genealogical tree of the Messiah is closely linked also with the same in the New Testament. All of these items are tangent to central Christian problematics.

## **1 The tainted descent (משפחות פסולות) of Ruth and the evil inclination (היצר הרע) in Jewish and Christian literature**

Parashah eight is putting a rhetorical question typical to the literary genre of Midrash: "David - is he not of tainted descent?" דוד, "Tamar - is she not a tainted descent?" תמר, לא מפסול משפחה היא. All this is to assume that the Messiah himself will also have a kind of tainted origin. The concept פסול means a "spoiled" and "depraved" matter which can not be accepted for food or for other purpose. In Genesis 6:11-12 we read similarly, that "the earth was corrupt before God"; "for all

flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth". The same problem was characteristic also to the time of judges.

However the people of Israel had to examine its moral conduct; "*Tremble and sin not!*" and "*Commune with your own heart upon your bed!*" In Ephesians 4:26 we find the same principle of Psalm 4:4, "*Be ye angry and sin not!*" The whole verse is according to King James version: "*Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.*" The problems of our lives derive from the "evil inclination" which rules over our behaviour.

**R. Jacob Bar Abijah**, an Israeli Amora from the fifth generation (350-375 CE.), combined the sin and the evil inclination with his words: "Fight against your evil inclination and sin not!" The Hebrew concept for this inclination **היצר** is based in Genesis 6:5 where we read: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually*" **וּכְלֵי-יִצְרַח מֵחִשְׁבַּת לְבוֹרָק רַע כָּל-יוֹם** .

### **1,1 The problem of free will and original sin**

In Jewish thought it is not possible to estimate the weight of various claims in the light of their historical preference measuring which saying would be earlier or later. Of course there are certain layers of development in the Jewish thinking. However, some basic features remain through the centuries. One of these is the teaching of the unity of God Almighty. The other one is perhaps the consciousness of the limits in our human nature. The problem of the "evil inclination" has been a constant object in Jewish writings.

The famous Swedish scholar **Hugo Odeberg** has directed attention

to the rabbis' teaching that man has *free will*.<sup>248</sup> Paul does not use the term "original sin" - in stead of it he emphasized that man is *corrupted by his sinful nature*. Therefore he is not capable in his own strength of doing what is acceptable to God. Only regeneration changes the human mind, so that one "is renewed in mind and spirit" and has "the mind of the Spirit" - but then even one must live his life "with fear and trembling."<sup>249</sup>

This *emphasis on free will* generally accepted by the rabbis appears in Jewish prayer literature, the Talmud and the sayings of the Fathers. In this context there is reason to mention only some clear statements: **Pirquei Aboth** III:16 cites the well-known words of **Rabbi Akiba**: "*Everything is predetermined; people have been given free will and God's goodness judges the world according to the preponderance of works* לפי רוב המעשה".<sup>250</sup> The rabbis say unambiguously that here it is a question of free will and that the main trend of people's deeds is taken into account at the final judgment as it has been emphasized in Midrash Ruth. They say:

"Blessed are Israelites when they practise the Torah and good works and when their evil impulse is under their own control and not they under its control." "Blessed is the man who controls his evil impulse like a man and loves the Law" - "Be not like slaves who serve their master for the sake of their allowance." "Who is a mighty man? He that subdues his evil inclination."<sup>251</sup>

The character of the Jewish conception of man, which comes up also in the New Testament, is visible in the compact description of the historian **Josephus**. Josephus had himself experienced both a Pharisaic and an Essene period in his life. So as an expert he

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<sup>248</sup> **Hugo Odeberg**, *Fariséisme og Kristendom*, Oslo 1949.

<sup>249</sup> See Rom. 12:2, Eph. 4:23 and Phil. 2:12.

<sup>250</sup> The Hebrew **Pirquei Aboth meforashim me-et Eliezer Levi**, Tel-Aviv 1956, pp. 52-53 and **Aboth** III:16.

<sup>251</sup> **Abodah Zarah** 5,b and 19,a as well as **Pirquei Aboth** IV:1.

tackled the essential differences between the main religious parties of his time. It is useful to remember his words as such in this context:

"Now at this time there were three religious parties among the Jews, which held different opinions concerning human affairs; the first being that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes. As for the *Pharisees*, they say that *certain deeds are subject to Fate, but not all; other deeds are dependent upon Fate but not brought about by Fate*. The sect of the *Essenes*, however, declares that Fate is mistress of all things, and that *everything that happens is predetermined*. But the *Sadducees* do away with Fate - *all things lie within our own power*, so that we ourselves are responsible for our well-being, while we suffer misfortune through our own stupidity."<sup>252</sup>

## 1,2 Some extracts concerning free will in Midrash Ruth and the New Testament

**Myron Bialik Lerner** gave in his Hebrew academic dissertation some concrete examples about the stylistic devices in the New Testament and in Midrash Ruth. They concern the good works, the merits which are valid also in the world to come and the evil inclination. There is always the same old literary pattern in both of them. The antithesis between this world and the coming one is expressed as follows:<sup>253</sup>

1. "In this world a) one who is small b) can become great b) and he who is great a) can become small, but in the world to come a) one who is small b) can not become great and b) he who is great a) can not become small." This is resembling the words of Jesus in Mark 10:31, that "in the age to come - many

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<sup>252</sup> **Josephus**, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XIII,V,9.

<sup>253</sup> See **Lerner**, the first Volume pp. 76-78.

that are first will be last and the last first".<sup>254</sup>

2. Matthew 7:17-18 shows a similar model too. **Lerner** is stating in the above presentation that a certain extract of the Sermon on the Mount proves that this pattern typical to Amoraic era was used already in the Gospel. Jesus said according to the translation of Lerner that a) "every good tree a) bears good fruit, b) but every bad tree b) bears bad fruit and a) a good tree cannot b) bear bad fruit b) nor can a bad tree a) bear a good fruit."

3. The third example of **Lerner** speaks of the evil inclination: "A free slave of his master: That man, all the time when he lives, he is serving for two masters, he serves for his Creator and he serves for his inclination **ליצרו ועבד ליצרו** : a) when he hears the will of his Creator b) he harms his inclination and b) when he obeys the will of his inclination a) he makes harm to his Creator."

**Lerner** summarizes his reference related to the New Testament saying: "The famous Sermon on the Mount repeats the pattern 'blessed are those who' at least nine times. The corresponding verses in Luke are repeating it four times and the antithesis 'woe to you that are' is used respectively four times too - the Gospels are seemingly *reflecting the same old mode of eloquence* which was commonly used in the first Christian century or after it. *A similar style in the original layer of Midrash Ruth seems to indicate that we have there a sermon from the period of Tannaim.*"<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> See also Matthew 19:30 and Luke 13:30.

<sup>255</sup> **Lerner**, Volume I, p. 156. From the point of view of their content and mode of presentation the Gospels dovetail thus with the same reasoning typical of the Midrash in common as has been shown by **M. Gertner** in his study 'Midrashim in the New Testament', J. Sem. Stud. 7, 1962, pp. 267-292.

### 1,3 The evil inclination in the writings of Qumran

The consciousness of the human limits and depravity in our nature is as we have said a kind of common property. This becomes apparent when we study **the Scrolls of the Dead Sea**. In the Scrolls discovered at Qumran the term **יצר** is repeated dozens of times. Its background is the phrase in Gen. 6:5 about **מחשבת יצרו**, that is, the thoughts arising from the "impulse" or "our inherited inclination". For example, the "hodayoth" or hymns of thanksgiving are using the expressions "*deceitful nature*", "*creature of clay*", "*creature of dust*" or "*fleshly nature*" **יצר רמיה, יצר החמר, יצר העפר, יצר בשר ועוד**. Also Paul spoke a lot of "*fleshly nature*", "*of the mind of the flesh*" and "*fleshliness*". The preference in Qumran is mostly given to the concept of the "creature of clay", which appears many times in the Jewish prayers too.

The whole mankind is in fact according to the expression of Midrash Ruth of "tainted descent". In their content these ideas of the Essenes are tangent also with Paul's view of man. The idea that I am a "creature of clay" reminds one of the words in 2 Cor. 4:7 that "we have this treasure in jars of clay." The Essenes wrote almost in the same way:

"To God Most High belong all the acts of justice, and the path of man is not secure except by the spirit which God creates for him."  
 "And I am a *creature of clay* - my *nature of dust* I have known by the spirit which you have given me." "What, then, is flesh to understand? - And how can *dust* direct its steps?" "In contemplating your glory I recount your wonders, and on understanding it I trust in the abundance of your compassion and hope in your forgiveness. Because you have fashioned *my being of clay חמר יצר* - and you have put within me the *fleshly nature יצר בשר*.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> **Hodayoth** IV:31 fragment 3:11 and 14 and **Hodayoth** XV:25 and X:20-23.

## 1,4 The evil inclination in the light of the Siddur

To estimate the weight of various claims in the light of their historical preference is always difficult. The oldest layers of Jewish thinking are however reflected in the invariable prayers which were used also as a base for the common teaching. There are particularly two old petitions in the Morning Service which have been unchangeable from the old. Both of them affirm the impression by the Jews that man would have a free will. The beautiful prayer **היא נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא** אלהי, which is always used in the morning runs as follows:

"O my God, *the soul which thou gavest me is pure; thou didst form it, thou didst breathe it into me; thou preservest it within me; and thou wilt take it from me, but wilt restore it unto me hereafter.*" <sup>257</sup> Even this prayer as many others ends with *a faith in resurrection*: "Lord of all souls! Blessed art thou, O Lord, who restorest souls unto dead bodies." <sup>258</sup>

The second example from the morning prayer of the Siddur has probably given material for the Lords Prayer:

"O *lead us not* into sin or transgression or iniquity, or *temptation* or to scorn: let not the *evil inclination* have sway over us **אל תשלט בנו יצר הרע** and keep us far from a bad man and a bad companion: make us cleave to the *good inclination* **דבקנו ביצר הטוב** and to good works: *subdue our inclination* so that it may submit itself unto thee **כוף את יצרנו להשתעבד לך**; and let us obtain this day and every day grace, favor and mercy in thine eyes and in the eyes of all who behold us etc."

These extracts emphasize that a man is basically pure in his

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<sup>257</sup> In **Berakhoth** 60,b there is an advise to say this prayer every morning after awakening.

<sup>258</sup> The English translations are from the **Siddur** of Dr **M. Stern** pp. 14 and 16.

innermost being and that sin lurks for us mostly from outside of our hearts. If the will of man would be free then he would succeed to control his tainted inclination. **R. Jacob Bar Abijah** said in Midrash Ruth: "Fight against your evil inclination and sin not!" According to him that would be the only way to be worthy of seeing the days of the Messiah.

## 2 Discussion concerning Perez,

### פרץ ומוצאותיו של המשיח

The second aspect of the eighth Parashah touches the wide discussion about **Perez** in the Rabbinic literature. The word Perez functions as a bridge to the genealogy of the Messiah. It is also a keyword in the New Testament. Midrash Ruth is asking: "*Look at your own genealogy - do you then have an honourable genealogy?*" After this Midrash Ruth explains the salvation history in the light of the tainted human race - "*these are the generations of Perez.*"

We have already seen briefly the name of Perez as "a seed from another place". In the end of Parashah VIII we read, that "*R. Huna said: It is written For God hath appointed me another seed, that is, seed from another place, referring to the Messiah.*"

In Micah 2:13 we saw a similar interpretation about word **הפורץ** לפניהם "one who breaks open the way". The word **פורץ** and Perez **פרץ**, one of the main figures in Midrash Ruth, were of the same root, as we have said. Elijah is the "breaker" who will come before the Messiah. Again even here **RaDaK** saw *Elijah; and in the "King" of the above verse there was "the Branch, the Son of David"*.

Mental and spiritual concepts must, by their very nature, be

described figuratively. We cannot explain precisely what, for example, 'faith', 'hope', or 'love' is. By the same token, the Messianic mystery has, as it were, created its own secret code, which must be "cracked" before it will be understood. One of the toughest nuts is **Gen. 38:29** on the son of Judah and Tamar: "*What a breach you have made for yourself! Therefore his name was called Perez.*" Perez "the breaker" is associated with Messiah primarily as the conqueror of death. Ben Paretz, "son of Perez" is actually one of the best known cryptic Messiah epithets. In Matthew's genealogy of Jesus the name appears in the form 'Phares': "And Judah begat Phares", Matt. 1:3. Therefore Jesus was, in a sense the 'Son of Perez'.

The 'Seal of the Midrashim', R. **Tanhuma Bar Abba**, speaks again and again of the Messiah in connection with Perez. "*He is the final saviour, the Messiah-King.*" Tanhuma states that there are sinners who through their falling have sustained great loss, and those who have benefited from their misdemeanours:

"Thus Judah profited, because from him came forth Perez and Hezron from whom are descended David and *the Messiah-King*, he who will save Israel. Behold how great the difficulties the Holy One indeed gave until he was to raise up *the Messiah-King from Judah*, he of whom it is written, 'And the spirit of the Lord will be upon him'." <sup>259</sup>

The **Midrash Rabbah on Genesis** discusses about the blessing of Jacob and the role of Judah at greater length. Firstly the half-humorous observation is made that, "*Judah was busy taking a wife, while the Holy One, blessed be He, was creating the light of the Messiah*". <sup>260</sup> One of the main Rabbinic expository works known as "**The Priestly Gift**" in Mikraoth Gedoloth says of this: "*The last Saviour is the Messiah, the Son of David, who is descended from*

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<sup>259</sup> **Midrash Tanhuma**, Bereshith va-Yeshev and Isaiah 61:1-3.

<sup>260</sup> **Midrash Bereshith Rabbah**, Par. 85.

*Judah's son Perez*", and it continues, "*This is the Messiah-King; as it is written, 'A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse' and 'The Lord will extend your mighty sceptre from Zion.'*" (Is. 11:1 and Ps. 110:2) The **Rabbis' explanation** adds: "*This is the Messiah, who will soon appear, because it is written of him that 'One who breaks open the way will go up before them.'*" (Micah 2:13) Both of the above sources are attached to Mikraoth Gedoloth.

It is important to take note of the Bible passages mentioned above. They illustrate a method by which weakly founded Messianic prophecies are set in their larger context. We see furthermore that the Targums and Midrashim generally speak of the 'Messiah-King', and not so much of some nebulously argumented 'Messiah-concept'.

**RaMBaN**, R. Moses Ben Nahman, who lived towards the end of the 13th century, described according to Mikraoth Gedoloth the birth of Perez as follows:

"He was *encircled by a hedge*, and he was enclosed within it. That is why it is said 'So this is how *you have broken through the hedge* and come out from within it.'" Perez was the first-born, "The first-born through the power of the Most High, as it is written, 'I will give to him a first-born son'. This was written about the holy person who is to come, David, the King of Israel - long may he live. Those who are wise will understand."

What would 'those who are wise' understand, and what is meant by 'breaking through the hedge'? Historically this well depicts what came true when Christianity broke out of the Jewish mould, as it has happened. That is probably also the reason why Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:14 about Christ, that he "has broken down the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances". Here is the picture about "*the hedge of the law*" as expressed in Jewish writings. Midrash Ruth is reflecting the common national disappointment among the Jews in the time of its compilation. Parashah eight tries to connect the first link of the Messianic genealogy, Perez, to its proper setting.

### 3 The "ladders of princes and kings" סולמות לנשיאים וסולמות למלכים

Thirdly, parashah VIII deals extensively with the "ladders of princes" and "ladders of kings" which are leading to the fulfilment of Jewish Messianic expectation. In our textual and conceptual analysis we are trying to uncover *every possible detail linked with the general picture in the Messianic idea*. Our Midrash has revealed to us an abundance of new perspectives.

In the following presentation Midrash Ruth tries to differentiate between "**the ladders of princes**" and the "**ladders of kings**". The same way it makes distinction between "*the roll of a book which is prescribed for me*" and "*the book*" which refers to the Messiah: "*Ram begot Amminadab; and Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Why is he called Salmon? Because up to him they formed ladders of princes, from him onwards they formed ladders of kings.*" **Rabinowitz** explains in his translation of Ruth Rabbah that "Salma ends the line of princes or judges and from Boaz his son begins the line of kings, since it was destined that Boaz and Ruth should be the progenitors of David and his descendants".

Midrash Ruth does not forget the problem of the "tainted" persons in this genealogy. When the compiler explains the difference between the roll and the book, it describes it as follows: "I have come with the roll of a book which is prescribed for me (Ps.

XL,8).<sup>261</sup> 'With the roll' refers to the verse, Concerning whom Thou didst command that they should not enter into Thy congregation (Lam. I,10). 'In the book' as it is said, 'An Ammonite and a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord' (Deut. XXIII,4). And not only have I been allowed to enter, but in *the roll and the book it is written concerning me*. **'In the roll' means Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David; 'In the book',** And the Lord said: *Arise, anoint him; for this is he* (1 Sam. XVI,12). R. Huna said: *It is written For God hath appointed me another seed (Gen. IV,25), that is, seed from another place, referring to the Messiah.*" - *"It was to thee that I looked forward. What need had I to record the genealogy of Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Nahor and Terah?"* (1 Chron. I,24).

In fact, the genealogy is not "needed" now as a primary matter for Midrash Ruth. Still even these concealed secrets are related to the Messiah. We must realize that there are probably no other sources which give in the same exact way the genealogical tree of ancient tribes as the Bible does. But it was related always to the hereditary rights of the Hebrew people to their land - on the other hand every tribe had received also a spiritual inheritance. Midrash Ruth is interested more in the spiritual aspects of kinship, rather than the purely biological. And Judah, who married Tamar and was therefore also "tainted", is in a way the first important ancestor of the Messiah.

This is confirmed in the blessing of Jacob, Genesis 49:10. The Sages accepted in one voice that it speaks of the Messiah. Even the text of **Qumran** interprets this verse messianically speaking of the time when *"the Righteous Messiah, the Branch of David, has come"*.<sup>262</sup> In this context the above verse is of uttermost

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<sup>261</sup> **Hebrews** 10:8 is using the same idiom: "It is written of me in the roll of the book".

<sup>262</sup> **Qumran** Commentaries on Genesis **4Q252 Frag. 1, Col. 5**, line 3.

importance. Since the time of Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century the Christian exegesis has considered Jacob's blessing to be Messianic.<sup>263</sup> The Jewish Messianic tradition of this text is founded on older material. **Targum Onqelos** says of **Judah's sceptre** that it will not depart "*until the Messiah comes, he who has the power to reign*". **Targum Jonathan** puts it that the verse refers to "*the age of the Messiah-King, the King who will come as the youngest of his children*". **Targum Yerushalmi** speaks of the "*time when the Messiah-King will come*".

The **Midrash** literature attaches to the blessing of Judah in Genesis 49:10 some additional features. Rabbi **Hillel** declares first in **Bereshith Rabbah** a well known remark:

"A genealogical table was found in Jerusalem which said that he was descended from David". Then follows a shattering observation: "Rabbi Hanin said that Israel will not require the teaching of the Messiah-King, because in Is. 11:10 it is written; 'In that day the Gentiles will rally to the root of Jesse', but not Israel." <sup>264</sup>

**Midrash Tanhuma** proposes the following remark in its discussion of Judah's portion of Jacob's blessing:

"Why did your brothers praise you, Judah? Because all Israel would be called 'Jews' after you; and not only for that reason, but also because the Messiah will be your descendent, he who will save Israel; as it is written, 'A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse' (Is. 11:1)." <sup>265</sup>

All the discussion about the genealogy of the Messiah has to be seen in this framework. Tamar and Judah are beginning an important

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<sup>263</sup> **E.W. Hengstenberg**, *Christology of the Old Testament*, pp. 27-33.

<sup>264</sup> **Midrash Bereshith Rabbah**, Par. 98:8 and 98:9.

<sup>265</sup> **Midrash Tanhuma**, *Bereshith va-Yehi* 64.

phase in the history of salvation. The various ways to express the genealogical ladders aim at the same point: The Messiah had to be a descendant of Judah and David. And David was a descendant of Ruth and Boaz.

## 4 The genealogical tree of the Messiah linked with the New Testament

The sundry ways of expressing the dependence of the genealogical tree of the Messiah do not inevitable lend a hand to dissection by modern methods of criticism. If we consider the corresponding patterns in **Aboth** and in the **New Testament**, both of them represent the same principle simplifying the jungle of names and making shortcuts to more prominent figures.

In **Aboth chapter V:1-9** there is a pattern of the number ten. "By **ten sayings** the world was created" - "There are **ten generations from Adam to Noah** עשרה דורות מאדם ועד נח to show how much long-suffering is before Him, for all the generations went on provoking Him until He brought upon them the waters of the Flood" - "Ten generations from Noah to Abraham עשרה דורות מנח ועד אברהם to make known how much long-suffering is before Him" - "With **ten trials** Abraham our father was tried" - "Ten wonders were done for our fathers in Egypt" etc. All this was intended to a kind of mnemonic help.

The same mnemonic principle concerns **the pedigree of Jesus according to Matthew**. His genealogy comprises a **triple 14-name series** which, using gematria, spells out "three times David", the numeric value of the name 'David' being  $4+6+4 = 14$ . Gematria was used often as a mnemonic device but it always had a direct bearing on the actual subject matter itself, as has been noted in Matthew 1:17: *"Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen*

*from the exile to the Christ.*" If Matthew, then, did use the cryptic gematria methods current in his day, we can easily understand his somewhat forced way of dividing Joseph's lineage into a series of three 14's. Terminating, as he did, his lineage with Abraham he only had 42 generations to accommodate, whereas Luke, continuing right back to Adam, had 56.

The problem of Matthew's genealogy lies primarily in the statement that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, a claim which would seem to render Joseph's genealogy meaningless.<sup>266</sup> The Talmud, furthermore, is at pains to make it clear that "*only the father's family is called family; the mother's family is not called family*". It is, perhaps for this reason that Matthew sketches the "formal" father's lineage.<sup>267</sup>

It may be that **Luke is acknowledging this** in giving Mary's genealogy, although he too, following the legal line, attaches it to Joseph. The presentation of Midrash Ruth becomes more convenient after this ostensible bypath. Luke begins his family tree with Joseph's father-in-law Heli and concludes with Adam and God. There are two passages in the Talmud which speak of "*Mary, daughter of Heli*".<sup>268</sup> Some scholars indicate that this would refer to Jesus' mother.<sup>269</sup> In 3:23 Luke uses the phrase *ὡς ενομιζέτο*, 'as was supposed', for a bridge. In the Greek we read that Jesus was "the son, so it was supposed, of Joseph, the son of Heli". The Greek

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<sup>266</sup> **Larry L. Lyke**, the Professor at Harvard University, has written briefly of this item in his article "Midrash Ruth Rabbah and the Matthean Genealogy of Jesus".

<sup>267</sup> See **Joachim Jeremias**, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 284-297, "The Historical Value of Lay Genealogies", London 1969.

<sup>268</sup> **Jerusalem Talmud**, *ḥagigah* II 77d and **Sanhedrin** VI 23c.

<sup>269</sup> This **John Lightfoot's** supposition that the notice in **T.J. ḥagigah** II 77d of Mary daughter of Heli refers to the mother of Jesus seems to be conjectural and quite unwarranted although it can be found in some popular studies too. See **A. Lukyn Williams**, *Christian Evidences for Jewish People*, London 1911, p. 17.

phrase corresponds to the Hebrew expression כחזקה or כמו הוחזק, which means that the matter had been legally "**confirmed**". Thus, before the law, it was right to connect Jesus through Joseph to his father-in-law Heli. For the Jewish reader this was sufficient evidence of the fact that Jesus was, both on his mother's side and on his "foster-father's" side, legally "recognised" and confirmed as a descendant of David.<sup>270</sup>

Western thought often demands from a genealogy more than the experts, the Jews themselves, were in the habit of writing down, with the result that the genealogies of Matthew and Luke have been subjected to the minutest examination in search of inconsistencies. It is noteworthy that Luke assumes Mary to be of Davidic extraction also on other accounts than the genealogical.<sup>271</sup> Paul too refers strongly to this.<sup>272</sup> The church father **Ignatius** says ca. 100-110 AD that, "*Our Lord Jesus Christ was born of Mary in the divine economy, of the seed of David and through the Holy Spirit*".<sup>273</sup> Thus Jesus was in truth, as he is called again and again by the Gospels, "the Son of David".

Matthew sets out his genealogy as the pedigree of "Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham", thus setting **Abraham** in a position of prominence in the divine dispensation. **Midrash Ruth** gives in the end of Parashah VIII a long parable of a king who had lost "a precious pearl" from his head. Abraham was the pearl that God the King had "found". The compiler of Midrash is saying: "*It was thee that I looked forward.*" **Bamidbar Rabbah** Parashah 2 describes "the seed of Abraham" stating, that "in the Messianic age it will be like the sands of the sea". Nehemiah 9:8 mentions the

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<sup>270</sup> **Baba Bathra** 134a says that the mere verbal recognition of the child was considered sufficient.

<sup>271</sup> Luke 1:32 and Acts 2:30.

<sup>272</sup> See eg. Romans 1:3 and 2 Tim. 2:8.

<sup>273</sup> **Ignatius** in his letter to the Ephesians, XVIII:20.

name of Abraham characterizing him as follows: "You 'found' his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him."

Midrash Ruth drew up an ingenious way to solve the pedigree of the Messiah when it divided his ancestors to princes or judges and kings. The partition of two main figures which God found, Abraham and David, was very reasonable too. The Gospel of Matthew begins with both of these names; "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." For the Jewish reader that is an impressive prelude indeed!

Midrash Ruth presents some of the same names in its genealogical "ladders" as the New Testament does: "*In the roll means Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David*" - all those nine names are repeated in Matthew 1:3-6. "*What need had I to record the genealogy of Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Nahor and Terah? (1 Chron. 1:24). Only on account of thee Abraham*" - again all those names are in Luke 3:34-36. Midrash Ruth helps us to see the consistency of the pedigree of Jesus in the Gospels also.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> In dealing with the New Testament and the Midrash we are leaning on the secondary literature only in the necessary proportion to the whole. The common traits of both are many as can be seen eg. in the following studies: **Gertner M.**, Midrashim in the New Testament, J. Sem. Stud. 7, 1962, p. 267-292. **Hirschberg H.**, Paulus im Midrash, Z. Relig. & Gesetzsg. 1960, p. 252-256. **Kister M.**, The Sayings of Jesus and the Midrash, Immanuel 15, 1982-83, pp. 39-50. **A. Lukyn Williams**, A Manual of Christian Evidences for Jewish People, London 1911 with a Preface by H.L. Strack. **McGrath B.**, The Meaning and Use of Midrash, Contemporary N.T. Studies 1965, p. 72-77. **Lachs Samuel Tobias**, A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament, New York 1987 etc.

## VI THE SAGES BEHIND THE MESSIANIC PARASHIYOTH IN MIDRASH RUTH

The traditions behind the ideas of Midrash Ruth are anchored with the words of certain well known rabbis. The determination of the time of the editing and arranging of the various Midrashim is however by no means a simple matter. However, as we have said, it is possible to arrive at a *relative date*, that is, *to determine the relation of a particular Midrash to others*. To do this one cannot rely on the historical allusions alone or merely on the names of the Sages mentioned in the Midrash, since all the Midrashim contain much material from different and extended eras. *The various traditions however are anchored to well known names of certain rabbis which also had well known friends with whom they used to discuss.*

The time of each and every rabbi gives the general guidelines to their background showing in any case the *approximate value* of their claims in their respective time. The common view of our item is not monolithic at all. In every matter there are various layers and many-faceted variations which have emerged especially in the enigmatic discussions about the Messiah himself. *The only way to deal critically with the source material is to draft a sketch of the approximate timing of the Sages in point and to compare them with each other.* After it also some differences between the Midrash, Talmud, Zohar and the respective Jewish prayer literature can be specified. All these are however only a kind of ledger lines for the final conclusions.

In order to see the message of Midrash Ruth as a historical document we are introducing the Rabbis and their appearance in

Jewish writings. We do it in the same order as our Midrash does combining their statements to this setting. Only in this stage of our study it will be convenient to take them all to our treatment.

## VI,1 The Sages in the "Messiah-Parashiyoth"

The chief architect of the Messianic interpretation in Midrash Ruth was **R. Jonathan**. He expounded the book of Ruth in six ways **פתר בה שית שטן**. The whole pattern of expressions was probably given by him. To be "near to the kingdom", the "bread of kingdom", the picture of vinegar related to the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53, the kingdom **המלכות** taken from him for a time and "restored" to him again and the wording that he who is eating the meal of the Messiah in this world, will eat it "in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come" were all in his handwriting. The other rabbis were only extending the discussion with their short remarks. In presenting the Sages we are using mainly the Hebrew Encyclopedia of Talmudic and Geonic Literature given by **Mordechai Margalioth** and the "Toldoth Tannaim ve-Amoraim" of **Hyman**.<sup>275</sup>

**Rabbi Jonathan ינתן** was a Tanna of the 4th generation between **135 and 170 A.D.** living in **Eretz Israel**. After the revolt of Bar Kokhba he wanted to leave the country together with R. Hanina,

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<sup>275</sup> **Mordechai Margalioth**, אנציקלופדיה לחכמי התלמוד והגעונים, Encyclopedia of Talmudic and Geonic Literature, being A Biographical Dictionary of the Tannaim, Amoraim and Geonim, two Volumes, Jerusalem 1964. **Aaron Hyman**, Toldoth Tannaim ve'Amoraim, ספר תולדות תנאים ואמוראים, Comprising the Biographies of all the Rabbis and other persons mentioned in the old Rabbinic Literature - in three Volumes, Jerusalem 1987.

one of the names in Ruth Rabbah, because it was prohibited to teach the Torah anymore - only afterwards he carried out his wish. Jonathan was following the footsteps of his teacher R. Ishmael (110 - 135 A.D.) whom we know of his thirteen hermeneutic rules. The main emphasis of Jonathan was to interpret the Torah "in the language of human beings". There is a saying "to interpret the word as simply as it is, as a seal of the matter". The second alternative would be Rabbi **Jonathan Ben Eleazar**, an Amora of the first generation between 220 - 250 A.D. He was often disputing with the "minim". The name Jonathan is however without any additional remark and that would indicate the preference to the previous person who was living hundred years earlier.

**Rabbi Huna** חונא, called often as Rabbah, was an Amora of the 3rd generation between **290 - 320 A.D.** living in Sepphoris in the upper Galilee. Being an Israeli of his origin he probably knew the words of Jonathan and made then his remark that the kingdom was to be "restored" to David and this was indicating that he would eat "in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come".

**Rabbi Yohai b. Hanina** יוחאי בר חנינא was a Tanna of the 4th generation between **135 - 170 A.D.** As a contemporary of Jonathan he added to his words the remark of an angel who "sat upon the seat" of Solomon thus pointing to the Messiah who would sit on his seat and indicating that he would be restored to his kingdom in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come.

**Rabbi Abba Bar Kahana** אבא בר כהנא, was an Israeli Amora of the third generation between **290 - 320 A.D.** He said about Manasseh that he was taken into captive with manacles as he was "deprived of his kingdom" on account of his "evil deeds".

**Rabbi Levi Bar Hayyatha** לוי בר חיתא represents the next generation between **320 -350 A.D.** He began to speak of ministering angels. He added however that the kingdom was to be restored again to Jerusalem.

**R. Samuel** speaks thereafter in the name of **R. Aha** - the Soncino translation makes a mistake and speaks here in contrary to the Hebrew text of "Aba" instead of Aha. Rabbi Samuel is hinting in this context probably to the Messiah when he mentions that he was "brought back with a wind" - in Lamentation Rabbah I,51 there is a similar word that "a whirlwind came" and carried the Messiah away. **Rabbi Samuel שמואל** and **Rabbi Aha אחא** were both teaching in Eretz Israel between **290 - 320 A.D.** They also spoke about eating "in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come".

**The fifth interpretation** is related to King Messiah. The whole pattern of R. Jonathan is repeated again. But now the vinegar refers to the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53, as it is said that he was "wounded because of our transgressions". He would also be deprived of his kingdom for a time and restored again to his kingdom. Now **R. Berekiah** explains in the name of **R. Levi** that the future Redeemer would be like the the former Redeemer. He will be revealed and hidden again. **Rabbi Berekiah ברכיה** , a famous teacher in his time, was living in Eretz Israel also in the 4th Amoraic generation **between 320 - 350 A.D.** In Midrash he is called also with the name **Hacohen הכהן** . He and his father **Rabbi Hayya חייא** were acting mostly together. R. Berekiah was teaching often in the name of R. Levi and R. Abba Bar Kahana. The latter was as we saw an Israeli Amora of the former generation. All of them built a **common school of teaching**.

**Rabbi Tanhuma (Bar Abba) תנחומא בר אבא** was an Amora of the fifth generation between **350 - 375 A.D.** living also in Eretz Israel. He used to collect and adjust anew the teachings of rabbis. His principal teacher was **R. Huna הונא** (320 - 350) whose home was in Tiberias. Rabbi Tanhuma spoke fluent Hebrew having rhetoric and poetic ability to express the sermons in a pleasant form. He was in fact the last Israeli "preacher" known by his name. He is also called as the "seal of the Midrash". If Rabbi Jonathan was the chief architect of Midrash Ruth then Rabbi Tanhuma can be considered as

the revisor of the given text. Rabbi Tanhuma began to answer the question about how long the Messiah would be hidden.

**Rabbi Isaac Ben Qazarta** יצחק בן קצרתה was a third generation Amora between **290 - 320 A.D.** His thoughts were affirmed by a well known **Rabbi Jonah** יונה of the next generation between **320 - 350**. Rabbi Jonah lived in Tiberias and had a close friendship with **R. Abahu** who used to dispute with the "minim" e.g. about the Trinitarianism among other things. Also **Rabbi Isaac Bar Marion** יצחק בר מריון is involved to this discussion about the Messianic meal. He was a friend of R. Abahu and functioned between **290 - 320 A.D.** Rabbi Isaac Bar Marjon claimed that "finally" God will rain down manna upon Israel. This was the task of the Second Moses, the Messiah.

The sixth interpretation begins again with a word of R. Jonathan. Then the name of Rabbi **Isaac Bar Marion** appears again twice. He is extending the picture of manna to the origin of the Messiah which is to be seen already "in the stomach" of Ruth. But it requires the "performing of good deeds" which the Scriptures will record.

Then **Rabbi Cohen** כהן and **Rabbi Joshua of Siknin** יהושע דסכנין living around **300 to 340** intervene in the discussion telling that Elijah will record the good deeds and "the Messiah and the Holy One, blessed be He, subscribe their seal to it". **Rabbi Cohen** was probably a brother to the well known **R. Hiyya Bar Abba** living in Sepphoris and often visiting his friends in Tiberias. This idea is however given in the name of **Rabbi Levi Bar Hayyatha** their contemporary and friend.

**In the Parashah VII:2** there are only two rabbis who were expounding the message of six righteous men among the kings, the names of the Messiah in Isaiah IX,6 and about the enigmatic hint in the so called "closed mem". **Rabbi Simon** סימון and his son **Rabbi Juda Bar R. Simon** יהודה בר סימון were active in the second and third Amoraic generation approximately between **270 - 320 A.D.**

Juda Bar Simon spoke often about the bitter destiny of the Jews in the dispersion and about their return in the days of the Messiah. He gave also the famous phrase that all the gentile nations are once bringing presents to the Messiah. Rabbi Simon began his explanation with the important words: "**Bar Qappara** בר קפרא said in **Sepphoris**." Bar Qappara was a friend of R. Judah ha-Nasi, simply called as Rabbi, because he was the main redactor of the Mishnah. R. Bar Qappara builds a bridge between the Tannaim and Amoraim between **200 - 220 A.D.** Even here we can notice that both **Tiberias and Sepphoris** were the main centers of Jewish learning. In Talmud these names are mentioned side by side.<sup>276</sup> It is stating that "the kings weight was the weight with which the men of Tiberias and Sepphoris weigh".

**Parashah VIII,1** mentions again **R. Abba Bar Kahana**, acting as we saw from **290 to 320 A.D.** This time he expresses an important question about David: "Is he not of tainted descent? Is he not a descendant of Ruth the Moabitess?" With this problem Midrash Ruth begins the discourse about the evil inclination, the ladders of princes, the ladders of kings and the "another seed" who is the Messiah. And finally it ascertains that the Messiah is also the seed of Abraham and "Abraham was the pearl that God the King found". The debating company comprised the following names:

**Jacob Bar Abijah** יעקב בר אביה (350 - 375 A.D.) and **Rabbi Abba** אבא (290-320 A.D.) on whom the former was based, began to discuss about the popular item, the genealogy of the Messiah. R. Abba came from Babylon and lived mostly in Tiberias. He brought silk to the country and traveled often to his former homeland. The discussion about the origin of the Messiah goes between **R. Isaac, R. Huna, R. Berekiah and R. Simon** all of whom we already know. They could be limited at least between 270 - 350 A.D.

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<sup>276</sup> **Sotah** 10b.

We can **conclude** of the above analysis that there were in the tradition of Midrash Ruth obviously **two different layers**: **1.** The idea of the Messiah and his banquet seems to base at the earliest on the teaching of **R. Jonathan**, a contemporary of **Rabbi Yohai b. Hanina**, a Tanna of the 4th generation between **135 - 170 A.D.** *The tradition in Midrash Ruth about Isaiah 53 which has been given in the name of Jonathan is thus derived according to the Rabbinic understanding from Tannaitic period as we can see also in the Zohar.* The stylistic devices of Midrash Ruth resemble that of the Gospel of Matthew as Myron Bialik Lerner has proved. Even the use of the Bible is similar. **2.** The second level has been developed by the Sages of the Amoraic period **between 270 and 350 A.D.** Most of the teaching is linked with the Academies of Tiberias and Sepphoris, which were living Rabbinic centers at that time.

Some of the rabbis were disputing with the "minim" particularly in Tiberias. With this in mind we cannot however assume in the light of our hypothetical allegation that in those circumstances these compilers would draw up a Christian interpolation to Midrash Ruth. The story about **R. Meir** (135-170 A.D.) from Tiberias and his teacher **R. Elisha Ben Abuyah**, both contemporaries of Jonathan, proves that the climate among the rabbis was dubious and even hostile towards the Hebrew Christians.

The question whether R. Abuyah or "Aher" would have been a Gnostic believer has been raised e.g. by **Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa**. When R. Abuyah saw in **ḥagigah** 15a Metatron, as we have told, he would have believed that there were "two powers in heaven", as Gnostics used to think. And he was found "killing promising students of the Torah, or having tried to persuade them to abandon their study". He became thus "a type, a symbol of religious

opposition to the Rabbis".<sup>277</sup> The same kind of accusations were however generally raised against the Hebrew Christians in the Talmud. It concerned both "Yeshu" and the other who "blaspheme the words of Sages".<sup>278</sup> This in mind I am inclined to surmise that it would be most improbable to assume that the famous Rabbi Elisha Ben Abuyah would have been considered as a Gnostic!

## VI,2 The tradition of Midrash Ruth visualized in schemes

We have drawn already the ledger lines for the traditional history of our Midrash. There are however other effecting factors behind its compilation which seem to be too self-evident for the reader. The main building material in all the Midrashim is certainly the Bible. "Writing with the Scripture" created bridges through the centuries beginning from Abraham, the Judges and the prophets and ending to the Amoraic Sages. It is a long chain of tradition.

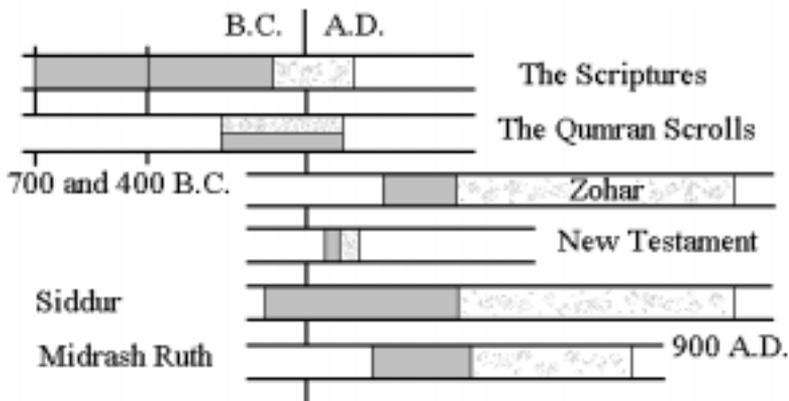
But how does this landscape of various traditions look as a scheme on a paper. We are trying to demonstrate it roughly with two sketches in order to see the picture as a whole. The first sketch combines the Bible, the scrolls of Qumran, the New Testament, the Zohar and the Jewish prayer literature together *striving to see the roots of the tradition in each source and their appearance in a written form*. The other one portrays Midrash Ruth in the same manner.

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<sup>277</sup> **ḥagigah** 15a. See **Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa**, "Aher: A Gnostic", Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978, Vol. 2: pp.808-811.

<sup>278</sup> **Gittin** 57a.

The Bible presents the home yard where all the Jewish life is concentrated. Qumran describes the close circuit of an extreme fellowship which has been drifted on the side tracks in the endeavor to maintain the internal discipline by the use of their own commentaries to the Scriptures. Zohar, the interpretation of the books of Moses, is a training field of Jewish elite using logical thinking in solving enigmatic secrets of the creation. The New Testament is concentrated to record the course of events in the Gospel and the Messianic fulfilment in the life of Jesus. It justifies every claim the same way as Midrash does "writing with the Scripture". Siddur is the catechism of Jewish thinking and the mirror of their soul. It contains also the whole book of Psalms and a lot of remarks taken from Talmud and Zohar. Our first scheme gives the rough estimate of these sources:

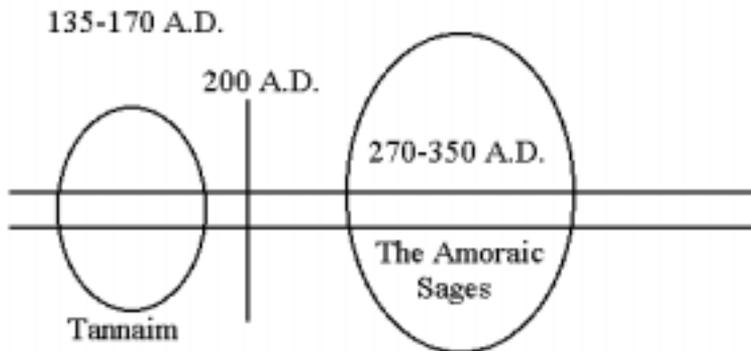


The grey rectangles represent the roots of the tradition and the white the time of the editing phase. This shows that only the Scrolls of Qumran and the New Testament were edited approximately in the same time when the tradition was born.

If we would add to this scheme the tradition of Didache, it would indicate that those roots common with the New Testament were composed in a very narrow time period between 90 to 100 A.D. It

is accepted in general that the first Midrash writings e.g. Genesis Rabbah, Leviticus Rabbah and Lamentations Rabbah were not **edited** until 400 and 500 C.E. and Songs Rabbah with Ruth Rabbah between 500 to 640 C.E. We have however already seen that their traditions contain many common denominators.

**The two historical layers** in Midrash Ruth are more clear if we take to our consideration the **four famous Tannaim** of the first period, **R. Jonathan, R. Hanina, R. Meir** and **R. Elisha Ben Abuyah** who were living the same time and near to each other. The second phase with a group of Amoraic Sages can also be distinguished from the first one. Our scheme of Ruth Rabbah shows the **roots of the traditions** as follows:



This scheme shows the approximate time when the main part of Midrash Ruth received its various components by the scholars although the editing absorbed new elements in the long period of the actual composition. R. Jonathan can be considered as the chief architect and R. Tanhuma as the revisor of the given text.

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Without these sketches it would be very difficult to grasp the subtle traits and the profound message in Midrash Ruth. We must also remind ourselves that the only experts of the ancient Jewish writings were the medieval Sages. They collected the first and the only

commentaries which are available in this kind of research. In order to cover **the entire expanse of Jewish thinking** we had to bridge the distance of the old Rabbinic writings and its medieval interpretations expressed in Mikraoth Gedoloth and other respective sources. But it meant that we were reverting always to the original sources like Talmud, Zohar and the oldest Midrashim.

The four famous Tannaim of the first period were living near to each other approximately **from 135 to 170 C.E.** The two main Rabbis from the Zohar who spoke about the Messiah in context of Isaiah 53, as we have seen, Rabbi **Simeon Bar Yohai** and his son **Eleasar** were probably the first Tannaim who saw the Suffering Servant of Isaiah also as a prototype of the Messiah - and this tradition was raised **between 150 and 200 C.E.**, although Simeon studied already at the feet of Rabbi Akiba before the year 135 C.E. The latter claimed in his time that Simon Bar Kosiba would be the promised Anointed One. No wonder therefore that Midrash Ruth also made a linkage from the fifth Parashah to the Messianic idea.

## VII THE MESSIAH AND HIS MEAL IN RESPECTIVE JEWISH LITERATURE

### 1. The bridge to the relevant literature

We are proceeding now to the part where the reference value of each and every concept will be measured. *Remaining in the frame of our stylistic presentation* in Midrash Ruth we divide the following items to **six** portions according to the approximate order of the sources: **1.** We first try to find **the results of our intertextual inspection** putting the main aspects of our findings together in order to be more alert when the same things bob-up in other circumstances. **2. The Scrolls of Qumran**, which reflect the earliest traditions of the Messianic meal, can be understood only if we compare it with the New Testament. If the historical roots of this matter are revealed, then also the particular emphasis of the Holy Communion becomes more evident. **3.** This leads to the message of the "Messianic meal" and its background in **the New Testament**. Does it have the same components with Ruth Rabbah? **4.** The eternal perspectives of the Messianic meal in Midrash Ruth resemble in certain extent also the emphasis of the prayers in **the Didache**. **5.** "Melawe malkhah", **the third meal in Sabbath**, is called also as "the meal of the Messiah". The discussions of its regulations **in the Zohar and in the Talmud** reveal some common denominators which appear in other respective sources too. **6.** And finally the most beautiful reference material for the Messianic meal is embedded in **the Jewish prayer literature of the Siddur**.

### 1.1 Preliminary results of our intertextual approach

The analysis of the Messiah and his meal in Midrash Ruth reveals a wide spectrum of new components which are reflected also in the respective Jewish literature. We may remind in our inspection some of them which arise also in the later procedure.

We have seen the literary methods of Midrash and its special characteristics when the compilers prove their case "writing with the Scripture" as **Jacob Neusner** loves to say. The rabbis advised that one had to interpret all the minute details in Scripture, **כל תיבה** **וכל אות שבתורה**. Furthermore, the Sages taught that "a biblical verse never loses its literal meaning". Neusner concluded in his impression about Ruth Rabbah that it had "*only one message*, expressed in a variety of components but single and cogent. It concerned the outsider who becomes the principal, the Messiah - and this miracle was accomplished through mastery of the Torah".

One of the most sensitive and central items in Midrash Ruth was the moral conduct of the people in their dispersion. This also caused a common national disappointment and raised the question whether God will renew again his people. In the first parable of kings we noticed the remark: "*Yet to destroy them is impossible, to take them back to Egypt is impossible and to change them for another nation is impossible.*" The national disappointment is reflected in the tradition of Elijah according to which the things turned out as they did "on account of our sins". The same expression was to be seen in the morning prayer of Siddur and in the "Amirah" of the Passover sacrifice although this delicate matter was omitted from the English translation given by Dr. Stern.

The manifold discussions of the "Messiah-parashiyoth" in Midrash Ruth revealed an eternal perspective for the Messianic banquet similar to the Holy Communion in the New Testament. Especially the concepts "to eat in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in

the World to Come", "the bread of kingdom", Messiah who will "rain down manna" upon his people and the discussion about Elijah recording our good deeds and "the Messiah and the Holy One subscribing and sealing" them gave imposing spectacles of the authority of the Messiah in this world and in the world to come.

We saw also some parallels of **Leviticus Rabbah** based on the traditions which are at least hundred years older than that of Midrash Ruth. In Parashah 34 there were **three similarities** common to our Messiah sections:<sup>279</sup>

1. R. Simon asked: "Who was it that showed kindness to one that needed kindness? Boaz to Ruth; as is proved by the text, And Boaz said unto her at meal-time: **גשי הלום** (Ruth II, 14), i.e. come over here; And *eat of the bread*, i.e. the bread of the reapers; And *dip thy morsel in the vinegar*."

2. As a conclusion for his remark one of two things were drawn: "Either a blessing rested in the hand of that righteous man [**Boaz**], or a blessing rested in the bowels **במעיה של אותה צדקה** of that righteous woman [**Ruth**]. However, from the fact that it is written, 'And she did eat and was satisfied, and left thereof' we know that *the blessing rested in the bowels* **בתוך מעיה של אותה צדקה** of the righteous woman." The same exact words were said in Midrash Ruth too.

3. The third feature concerned the *recording of good deeds*: "R. Kohen and R. Joshua son of R. Simon in the name of R. Levi said: In times past when a man did a good deed the prophet used to record it, but now if a man does a good deed *who records it? Elijah and the King Messiah, the Holy One, blessed be He, signing beside them*".

There were also some common denominators in Midrash Ruth and the New Testament as well as in Siddur when we spoke about the

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<sup>279</sup> **Leviticus Rabbah** Parashah 34.

kingdom taken from the Messiah "for a time", the fate of Torah teaching and the Torah in the Messianic age. Also the potential second advent of the Messiah and "the second day of the Messiah" was dealt with; the word "a second time" was used in that connection. We found that the Jewish Messianic expectation comprises all kind of enigmatic concepts and secrets which are not emphasized in that extent in the New Testament.

In many cases the Talmudic disputations and Midrash Ruth were apparently directed against the heretics not only when the issue of Elisha Ben Abuyah was taken up but also when they pondered about Metatron and the "seat" and the authority of the Messiah. The closest connection of the Rabbinic exegesis and Christian interpretation was perhaps found in the genealogical tree of the Messiah linked with the New Testament. Our intertextual approach is the only way to evaluate the various components of the Jewish Messianic idea when we strive to see the "leading points" and traits as well as the "inner affiliations" of Midrash Ruth Rabbah with the respective Jewish literature.

We have been proceeding in our study observing the common Rabbinic regulations: the **fifth** rule of **Hillel** advanced from *common and better known principles* to special claims כלל ופרט, his **sixth** principle was to find "*similar features in other connections*" כיוצא בו במקום אחר and the **seventh** rule concerned practical and spiritual "*conclusions*" of the matter concerned דבר הלמד מענינו. The content of the New Testament is better known than that of Qumran, the Talmud, the Didache and the Siddur. This is the reason why we are repeatedly comparing the Messianic banquet of these less known sources to the New Testament.

## 2. The Messianic meal in the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Dead Sea Scrolls gave a new relevance to the discussion about the nature of the New Testament and particularly to the many parallels with the writings of John the Evangelist or the epistles of Paul. There is already an enormous literature dealing with these items. **David Flusser** stated however in his book about the Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity that "the Scrolls do not contribute much to the understanding of the personality of Jesus or of the religious world of his disciples. Talmudic literature remains even now our principal source for the interpretation of the Gospels." This proves to Flusser that "Jesus and his followers were nearer to Pharisaic Judaism than to the Qumran Sect".<sup>280</sup> This has been always his main thesis.

It is helpful to see the common denominators of the Messianic meal in Midrash Ruth, in the Messianic banquet of the Qumran sect and in the New Testament. Do the Essene texts speak of the eternal aspect of their meal? Does it have any sacramental feature related to the forgiveness of sins? And what are the moral preconditions for one who will partake in the communion of the sect?

### 2,1 The common characterization of the Qumran Scrolls in this context

Prof. **David Flusser** writes in his Hebrew Collection of Studies and Essayes also about "The last Supper and the Essenes". He remarks that many are claiming that Holy Communion has an Essene origin. But we should remember that *the Essenes got ritually clean in the water before their meal* and only thereafter they came together in

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<sup>280</sup> **David Flusser**, Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity, Jerusalem 1958, Scripta Hierosolymitana, Volume IV, p. 216.

their assembly hall. Only the Essenes were granted to enter the banquet, not the visitors. Flusser also emphasizes that the Christian Holy Communion was linked mostly with the Jewish Passover feast.<sup>281</sup> The Essenes had the custom *to bless first the bread and thereafter the wine* as is done in the Eucharist also. The whole Seder however began with a "qiddush" of the wine. The Essenes used mostly the concepts **לחם ותירוש** where the "tirosh" was actually "young and sweet wine before it was fermented".

In order to discern the teachings of the Essenes from other groups it is helpful to remind some similar features among **the Egyptian Jewish ascetics called "Therapeutae"** (Gk. "healers"). They were settled near to Alexandria during the first century of the Christian era and their way of life resembled that of the Essenes. According to Philo, who gives the only original account of this community in his *De Vita Contemplativa*, members of the sect devoted most of their time to contemplation.<sup>282</sup>

The **similarities and the differences** between those two groups are many. Prayer and study were the sole occupations of the Therapeutae. Nothing was tolerated but the Books of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. For six days a week they lived apart and sought wisdom in solitude in their respective sanctuaries, never emerging from the house. On the Sabbath *men and women* met in the common sanctuary which was divided with a double enclosure to both of them. After that they shared their food, the bread flavored with salt or hyssop and a drink of spring water. They *abstained from wine and meat*. After the meal they held the "sacred vigil" and *continued it till dawn*.

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<sup>281</sup> **David Flusser**, the Hebrew Collection of Studies and Essayes **יקדות ומקורות** about "The last Supper and the Essenes", Tel-Aviv 1979, pp. 115-119.

<sup>282</sup> We are following the report in **Encyclopaedia Judaica** 15, page 1111 and 1112.

There is a strong reason to presume that these groups were a kind of prototype for the monasticism of the Christian Church. The consensus of modern scholars is that the Therapeutae were a radical offshoot of pre-Christian Judaism, probably Essenism.

In this light the the Essenes were more exclusive and organized. We can find nowadays an enormous amount of literature which deals with the Qumran community and with the teachings of the Essene groups. Our study in this matter concentrates however to the "sacred banquets" of the Essenes. The studies of **J. van der Ploeg**, **Lawrence H. Schiffman** and **Matthias Klinghardt** provide a sufficient background to our main theme.<sup>283</sup>

The best coherent account of these Essenes and their habits is given by **Josephus** in the *Wars of the Jews*, book II, chapter VIII.<sup>284</sup> Josephus himself had experienced an Essene period in his life. We may pick up here some special features of this sect. The Essenes were using white uniform garments. They didn't speak a word about profane matters before sunrising. At the fifth hour of the day when the noon was approaching the Essenes used to bathe in cold water. They had been working on the land during the morning hours. After the bath they took the white robes and entered their refectory which was meant only for the official masculine members.

Now they were already without blame and καθαροί, "ritually pure". The blessing for the food was given by the priest. Josephus explains that the Essenes entered the room "as if into a kind of holy precinct", καθαπερ εις αγιον τι τεμενος, - and the silence during the

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<sup>283</sup> **J. van der Ploeg**, The Meals of the Essenes, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 2, 1957, pp. 163-173, **Lawrence H. Schiffman**, The Eschatological Community of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Soc. of Bibl. Literature, Monograph Series Number 38 and **Matthias Klinghardt**, Gemeinschaftsmahl und Mahlgemeinschaft, Mahl- und Gemeinorganisation in Qumrantexten, Tübingen 1996, pp. 217-249.

<sup>284</sup> See **Josephus** Complete Works translated by **William Whiston**, twelfth printing 1974 in Michigan, pp. 476-478.

meals made the impression of a kind of "terrible mystery", ως μυστηριον τι φρικτον. An Essene was not allowed to partake of other meals than those prepared for him and his group. But here is no indication that the food itself was holy.<sup>285</sup> And these meals were not inevitably "sacred" as such.<sup>286</sup>

In the so called "**eschatological banquet**" of the **Qumran sect** which we shall describe more closely in the next chapter the main menu was comprised of bread and wine. The food was eaten seated, as opposed to the Tannaitic usage of reclining at formal meals. Reclining was the Greco-Roman pattern, whereas the biblical tradition was one of sitting.<sup>287</sup> The **common communal meal** of the sect required *either* bread or wine, **the messianic banquet** involved the both. Wine was a weak, diluted, and often unfermented grape wine, similar to modern grape juice. In the messianic era the Qumranites would return victoriously to the "New Jerusalem" where they would reconstitute the cult according to their views and with their own priestly messiah at its head.

In a certain extent the Essene banquet was a kind of pre-enactment of the final messianic meal in the end of days. The Therapeutae celebrated their meals as a substitute for the sacrificial service of the Jerusalem cult. **Schiffman** reminds that **Yigael Yadin** has supported the claim that the communal meals at Qumran served also as substitutes for the sacrifices and that in this context the words ערך, "to set out" and שלחן, "the table" was used in the sense of "altar".<sup>288</sup> The concept "table" is very important in our study as we

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<sup>285</sup> See **J. van der Ploeg** pp. 168-171.

<sup>286</sup> **Matthias Klinghardt** presumes that the Essene meals were mainly a kind of "cultic banquets" where the communion was manifested in their fellowship when they "ate together, consecrated the food together and conversed together", p. 223 in "Gemeinschaftsmahl und Mahlgemeinschaft".

<sup>287</sup> See **Lawrence H. Schiffman's** presentation in pp. 56-67.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibidus* page 60.

shall see in the further discussions.

The Messianic emphasis in Qumran appears to be strong and even somehow **similar and relevant** to that of the New Testament as we are showing along our study according to the fifth principle of Hillel, **כיוצא בו במקום אחר** . The **differences** however help us to realize that the Qumran scrolls do not explain the derivation of the Christian Eucharist. May I only quote as an example the "Midrash of the latter days" in the Hebrew text of **A.M. Habermann**, "Megilloth Midbar Yehuda" from page 1, lines 10 to 14.<sup>289</sup> These words show the linguistic similarities of the Qumran text to the modern Hebrew also:

”והאגיד לכה יהוה כיא בית יבנה לכה : והקימותי את זרעכה אחריכה  
והכינותי את כסא ממלכתו (לעולם) : אני (א)ה(יה) לוא לאב והוא יהיה לי  
לבן - הואה צמח דויד העומד עם דורש התורה אשר (יקום) בציון (בא)חרית  
הימים : כאשר כתוב והקימותי את סוכת דויד הנופלת - היאה סוכת דויד  
הנופלת (כא)שר יעמוד להושיע את ישראל.”

It is essential to notice that the Essenes used the so called "full writing" easy to be read and similar to the general style in modern Hebrew. The translation reveals also the kinship of Qumran with the "messianic" texts in other Jewish writings:

"The Lord has told to you that He will build for you a house; and I will raise up your offspring after you and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever; I will be his father, and he shall be my son (2 Sam. 7:12-14); he is the Branch of David which is standing together with the Teacher of Torah who is rising in Zion in the Latter Days; as it is written, I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen (Amos 9:11); he will be that booth of David which was fallen when he stands up to save Israel."

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<sup>289</sup> See page 174 in the Hebrew collection of **Habermann**.

## 2,2 The Messianic meal at Qumran and its special aspects

The best description of the Essene communion meal is depicted in the "Charter for Israel in the last days", **1QSa, 1Q28a**. The comprehensive collection of all the published Qumran texts given by **Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr.** and **Edward Cook** helps to see the scrolls in its entirety. The introduction and evaluation of the above chapter reminds, that the section is intended for an ideal future, which it calls the "Last Days". The first remarkable aspect of this writing was in the reference to God's "fathering" of the Messiah, that is the war leader, who was to arise from the line of David. The translation "fathering", which is not suitable at all, must be understood in its wider meaning.

We have already dealt with its "begetting" passage, where the Hebrew word "holid" or **יוליד** was used. According to **Michael Wise** this text is notable. Wise argues as his opinion:

This text "has long been controversial. The reading of the Hebrew letters is difficult, but the scholars who saw the manuscript when it was first discovered (when it was more legible than it is today; the texts have deteriorated) agreed on this reading." "This reading, which has been queried by many, including myself (in the past), seems to be confirmed by computer image enhancement." "If the traditional reading is correct, then this Qumran text is describing a Messianic figure who is in a special way a 'son of God'."<sup>290</sup> The matter requires however further study.

The second aspect concerns the Messianic banquet in which all Israel will take part in the Last Days. The feast is associated with the arrival of the "Messiah of Israel" and is comparable with the early Christian *agape* or "love" feasts attached also to the sacrament

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<sup>290</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls by **Wise, Abegg** and **Cook**, page 144.

of Communion. The word *Yahad* or **יחד** used by the Essene community means actually "unity" or "oneness", almost as the concept "communion". Although the Essene banquet has an eschatological nature it does not contain any real associations with the "world to come" as Midrash Ruth does. Even the New Testament ends with the vision of the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:6-9) resembling more the message of Midrash Ruth and not so much the communion of Qumran.

The Essene community had **strict regulations for the participants** of the feast. The "dull-witted" were not allowed to be ordained to the offices of the *Yahad* and the society accepted for their close fellowship only men of ability and blameless behavior. In their communal prayer **4Q501** they advised: *"Do not give our inheritance to strangers, nor our produce to the sons of a foreigner"*. The whole attitude of this sect was impregnated with small hostile remarks against the strangers and "outsiders" - as an opposite to the more "permissive" attitude of Midrash Ruth. The Christian Eucharist is intended for sinners who are ready to repent for their behavior without any preconditions.

The hardest words in Qumran may be in those instructions which describe the cultic impurity based in physical infirmity regarded primarily as a mark of sin. These rules in **1QSa, col. 2** define categorically:

"No man with a physical handicap - crippled in both legs or hands, lame, blind, deaf, dumb, or possessed of a visible blemish in his flesh - or a doddering old man unable to do his share in the congregation - may en(ter) to take a place in the congregation of the m(e)n of reputation. For the holy angels are (a part of) their congregation etc."

The Yahad believed that in the Last Days two Messiahs would emerge from their own ranks, one a Priest, the other a Royal commander for the armies. The Messianic banquet of Qumran "Charter for Israel in the last days" gives certain "**table manners**"

for the participants:

"The procedure for the (mee)ting of the men of reputation (when they are called) to the banquet held by the society of the Yahad, when (God) begets **יְלִיד** the Messiah, among them will come first the Priest, head of the whole congregation of Israel and of all the elders of the sons of Aaron, those priests (appointed) to the banquet of the men of reputation. And they will sit before him, each man according to his dignity. Then the (Mess)iah of Israel will en(ter) etc."

The Qumran "Charter for Israel in the Last Days" gives also instruction for **the use of bread and wine** as follows:

"(When) they gather (at the) communal (tab)le, (having set out .bread and w)ine so the communal table is set (for eating) and (the) wine (poured) for drinking, none (may re)ach for the first portion of the bread or (the wine) before the Priest. For (he) shall (bl)ess the first portion of the bread and the wine, (reac)hing for the bread first. Afterw(ard) the Messiah of Israel (shall re)ach for the bread. (Finally) ea(ch) member of the whole congregation of the Yahad (shall give a bl)essing, (in descending order of) rank."

As we can see the Messianic feast of the Essenes is very exclusive of its nature. It does not accept "the outsiders" to the communion of the Yahad. And it does not show to its participants the same hope for the "world to come" as the New Testament or Midrash Ruth emphasize. Nor does it have any sacrificial nature as such. In this sense the writings of Qumran can not be considered as the source for the Holy Communion.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> See also **Weiss K.**, *Messianismus in Qumran und im Neuen Testament*, Bardtke; Qumran-Probleme, Berlin 1963 and **Weinfeld M.**, *Grace after Meals in Qumran*; JBL 111 1992, pp. 427-440.

### 3. The Messianic meal in the New testament

We shall discuss the Holy Communion compared with the results of our study only in such extent that the common components with Midrash Ruth will be uncovered. *The Last Supper is based mostly on the biblical Passover feast* which has among the Jews many regulations transparent in the Gospels too.<sup>292</sup> The discussions about the meaning of the bread in the New Testament resemble that of Midrash Ruth. The vinegar had also a certain message in the Passover meal. Elijah and the coming of the Messiah are associated with certain habits on the Passover eve. And the sacrificial death of the Messiah is lifted up in the Gospels as it did also in a concealed way in Midrash Ruth.<sup>293</sup>

#### 3,1 The limits of our inspection

The modern scholarship is inclined to think that there are some essential differences between the synoptic Gospels and the record of John the evangelist. This can be seen almost in all the studies. When **I. Howard Marshall** deals in his book *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* with this problem, he gives a detailed analysis of

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<sup>292</sup> **Alfred Edersheim** deals with this matter thoroughly in his books "The Temple, Its Ministry and services", Chapter XII, The Paschal Feast and the Lord's Supper, pp. 229-248 and "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah", Chapter X, Volume Two, The Paschal Supper - The Institution of the Lord's Supper, pp. 490-512.

<sup>293</sup> **S. Bacchiocchi** presents in his book "God's Festivals in Scripture and History" the negative stand of some early church leaders toward the Jewish understanding of the Passover and the words of the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 according to which "it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews". The book was published in 1995; see pages 99 and 103.

"The Accounts of the Last Supper".<sup>294</sup> There he explains that according to R. Bultmann the sacramental table-fellowship between Jesus and his disciples was a kind of transformation of the Hellenistic festive meals. He called them as "an 'etiological cult-narratives' - a phrase which undoubtedly means that he regarded the account of the Last Supper as being unhistorical". There is however "no need for us to be intimidated by him" (ibid. p. 31).

If we observe the Gospels as historical documents, we are endeavoring to solve *what actually happened* at the Lord's Supper. The theological discussions intend to answer, *what is the significance* of these matters. However, the discrepancy of the synoptic Gospels and that of John is not essential at all, because both of them depict in fact the same celebration of the Passover feast which followed the strict rules of the "Seder" ordinances.

For a Jewish reader it is not so self-evident that there would be a contradiction in the corresponding stories. When this perplexing problem was raised in 1870's, the connoisseur of the Jewish Temple service and Rabbinic literature, **Alfred Edersheim** gave to it a solution which still seems to be the most convincing.

The Gospel of John tells us that "*many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover*" (11:55). If they did not tarry for the festival, they returned home with a sacrificial lamb approved by the priesthood for their feast of unleavened bread. Speaking precisely, the Pesah proper with its Paschal meal was on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, whereas the "feast of unleavened bread" began on the 15th of the same month and lasted 7 days, that is to the 21st of Nisan. These two feasts were so inextricably bound up one with another that the Old and New Testaments treat them as one. Josephus quite logically refers to

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<sup>294</sup> **I. Howard Marshall**, Last Supper and Lord's Supper, Paternoster Exeter 1980, II Ch. pp.30-56.

Passover as "the eight-day feast".

This exactitude regarding the nomenclature here is no mere splitting of hairs. If this is not taken into account, the impression might be gained from John's Gospel that the disciples were not eating an actual Paschal meal at the institution of the Lord's Supper. According to **Edersheim** there were, in fact, **two important hagigah festive sacrifices**. The first *hagigah* was sacrificed on the 14th Nisan and it was associated with the obligatory Paschal meal of the same evening. The second *hagigah*, which could be translated as "*festive offering*", was made on the 15th, in other words, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

It is this second sacrifice which is alluded to in John 18:28 when we are told that the Orthodox Jews, "to avoid ceremonial uncleanness", could not go into the palace as "they wanted to be able eat the Passover". Many Christian scholars have calculated that the actual Paschal meal was, according to this verse, only on the day of Jesus' death, Friday. *This ceremonial uncleanness lasted in Jewish custom only to sunset*, and the proper Passover meal was in fact eaten late in the evening. Ceremonial uncleanness would, however, have prevented them from participating in the festivities of the 15th of Nisan. The Hebrew word John uses, *pascha*, apparently refers in this case to the afternoon ceremonial "hagigah sacrifice".

The Jewish-born Dr **Alfred Edersheim** had as such no need of "harmonizing acrobatics". This first-rate authority on the cult-worship of the Temple, writes in his consideration of the "apparent" inconsistency in John, saying that:

"Our Lord could not have partaken of any form of meal before the actual Paschal meal against the customs of the other Jews, because the only time for eating the Passover meal was on the evening of the 14th of Nisan."<sup>295</sup> "The suggestion", he states

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<sup>295</sup> **A. Edersheim**, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, p. 389.

further, "that in that year the Sanhedrin had postponed the Paschal Supper from Thursday evening to Friday evening, so as to avoid the Sabbath following on the first day of the feast -- and that the Paschal Lamb was therefore in that year eaten on Friday, the evening of the day on which Jesus was crucified, is an assumption void of all support in history or Jewish tradition."<sup>296</sup>

In the original Greek John uses the Hebrew word *pascha* (18:28) which indicates that the offering on 15th of Nisan was a *hagigah* afternoon sacrificial liturgy. We should not draw artificial conclusions from the Gospel reports knowing that the writers had always certain reasons for their choice of wording.<sup>297</sup> In our study we are giving more evidentiary value to the original Hebrew sources.

Some scholars imagine that the paschal meal was twenty-four hours ahead of the proper time - some have adopted the idea that Jesus held his festive meal simultaneously with the Essene community already on Tuesday. Dr. **Bargil Pixner** has directed archaeological excavations in the Essene Quarters both in Bethany and on Mount Zion. According to him Jesus had a close friendship with the Essene groups in Bethany. When he said in John 13:10 that "*He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet - and you are clean*", he hinted probably to the immersion basins in Bethany

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<sup>296</sup> **A. Edersheim**, *The Life and Times of Jesus II*, pp. 481-482.

<sup>297</sup> **Jean-Marie van Cangh** has written an article "Evolution in the Tradition of the Last Supper", Berlin 1999. For her "the chronology of the Synoptics and John do not coincide on the date of the Last Supper", p. 375. Consequently also she finds the "liturgical influence" of the Hellenistic communities behind the Gospel stories. And she is suggesting that there are in the Last Supper only two 'cups', "an eschatological cup which was included in primitive paschal (or festive) accounts and an eucharistic cup, which has been added under the influence of the liturgy" in the Christian churches, p. 377. In the light of Jewish literature and the actual Seder ordinances this theory seems to be very artificial indeed.

which resemble exactly those found on Mount Zion.<sup>298</sup> Even **David Flusser** emphasized as we have seen that "the Essenes got ritually clean in the water before their meal".

In the proper time, on Thursday evening, it was very difficult to find "a guestchamber", **καταλυμα** (Luke 22:11), in the Jewish parts of the city. Lukas 2:7 uses the same Greek concept of the "*inn*" or "hotel" in the context with Betlehem. The Essene Quarters were practically empty in the official Seder evening. It took always months to order a banqueting hall from Jerusalem during the festive season. For those however, who did not despise the Essene sectarians, their premises were free and available on Thursday evening.

The Jewish readers are conscious of the fact that the fourth Gospel tells more of the Jewish festivals and their habits than all the others. Even the name of Nicodemus, a well known historical figure, "a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews" is mentioned three times in this Gospel.<sup>299</sup> In this light we must rely upon the record of John the evangelist.

### 3,2 The historical background of the Passover meal

The Passover meal "Seder" is celebrated on the evening of the fourteenth of Nisan in commemoration of Israel's exodus from Egypt, as told in Exodus 12. The seder-service and its liturgy, the Haggadah, developed as it is commonly accepted at least during the

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<sup>298</sup> **Bargil Pixner**, With Jesus in Jerusalem, His first and last days in Judea, Corazin publishing in Rosh Pina 1996, pp. 85-89. See also his article about the excavations on Mount Zion, "Das Heilige Land", Heft 2/3, Sept. 1981.

<sup>299</sup> **Gittin** 56a, **Ketuboth** 66a, and John 1:1, 7:50-51 and 19:39.

time of the Second Temple and in the first century thereafter.<sup>300</sup> In earlier times the strict observance of Pesah-offerings was not yet very much in vogue. The Passover feast has still a long biblical history.<sup>301</sup>

**Louis Finkelstein** argues that the Passover Haggadah dates from the last half of the third century B.C. or the first half of the second and indicates toward the former date.<sup>302</sup> After the destruction of the Temple the Seder received greater emphasis and was furnished more with texts of symbolic meaning and some new homiletical interpretations. Still the frame of the Passover Haggadah remained almost the same.

In this context we are concentrating to three main aspects: the bread, the wine and the eternal perspective of the Passover meal and Holy Communion. Rabbis of old taught often that the Messiah was most likely to come on the night of the Passover. A vacant chair is always reserved at the Seder feast for Elijah, the herald of the Messiah. No wonder that the Messianic expectation is reflected also in the prayers and discussions on the Passover feast.

According to **Exodus 12** only three things were commanded to be taken for the Passover table; the lamb, the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs. Wine, candles, an egg, salt water, greens, grated apple

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<sup>300</sup> **A.Z. Idelsohn**, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*, New York 1975, p. 175.

<sup>301</sup> **The Old Testament describes the Pesah meal** in Exodus 12-13; then in Numbers 9:1-14 after the deliverance from Egypt; in Joshua 5:10 when the second generation had the Passover in the plains of Jericho; when the king Solomon had his feast of "unleavened bread" in 2 Chron. 8:12-13; then in 2 Kings 23:21-22 and 2 Chron. 35 when king Josiah kept such kind of Passover, which was not seen "from the days of the Judges"; then according to the command of Ezekiel 45:21-24 and finally when the Babylonian exiles returned to Jerusalem with Ezra, written in Ezra 6:19-22.

<sup>302</sup> According to **Addison G. Wright**, *The Literary Genre Midrash*, p. 78.

and other additional elements were of later period. The bitter herbs, usually horseradish, brings tears to the eyes and reminds of the bitterness and sorrow in the time of slavery. The saltwater has been interpreted by the Sages also so that they relate to the tears of angels when they cried for Egyptians who drowned in the Red Sea. The "charoseth", a claylike substance made of apples and nuts typifies the clay and the time when Israelites laid bricks building fortresses to Pharaoh. The hard boiled egg is a symbol of the second sacrifice for the Passover day.<sup>303</sup> After the destruction of the Temple it was impossible to slaughter anymore the sacrificial lamb - the Essenes abandoned the habit to eat the lamb even before it. The shank bone of a sheep compensates nowadays the lamb.

### 3,3 The message of the bread

In the Holy Communion the bread has a deeper meaning combining the lamb and the unleavened bread. In John 6:48-58 Jesus said, that he is *"the bread of life"*. *"The fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died - if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world, is my flesh"*. The item of manna given by the Messiah is emphasized in Midrash Ruth too and the eternal perspective is hidden even there. But Jesus said in the same context also: *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."* The disciples murmured at it - but Jesus asked: "Do you take offence at this?"

The Gospel of John describes the Passover feast in detail from

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<sup>303</sup> See also **Untergassmair Franz Georg**, Jesu letztes Abendmahl und seine jüdische Wurzel, Ein Beitrag zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog. In Ernst Josef, Surrexit dominus vere, Bonifatius-Verlag 1996, pp. 395-406 and **Scholtissek Klaus**, Das Herrenmahl im Spiegel der neueren exegetischen Forschung; Bibel und Liturgie 70 1997, pp. 39-44.

chapter 13 to 17, but it does not present the words of institution for the Holy Communion probably because the other Gospels had already done it before.

About the bread Jesus said: "*Take, eat; this is my body.*"<sup>304</sup> In the sacrificial language the lamb is called as "guph ha-pesah" גוף הפסח, "the body of Passover". That formed a natural association to the earlier teachings of Jesus. Theologians speak in connection with the Holy Communion about the "substance" of the sacramental "elements". The Hebrew idiom גופו של הענין "the substance of the matter" fits well to this discussion. The Hebrew word "guph" or "body" signifies the essence of a thing and its "substance".

There is certainly a danger of exaggerating certain things about the nature of the Holy Communion as it is done in the history of the Church.<sup>305</sup> **David Flusser** once stated in his lecture that the Catholic Church has made it to a kind of chemistry with its doctrine of the real transformation of the elements in the Eucharist; in Calvinism they have changed it to philosophy because it has only a symbolic meaning for them; but Luther had a religious explanation when he emphasized the words of Jesus: this *is* my body.

The unleavened bread, the "*matzoth*", are put in Jewish homes at three levels. The middle one has a traditional name "*afikoman*", אפיקומן. Part of it is eaten during the meal itself and the other part

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<sup>304</sup> Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19 and 1 Cor. 11:24.

<sup>305</sup> The historical fact is that **the Holy Communion had first two parts**, the "agape" or "love feast" and "the Eucharist". The Therapeutae held the "sacred vigil" and continued it till dawn. So did the first Christians. Pliny the Younger's letter to Trajan (X,96,7), writing in 112 A.D., tells us: "The Christians had the habit of gathering on a given day (*stato die*) before dawn (*ante lucem*) and singing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as to a god and pledging oaths (*sacramento*). This is the moment in which most commentators situate the celebration of the Eucharist although not all of them.. See the article of **Jean-Marie van Cangh** in her *Tradition of the Last Supper*", p.374.

is put aside or hidden. Hebrew Christians often explain that the three levels of bread are somewhat related to the Trinitarianism or as it is expressed in Zohar, to the "secret of the number three", **הרז דשלושא**. This however does not have any historical ground.<sup>306</sup>

According to the Sages the paschal lamb itself had to be eaten as the last portion of food on the night of Seder. Since the destruction of the Temple, however, the "hidden part" of afikoman became a symbolic reminder of the paschal sacrifice and was thus not eaten until the very end.<sup>307</sup> In the East the hidden portion of afikoman is often kept in the houses throughout the year for good luck. It is in a way forecasting for them the coming of the Messiah. The Greek origin of afikoman derives from the word **αφικνεομαι** which means "to arrive". No wonder that it is sometimes combined with the coming of the Messiah.

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<sup>306</sup> The enigmatic tradition of Zohar tries to explain the various "faces", the "parzufim", of the being of God. Zohar uses five expressions which refer to the doctrine of the Trinity: *tlat rishin*, 'three heads'; *tlat ruhin*, 'three spirits'; *tlat havayoth*, 'three forms of revelation'; *tlat shmehin*, 'three names'; and *talta gvanin*, 'three shades of interpretation'. These Aramaic words express God's "being", just as in English the word 'godhead' is used. The Zohar asks: "How can these three be one? Are they one only because we call them one? How they are one we can know only by the urging of the Holy Spirit and then even with closed eyes." It should be pointed out that the word 'trinity' does not even appear in the New Testament. The doctrine of the "three in one" is primarily a "postulate of practical reason", to use the expression of the philosopher Immanuel Kant. The Zohar too makes a similar kind of inference. The Zohar refers to this problem of God's self-revelation by the name *razei de-shlosha* or 'The mystery of the number three'. They are like the "outer shell of the inner truth", as the Rabbis have said. This mystery will one day be revealed by Messiah: "And this is the spirit which will rise from the hidden wisdom, and which is called the spirit of life; and that the spirit is ready to give this wisdom in its due time through the Messiah-King, as it is written (Is.11:2): 'And the spirit of the LORD will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding'." See the book of Rabbi **Tzvi Nassi (Hirsch Prinz)** in the Literature Consulted or Zohar Amsterdam Edition, part III, p. 307 and *ibid.* II p. 43.

<sup>307</sup> **Pesahim** 119b-120a.

The holy bread or wafer has caused much discussion in Christian theology. In Midrash Ruth the "bit of bread" hints to the common Jewish interpretation that the Messiah will give **manna** from heaven. For **RaSHI** the Messianic Meal relates to Psalm 22:26, where we read that *"the poor will eat and be satisfied"*. He understood that *this verse "refers to the time of deliverance, to the days of the Messiah"*. In **Shemoth Rabbah** there is a discussion upon Psalm 23, the Shephard Psalm, verse 5: *"You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies' means manna; 'you anoint my head with oil' means freedom from cares; 'my cup overflows' refers to a spring; and so will he prepare a table for the One who is to come (the Messiah), and they will dine and eat in the Garden of Eden."*<sup>308</sup>

The bread itself is related also in some discussions to the Lord's Prayer. The Greek wording **τον αρτον τον επιουσιον** or "our daily bread" has been understood by the lecturer at the Hebrew Union College in New York, rabbi **Lawrence A. Hoffman**, in the light of Didache Ch. 8 as *"supernatural bread"*.<sup>309</sup> The prayer was always uttered in connection of the Holy communion. Jerome called it *"bread for the morrow"*. Ambrose named it like Midrash Ruth as *"bread for the kingdom"* and added, that it *"is not the bread that enters the body, but the bread of eternal life"*.<sup>310</sup>

Even in the Siddur the expression about the "daily bread" is sometimes outlined in form, **זמן מזוני וְלֶחֶם חֻקִּי**, which would mean literally, "give my nourishment in the right time and my legal bread". The prayer in "Zemiroth le-motzae Sabbath" begins with the words "O God, Renew my joy and bring us Elijah the prophet" and continues as follows:

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<sup>308</sup> **Shemoth Rabbah**, Parashah 25:7.

<sup>309</sup> **Lawrence A. Hoffman**, A Symbol of Salvation in the Passover Haggadah, in the "Worship", Vol. 53, No 6 November 1979, p. 529.

<sup>310</sup> **Jerome**, Commentary on Matthew 6:11 and **Ambrose**, Sacraments 4:5.

חדש ששנוני אל נא והביא את אליהו הנביא - זמן מזונו ולחם חקי - יבא משיחי לעיר מושבו - פדותך לעמך בקרוב תגלה - ולציון גואל תביא, איש "O God, Give for me my nourishment and the daily bread - my Messiah will come to his City - O reveal soon Thy redemption to Thy people - bring the Saviour to Zion, let the Branch shoot up, *Elijah the prophet and Messiah the King*."<sup>311</sup>

The message of the bread has a central position in the Passover story. The Lord's Prayer which was used in the Eucharist liturgy from the old refers to the "daily bread". The Holy Communion deals more extensively with the subject giving to it a deeper meaning. It forms a *logical equation as whole*: the bread compensates the lamb; the lamb is related to Christ, the "lamb of God"; and manna hints to afikoman and the wafer, symbolizing the reconciliation of the Messiah by his death and resurrection. A well known Hebrew Christian Dr. **Victor Buksbazen** has said that "Passover without the lamb is like a wedding without the bride".<sup>312</sup>

The Jewish Messianic meal in this world does not include the emphasis of expiatory sacrifice. The national disappointment expressed in Midrash Ruth is related partly to the lack of reconciliation even if it mentions the verse in Isaiah 53 of him, who was "wounded for our transgressions". We saw already three quotations both in Siddur and in Talmud which particularize that the Tempel has been destroyed and the daily sacrifices have been annulled. One of them was in the "Amirah" before the Passover sacrifice. By this also the antithesis of Zohar gets a deeper meaning because "as long as Israel were in the Holy Land, *by means of the Temple service and sacrifices*" they received the reconciliation but

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<sup>311</sup> **Siddur** Tefillah ha-Shalem pp. 340-341.

<sup>312</sup> **Victor Buksbazen**, *The Gospel in The Feasts of Israel*, Collingswood, N.J., 1976, p. 7.

"now it is *the Messiah*" who takes care of his people.<sup>313</sup> Bread symbolizes "*guph ha-pesah*", the "body of Passover". And Jesus said in John 6:51: "The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."

### 3,4 The message of the wine

When we discuss about the wine we enter the gist of Holy Communion. 1 Cor. 11:25-26 interprets the message of wine with the words of Jesus. There we read: "'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." This is related with the passover lamb in Exodus 12:21-22 which was slaughtered and then the blood was smeared on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses. This was "the blood of the covenant" and "it is the blood that makes atonement".<sup>314</sup> *The second aspect "until he comes" has an eternal perspective familiar to Midrash Ruth.*

In this context it is useful to remember a well known Aramaic expression **דמים תרתני משמע** "*blood has two meanings*". It can be related to blood and "price". In this light the interpretation of Peter and Paul is very logical indeed: "You know that you were ransomed - not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot". "You are not your own; you were bought with a price".<sup>315</sup>

From the perspective of our theme it is also essential to notice that the Passover liturgy has in fact **four cups of wine**. Every cup has its own name and symbolizes certain features of the Seder.

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<sup>313</sup> **Soncino Zohar**, Shemoth, Section 2, Page 212a.

<sup>314</sup> Exodus 24:8 and Leviticus 17:11.

<sup>315</sup> 1 Peter 1:18-19, 1 Cor. 6:20 and 7:23.

According to the rules of the drink offerings in the Temple service the wine was composed so that it had *two thirds water and one part of excellent wine*. The rabbis discuss about its high grade and quality. This concerned also the "cup of salvation" in Psalm 116. From the very beginning this rule was adapted for the Holy Communion as it still is in the tradition of Syria and Eastern Churches. In the Talmud there is a playful saying, that "after the destruction of the Temple there is no joy without wine". The Passover began in fact the period of joy.<sup>316</sup>

In order to see this in the proper setting it is good to remember the words of **Justin Martyr** and his instructions about the Holy Communion. He explains in about 150 A.D. that after the Eucharist the participants ought to "greet each other with *a holy kiss*". "Thereafter the supervisor will receive *the cup, in which the wine and water is mixed*; and he thanks the Father of all and His Son and the Holy Ghost - when the leader of the congregation and all the people have said their praise, then those who have been appointed to deacons *deliver the bread and the wine mixed with water* after the thanksgiving, and *they bring a part of that to those absent*."<sup>317</sup>

**The first cup** was called with the name **קדוש** which means the same as "*sanctification*". After it the host washed his hands. In this connection Jesus washed the feet of his disciples - as it is still done in Jewish families by one of the modest maidservants in the Eastern parts of Europe. This ritual, however, is probably of later origin.

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<sup>316</sup> **Pesahim** 109,a.

<sup>317</sup> **Apology** I,65. **Samuele Bacchiocchi** deals in his book "Wine in the Bible", pp. 106-128, with the problem of preserving the grape juice in the Roman world and among the Jews as "boiled-down must" or with salt and through filtration. And mostly "all the positive references to wine" are related to "unfermented, unintoxicating grape juice" which was used in Jewish homes (p.101). The "mixed wine" in the Passover Eve was probably composed of fermented red wine of finest quality, so called **שורקה** (choice vine in Gen. 49:11 and Isaiah 5:2), and of water.

**The second cup** has the name **מַגִּיד** and it begins *the "narrative" part* of the Passover. Then the youngest participant intones the question: "Why is this feast different from all the other nights? The answer will be given then by the host: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand." All the participants were probably leaning on their left side around the low table - because as slaves they had to eat standing before their masters. After this all the ten plaques of Egypt in Exodus 7 to 12 are narrated as a **זָכָרוֹן** "*memento*" of the redemption from Egypt.

This *idea of commemoration* is used by Jesus later on at the meal to express his own redemptive death for the world as he said: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). This resembles also the words of **the Siddur** in the Day of Atonement, when the pattern of redemption is repeated three times separately both for men, women and children: **זֶה חֲלִיפְתִּי, זֶה תַּמּוּרְתִּי, זֶה כַּפְרְתִּי** "*this is instead of me, this is for my compensation, this is for my atonement!*" In 1 John 2:2 we read that "he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world".

**The third cup** is called as **כּוּס הַבְּרָכָה**, "*cup of blessing*", as it is revealed in 1 Cor.10:16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?"<sup>318</sup> In Greek the concept **τὸ ποτηριὸν τῆς εὐλογίας**, "*cup of blessing*", is connected now with the Holy Communion. In Luke 22:15-18 Jesus said: "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you - for I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." All this builds a bridge to the following cup.

According to the tradition the Messianic idea is raised up in this

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<sup>318</sup> In the new Finnish translation from the year 1992 this concept is totally omitted and in stead of it there is only the expression about the cup, "which we bless" - of course all the four chalices were blessed according to the habit of the Jews.

phase. The children observe whether the surface of the wine before the seat of Elijah shivers as a sign that the Messiah is coming. And now the whole meal will be eaten to the end. This is the last part of the Seder. Both Luke 22:20 and 1 Cor. 11:25 emphasize that Jesus took this cup "*after supper*". And he said verbatim as expressed in Matthew 26:27, *πιετε ἐξ αὐτου παντες - Drink ye of it all!* All the food and spices had to be eaten in the same night to the finish and nothing was permitted to be left for Egyptians. This symbolized the "whole offering" given in the wilderness. Between the third and fourth chalice however it was forbidden to sip of the wine in order to exclude the last important chalice from the others.<sup>319</sup>

### 3,5 The eternal perspective in the Holy Communion

**The fourth cup** is seldom treated in the Christian theology. If we examine the Last Supper with a magnifying glass, we notice that the Gospel does not speak at all about the fourth chalice. It was called as "*the cup of kingdom*". In Mark 14:25 Jesus promised that "I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine *until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God*". In Luke 22:16-17 Jesus said that he will not eat the Passover "*until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God*" and drink the fruit of vine "*until the kingdom of God comes.*"

The professor of the Oxford University, **David Daube** has written an extensive study "The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism". There he deals with the problem of the fourth cup.<sup>320</sup> For Paul the "cup of blessing" was also "*the cup of the Lord*", 1 Cor. 10:21. But why did Jesus not drink the *fourth* cup at all?

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<sup>319</sup> **Pesahim X:7** explains that between other cups it was permitted to drink of the chalice but between the third and fourth not. The expression that they "brought before Him the body of Passover" is in the same chapter, fraction 3.

<sup>320</sup> **David Daube**, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism, pp. 330-331.

According to Daube Jesus "instituted it to compensate the real, perfect and final coming of the kingdom which is still a matter of faith and hope. And he referred it obviously to the fourth cup". Jesus did not drink this cup and say ברכת השיר 'the blessing of the song' because "he moved this part of the liturgy to the fulfilment of the final kingdom of God".

More information about the matter can be found in the two excellent commentaries, that of **David Daube** or the book of **Samuel Tobias Lachs** on the New Testament in the light of Rabbinics.<sup>321</sup>

This perception shows that the Passover story of the New Testament reflects the same eternal perspective which is typical to Midrash Ruth. Jesus convinced this to his disciples when he said: *"I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom"*, (Luke 22:29-30). That is the eternal Messianic meal which is described in our Midrash too.

### 3,6 "The blessing of the song" ברכת השיר and the "hallel"

Both Matthew and Mark close their Passover story very briefly. After the words that Jesus will drink the wine new in his "Father's kingdom" the evangelists continue: "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives".<sup>322</sup>

According to tradition the Seder ended always with a hymn called a "hallel", a section of "praise". It consisted the **Psalms from 113 to 118**. They speak about the salvation from Egypt and how all nations and all peoples ought to praise the Lord. Psalm 118 is called in Aramaic as a *"royal song"* or שיר מטרוניתא , "shir

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<sup>321</sup> See **Samuel Tobias Lachs**, A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament, pp. 397-409 about the Last Supper.

<sup>322</sup> Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26.

matronitha". It closed the Passover meal.<sup>323</sup> The message of "the stone which the builders rejected" in Psalm 118 is quoted repeatedly in the New Testament. The "royal song" was traditionally chanted in the Passover eve as well as in all the main Jewish festivals.

We have seen in Midrash Ruth that the words **נוצדה ממנו המלכות לשעה** "the kingdom was taken from him *for a while*" were repeated five times and that also the expression **חזרה לו מלכותו**, "he was restored to his kingdom" was mentioned five times. This caused the discussion about the potential temporary denial of the Messiah. This possibility is expressed best in Psalm 118 and in its Jewish interpretation.

Psalm 118 is traditionally associated with the inauguration of the Temple, but it gives additional information also on the Rabbis' wide-ranging Messianic expectation. The traditional Jewish Messianic interpretation is linked primarily with verses 20 to 26: *"This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank thee that thou hast answered me and hast become my salvation. The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech thee, give us success! Blessed be he who enters in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord."*

In Midrash Ruth we find that the Rabbinic exposition makes often **Messianic inter-connections** between passages which are not normally connected with each other. Both the Midrash on the Psalms and the Talmud describe how the above verses were customarily sung antiphonally: The inhabitants of Jerusalem said within the walls, "O Lord, hosanna", and the men of Judah on the outside said "O Lord, grant us success", the inhabitants of

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<sup>323</sup> Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11 or 1 Peter 2:7

Jerusalem, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD" etc.<sup>324</sup>

When Jesus, at the beginning of Passion Week, rode into Jerusalem we remember that people spread out their cloaks and palm fronds on the road and sang: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!"<sup>325</sup> Rabbi **Akiba** explains in Talmud that *it was the Holy Spirit who gave this song, and that the Israelites sang it as they crossed the Red Sea*. The tradition here is associated with the names of Rabbis **Jehudah and Shmuel**.<sup>326</sup> They said that, *"The prophets have commanded Israel that on the day of their salvation they are to sing this to their saviour."*<sup>327</sup>

**Midrash Tehillim** which is dated between 900 and 1000 A.D. and gives many detailed interpretations about the Psalms, emphasizes three times that Psalm 118 has been given *"by the Holy Spirit"* and speaks about the king David. In its exposition it repeats again the words about the Holy Spirit and specifies that the Psalm is related *"le-atid lavo", "to him who is coming"*, the Messiah.<sup>328</sup> The reality of the Holy Spirit is reflected in Midrash Ruth also as well as in other Midrash writings.

The **Zohar** connects the theme of Psalm 118 to Israel's departure from Egypt. Exodus 15 begins with the words "Then Moses sang", and describes the deliverance of Israel from the Red Sea. These words have caused a wide discussion.

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<sup>324</sup> **Pesahim** 119a.

<sup>325</sup> Matt. 21:9, Mark. 11:9-10, Luke 19:37-38 and John 12:13-15.

<sup>326</sup> **Jehudah Bar Simon** and **Shmuel Bar Rav Yitzhak**, were Amoraim Israelim of the third generation (290-320). They had often common statements about the good works and the days of the Messiah.

<sup>327</sup> There is a far-ranging discussion of this in e.g. the Hebrew **Beit Ya'akov** commentary of the Siddur prayerbook, Warsaw 1880, pp. 520-521.

<sup>328</sup> **Midrash Tehillim**, printed in Wilna 1890 and Jerusalem 1976, p.487.

The **Zohar Shemoth** 54a explains that *"there is a reference here to the 'One who is to come' - Therefore Israel is to sing this to Him who will come."* And *"God will once more extend his hand to save the remnant of his people"*. Then they *"who died through the serpent's beguiling will arise and they will become the advisors of the Messiah-King"*. *This song is a "royal" song, שיר מטרוניתא, and it speaks of "the community of faith and the coming of the Messiah"*.<sup>329</sup>

The Zohar repeatedly gives of the Messiah the name "The Holy and Most High King". In the future, as Zohar Shemoth 54b explains, *"in the days of their Messiah-King, Israel will praise the fact that it is a joy for them to gather together at the house of the Holy One"*. *"The words 'He has become my salvation' indicate the Messiah-King."* When the Holy King comes we will *"rejoice and be glad over his salvation; and his salvation means, of course, the Lord's salvation, which has come back to Zion"*. The words *"I will sing unto the Lord"* (Ibid.) refer to the Supernal Holy King - this repetition denotes that *it is to be sung in all generations*, in order that it should never be forgotten, for he who is worthy to sing this song *in this world shall be worthy to sing it in the world to come*.<sup>330</sup>

The Zohar's exposition, which has not suffered to any significant extent from the Synagogue's internal censorship, represents the normative, generally accepted stance for Orthodox Jews. In the Hebrew collection of the censored passages in Talmud, "**Hesronoth ha-Shem**" or *"the missing passages of God"*, there is also an answer of **RaDaK** to "the Nazarenes". It has collected the

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<sup>329</sup> The **Translators note** in the Soncino CD Rom relates this with **Shabbath** 55b, saying that Benjamin, Amram, Jishai and Kaleb, David's son, were sinless and died not for their own sins, but because of the "serpent's counsel", i.e. of "original sin" they had to die. Here the Jewish comment speaks of the "**original sin**".

<sup>330</sup> Soncino **Zohar, Shemoth**, Section 2, page 54b.

"hashmatoth" השמטות or "excluded" words and quotations of Talmud and the additional delicate expositions of RaSHI, RaMBaM and others.<sup>331</sup> It does however not include any censored passages of the Zohar.

If we consider the above words of the **Zohar**, then the message of Midrash Ruth which speaks of eternal hope, can be seen in the same line with the given extracts. They both combine this world and the future one together. The beginning of page 54b reduces this Jewish Messianic hope as follows:<sup>332</sup>

"We have been taught that every one who sings this hymn daily with true devotion will be worthy to sing it *at the Redemption that is to be, for it refers both to the past world and to the future world*; it contains confirmations of faith and *mysteries relating to the days of the Messiah.*"

Psalm 118:25-26 climaxes in a salutation addressed to the future deliverer: "O LORD, save us - Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you." Thus being so, Jesus really was greeted "from the house of the LORD" when it still was existing. And he himself claimed to be the stone which the builders rejected. The Passover Eve and the Holy Communion concluded with "the blessing of the song" and "hallel" itself. Perhaps Jesus uttered "the blessing of the song" ברכת השיר but the cup of the kingdom was left to the final fulfilment in the kingdom of God.

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<sup>331</sup> הסרונות הש"ם והוא ספר קבוצת ההשמטות כולל כל הדברים החסרים בתלמוד בבלי - 1893 והוספנו בהוצאה החדשה הלז תשובות חרד"ק להנוצרים, קראקא

<sup>332</sup> Soncino **Zohar, Shemoth**, Section 2, page 54b.

## 4. The Didache and its Messianic banquet

The oldest known source for the early Christians and their teachings outside of the New Testament is the *Didache* or as it is called "*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*". The *Didache* was quoted already in the discussions of the Church Fathers but nobody knew its origin or exact content until the full manuscript was found in 1873. It was published ten years later in 1883. Afterwards it aroused much discussion among the scholars. The time of its compilation is fixed between 90 and 100 A.D.

### 4.1 The Didache as a bridge between Jewish and Christian thinking

The famous Rabbi **Gottlieb Klein** from Stockholm has written an extensive study of *Didache's* specifications. He shows how *Didache* reflects the Palestinian thinking and teaches "the moral values of prophets to the conscience of people". He speaks also about an "**initial**" or "**Ur-Didache**" which functioned as a bridge between the Jewish and Christian thinking.<sup>333</sup>

The **content of Didache** can be divided to two sections. **First** it speaks of "two ways" (**1:1-6:2**). The expression "derekh erez" דרך ארץ used in *Didache* shows "how to behave in the land" based on

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<sup>333</sup> **Gottlieb Klein**, Den första Kristna Katekesen, dess religionshistoriska förutsättningar, Stockholm 1908, i Förord page XII.

Jewish moral teachings. From the Christian perspective it is the most condensed summary of the Gospels but includes also some special features of the so called "Noachic" laws, the minimum of the demands required from the alien nations. In **1:2** for example it gives good advices for moral conduct: *"You shall not corrupt boys; you shall not be sexually promiscuous - you shall not engage in sorcery; you shall not abort a child or commit infanticide."* The rules of "derekh erez" were used earlier as instructions for Jewish proselyte work.

**Klein** says in the introduction of his book that *"nowadays people believe that they are able to prove everything under the banner of religio-historical research"*. Thus they reach *"hasty conclusions in areas which have not been studied in very great detail"*. Klein complains about the "prophet and universal genius" of this trend in research, **A. Harnack**, from whom he says he had learned the most, that he *"could not move independently in the area of Rabbinic literature."*<sup>334</sup> In Klein's book there are about five hundred references to Jewish sources and also separate chapters on proselyte teaching and, for instance, "the Apostolic Council" in Acts 15th chapter and its background issues.

#### **4,2 The Didache as source material for the Holy Communion**

The **second** section of the Didache (**6:3-16:8**) is a kind of manual for Church order dealing also with advice on food, Christian baptism, fasting, prayers, the Eucharist and the various offices in the Church. The translation of **Lightfoot** and **Harmer** in "The Apostolic Fathers", revised by **Michael W. Holmes**, gives the full text of the Didache.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid. page XV.

<sup>335</sup> **Lightfoot J.B. - Harmer J.R.**, The Apostolic Fathers, Second Edition, Baker Book House, 1994 England.

**Participation in the Eucharist** was granted in Didache only to the baptized.<sup>336</sup> By contrast to the Christian understanding of the Holy Communion and to Didache, the Qumran community had its separative and exclusive preconditions for their banquet. In the Didache the Eucharist is allowed to those who have been baptized and who profess their Christian faith without naming any other gradings. In the **7th paragraph 1-3** the Didache teaches:

"Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit *in running water*. But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water; and if you are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then *pour water on the head three times in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit*."

Also for the Jewish baptism, the "mikwe", the main thing was clean water, rather the running one, and the minimum was "*40 seah less one*" which makes about 520 litre whereas the quantity of a seah would be according to **Mishneh Mikwaoth** VII,1,9 about 13,3 litre.<sup>337</sup>

The **procedure of the Holy Communion** has in Didache various statutes. In the section **14:1-2** it directs:

"On the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. But *let no one who has a quarrel* with a companion join you until they have been reconciled."

The latter instruction is typical in Jewish writings. Didache **4:3** teaches: "*You shall not cause division, but shall make peace*

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<sup>336</sup> **Everett Ferguson**, *Early Christians Speak, Faith and Life in the First Three Centuries*, pp. 93-105, Eerdsman Publ. Co. 1993.

<sup>337</sup> **Mishneh Mikwaoth** VII,1,9. Thus the quantity of 39 x 13,3 = 518,7 litre.

*between those who quarrel."* In the extensive collection of ordinances against improper use of the tongue, "**hefetz hayyim**", there are many sayings which warn the believers that *"the Holy Spirit does not get along where there is quarrel and idle talk"*. Even Midrash Ruth speaks about the Holy Spirit who departed from the people because of their immoral conduct.<sup>338</sup>

The Didache uses approximately the same language as the Talmud does when it speaks of wine and bread. The Didache is probably the only source to compare the differences and various aspects between the Jewish and Christian understanding of the "meal of the Messiah". It becomes clearer when we observe later the prayers of the Didache and the Siddur.

The **cup of thanksgiving** is blessed as follows in **9:2**: *"We give you thanks, our Father, for the holy wine of David your servant, which you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant; to you be the glory forever."* The **broken bread** is sanctified in the section **9:3-4** with the words:

*"We give thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant; to you be the glory forever. Just as this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and then was gathered together and became one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of*

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<sup>338</sup> The well known Hebrew collection of Talmudic ordinances "**hefetz hajjim**, **Shemirat ha-lashon**", printed in Jerusalem, which consists of more than 200 pages, speaks about idle talk and gossip in letters, in small hints, in joking, in meeting face to face or speaking behind the back, in consenting to hear the gossip even if it is true and how to correct the broken relations. The name of the book "Desire of Life" is taken from Psalm 34:12-13: "What man is there who desires life **מי האיש החפץ חיים** keep your tongue from evil." The Temple was destroyed because of **שנאת חנם ולשון הרע** hatred and evil tongue, **Yoma** 9b. The explanation in Yoma is that "it teaches you that **groundless hatred** is considered as of even gravity with the three sins of idolatry, immorality and bloodshed together". See also the words in John 15:25 about the "**שנאת חנם**".

*the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.*"<sup>339</sup>

**After the food** in section **10:3** and **5-6** the congregation reads:

"To us you have graciously given *spiritual food and drink, and eternal life* through your servant" - Gather the church "from the four winds into your kingdom, which you have prepared for it; *for yours is power and glory forever*. May grace come, and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If anyone is holy, come; if anyone is not, let him repent. Maranatha! Amen!"

The same pattern can be found in 1 Cor.16:22, where Paul closes his letter: "If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be *anathema*", i.e. cursed or separated, in Hebrew **חרם**. The word "*maranatha*" means "Our Lord come!" The Aramaic exclamation **מרן אתא** which was used above also in the Didache is a positive welcome to the Lord.

The Didache speaks of "*the holy wine of David*" - Melawe malkhah was called "*se'udat David*" or King David's banquet. The eternal aspect found in Midrash Ruth appears also here when the Didache refers to *the spiritual food* which is linked to the eternal life in the kingdom of God. "Therefore may this world pass away and the Lord come!"

The most impressive vision is however in the **ecumenical message**

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<sup>339</sup> **Karl-Gustav Sandelin** gives in his Book "Wisdom as Nourischer", Acta Academiae Aboensis, Vol. 64 nr 3, page 220, the same potential Hebrew translation of the "**broken bread**", **το κλασμα**, as Midrash Ruth does of the "morsel", **פת**. This would indicate a hidden kinship between these concepts in Jewish writings. Sandelin shares the same impression in page 219: "I do think it a reasonable surmise that some such prayers existed and that they were used in sapiental contexts, first in a Hebrew form in Palestine, and subsequently, with certain accretions, in Egypt." "When the prayers were transferred to an Egyptian setting and translated into Greek they received new nuances" (ibid. p. 221).

of the "broken bread" which unites the church and gathers believers from "the four winds" into the kingdom of God. The Hebrew idiom of "the four winds" is often employed in Rabbinic exegesis as it is done e.g. in Mikraoth Gedoloth in the context of the "corner stone" in Psalm 118:22 which will be once seen of the four cardinal points of the compass. This also reveals the Hebrew traits of the Didache.

## **5. The third meal in the tradition represented by the Zohar, the Talmud and the New Testament**

Both the Zohar and the Talmud are based primarily on the same Rabbinic traditions. Even their Messianic emphasis is expressed approximately in the same manner in both of them. That's why there is also a good reason to deal with both the Zohar and the Talmud together when we examine the Messianic banquet compared with Midrash Ruth. The extensive commentary of Jewish prayers in the **Siddur Beit Ja'akob** which consists about 900 big pages has included also the Zohar to its main sources. This justifies the use of the Siddur in this context too.

### **5,1 The third meal and its specifications in the Zohar**

There is a discussion in the **Zohar** which includes the *common components* both to Talmud and to the Jewish prayer book Siddur. This is apparent when we search for the roots of the Messianic banquet in the light of the Sages. We are presenting first the *various concepts* linked with the festive meal in the Zohar. The

Talmud has more details of the third meal itself and is thus more comprehensible in the light of the descriptions in the Zohar. We take here only one extract of the Zohar:

"R. Hamnuna the ancient, when he sat at his Sabbath meals, used to find joy in each one. Over one he would exclaim: 'This is the *holy meal of the Holy Ancient One*, the All-hidden' דא היא סעודתא קדישה דעתיקא קדישה סתימה דכלא. Over another he would say: 'This is the meal of the Holy One, blessed be He'. And when he came to the last one he would say: '*Complete the meals of the Faith*' סעודתי דמהימנותא. R. Simeon used always to say when the time of the Sabbath meal arrived: '*Prepare ye the meal of the supernal (of the uppermost) Faith* עלאה סעודתא דמהימנותא עלאה *Make ready the meal of the King!*' Then he would sit with a glad heart. And as soon as he had finished *the third meal*, it was proclaimed concerning him", the King.

The following words of the **Zohar** Section 2, pages 88a-b explain after the former extract accordingly:

"Therefore one must wholeheartedly rejoice in these meals, and complete their number (*three altogether*), for *they are meals of the perfect Faith, the Faith of the holy seed of Israel, their supernal Faith*, which is not that of the heathen nations".<sup>340</sup>

In the sequel of the text there are also two important aspects as we read: "Also mark this. On all festivals and holy days a man must both rejoice himself and *give joy to the poor.*" - "And because the Faith is centred in the Sabbath, man is given on this day an additional, *a supernal soul*, a soul in which is all perfection, *according to the pattern of the world to come.*" This enigmatic speech of an "additional supernal soul" comes forth also in many discussions in the Talmud. **Ta'anith** 27b and **Pesahim** 102a are stating in the name of Resh Lakish: "Man is given an additional soul on Friday, but at the termination of the Sabbath it is taken away

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<sup>340</sup> **Zohar**, Section 2, 88a-b.

from him".<sup>341</sup> This shows in a concrete way the nostalgic feelings of the Jewish believer in the days of Sabbath.

If we gather all the *specifications* of this extract we can already make some *conclusions* about the nature of the third meal of Sabbath in the tradition of the Sages. It was a "holy meal of the Holy Ancient One", it was "a meal of faith", a "meal of supernatural faith", a "meal of the King" and "a meal of perfect faith of the holy seed of Israel" and of their "supernal faith". All this is parallel to "the third meal" in Sabbath. It was a feast of joy which foreboded the perfection "in the world to come". The last meal, the third one in Sabbath, is often called by the Sages as "the meal of the Messiah" as we shall see again while discussing about the Sabbath prayers in the Siddur.

## 5,2 The third meal in the tradition of the Talmud

The third meal has also the name "**melawe malkhah**" מלוה מלכה , "escorting the queen", a term used to describe the meal and the festivities at the end of the Sabbath. The arrival of "the queen of the Sabbath" was greeted as a counterpart in the beginning of the feast. The origin of these customs has been traced to the Talmud. In **Shabbath** 119b it is stressed that even a small amount of food will be sufficient for the celebration: "R. Hanina said: One should always set his table *on the termination of the Sabbath*, even if he merely requires as much as an olive. Hot water after the termination of the Sabbath is soothing; fresh warm bread after the termination of the Sabbath is also soothing."<sup>342</sup>

Melawe malkhah is called also as "**se'udat David**", King David's banquet. One of the essential features in the praises of "melawe"

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<sup>341</sup> **Ta'anith**, 27b, **Pesahim**, 102a.

<sup>342</sup> **Shabbath**, 119b.

has always been the role of "Eliyahu ha-Navi" as a herald of the Messiah. For some rabbis the last meal of Sabbath was according to **Sabbath** 117b however the fourth one.<sup>343</sup>

Most important to us is to pay regard to the concept "**havdalah**" **הבדלה**, the "*discerning*" of the wine at the termination of Sabbath. Apostle Paul is using this Greek word δια-κρινω in 1 Cor. 11:29 when he speaks of the Holy Communion: "For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself". The word "to judge" κρινω is also in the verse 31 according to which "we should judge ourselves" so that we should not be "judged". The havdalah intended to emphasize the distinction between the sacred and the profane.<sup>344</sup>

The havdalah had a central place in the liturgy of "melawe malkhah". There is a wide discussion in Talmud among the rabbis about the "table order" of each detail in the third meal:

"It was taught in **R. Akiba's** name: He who tastes anything before reciting havdalah shall die through choking." "**R. Johanan** said: Three are of *those who will inherit the world to come*: he who dwells in Eretz Yisrael, and he who brings up his sons to the Study of the Torah, and he *who recites havdalah* over wine at the termination of the Sabbath."

Even other precepts of the Melawe Malkhah can be found in those discussions e.g. in **Pesahim** 105a, 113a and **Berakhoth** 52a.<sup>345</sup>

The last Sabbath meal culminates in these discussions always in the benediction of havdalah: "*When one goes into his house on the outgoing of Sabbath, he says blessings over wine and light and spices and then he says the havdalah.*"

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<sup>343</sup> **Sabbath**, 117b.

<sup>344</sup> **Pesahim** 103b.

<sup>345</sup> **Pesahim** 105a, 113a and **Berakhoth** 52a.

There are in the Talmud some common expressions with those of the New Testament. In one of them we read also about "*the table of the Lord*" as it is expressed in 1 Cor. 10:21 that "you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons". In Talmud **Berakhoth** 55a we read in the context with *melawe malkhah*:

"This is *the table that is before the Lord*. Now the verse (Mal. 1:7) opens with 'altar' and finishes with 'table'? R. Johanan and R. Eleazar both explain that as long as the Temple stood, *the altar atoned for Israel, but now a man's table atones for him*."<sup>346</sup>

The same words are repeated verbatim in **Menahoth** 97a and **ḥagigah** 27a where we read in the similar discussion as follows:

"At the time when the Temple stood, *the altar used to make atonement for a person; now a person's table makes atonement for him*".<sup>347</sup>

All this reminds of the words which we already brought from the **Zohar Shemoth**, Section 2, page 212a:

"As long as Israel were in the Holy Land, *by means of the Temple service* and sacrifices they averted all evil diseases and afflictions from the world. *Now it is the Messiah* who is the means of averting them (the afflictions) from mankind".<sup>348</sup> Even here we see that the Zohar and the Talmud can be examined together.

It is interesting to notice that in this context the Sabbath table itself compensates the sacrifices of the Temple. Perhaps even here one can see a reflection of the national disappointment and the lack of the sacrifices. If the expression in **melawe malkhah** that "now a

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<sup>346</sup> **Berakhoth** 55a.

<sup>347</sup> **Menahoth** 97a and **ḥagigah** 27a.

<sup>348</sup> **Zohar** Section 2, page 212a.

person's table atones for him" really would mean that "the table of Lord makes atonement", then it would indicate that the "Messianic meal" and the havdalah would be somehow related to the teachings of the Holy Communion. Then also the message of Midrash Ruth about the Messianic banquet would get another deeper setting.

### **5,3 The third meal reflected in the New Testament**

If the Jewish tradition about the Messianic meal is so obvious in Talmud and Zohar as it seems to be, this old tradition ought to reflect inevitably already in the writings of the New Testament which signifies an earlier historical stage. This possibility is apparent especially in the light of the third missionary journey of Paul in the book of Acts.

It tells that Paul stayed in Troas for seven days. There he *"prolonged his speech until midnight"*. Many lights were lit in the upper chamber where they gathered. A young man called Eutychus who was sitting on the window-ledge, sank into a deep sleep and fell to the ground from the third storey. And he was picked up dead. But Paul put his arms around him and said, "Do not be alarmed. He is still alive." And Paul returned to the upper room, *"broke bread and ate"*. And the story goes that *"he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak"* (Acts 20:7-12).

The enigma of this Evening meeting at Troas reveals, that Paul *"prolonged his speech"* and *"he conversed"* with his audience until the daybreak - as the Jews were in the habit of doing after the third meal. The description of the meeting begins with the words: *"On the first day of the week we came together to break bread"*. In the original Greek there is the phrase *"en de te mia ton sabbaton"* εν δε τη μια των σαββατων which is, "on the first of the Sabbath." This is usually translated as pointing to Sunday, when the church is supposed to have celebrated the Lord's Supper at this strange hour in

the late evening. The Jews counted their day from the previous evening to the next one.

The Syriac **Peshitta**, used by the ancient Oriental churches, says that the meal was a "*eukharistia*" אֲזַכְרִיָּא and that it was "*ba-yamma de-had ba-shabba*" וּבְיֹמָא דְחַד בְּשַׁבָּא that would be, "*on the first day on the Sabbath*". We do not know whether the gentile born Luke, when he wrote the Acts, would have been conscious of the third meal and its traditions, but the translation of Peshitta shows that this option is a noteworthy interpretable alternative.<sup>349</sup>

**Franz Delitzsch's** Hebrew translation of the same verse, "be-ehad ba-shabbat" וַיְהִי בְאַחַד בְּשַׁבָּת would be literally "*on the first day on the Sabbath*." But why does the word "Sabbath" occur in the original Greek and in the Syriac? Luke should have written either "on the first day of the week" or "on the evening of the first day of the week", if it was Sunday. Then it would also have corresponded the Hebrew expression "*ba-yom ha-rishon*" or "*ba-motzaei yom ha-rishon*".

This odd way of expressions in Greek and Syriac has caused the conclusion that it was the last meal of the Sabbath or the so-called "*melawe malkhah*", which always continues, according to Jewish tradition, until late at night. Its prayers and discussions over the meal are connected with the coming of the Messiah, and it was prolonged often to the next morning.

The ancient Syrian and Near-Eastern churches still have the custom of celebrating the Eucharist or Holy Communion "*at the second hour on Saturday evening*." In their churches there are many Jews who circumcise their sons. Celebrating the Eucharist on Saturday

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<sup>349</sup> This theory is based also on the discussions with the Archbishop of the Apostolic Church of the East in Jerusalem, **Jacob J. Barclay**, an excellent Aramaic and Hebrew scholar. **Peshitta** on Acts 20:7-12.

evening is based on an ancient tradition, which they say originated in the Apostolic Age. The havdalah was read by the Jews after dark, when the stars were already visible. Thus the Sabbath was "accompanied" and "prolonged" at least until midnight and often even to the sunrise. Likewise even Paul conversed about the Messianic item "until daybreak". Thus the habit to celebrate melawe malkhah and to make havdalah in the Eucharist was adapted probably also by the first Christians.

## **6. The Messianic meal in the light of Jewish prayer literature**

The Jewish Prayer Book "Siddur" is in fact the soul of the Jewish people, as we have said: it presents the fundamentals of the faith, it functions as a basis for devotion and it is used as a calendar for Jewish feasts. It consists also the whole Book of Psalms - no wonder that many young boys are able to read all the Psalms by heart in the age of 13 or even earlier.

For our study about Midrash Ruth we need not to reconstruct the possible earliest layers of the Jewish prayers - our concern is applied to *the actual prayers and their conceptual forms* used at present in

the Jewish synagogue.<sup>350</sup> The most handy implement in this study is to lean on the many Hebrew commentaries like **Siddur Beit Ja'akob** and **Siddur Hagr"a** as we have done.<sup>351</sup>

The Siddur represents the oldest common tradition in Jewish thinking. Even the Messianic expectation and the Jewish comprehension of the "third meal" is reflected in the pages of the Siddur. But are there at present any distinctive evidences of the Messianic nature of this third meal in the Book of Siddur? And what additional components could be found in these quotations?

## 6,1 The banquet of King David in the Siddur

In our intertextual method we have strived to see the "leading points" and traits as well as the "inner affiliates" of Midrash Ruth Rabbah with respective Jewish literature. The expression about the *King Messiah* has recurred repeatedly both in Targum and Midrash. And perhaps the most unexpected description of the Messianic meal was in the words of **Zohar Shemoth**, Section 2, Pages 88a-b given by Rabbi Hamnuna about the "third meal" in the Sabbath, that it was "the *holy meal of the Holy Ancient One*, the All-hidden' **דא היא סעודתא קדישה דעתיקא קדישה סתימה דכלא**". It was "*the meal of Faith*" **סעודתי דמהימנותא** . It was "*the meal of the supernal (of the*

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<sup>350</sup> The comprehensive account of the "Prayer books" in **Encyclopaedia Judaica** XIII, pp. 985-994 presents both **Ashkenazi and Sephardi** publications mentioning also the beautiful prayer literature of the **Yemenites**. It touches the early Siddurim, some critical Jewish editions and the **numerous Rabbinic commentaries** in the matter. See also **A.Z. Idelsohn**, Jewish Liturgy and its Development, **Heinemann J.**, Prayers of Beth Midrash, pp. 264-280 and **Shekhter Josef**, **מבוא לסידור, הוצאת דביר תל-אביב 1957**, יוסף שכטר

<sup>351</sup> In the Preface of **Hagr"a** there is a famous word of **Pirke Aboth** VI:6 and **Megillah** 15a that "he who repeats the word in the name of him who said it, brings deliverance to the world" and so "we all are worthy to the coming of the Messiah" - כל האומר דבר בשם אומריו מביא גאולה לעולם ונוצה כולנו לביאת משיח -

uppermost) *Faith* סעודתא דמהימנותא עלאה!<sup>352</sup> But do we have some correlations to this speech in the Siddur too?

The *closest equivalent for this mode of expression* is to be found from Siddur in the third meal of the Sabbath in the Aramaic words of "havdalah" דא היא סעודתא דדוד מלכא "*this is the meal of the King David*". This belongs to the "zemiroth le-motzae Sabbath" which in fact is as a whole related to the Messiah. As a preparation for the role of the Messiah in the third meal we can take some extracts from "zemiroth leleil Sabbath".

These prayers begin with a citing from "tikunei Sabbath" or "special orders" in the Zohar as the Siddur often does, and the words have also a symbolic meaning: אתקינו סעודתא דמהימנותא - דמלכא קדישא : דחקל תפוחין קדישין וגו "Prepare the meal of Faith - of the holy King: this is the meal of the holy fruits from the field" etc. Then follows the "qiddush" or sanctification and the actual "zemiroth" as given e.g. in these short extracts:

*"In God the Lord is eternal Rock, in him who has spoken to His chosen people in order to sanctify them - may those who enjoy the celebration receive plentiful goodness when the Redeemer comes for the world to come - may they enjoy of the coming world, the day of Sabbath rest, all those who enjoy it. May they receive great joy in the sufferings of the Messiah יזכו לרוב שמחה , so they will be saved to liberty and our redemption will increase - Of Thy Rock we have eaten צור משלו אכלנו - our shepherd, our Father, we have eaten his bread and drunk his wine, therefore we praise his name - O Rock, in songs and aloud we thank and bless our God, who has given for our fathers a lovely and good country ארץ חמדה טובה , nourishment and booty has satisfied our souls - O Rock, have mercy in Thy grace on Thy people our Rock - O that the Son of David would come and save*

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<sup>352</sup> **Zohar** Shemoth, Section 2, pages 88a-b.

*us, the Spirit of our very soul, the Messiah of God.*"<sup>353</sup>

The item of the "*eternal Rock*" appears also in the Siddur in its regular morning prayers and in the evening of Sabbath which is as we have told repeated at least three times.

"May it be thy will - that we would keep thy statutes *in this world* and merit, and live, and inherit goodness and blessing in *the two days of the Messiah and in the World to come* - because God *the Lord is an eternal Rock.*"

The same message of Siddur about the Messiah as a "Rock of Salvation" is apparent also in the Old and New Testaments. Apostle Paul quotes it when he speaks of the Holy Communion in 1 Cor. 10:2-4 according to Revised Standard Version : "All were *baptized into Moses* in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same *supernatural food* and all drank the same *supernatural drink*. For they drank from the *supernatural Rock* which followed them, and *the Rock was Christ.*"

For some reason this Standard Version uses the same adjective as the Soncino Zohar in the concepts of the "*supernal Faith*" and "*supernal soul*". Actually the Greek word πνευματικός means rather "spiritual" which would be more convenient. Still the picture of the rock is related also in the Jewish literature to the Messiah. The Didache too spoke about the "spiritual food and drink" in connection with the Holy Communion.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> **Siddur tefillah ha-Shalem**, nusah ashkenaz, Beit Rafael, Tel Aviv, pp. 198-199 and 201.

<sup>354</sup> **Karl-Gustav Sandelin** deals with the item "**Christ as the Nourishing Rock**" in his book "Wisdom as Nourisher", Chapter 7, pp.161-172. His conclusion was: "If Paul thinks of the Lord's Supper as a 'mystery of Christ' this differs nevertheless from the 'mysteries of Wisdom' because it implies communion with the body and the blood of Christ" (page 172). There are, however, according to our study some of these common aspects also in the Siddur, in the Didache and in the New Testament.

The "song of Moses" in Deuteronomy 32, verse 15 uses a pet name of Israel, Jeshurun, but it reproaches her that she "*scoffed at the rock of his salvation.*" In Isaiah 8:14 the verse that "he shall be for a Sanctuary, for a stone of stumbling and for a *rock of offence* to both houses of Israel" is related in Talmud to the Messiah, the Son of David.<sup>355</sup> In this light it would be easy to understand the language of the Siddur. The **Hebrew commentaries** for these prayers agree unanimously that all the above prayers in Siddur are related to Messiah, the son of David.<sup>356</sup>

Our impression will be even more convincing if we take only one example of these commentaries. The prayers for the third meal, "**zemiroth le-motzae Sabbath**", include a famous petition which begins with the words **אגיל ואשמח בלבבי** "*I am delighted and I rejoice in my heart*". The commentators mention that this prayer has been composed by the Medieval poet **Elazar Qalir** who lived probably in the ninth, but according to Aharon Mirsk already in the 6th century A.D. We have seen his famous supplication in Mahzor Rabbah about the Messiah our Righteousness who has been before the creation and and has been "wounded for our transgressions".

The separate components after the words of rejoicing in this prayer are loaded with Messianic tunes:

"Bring the Saviour to Zion, grant the Branch sprout, the prophet Elijah and the King Messiah - *O God, let us have a meal* - O God, feed us - send us our Redeemer - my God, *speed thy day up* my

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<sup>355</sup> **Sanhedrin** 38a is stating: "When the wine took effect, they began by saying: The son of David - for it is written, And he shall be for a **Sanctuary**, for a **stone** of stumbling and for a **rock of offence** to both houses of Israel". The Soncino translation explains that he is "the Messiah".

<sup>356</sup> See the corresponding prayers in the commentaries of **Siddur Beit Ja'akob** and **Siddur Hagr'a**.

Saviour **חיש גואלי** , **אלי** , thy Servant shall prosper, he who brings good tidings, the prophet Elijah; how beautiful are the mountains, the ambassadors of him who has created the mountains and the feet of messengers" etc.

This poem based on Isaiah 52:7 shows that even the poets were able "to write with the Scripture", as Jabob Neusner has expressed it.

Now it has become clear that the picture of Messianic meal in Midrash Ruth does not represent an exception in Jewish literature. Zohar and Talmud reflect the same tradition having many enigmatic features like Midrash Ruth also does to a certain extent. The writings of Qumran reflect more of a distant relation to this conventional message of the communion in the congregation. They demonstrate a very exclusive mode of thinking. Only Midrash Ruth and the New Testament comprise a concrete bridge to the world to come, where those who partake of the Messianic meal in this world are seeing its fulfilment in the world to come. The real difference between the Christian Eucharist and the Jewish Messianic banquet is however in the sacramental nature of the Holy Communion - it is a token of expiation for the sin of the world.

## VIII CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THE MESSIAH AND HIS MEAL IN ITS JEWISH FRAME OF REFERENCE

The final evaluation of Midrash Ruth needs a condensed refreshing of the results which we have achieved until now. We must however be critical to previous studies and ostensible experts in the field as we have noticed of some quotations given by Joseph Klausner and David Flusser. According to our aim we have tried to uncover the message of the Messiah and his meal in Midrash Ruth.

### VIII,1 Conclusions concerning the method and content of our study

The research of Midrash and in particular Midrash Ruth is a kind of untilled virgin soil. The study of **M. B. Lerner** in 1971 was according to his own words the first Midrash essay made in Eretz Israel. **Renée Bloch** attempted as we have told to elaborate a new synthesis of all Midrashic texts. But her tragic death in 1955 prevented her from doing more than grapple with the preliminaries.<sup>357</sup> There is now a special need to *delineate the primary characteristics of Midrash from Christian perspective*. The

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<sup>357</sup> **Renée Bloch** has put forth also in her articles the idea that the way in which the evangelist John treats Scripture in his work is *an early example of Midrash*. She writes that "the symbolism of the Fourth Gospel, interest in the meaning of names, its penchant for word-plays etc. are also related to certain Midrashic tendencies". **Le Deault** however thought that Midrash had not yet developed into a literary genre by New Testament times -- according to him its genre was more applicable to that of Targums. See the discussions in [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

principal aim of Midrash is to comment on the Scriptures and to make it relevant to the reader in every epoch.

We have discovered that the *N.T. contains some of the stylistic devices typical to Midrash*. They both require a method which fits to this kind of literature. In the section of our methodological approach we presented in detail the scientific dilemma in Midrashic studies, the dating of the traditions and the reliability of the chain of transmission.

There is however a tension in opinions between the scholars of Israel and those abroad. **Neusner** and the Israeli **Safrai** had a heated disputation about the matter. **Neusner's** interpretation of the Rabbinic literature seems to signify a kind of *syncronic approach* dealing simultaneously with different aspects of the limited given text. He is mostly tackling with various sources at their own terms. **Safrai** for his part has an attempt to see the historical preconditions of the message in Midrash and other Jewish sources - its essential character has *a distinct diachronic quality*.

The methods of Neusner and Safrai provided a useful "rear view mirror" to project my own endeavor in finding feasible tools for Jewish studies. Intertextuality means "a relation of co-presence between two or more texts". And "in that sense the Rabbinic writings are wholly intertextual" as Neusner has stated. It can be seen also in our **Appendix two and three**.

If we are looking the problems through our rear view mirror, Neusner seems to have too many objectives for his scientific approach and there lurks a danger that this integrated wholeness falls to pieces. In his last 7th stage of approach Neusner endeavors to build constructive and comparative Jewish theology "from description to conviction". This leads easily to value judgments saying what a Jew ought to believe. "Building a religion" as Neusner describes his way of approach, means for him as he states, a kind of "constructive theology" and "formation of that Judaism"

which is "best characterized as philosophical, religious and theological" - and it comprises for him always "a theological synthesis". It could be thus a bit "intentional" of its nature.

The English word "topical method" based on the idea of **Aristotle** and given in its final definition by the father of the historic philosophy, the Italian **Giovanni Battista Vico**, is probably the most handy one in our study - the best Hebrew equivalence of this concept would be **שטת המקום**. In our method we "place" the details of Rabbinic concepts and thoughts to the corresponding liaison with other Jewish writings. This indicates an intertextual method. In other words, I am striving to see the "leading points" and traits as well as the "inner affiliates" with the respective Jewish literature as the topical method teaches.

**Jacob Neusner** draws parallels between the various parts of all the normative Jewish sources *as private units and based on their own merits*. In Neusner's approach the "topic" is rather a "theme" or "focus" of the document as such serving for the formation of modern Jewish thinking.

We also are trying to define the common denominators in a limited given section, the Messiah Parashiyoth in Midrash Ruth. But in our analysis we are concentrating merely upon the central equivalents in the respective Jewish literature *in the light of the topical landscape as a whole*. That is a kind of "*Mindmapping*" which strives to bind "die gefundenen Aspekte einer Argumentation miteinander". The father of the historic philosophy Giovanni Battista Vico called this type of approach as a topical method. According to **Pompa** the topics of Vico was "*an art of knowing and being able to summon all the considerations relevant to the formulation of a true judgement*". It reveals best the Messianic flavor of Midrash Ruth and the eternal nature of the Jewish Messianic meal.

The Talmud as well the Mikraoth Gedoloth are following a similar intertextual system. **The third** Hebrew extract of our **Appendix**

shows the various Rabbinic interpretations in Rashi script in both sides of the discussions. But in the right hand of the main text there are notes from Isaiah and of the Psalms and in the left margin accordingly the corresponding halakhoth.

In making analytical comparison of Midrash and relating it to medieval sources there is a danger to extrapolate the Jewish literature backwards drawing assumptions that defy the vast chasm of history that separate one millennium from another. This tends to presuppose that the ideas and the terminology which are similar may be defined as conveying the identical religious message. The same concepts in Jewish thinking and in Christian theology do not always respond inevitably to each other. But there are still some essential principles which remain the same throughout all the history.

The dual dilemma between between Neusner and Safrai seems to be exaggerated. In fact both Neusner and Safrai are "reconstructing and interpreting the history of the formation of Judaism" in their own way. Both of them are trying to find a Jewish mode to interpret their "theology". If Neusner is making a kind of "revised version" of Jewish selfunderstanding as a religion, that would be really a bit different from that of Safrai.

One of the the difficulties entailed in these studies has been the *accessibility* to the old sources. Already the original sources give enough guidance in our theme, but the new ADP equipments and CD Rom's contribute the research workers in their achievements too. We have been leaning primarily on the *medieval Jewish comments* of Talmudic experts in the so-called Mikraoth Gedoloth. They contain a closer view to the original texts and their meaning. They build a *completed frame of reference* for all Rabbinical writings. Our *secondary literature* is strongly based on the books of the *golden age of Jewish studies* which extended approximately from 1870's to the First World War. Even the *modern literature* has been consulted in the necessary proportionate measure mainly in order to be aware of the new trends in Jewish studies.

*Judaism is not a consistent system of thoughts* but rather a form of syncretism composed of different ideas of different persons and eras. It is a kind of "*Weltanschauung*", a way to see the world as whole. It has still certain common denominators which always remain unchangeable. We must only see as Safrai emphasizes "the inner historical logic" of each dictum. This indicates in our study about Midrash Ruth an intertextual method, defined according to the understanding of Giovanni Battista Vico. In other words: this was the actual reason why we were striving to see the "leading points" and the common message in the respective Jewish literature.

*The most condensed picture of the content* in Midrash Ruth was given by **Jacob Neusner** in his exposition about Midrash Ruth. He explains that "Ruth Rabbah has *only one message*, expressed in a variety of components but single and cogent. It concerns the outsider who becomes the principal, the Messiah out of Moab, and this miracle is accomplished through mastery of the Torah".

Midrash Ruth gives a *psychological portrayal* describing the characters of Elimelech, Ruth and Boaz, the principal actors in the story. Everything depends here on everything else **הא בהא תליא** . Even the ten famines conceal a spiritual meaning - "God starved them of the *Holy Spirit*". And "the word of the Lord was precious in those days" - "God therefore starved them of the *Holy Spirit*". The reality of the *Holy Spirit* appears often in Midrashic literature as was seen in Midrash Tehillim when it repeated three times that Psalm 118 was given by the *Holy Spirit*.

We have said that there would be a temptation to think that Midrash Ruth would be, with its Messianic emphasis, a kind of hidden interpolation of Christian writings, inserting Christian material to Rabbinic discussions. Already in connection with the content of our Midrash we saw the name **Elisha Ben Abuyah**, a well disputed "min" of his time. We found that the friends of Jonathan were very dubious in their relation to the minim. But we remember also the famous **Rabbi Meir** who was befriended with his teacher Rabbi

Abuyah. In this light it might be true that the story about the "hot potato" Abuyah would stand mainly for *an effort to soften the disagreements of the synagogue and the new Hebrew Christians*. In this sense one can abandon the suspicion of a hidden interpolation in this matter.

In the *preliminary proems* there were six parables of the king and his will, similar to those in the New Testament. This served afterwards for the discussion about the ancestors of the Messiah. *Ruth Rabbah tells nothing of religious ceremonies and it has no regulations of purification laws at all*. This feature is characteristic and common to Midrash as such, but the disputations of Talmud represent predominantly a more rigorous religious attitude.

## **VIII,2 Specifications about the Messianic idea in Midrash Ruth**

In the light of our literary and conceptual analysis the message of Midrash Ruth became more clear. The fifth interpretation in Parashah V about the King Messiah explained that the vinegar refers to sufferings, as it is said in Isaiah 53, that "he was wounded because of our transgressions". In this context Midrash Ruth lead us to present first some similar molds of Isaiah 53 in Jewish prayer literature. This was however only a fraction compared with the extensive Jewish discussions about the matter in other respective sources.

### **1. The enigma of Isaiah 53 in its Jewish frame of reference**

The story about the Suffering Servant is somewhat problematic in the modern research. We must however remember that *all the delicate questions related to the relation of the Church and the*

*Jewish people are filtered by the mutual censorship of both parties and they represent in a certain extent a kind of distilled theology.* Therefore we had to follow more the original sources and not so much the opinions of various modern scholars. The old Jewish emphasis about the Messiah as Efraim the son of Joseph or the people of Israel has become a sort of "*evasive move*" to avoid the common Christian understanding. The Jewish thinking represents in this sense a kind of *modified theology* in which the Christian approach is often systematically relieved or even refuted.

We saw that **Joel E. Rembaum** spoke about the "relative silence as a form of *Jewish self-censorship* in the face of the Christian emphasis on the Christological meaning" of the Scriptures. **Urbach** however stated that this "anti-Christian polemical motive *cannot be assumed to be an ever-present factor* in the Rabbinic thinking on this matter". Our study has shown this common tension from various angles both in the Talmud and in the Siddur.

We tried to find *a conclusion* for the Jewish understanding about the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. The Zohar combines Isaiah 53 to the person of the Messiah by two noted Rabbis **Simeon Bar Yohai** and his son **Eleasar** *from the Tannaitic period* between 150 and 200 C.E. Simeon or simply Yohai was the student of the outstanding Tanna Rabbi **Akiba** before 135 C.E. The explanation of RaSHI that Isaiah 53 would speak mainly about the Jewish people was rejected as unsatisfactory already by **Maimonides**. According to **R. Mosheh Cohen Iben Crispin** RaSHI "distorted the passage from its natural meaning" as in truth it was given of God as a description of the Messiah himself. In that sense "the doors of the literal interpretation of this Parashah were shut". For that reason we presented the *oldest verbal readings* of this chapter, the text of Septuaginta and that of the Scrolls from Qumran. The tradition given by **Jonathan**, our Tanna in Midrash Ruth, does not however solve the whole problem of Isaiah 53 - it only connects the vinegar in the Messianic meal with the sufferings of the Suffering Servant in the chapter.

Our presentation revealed some reflections of Isaiah 53 *from Middle Ages*. Then we had to present "the footsteps of the Anointed one" in the light of Talmud. Although Isaiah 53 is missing from the annual readings from the prophets, so called *haphtaroth*, it appears in a remarkable prayer which is read in the Synagogue. The separate prayerbook for the feast days, the **Mahzor Rabbah**, contains as we noticed a literary prayer by Rabbi **Eleazar Qalir** which may be from the sixth century C.E.

It told that the "Messiah Our Righteousness" has turned away from his people - an aspect reflected in Midrash Ruth. Rabbi **Sa'adia Gaon** (882-942) combines this Messiah-term with the Son of Man concept. Although the person in the above prayer is shocked and shaken, he recognizes that the Messiah has already carried his burdens. Therefore forgiveness is to be found through the fulfilment of Isaiah 53. In this way a "new creation" is effected.

The words of the famous **Moses Alshekh**, that on the grounds of the "witness of tradition" it would be right to see the Messiah in the Suffering Servant of the Lord, gave new weight to the meaning of this chapter. Living in Safed, which was isolated from the Sages in Europe, he wrote in the late 16th century: "Our ancient Sages have preserved for us the witness of tradition that this refers to the Messiah." The *Zohar* tradition of Elijah as well as the *Talmudic* discussions about the Messianic age and the footsteps of the Anointed One proved as a whole for the Messianic characterization of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.

## 2. The Messianic age and the Torah

We gave also many relevant quotations about *the fate of the Torah* in the Messianic age: The Messiah will give "a new Torah", the "Torah will revert to its original state". Even the fearful thought of the "abrogation" of Torah was brought up in the traditions of the Wise: "In the future the commandments will be annulled." Romans

10:4 teaches that Christ is the "τελος", the aim or the purpose of the law. Galatians 4:4 clarifies, that when "the time had fully come", οτε δε ηλθεν το πληρωμα του χρονου, God sent his Son, "born under the law to redeem those who were under the law". In the new Messianic era which would be a fulfilment for the long expectation, this was a logical conclusion if the Messiah was to give a new Torah.

**RaMBaM** insisted upon the *natural character of the Messianic age* in his booklet Hilkhoth Melakhim XII. He wrote: "Do not entertain the idea that the natural course of this world will change in the days of the Messiah, or that the laws of nature will be suspended then. By no means! The world will follow its own course" - העולם כמנהגו נוהג. This would seem to imply that the Messianic age **ימי המשיח** will be *quite normal history* in which the Messiah will govern his believers by his statutes which he has constituted.

The message about "*the first Redeemer*" Moses and "*the last Redeemer*" the Messiah obtained more relevance in the light of Midrash Ruth. A similar parallelism appears as early as in Jesus' statement that, "If you believed Moses you would believe me, because he wrote about me". Those who listened to him sometimes exclaimed, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and about whom the prophets also wrote". Messiah was to be "Moses redivivus", Moses who was brought back to life, or the new Moses.

**Targum Jonathan** attached an important interpretation to the prophecy related to Moses in Deuteronomy XVIII: "God will raise up from your midst a prophet *by the Holy Spirit* דדמי לי ברוח קודשא יקים לכוך יי who will be like me". This observation ought to receive more attention.

### 3. The potential second advent of the Messiah

When our Midrash speaks of the odd expressions in its various forms about *the kingdom "taken" or "reproved" from the Messiah "for a time"*, we enter into an esoteric realm of the Messianic mystery. It gives a peculiar by-path for Messianic expectation in the synagogue when it diverts the attention to the potential rejection of the Messiah "for a time". The matter is repeated in Midrash Ruth over and over again. But in the second breath it promises always that his kingdom will afterwards be "restored" to him.

The potential second advent of the Messiah is reminded in the Jewish prayerbook **Siddur** which mentions several times "the two days of the Messiah". Siddur has three prominent petitions with this expression, one in the regular morning prayer and one in every morning and evening in Sabbath. This delicate matter is however omitted from the English translation of **Stern**.

According to Midrash Ruth the former Redeemer will reveal himself, return and then hide himself. But *how long* will he be hidden, was asked by Rabbi **Tanhuma**, the "seal of Midrash". This moved the discussion to the concept of kingdom, one of the favorite words in our text and about the seat of the Messiah. We saw the *heavenly "seat"* in the light of Psalm 2 and 110 quoting both Talmud and Siddur.

### 4. The enigma of the birth of the Messiah

The *blessing "in the stomach of that righteous woman" Ruth* led us to ponder the birth of the Messiah. However it developed afterwards another line of logic speaking of the genealogy of the Messiah. The problem of this term "*stomach*" raised up the corresponding word called a "*seed*", which appears side by side in the Scriptures. "Stomach" or **מעיה**, is a kind of euphemism and means in the Bible primarily the posterity.

The words **מעיה** and **זרע** are in fact almost as synonyms. A woman does not have a "seed" - thus the nearest equivalent for this concept would be **מעיה** or the "stomach", a picture of "womb" or "uterus". This would indicate that the birth of the Messiah could be a miracle. The word "seed" is used Messianically related to the seed of the woman, the seed of Perez and the seed of Abraham. The Messiah is as many Rabbinic sources assume "a seed from another place" - what ever this might really mean to a Jewish reader.

In noting the words of Targum Jonathan about Deuteronomy XVIII that the Second Moses would be "raised by the Holy Spirit" we pointed to **H. L. Strack**. He has insisted in an unconditional way about **רוח הקודש** that the New Testament in Matthew I,18 describes primarily the "creative power of God" and "it seems that the **רוח הקודש** is not appearing in the same meaning in the early Rabbinic literature". The Holy Spirit was rather "a spirit of prophecy and inspiration". "And no where comes efforts to see in this divine spirit the creative lifepower (Lebenskraft) of God."

**R. Gordis** stated regarding the disputed words in Qumran Charter for Israel in the Last Days, that **if** the excerpt about the Messiah whom God will "*beget*" is taken seriously, it would be "highly important as a source for the concept of a Divinely begotten Messiah". **Michael Wise** also insisted that according to computer image enhancement the first traditional Hebrew reading **יוליד** would be the best one. The word in Targum Jonathan seems to add new aspects to the impression of Gordis and Wise.

## 5. Elijah and Metatron

Midrash Ruth is seeing *Elijah as a herald of the Messiah*. There is a huge amount of Rabbinical literature in Talmud and other Jewish writings about him as a precursor of the Messiah. We found that he has the same role in the Jewish prayerbook Siddur too. But do the

oldest layers in the Jewish prayers also speak about Elijah and Metatron in relation to the Messianic expectation?

**David Flusser** gave his impressions about Midrash and the Jewish prayers in his book "Jewish Sources in Early Christianity". According to his opinion "the Midrash is originated in a period earlier than the rise of Christianity, but our great collections of Midrashim are rooted in the period of early Christianity." - "Jesus himself had a profound Jewish education, and it is obvious that he was familiar with numerous Midrashim." - "In the Midrashic literature, the ways of the Messiah acquire a dimension which is beyond everyday life and passes human understanding. *In Jewish prayers, the word Messiah does not appear*, and the expressions used are such as 'the Branch of David'." The diverse extracts which we gave from the Siddur proved however the contrary about his last conclusion.

We brought also many enigmatic examples of *Metatron as a heavenly scribe* both from Siddur and Talmud. These discussions are touching some cryptic names which are also related to the Messiah. Stockholm's erstwhile chief Rabbi **Gottlieb Klein** gave in one of his books Metatron's main features as portrayed in the Jewish literature. "Metatron is the nearest person to God, serving him; on the one hand his confident and delegate, on the other hand the representative of Israel before God - Metatron is also known as Sar ha-Panim, the 'Prince of the Countenance' or just as 'the Prince', and he sits in God's innermost chamber (penim). The numeric value of 'Metatron' is the same as that of Shaddai, 'the Almighty'. He is therefore the delegate of the Almighty."

Klein wrote also at length about how in Jewish writings Metatron is often identified with the Greek Word "logos" **λογος** along with the above intermediaries from the Talmud. Ruth Rabbah leans on this tradition when it portrays the heavenly scribe telling that Elijah records the good deeds and "the Messiah and the Holy One, blessed be He, subscribe their seal to it".

## 6. The secret of "the closed Mem" in Isaiah 9:6

**Parashah VII** in our Midrash raised up also *the secret of "the closed Mem"*. It is based on the discussion in Talmud Sanhedrin 94a and Yalkut Isaiah about the Holy One, who "wished to appoint Hezekiah as the Messiah" but was disappointed. The prophecy in Isaiah IX relates the matter to Hezekiah. But it is strange that the child should be Hezekiah, because he was already nine years old when his father Ahaz came to the throne, and our verses plainly describe the joy at the birth of a newborn child when the prophet wrote his words. The incontrovertible conclusion of the Sages is, that the word **לסרבה** "the increase" is written with a closed mem and not a normal open one because the **ס** here refers to the secret of the Messiah. *The tradition* is recorded in the name of Rabbi **Bar Qapparah**, a citizen of Sepphoris in Midrash Ruth, the pupil of **Judah ha-nasi** in *the end of Tannaic period*. The theory recorded in his name was probably directed as an answer to the heretics in this delicate matter.

In the **Zohar** there are six discussions about the closed mem. Four of them are bound to the **Song of Solomon IV,12**, "A Garden locked is my sister, my bride; a garden locked, a fountain sealed". Rabbi Yitzhak said that this would happen "in the time of the Holy King" **בשעתא דמלכא קדישא** . The final solution of the closed mem is still not solved and needs further a profound study.

The Song of Songs is mentioned as regards to the coming of the Messiah at least 16 times. It serves as a key-text for the Messianic interpretation in many writings. In the **Midrash of the Song of Songs** there were eight different interpretations related to the Messiah. In the respective **Targum** we found seven similar discussions. All this shows how strong the Messianic idea really is in Jewish writings.

## 7. Good deeds and free will

One of the main components in Midrash Ruth is combined with *good deeds*. There was a need to compare this message in its Jewish and Christian reference. The rabbis teach that "man was created for good works only"; the benefactor is doing "the deeds of God"; thus he fills "the whole world with the love of God"; and he should do them "from a generous and loving heart" and "in secret". It meant visiting the sick, lodging foreigners in homes, supporting young bridal couples, attending weddings and funerals and, for instance, giving speeches of consolation even to the Gentiles, as Gamaliel, the teacher of Paul taught.

**Parashah VIII** in Midrash Ruth is putting a rhetorical question typical to the literary genre of Midrash: "David - Is he not of *tainted descent*? Is he not a descendant of Ruth the Moabitess?" All this is to assume that the Messiah himself will also have a kind of tainted origin.<sup>358</sup> It raised afterwards the problem of *free will* and the so called *original sin* which word as such does not appear in the Bible.

This emphasis on *free will* generally accepted by the rabbis appears in Jewish prayer literature, the Talmud and the sayings of the Fathers. In this context there was reason to mention some clear statements: **Pirquei Aboth** 3:16 cites the well-known words of Rabbi **Akiba**: "Everything is predetermined; people have been given free will and God's goodness judges the world according to the preponderance of works **לפי רוב המעשה**." The rabbis say unambiguously that here it is a question of free will and that the main trend of people's deeds is taken into account at the final judgment.

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<sup>358</sup> The first chapter of Matthew gives the same impression when it states expressis verbis that Judah was "the father of Perez and Zerah **by Tamar**", and "Salmon the father of Boaz **by Rahab**" and "David the father of Solomon **by the wife of Uriah**" - **three** tainted women in the pedigree of the Messiah.

The rabbis explain this item, which is a central question in the Christian theology too, with many words: "Blessed are Israelites when they practise the Torah and good works and when their evil impulse is under their own control and not they under its control." "Blessed is the man who controls his evil impulse like a man and loves the Law" - "Be not like slaves who serve their master for the sake of their allowance." "Who is a mighty man? He that subdues his evil inclination."

**Myron Bialik Lerner** gives in his Hebrew academic dissertation some concrete examples about Midrash Ruth and the New Testament. They concern the *good works*, the *merits* which are valid also in the world to come and the *evil inclination*. There is always the same old literary pattern in both of them and also the antithesis between this world and the world to come. Lerner summarizes his reference related to the New Testament saying that "the Gospel of Matthew is seemingly reflecting the same old mode of eloquence which was commonly used in the first Christian century or after it. A similar style in the original layer of Midrash Ruth seems to indicate that we have there a sermon *from the period of Tannaim*".

In the Scrolls discovered at **Qumran** the term יצר is repeated dozens of times. Its background is the phrase in Gen. 6:5 about מחשבת יצר, that is, the thoughts arising from the "impulse" or "our inherited inclination". For example, the "hodayoth" or hymns of thanksgiving are using the expressions "deceitful nature", "creature of clay", "creature of dust" or "fleshly nature". Also Paul spoke a lot of "fleshly nature", "of the mind of the flesh" and "fleshliness". The preference in Qumran is mostly given to the concept of the "creature of clay", which appears in Jewish prayers too.

The extracts of Jewish writings which we have seen in the above sources and in Siddur emphasize that a man is basically pure in his innermost being and that the sin lurks for us mostly from outside of

our hearts. If the will of man is free then he will succeed to control his tainted inclination. R. **Jacob Bar Abijah** said in our Midrash: "Fight against your evil inclination and sin not!" According to the text that would be the only way to be worthy of seeing the days of the Messiah.

The second aspect of the eighth Parashah touched the wide discussion about **Perez** in the Rabbinic literature. The 'Seal of the Midrashim', R. **Tanhuma Bar Abba**, speaks again and again of the Messiah in connection with Perez. "He is the final saviour, the Messiah-King."

Thirdly, parashah VIII dealt extensively with the "*ladders of princes*" and "*ladders of kings*" which were leading to the fulfilment of Jewish Messianic expectation. The genealogies in the Old Testament are mostly related to the hereditary rights of the Hebrew people in their land - on the other hand every tribe had received its own spiritual inheritance.

## 8. The genealogy of the Messiah

In the *genealogy of the Messiah* both the *New Testament* and *Midrash Ruth* represent the same principle simplifying the jungle of names and making shortcuts to more prominent figures. This principle concerned also the pedigree of Jesus according to Matthew as we saw in our analysis before. Midrash Ruth drew up for its part an ingenious way to solve the pedigree of the Messiah when it divided his ancestors to princes or judges and kings. The partition of the two main figures which God found, *Abraham and David*, was very reasonable too. The Gospel of Matthew begins with both of these names; "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." For the Jewish reader this is an impressive prelude indeed!

The *genealogy of the Messiah in Midrash Ruth* is a very essential

object. The various ways to express the dependency of the genealogical tree do not inevitable lend a hand to a dissection by modern methods of criticism. It was commonly accepted to use different *mnemonic rules* in order to follow the purpose of these lists. We found a certain pattern in **Aboth V:1-9** which repeats the number ten: "By *ten* sayings the world was created" - "There are *ten* generations from Adam to Noah to show how much long-suffering is before Him, for all the generations went on provoking Him until He brought upon them the waters of the Flood" - "*Ten* generations from Noah to Abraham to make known how much long-suffering is before Him" - "With *ten* trials Abraham our father was tried" - "*Ten* wonders were done for our fathers in Egypt" etc. All this was as we said intended to a kind of mnemonic help.

The same principle concerns *the pedigree of Jesus according to Matthew*. His genealogy comprises a triple 14-name series which, using gematria, spells out "three times David", the numeric value of the name 'David' being  $4+6+4 = 14$ . Gematria was used as a mnemonic device but it always had a direct bearing on the actual subject matter itself, as has been noted in Matthew 1:17: "Thus there were *fourteen* generations in all from Abraham to David, *fourteen* from David to the exile of Babylon, and *fourteen* from the exile to the Christ." In Matthew's lineage with Abraham he only had 42 generations to accommodate, whereas Luke, continuing right back to Adam, had 56.

The problem of Matthew's genealogy lies primarily in the statement that Jesus was born by the Holy Spirit, a claim which would seem to render Joseph's genealogy meaningless. The Talmud however is at pains to make it clear that "only the father's family is called family; the mother's family is not called family".

*Luke is acknowledging this principle* when he gives Mary's genealogy, although he too, following the legal line, attached it to Joseph. He began his family tree with Joseph's father-in-law Heli and concluded it with Adam and God. There were two passages in

the Talmud which speak of "Mary, daughter of Heli" although it is not sure whether it would refer to Jesus' mother. In 3:23 Luke uses the phrase *ὡς ἐνομιζέτο*, 'as was supposed', for a bridge. In the Greek we read that Jesus was "the son, so it was supposed, of Joseph, the son of Heli". *The Greek phrase corresponds to the Hebrew expression כחוקה or כמו הוחזק, which means that the matter had been legally "confirmed".* Thus, before the law, it was right to connect Jesus through Joseph to his father-in-law Heli. For the Jewish reader this was sufficient evidence of the fact that Jesus was, both on his mother's side and on his "foster-father's" side, legally "recognized" and confirmed as a descendant of David.

Most impressive in this important matter of Messiah's genealogy was first of all the fact that Midrash Ruth presents in fact the same names in its genealogical "ladders" as the New Testament does. Secondly it uses the same editorial principles as Matthew and Lukas did. Thirdly when Midrash Ruth found the "precious pearl" Abraham and David, also the New Testament arrived to the same conclusion: Jesus Christ was "the son of David and the son of Abraham".

### **VIII,3 New light on the Messianic meal**

Midrash Ruth reveals as we have seen an eternal perspective for the Messianic banquet similar to the Holy Communion in the New Testament. Especially the paraphrase "to eat in this world, and in the Messianic age, and in the World to Come" gave imposing views to other Jewish writings. We were discussing about the Holy Communion compared with other sources only in order to uncover the common components with Midrash Ruth.

In our study we noticed that *the Last Supper is based mainly on the Jewish Passover feast* which has many regulations transparent also

in the Gospels. The discussions about the meaning of the bread resembled that of our Midrash. The vinegar had a certain common message too. Elijah and the coming of the Messiah were associated with specific habits on the Passover Eve. And the sacrificial death of the Messiah was lifted up in the Gospel as it did by implication in Midrash Ruth also.

### 1. The "piece of bread" projected in old sources

In the Holy Communion the bread had a deeper meaning combining the lamb and the unleavened bread. Jesus said, that he is "the bread of life" - "if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever". The item of manna given by the Messiah was emphasized in Midrash Ruth and the eternal perspective is expressed both in the Midrash and the New Testament. In the sacrificial language the lamb is called as "guph ha-pesah" גוף הפסח, the body of Passover. That forms a natural association to the sacrificial death of Jesus.

In Midrash Ruth the "piece of bread" reflected the common Jewish interpretation that the Messiah will give manna from the heaven. **RaSHI** relates the Messianic meal to Psalm 22:26, where we read that "the poor will eat and be satisfied". He understood that this verse "refers to the time of deliverance, to the days of the Messiah". In **Shemoth Rabbah** we found a discussion upon the Shepherd Psalm 23 verse 5: "You prepare *a table* for me; in the presence of my enemies means manna; you anoint my head with oil means freedom from cares and my cup overflows refers to a spring."

**Didache** spoke about "supernatural bread". All this formed a *logical equation as a whole*: the bread compensated the lamb; the lamb was related to Christ, the "lamb of God"; and manna hinted to afikoman and the wafer, symbolizing the reconciliation of the Messiah by his death and resurrection. By this also the antithesis of the Zohar got a deeper meaning because "as long as Israel were in the Holy Land, by means of the Temple service and sacrifices" they

received the reconciliation but "now it is the Messiah" who takes the same role for his people.

## 2. The wine and its interpretations

When we discussed about *the wine* in Midrash Ruth which related to the sufferings in Isaiah 53, we entered to the essence of the Holy Communion. 1 Cor. 11:25-26 interprets the message of wine with the words of Jesus: "This cup is the *new covenant in my blood* - as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Even here we had the eternal perspective.

**The Passover liturgy** had in fact *four cups of wine*. Every cup has its own name and symbolizes certain features in the Seder. **Justin Martyr** gave his instructions to the Holy Communion. He explained in about 150 A.D. that after the Eucharist the participants had to "greet each other with a holy kiss". "Thereafter the supervisor receives the cup, *in which the wine and water is mixed*."

The *first cup* is called with the name קדוש which means the same as "sanctification". The *second cup* has the name מגיד and it begins the "narrative" part of the Passover. The *third cup* is called as כוס הברכה, cup of blessing, as it is revealed in 1 Cor.10:16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?" The *fourth cup* is mostly forgotten in the Christian theology. If we are examining the Last Supper with a magnifying glass, we notice that the Gospels do not speak at all about the fourth cup. It was called "*the cup of kingdom*". In Mark 14:25 Jesus promised that "I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God".

According to the professor of the Oxford University **David Daube**, Jesus instituted the fourth cup "to compensate the real, perfect and

final coming of the kingdom which is still a matter of faith and hope".

### 3. The "hallel" linked with the eternal perspective

Midrash Ruth has a strong emphasis of the eternal hope and the world to come. In that sense the end of the Jewish Passover meal includes the same eternal perspectives. The Jewish tradition of the Seder emphasizes that the feast always ended with a hymn called "hallel", a section of "praise". It consisted Psalms of Psalm 113 to 118. They speak about the salvation from Egypt and how all nations and all peoples ought to praise the Lord. Psalm 118 is called in Aramaic as a "royal song" or **שיר מטרוניתא** , "shir matronitha". It closed always the Passover meal.

Rabbi **Akiba** explains in Talmud that it was the Holy Spirit who gave this song, and that the Israelites sang it as they crossed the Red Sea. The tradition here is associated with the names of Rabbi **Jehudah and Shmuel**, who said that "the prophets have commanded Israel to sing this to their saviour on the day of their salvation". Even **Midrash Tehillim** approves with this idea.

The **Zohar** connects the theme of Psalm 118 to Israel's departure from Egypt. It explains that "there is a reference to One who is to come - therefore Israel is to sing this to Him who will come." And the people is going to sing it "at the redemption which is to come, for it refers both to the past world and to the future world; it contains confirmations of faith and mysteries relating to the days of the Messiah".

### 4. Other similar Messianic banquets in the old tradition

**The Scrolls of the Dead Sea** gave a new relevance to the discussion about the nature of the New Testament. We found many common

denominators in the Messianic meal of Midrash Ruth, in the New Testament and also in the Messianic banquet of the Qumran sect. The Essenes had a habit to bless first the bread and after that the wine as is done in the Eucharist too. The Essenes used mostly the concepts **לחם ותירוש** where the "tirosh" was actually "young and sweet wine before it was fermented".

The best description of *the Essene communion* meal was depicted in the "Charter for Israel in the last days". The communion feast of the Essenes was associated with the arrival of the "Messiah of Israel" and it is comparable with the early Christian agape or "love" feasts attached to the sacrament of Eucharist. The word *Yahad* or **יחד** used of the Essene congregation actually means "unity" or "oneness", almost as the term "communion". Although the Essene banquet had an eschatological nature it did not contain associations with the "world to come" as Midrash Ruth does.

The *Qumran society* accepted only men of ability and blameless behavior to their close fellowship. In their communal prayer **4Q501** they said: "Do not give our inheritance to strangers, nor our produce to the sons of a foreigner". The whole attitude of this sect was impregnated with small hostile remarks against the "outsiders" - as an opposite to the attitude of Midrash Ruth.

The **Christian Eucharist** is intended for sinners who are ready to repent for their behavior without any preconditions. The Essenes ordered that "no man with a physical handicap - crippled in both legs or hands, lame, blind, deaf, dumb, or possessed of a visible blemish in his flesh - or a doddering old man unable to do his share in the congregation" can partake their banquet. We saw here that the Messianic banquet of the Essenes was very exclusive of its nature. They did not accept "the outsiders" to the communion of the Yahad. And it did not give to its participants hope for the "world to come" as the New Testament or Midrash Ruth emphasized. In this sense the writings of Qumran can not be considered as the source for the Holy Communion.

Both the **Zohar and the Talmud** are based primarily on the same Rabbinic traditions. Even the Messianic emphasis is expressed approximately in the same manner in both of them although the Zohar has not been in that extent under the supervisory eye of the rabbis as is done for the Talmudic texts. There was a justified reason to deal with them together when we examined the Messianic banquet in Midrash Ruth.

### 5. The special message of the so called "third meal"

We found in the **Zohar** a discussion about the "*third meal*" which includes the components common both to Talmud and to the Jewish prayer book Siddur. We took only one example: "R. Hamnuna the ancient, when he sat at his Sabbath meals, used to find joy in each one. Over one he would exclaim: This is the *holy meal of the Holy Ancient One, the All-hidden.*" - "and when he came to the last one he would say: 'Complete the *meals of the Faith*.'" R. Simeon used always to say when the time of the Sabbath meal arrived: "Prepare ye the *meal of the supernal Faith* - Make ready the *meal of the King!*"

**Zohar** Section 2, pages 88a-b explains also: "Therefore one must wholeheartedly rejoice in these meals - for they are meals of the *perfect Faith, the Faith of the holy seed of Israel, their supernal Faith*, which is not that of the heathen nations". In the sequel of this text there are then two important aspects as we read: "give joy to the poor." - "And because the Faith is centered in the Sabbath, man is given on this day an additional, a supernal soul, a soul in which is all perfection, *according to the pattern of the world to come.*" This enigmatic speech of an "additional supernal soul" comes forth also in many discussions of Talmud. "Man is given an additional soul on Friday, but at the termination of the Sabbath it is taken away from him".

We saw also the third meal in the tradition of the **Talmud**. It has the name "*melawe malkhah*" מלוה מלכה, "escorting the Queen", a term used to describe the meal and the festivities at the end of the Sabbath. The origin of these old customs has been traced to the Talmud. In **Sabbath** 119b it is stressed that then even a small amount of food will be sufficient for the celebration. Melawe malkhah is called also as "*se'udat David*", King David's banquet. One of the essential features in the praises of "melawe" has always been the role of "Eliyahu ha-Navi" as a herald of the Messiah as is stressed also in Midrash Ruth.

The concept "*havdalah*" הבדלה, the "*distinction*" of the wine at the termination of Sabbath has its reflections in the New Testament too. The Apostle Paul is using this word in 1 Cor. 11:29 when he speaks of the Holy Communion: "For any one who eats and drinks without *discerning* the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself." There is a wide discussion in Talmud among the rabbis about the "table order" of each detail in the third meal. "It was taught in **R. Akiba's** name: "He who tastes anything before reciting havdalah shall die through choking." **R. Johanan** said: "Three are of those who will inherit the world to come: he who dwells in Eretz Yisrael, and he who brings up his sons to the Study of the Torah, and he who recites havdalah over wine *at the termination of the Sabbath.*" Living in Israel was important also for the compilers of Midrash Ruth.

The Talmud uses some common expressions with those of the New Testament. In one of them we read also about "*the table of the Lord*" as it is expressed in 1 Cor. 10:21 that "you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons". In Talmud **Berakhoth** we read: "This is the table that is before the Lord - the verse in Mal. 1:7 opens with 'altar' and finishes with 'table'? R. Johanan and R. Eleazar both explain that as long as the Temple stood, *the altar atoned for Israel, but now a man's table atones for him.*" The same words were repeated verbatim in **Menahoth** and **hagigah**. Also the **Zohar** emphasized that "as long as Israel were

in the Holy Land, *by means of the Temple service* and sacrifices they averted all evil diseases and afflictions from the world. *Now it is the Messiah who is the means of averting them*". Even this shows that the Zohar and the Talmud must be examined together.

The story about Paul in Troas and the young man called Eutyclus who fell from the third storey tells how after this accident, Paul "*broke bread and ate*". The enigma of that evening meeting at Troas reveals, that Paul "prolonged his speech" and "conversed" with his audience until the daybreak - as the Jews were in the habit of doing after the third meal in Sabbath, which was called as "se'udat David" and "the meal of the Messiah". The verse in Acts 20:7 is usually translated as pointing to Sunday, when the church is supposed to have celebrated the Lord's Supper at this strange hour in the late evening. The Syriac **Peshitta**, used by the ancient Oriental churches, says that the meal was a "*eukharistia*" אֲוֹכְרִיסְטִיָּא and that it was בְּיוֹמָא דְרֵדָּא בַשְּׁבִיעָא "*on the first day on the Sabbath*". The ancient Syrian and Near-Eastern churches still have the custom of celebrating the Eucharist or Holy Communion "at the second hour on Saturday evening". In their churches there are many Jews who circumcise their sons. Celebrating the Eucharist on Saturday evening is based on an ancient tradition, which they say originated from the Apostolic Age.

## 6. The holy banquet in Didache

The **second section of the Didache** (6:3-16:8) is a kind of handbook for the Church order dealing with advices for the food, Christian baptism, fasting, prayers, Eucharist and the various offices in the Church. The *participation in the Eucharist* was granted only for those who were baptized. The congregation received the Eucharist having first confessed their sin so that the sacrifice would be pure. "But let no one who has a quarrel with a companion join you until they have been reconciled." The latter instruction was typical in Jewish writings. In the extensive collection of lawsuits

against improper use of the tongue, "Hefetz hajjim", there were many sayings which warn the believers that "the Holy Spirit does not get along where there is quarrel and idle talk". A similar hint to the absence of the Holy Spirit is repeated in Midrash Ruth too.

The *cup of Eucharist* is blessed in Didache 9:2 as follows: "We give you thanks, our Father, for *the holy wine of David your servant*, which you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant; to you be the glory forever." The *broken bread* is sanctified with the words: "We give thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant; to you be the glory forever. Just as this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and then was gathered together and became one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever."

*After the food* the congregation read: "To us you have graciously given *spiritual food and drink, and eternal life* through your servant" - Gather the church "from four winds *into your kingdom*, which you have prepared for it - may grace come, and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David".

The Didache spoke of "the holy wine of David" almost the way as the melawe malkhah, "se'udat David" or King David's banquet did. The eternal aspect found in Midrash Ruth appeared also here when the Didache referred to the Communion as the spiritual food, which is linked with the eternal life in God's kingdom. And the ecumenical message of the broken bread united the Church and gathered the believers from "four winds" to the kingdom of God.

## 7. The third meal in the book of Siddur

**The Jewish Prayer book Siddur** is in fact the soul of the Jewish people as we have said: it presents the fundamentals of the faith, it

functions as a base for the devotion and it is a kind of calendar for Jewish feasts. The closest equivalent to the above modes of expression was found from Siddur in the third meal of Sabbath in the Aramaic words of "havdalah" **דא היא סעודתא דדוד מלכא** "*this is the meal of the King David*".

In the actual "Zemiroth" there were short extracts: "In God the Lord is *eternal Rock*, in Him who has spoken to His chosen people in order to sanctify them - may those who enjoy the celebration receive plentiful goodness *when the Redeemer comes for the world to come* - may they enjoy *of the coming world*, the day of Sabbath rest, all those who enjoy it. *May they receive great joy in the sufferings of the Messiah* **יזכו לרוב שמחה מחבלי משיח**, so they will be saved to liberty and our redemption will increase - *of Thy Rock we have eaten* **צור משלו אכלנו** - our shepherd, our Father, we have eaten his bread and drunk his wine, therefore we praise his name - *O Rock*, in songs and aloud we thank and bless our God, who has given for our fathers a lovely and good country, nourishment and booty has *satisfied* our souls."

Midrash Ruth too spoke much of the concept to "satisfy". We must remind also the extract in Siddur from its regular morning prayers and of the evening in Sabbath which was repeated as we told at least three times. "May it be thy will - that we would keep thy statutes *in this world* and merit, and live, and inherit goodness and blessing *in the two days of the Messiah and in the World to come*" - because God the Lord is *an eternal Rock*." Sometimes the "rock" is related in the Talmudic tradition also to the Messiah.<sup>359</sup>

In our intertextual method we have compared the normative Jewish sources also with the New Testament. Paul quotes similar expressions with the Zohar and the Siddur when he speaks of the

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<sup>359</sup> We have shown in our discussion about the prayers in the Siddur that Talmud **Sanhedrin** 38a spoke in the context of the "stone of offense and the rock of stumbling" in Isaiah 8:14, that "**he is the Messiah**".

Holy Communion in 1 Cor. 10:2-4. According to Revised Standard Version we read: "All were *baptized into Moses* in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same *supernatural food* and all drank the same *supernatural drink*. For they drank from the *supernatural Rock* which followed them, and *the Rock was Christ*." This resembles the translation of Soncino Zohar, which used the concepts "supernal Faith" and "supernal soul". Actually as we said the Greek word πνευματικός means rather "spiritual" which would be more accommodating.

**As a summary** of the common features in Midrash Ruth and in the respective Jewish literature we have discovered until now that our Midrash does not represent an exception in Jewish literature.

Zohar and Talmud reflect the same tradition having many enigmatic features, which Midrash Ruth does only to a certain extent. The Messianic banquet of Qumran had no sacramental nature at all, and the Essene writings won't in that sense be the source for Christian Eucharist. The Scrolls are demonstrating a very exclusive mode of thinking. Only Midrash Ruth and the New Testament comprise a concrete bridge to the coming world, where those who partake of the Messianic meal in this world are seeing its fulfilment in the world to come. However the real difference between the Christian Eucharist and the Jewish Messianic banquet is in the sacramental nature of the Holy Communion as a token for the expiation of the sin of the world.

## VIII,4. "What then shall we say", "מאי קא משמע לך" ?

In Rabbinic disputations there was a habit to give, after all the differing opinions, *the final judgment about the matter*. It began with the Aramaic question: "What then is the meaning of this for us?" "מאי קא משמע לך". Observing the same custom Paul too says at least five times in his letter to the Romans: "What then shall we say to this?", **Τι οὖν εἰπούμεν**?<sup>360</sup> The seventh principle of Hillel ended his exposition similarly with practical and spiritual conclusions asking, "What does this teach to us", "ידבר הלמד מענינו".

In the *intermediate accountancy* the clerk looks his accounts in order to be aware of his bookkeeping and the actual financial situation. We have done this throughout in our study, and almost in all the smaller sections there were *some preliminary conclusions*. When we defined our view about the Sages in the "Messiah-Parashiyoth" in chapter **VII,1**, we had to examine and determine the role, the friends and the teachers of each rabbi in his own time.

That enabled us to make conclusion of the *two main layers in the tradition of Midrash Ruth*. In chapter **VIII,1** we made summary about our method, although there is a danger to be "frustrated by an important and *insoluble problem of critical research* using Rabbinic literature as the principal source" for historical research, as Neusner felt in his studies. In **VIII,2** we collected 8 *special features* in Midrash Ruth and the respective Jewish literature about the Messianic exposition of various Rabbinic concepts having many

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<sup>360</sup> In **Erubin** 86,a this question is related to halakhoth and haggadoth, in **Shabbath** 100,a to the new interpretations and in **Berakhoth** 2a to the personal message for the listener. Paul uses the expression in Romans 4:1, 6:1, 7:7, 9:14 and 30. In the Catechism of Martin Luther it is in the form, "What is meant by this?"

important results. In **VIII,3** we saw 7 *specifications* of the Messianic meal in Midrash Ruth and in the normative Jewish literature. Every sections concluded nearer characterization of the special topic in these sources. All these investigations and their conclusions represent also our judgments of Midrash Ruth and its Messianic message.

In preparing our **final judgment** or "דבר הלמד מענינו" we have to "place", as has been said, the details of Rabbinic concepts and thoughts to *the corresponding liaison with other Jewish writings* -- לְמַקְּם אֶת הַמִּנְחָה לְמַקְוֵמוֹ הַמֵּיָאָד. In this challenge we use a method which tries to "*cover the entire expanse of human thinking*". It is the most handy implement in this kind of research. This way we revealed impressive facts about the nature and the message of Midrash Ruth:

- It first shows that Midrash Ruth belongs **to the early Midrashim** having classical proems and reflecting old Rabbinical Hebrew. It represents exegetical Midrashim commenting upon the whole book of Ruth and it is edited in the Land of Israel.
- It reflects the discussions of the **Tannaic and Amoraic era**.
- It does not have any **halakhic purification rules**.
- It represents a **positive attitude toward minority groups**.
- If we consider the time of the earlier historical layer in the tradition of Midrash Ruth and the Scrolls of Qumran or the editing of the New Testament and the Didache, and even the Talmudic traditions, all these sources together are **relatively close** to each other.
- Midrash Ruth gives **new hope and eternal perspectives** for the Messianic expectation which is partly extinguished - but God does not abandon or change his people to other nations.
- The **final fulfillment** of the Messianic hope will come true already **in this world or at least in the world to come**.
- Boaz and Ruth became worthy to be ancestors for the Messiah **by the merit of their moral behavior**.
- The good deeds are recorded in the **heavenly accountancy** by Elijah and the Messiah; in this light all Israelites are of tainted origin.

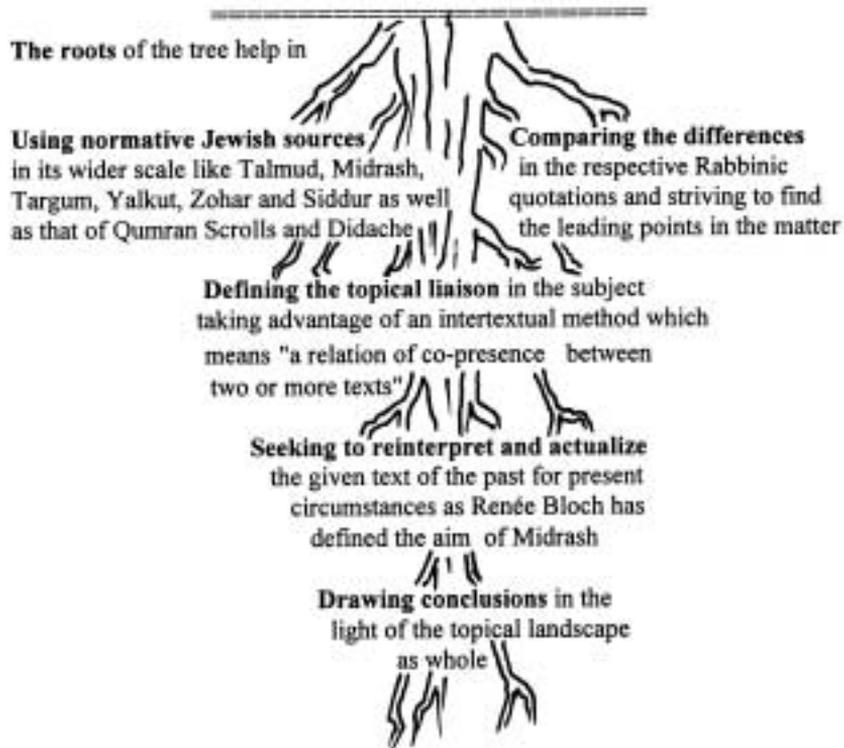
- Thus **the Messiah is of tainted origin too**. This was proved also by his genealogical tree.
- The way to present **the genealogical tree of the Messiah** in Midrash Ruth is **very similar** to that of the New Testament.
- **The Messianic meal of Ruth Rabbah is recompensing the lack of the temple and the national disappointment** which was prevailed in the time of the first compositors of Midrash Ruth and even later on.

## **VIII,5. The scheme of the content and the roots of our study**

Midrash Ruth revealed an astonishing amount of different components about the Messiah and his meal. According to the words of our dedication we intended to "compare" the biblical roots of the Church with the religious inheritance of the respective Jewish faith. It was stated in **LWF-Committee held in Bossey August 1982** that this would "enrich the Church and give to it a deeper understanding of its own biblical roots". It will be, in the end, helpful to draw some sketches about the substance of the abundant message in Midrash Ruth in a form of a tree, its trunk and the "roots". Without these outlines it is difficult to grasp the profound message in our study.

We have shown already the schemes of the traditions and their written form in the main normative Jewish sources and the two historical layers in Midrash Ruth. Now we shall differentiate here the structure of the Messianic idea and its fulfilment in the Messianic banquet in the light of the Jewish literature. The trunk of tree presents best the heading of our research "The Messiah and His Meal in Midrash Ruth". The **content** of our study looks in a scheme as follows:





a) The trunk of our tree portrays the major message of the Messiah in Midrash Ruth and in Rabbinics. Our Midrash does not stand for an exception in its presentation about the Messiah. It reflects the common denominators in the respective Jewish literature. The Messiah is in Jewish sources the Second Moses who gives manna for his people, he is the future Redeemer and he is the Messiah our righteousness. He has many enigmatic cryptic names like Menahem the Comforter or Penuel Sar ha-Panim and Penuel the Prince of Countenance. He is recording and sealing the good works in his heavenly accounting together with Elijah and Metatron, him "who is sitting on his heavenly throne". "The Messiah-King is sitting at the right hand of God and Abraham at his left". Part of this will be fulfilled in the Messianic age when "the world will follow its own course", which signifies a normal history, and the other half in the World to Come.

b) The pedigree of the Messiah represents the common biblical roots in Jewish writings. Messiah is son of Perez, "a seed from another place", he is the seed of woman, seed of Abraham and the son of David. Abraham was "the pearl which God found" to begin with His Messianic plans. The secret of its fulfilment is

however bound with the mystery of "the closed Mem" which relates to king Hezekiah and in the Zohar "to the Holy King", the Messiah who comes forth from "a garden locked, a fountain sealed". In Midrash Ruth the birth of the Messiah is connected with the "stomach of the righteous woman" Ruth. But in that sense he is "of tainted descent" being "a descendant of Ruth the Moabitess". Midrash Ruth has a brilliant solution for **the genealogy of the Messiah** when it divides it to the "ladders of princes" and "ladders of kings". When it presents the jungle of the names in the Old Testament it makes shortcuts to more prominent figures. It gives the same names in its genealogical ladders as the New Testament does proving that the Messiah would be "the son of David and the son of Abraham".

The Jewish Messianic expectation is in fact much more extensive than that of the New Testament. It is so complex of its nature with many cryptic concepts that it is difficult to grasp its concealed message. There was also, as we saw, in **Leviticus Rabbah Par. 34** almost the same discussion of the joint meal in the field of Boaz as in Midrash Ruth. This source, which is about hundred years older, mentioned also that Elijah and the King Messiah are recording the good works in the heavenly accountancy (See page 51). It did not, however, speak anything about the Messianic banquet in the eternity. Only Midrash Ruth deals extensively with this matter. In this sense it proved to be "sui generis" among the old Midrashic compilations.

In our day the scientific approach is not tackling so much with the external phenomena and with the outer structures. The technical and critical research does not inevitably do justice to the general views of the object. The humanities comprise always a kind of endogenous parameters. These elements must be studied from within. In this sense the Rabbinic literature is of its own class. We must not minimize the danger to get on the wrong track in our characterization of Jewish thinking. The world of the rabbis is an unknown and a virginal territory for the Western theology. If we are making mistakes with our judgment, despite of our best endeavors, it must be forgiven. In any case our mutual studies with our Jewish colleagues are completing each other.

The whole work about *the Messiah and his meal in Midrash Ruth* has been very inspiring indeed and has corresponded to the aim of Midrash - which according to the definition of **Renée Bloch** seeks to reinterpret or actualize a given text of the past for present circumstances.

## APPENDIX

In order to understand the special nature of the normative Jewish sources and other respective material we are striving to visualize them as they appear in the original texts.<sup>361</sup> The extracts are taken from the text which we already know. In some cases a few additional explanatory notes are also needed.

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<sup>361</sup> In the end we may still remind that the New Testament, the Didache and the Scrolls of Qumran were presented only related to our theme in Midrash Ruth as they appear **ipso facto** in the official translations.

1. The first extract is from Midrash Ruth Rabbah V:6, פרשה ה', It begins in the third line with the words: "And at the mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here; R. Jonathan interpreted this in six ways. It relates to David" etc. The quotation of Isaiah LIII,5 is on the seventh line from beneath in the left. The whole context in our study is to be found from **page 78** and on.

הודעות (שש ג) ונבה הלך וילכוד את קנת ואת בנותיה ונ' מלמד שלא עמד לה ארתו השם, ורכוזה (אויס פ) ויאמר אלי לבנות לה בית בארץ שנער מלמד שאין לשקר תשועה : (ו) ויאמר לה בועז לעת האכל נשי הלום . רבי יוחנן פתר בה שית ששין . מדבר ברוד . ה נשי הלום קרובי למלכות ואין הלום אלא מלכות הה"ד (ז"ג ו) כי הביאותני עד הלום . ואכלת מן הלום זו לחמה של מלכות . ומבלת פתך בחימין אלו היסורין שנא' (פסוק י) י"י אל באפך תוכידי . ותשב מצד הקוצרים שנוצרה ממנו המלכות לשעה ורא"ר הונא כל אותן ו' חדשים שהיה דוד בורח מפני אבשלום לא עלו מן המגין שהיה מתכפר לו בשעירה כהדיוט . ויצבט לה קלי שהורה לו מלכותו שנא' (סג) עתה ידעתי כי הושיע י"י משיח . ותאכל ותשבוע ותותר אוכל בעוה"ז ואוכל לימות המשיח ואוכל לעוה"ב . ד"א מדבר במלך המשיח נשי הלום קרובי למלכות . ואכלת מן הלום זו לחמה של מלכות . ומבלת פתך בחימין אלו היסורין שנא' (פסוק ט) והוא מודלל מפשעיו . ותשב מצד הקוצרים שעתידה מלכותו ליצר ממנו לשעה שנא' (פסוק י) ואספתי את כל הגוים אל ירושלים למלחמה ונלכדה העיר . ויצבט לה קלי שהיא עתידה לחזור לו שנא' (פסוק י) והכה ארץ בשבט פי . י"ר ברכיה בש"ד לוי כנואל הראשון כך נואל האחרון מה תנואל תראשון נגלה וחור ונכסה מהן . וכמה נכסה מהן ג' חדשים שנא' (פסוק ט) ויפגעו את משה ואת אורן . אף נואל אחרון נגלה להם ודודו ונכסה מהם . וכמה נכסה מהם . י"ר תנחומא

הודעות (שש ג) ונבה הלך וילכוד את קנת ואת בנותיה ונ' מלמד שלא עמד לה ארתו השם, ורכוזה (אויס פ) ויאמר אלי לבנות לה בית בארץ שנער מלמד שאין לשקר תשועה : (ו) ויאמר לה בועז לעת האכל נשי הלום . רבי יוחנן פתר בה שית ששין . מדבר ברוד . ה נשי הלום קרובי למלכות ואין הלום אלא מלכות הה"ד (ז"ג ו) כי הביאותני עד הלום . ואכלת מן הלום זו לחמה של מלכות . ומבלת פתך בחימין אלו היסורין שנא' (פסוק י) י"י אל באפך תוכידי . ותשב מצד הקוצרים שנוצרה ממנו המלכות לשעה ורא"ר הונא כל אותן ו' חדשים שהיה דוד בורח מפני אבשלום לא עלו מן המגין שהיה מתכפר לו בשעירה כהדיוט . ויצבט לה קלי שהורה לו מלכותו שנא' (סג) עתה ידעתי כי הושיע י"י משיח . ותאכל ותשבוע ותותר אוכל בעוה"ז ואוכל לימות המשיח ואוכל לע"ל . ד"א נשי הלום מדבר בשלמה נשי הלום קרובי למלכות . ואכלת מן הלום זו לחמה של מלכות שנא' (פסוק ו) וירד להם שלמה ליום אחד שלשים כר סלת וששים כר קמח . ומבלת פתך בחימין זה לכלך מעשים . ותשב מצד הקוצרים שנוצרה לו מלכותו לשעה דא"ר יוחאי בר תינא מלאך יורד ברמות שלמה וישב לו על כסאו והיה מחור שלמה על פתחי ישראל ואומר (ה' שלום) אני קהלת בן דוד הייתי מלך על ישראל בירושלים מה היתה אמת מהן עושה היתה נותנת לפניו קערה של גישיין ומכה אותו בקנה על ראשו ואמרת לו ולא שלמה וישב על כסאו ואתה אומר אני שלמה מלך ישראל . ויצבט לה קלי

יד יוסף ג ילקוט רות : ד שני מוסתא כהניסין כסן וכן סא כסר נזילת יוסף : ה סגס ק"ג ר"ל סמכרין סק י"ל . סמכרין ג' . וסמרי ולחמץ . וכנס . ונחל"ג פ' ל"ס . ודכ"ר פ"כ ט"ו ונכנסרין : י ילקוט רות :

יד יוסף ג ילקוט רות : ד שני מוסתא כהניסין כסן וכן סא כסר נזילת יוסף : ה סגס ק"ג ר"ל סמכרין סק י"ל . סמכרין ג' . וסמרי ולחמץ . וכנס . ונחל"ג פ' ל"ס . ודכ"ר פ"כ ט"ו ונכנסרין : י ילקוט רות :

**מתנות כהונה**

**ענף יוסף**

שאלו כ' . לחל"ל בזה להסגי' מחול שלום לו היעו מקבלין לויק שלל נחמדה לו ההלס סל עממי ולא עמוס וס"ל . בילקוט כהנים : אמר רב חסדא . בילקוט חמסע סמך לסיית חמר רב חסדא : שלמה . רוח לה שלמה ישמור ממנו וייק שלמה כסאיכחו : ה"ג בילקוט חמסע

(ד) [כמה נזיל כסן על ג"ח סלך חסין ס' ] כסוים נקי שאלו כק סס מוסל על כסרין וכסרין . וכן סיחלק כסווק על מלואם חמסע שיש פייט לה כוכות חריס סק"ל סר כ"ח מי ססר ססווח ונ' אל חזר ילקו סק"ל סוכו כ"י אל כוכות ישק סק"ל סס . אל כוכות סלך סס"ל סלך



3. The main source for Jewish selfunderstanding is the Talmud. The word means primarily a "study". It comprises the commentary and discussions about the Jewish law or Torah. The earlier part of it, the Mishnah, is collected mostly by R. Judah ha-Nasi before the year 200 C.E. and the second Gemara, "the supplement" until the year 500 C.E. Both of them are called also as the Oral Law. In Mishnah there are about 4187 instructive statements; in Gemara these teachings and disputations are challenged by Babylonian and Israeli sages. The main body of Talmud, consisting twelve big volumes, is collected in Babylon; the thirteenth volume is called as Jerusalem Talmud and is of Israeli origin.

The Mishnah and Talmud are divided into six orders or "Sedarim" and numerous tractates. **The first order** "Zera'im" consists of 11 tractates speaking about "the seeds" and the tithes and offerings in the farming. The widest of them, the "Berakhoth" is often quoted in our query. **The second order** "Seder Mo'ed" has 12 tractates, the tractates of Sabbath, Pesahim, Sukkah and ḥagigah being of major importance for us. **The third order** "Nashim" having 7 tractates deals with marriage, marriage contracts and divorce. The tractate "Sotah" about the suspected adulteress has been quoted in our study. **The fourth order** of "Nezikin" about the "damages" of property has 10 tractates. The most important and the widest of them in our study is "Masekhet Sanhedrin" which strongly emphasizes the days of the Messiah. **The fifth order** "Seder Kodashim" has 11 tractates and describes pure offerings, and **the sixth order** about "the Tehoroth" which has 12 tractates speaks about ritual cleanness.

These 63 tractates which consist about 525 chapters are completed with a supplementary part of the so called "small tractates" which were composed in geonic times approximately from 600 to 1000 C.E. They are called as "Soferim" or the writing and editing, "Semahot" or the "mourning", "Kallah" the "bride", "Derekh erez" about the moral conduct in the life, "Gerim" about the proselytes, "Kutim" which deals with the Samaritans and Tefilin, Zizit and Mezuzah which instruct the right way to use ceremonial utensils.

3. The "Masekhet Sanhedrin" in the Talmud has a long disputation of five wide pages from 97a to 99a about the coming of the Messiah. In our example on the three last lines there is the famous word of Rabbi Hillel: "There shall be no Messiah for Israel because they have 'eaten' him already in the days of Hezekiah." This reflects the common disappointment in Jewish writings about the Messianic idea on the whole. "These times were over long ago" (Sanhedrin 97a). Our extract is from the page 99a.

**חלק פרק אחד עשר סנהדרין צ"ט עין משפט נ"ר מצוה**

ר"ג הי"ט ד'אמר ליה הווא מינא לרבי אבא וס': אקוט בוזר . אקח ישראל ואמרוך עליהם כמו נקמיה לרבעים שנה אקוט בוזר בוזר רבן של רבעים שנה שהיא תמונה מחרוזת שלפניו ומסתמא הי"ט תסיה שטורן גדולים יהיו בוזרו ופסטיה וקרא מיא גבי חמי מדבר אלב מדכתיב אקוט משחצף אף להבא היה תורה אור

התנבא : מיוחד . חסוב : הי"ג רבי חומר ג' וזרות שנאמר ייראוך עם שמש . כלומר בהרי תסיה שחב טו (ההלים ט"ז) לפני שמש יתן שמו ייראוך ישראל ולפני ירח לפני מלכות בית דוד שנמשל כירח כדכתיב (ס"ט) כירח יתן שולם וגו' כמו כן ייראוך דוד הרים דוד אחד דוריהם<sup>ס"ט</sup> ב' הרי ג' : אין להם תסיה לישראל . אלא הקב"ה ימנך כעגמו וינאלם לבדו : שרי ליה מריה . יתחול לו הקב"ה שאמר דברים אשר לא כן : ואלו זכריה מיא מתנבא על תסיה נבית טי . דכתיב כתיב עשר הנה מלך יבא לך וגו' ולאו הי"ט זכריה בן יהוידע הסתן שטיבא נבית ראשון אלא זכריה בן כרמיה היהו כמלכות

היינו דאיל הווא מינא לרבי אבא וימתי אתי משיח איל לבי חפי להו חשובא להנרו אינשי איל מילת קא ליימת ל' איל קרא ל' כתיב<sup>ס"ז</sup> כי הנה תחשך יבסה ארץ וערפל לאישים ועליך זרחה ה' ובבדו עליך ידאה תצא ר' אליעזר אומר ימות המשיח ארבעים שנה שנאמר<sup>ס"ח</sup> ארבעים שנה אקוט בוזר רבי אליעזר בן עזריה אומר שבעים שנה שנאמר יודיה ביום הווא ונשברת צור שבעים שנה בימי מלך אוד איהו מלך מיוחד הוי אומר זה משיח רבי אומר שלשה דורות שנאמר ייראוך עם שמש ולפני ירח דוד דוריהם א"ר הילל אומר אין להם משיח לישראל שכבר אבדוהו בימי חזקיה אבד רב יוסף שרא ליה מדיה לרבי הילל חזקיה אימת הוה בבית

לאכרי לא גלייה . אלא הולאחי דבר חפי שהו איכרי יסלין לשמוע אלב כלבי היה עומן הדבר : למתן ירבו ימכם מימי השמים על הארץ . ולא טחוד באלים כל כך אלב טהדין לשמוד כטיבא תסיה : כמאוס חק . שבעת ימי התסיה כן ישים עליך שבעת ימים וימותו של הקב"ה אקף שנה : טו מי טח . כמו כתיב טח כחשונ השמים שנמשל בידו לאחי ונתן שבעת ה' תעבור מי טח עוד על הארץ כן נשבעתי כמו אחי חשונ נשבעתי מקלף עליך ומנערך כך שלא אחריב את עולמי לאחר שיבא משיח עוד שיכלה זה הזמן : לא נחשבו . מוצה לישראל : עין לא ראהה . דאין קן לדבר : לריקים אין שומדין . גדול חסן של כעלי תסיה אף בריה יסולה לשמוד (לפניהם) [כמחזיקים] : ברישא לרחוק . שנתרחק מן הקב"ה ואחיי טב אליו כמאוסה והדר שלום לקרוב תשיקרא לריק גמור דגחל חסן של כעלי תסיה : שהיה רחוק מן העבודה . כל ימי דהייט לריק גמור : לפיקודים ומגלה פנים . מפורש לקמן : בריה כשר . מילת : מאמן . מן הספיק

יב \* מיה פיה מיל' תסיה סלכס : ופ"ט כ"ט' : יב \* מיה סס מ"ז סלכס ר' : יד \* מיה סס מ"ג סלכס יד' : יב \* מיה סס סלכס ח' ס"ד \* מיה פ"ט ס"ג מ"ח סלכס יב ס"ח : יב \* מיה יד ס"י ר"ח ס"ד' סס :

4. The size of the Zohar given by the Mossad Harav Kook is as big as that of the Talmud, and it is extremely difficult to visualize it as such. The Zohar with Sullam interpretation in five Volumes given out by the Research Centre of Kabbalah, has smaller pages. The expositions in it are given in modern Hebrew. In the section linked with Exodus, פרשת שמות צו ל-קלו, there are about 8 pages dealing with the "coming of the Messiah". Here is one of them:

י עלייהו. ועל כמה חילין ומשיריין דגשפתין דצדיקא - תמן, ובראשי ירחי, וכוונתי, ובשפתיה, משיח עאל בההוא אתר לאשתעשעא בכל אינון היכלין. (ק) לנו לנו מכל אינון היכלין, אית אתר אחרא סמיר וגניו ולא אחריע כלל, ואקרי עדן, ולית מאן דיכיל למנדע ביה ומשיח, אגניו לבר, סחרניה דההוא אתר, עד דאתגלי ליה חד אתר, דאקרי קן צפור, ואיהו אתר דכרין עליה הוהא צפור, דאתער בנתא דעדן בכל יומא.

(ק) ובההוא אתר, פרקמן דיוקניו וכל שאר עמין, דאתכנסו עליהו

דישראל לאבאשא לון, עאל בההוא אתר, זקיף עיניו, וחוי אבהו, דעאלין

בחרבן בית אלהא, עד דחמי לרחל ׀ דדמעהא כאמתא, וקדישא בריד הוא מנתם

לה, ולא צביאת לסקלא תנחומין, כמה דאת אמר, מאנה לתנחום על בניה כדן,

משיח אריים סליה ובכי, ואודיעז כל בנתא דעדן, וכל אינון צדיקא דתמן געו

ובכו ׀ עמיה.

(י) געו ובכי זמנא תניינא, ואודיעז הוהא ריקיע דעל גבי בנתא, אלף

דחמש מאה רבוא משיריין עלאין, עד דמטי לנו כרטיא עלאה כדן, קדישא בריד

הללמי בראשית

י על מה וליה דעדין, ה לר חקן, י לר ובראשי ירחי, י סמלי, ה דהוא, ה לר ובראשי ירחי

#### בית המדרש

#### הסולם

#### מספר

נקרא קן צפור, צפור, צפור, ויה אם תאמנן שבמלכות, וקן, זה המקום שישם בגלת המלכות, ויה, דאתגלי ליה חד אתר דאקרי קן צפור, ואיהו אתר דכרין עליה הוהא צפור דאתער בנתא דעדן בכל יומא, השפעת המלכות ביהוה, נקרא כרין ולא דכרד, שיש חריץ המעשים סמנן כי תאמנן איהו מנגילת אלה במשיח נקרא דריס, ככיל (פר ירח דף ט"ז דה פרדוש ט"ז) ובשחלכות מסומים מנגלת המלכות לצדיקים שבגן עדן בכל יום ויה דאקרי בנתא דעדן בכל יומא.

(ק) ובההוא אתר פרקמן ובר: ומקום הוציא שני קן צפור, פרקמן בגלו המסנה פורעיה דמכא, (כיל כ"ב דף ל"ו דה חכמא רביעא ט"ז) צדית לשלל המנים שבאש על ישראל לרע להם בגטן המשיח במקום הוציא שני קן צפור ויהוה את האבות שנטבו בית אלקים חרוב דר ויהוה את רעל דרמטת על ליהוה חקית מוס איהו חרוב רחב לקבל תמונת כשיא מאנה לתנחום על בניה, אז השפעת מים קול המכה המורדת כל גן העדן, ועל אלו הצדיקים שישו עם נקיים ומכים עם.

(י) געו ובכי זמנא ובר: געו ובכו שיש שנית תנחומי ריקיע שלל חקן, הלף השש ששה רבוא משיח מלאים עליהם

משיח עמד עליהם ועל כמה בנתא ומחית של נשמת הצדיקים אשר עם הבראשי חריים ובמים מים ובשבתה גמם המשיח במקום הוציא שני קן צפור, ויהוה לאשתעשע בכל חילת חלל. (ק) לנו לנו מכל אינון היכלין, לפני חלמין מכל אלה, אקרי חילתה ומכורין, יש מקום אשר בגלות וגניו עשינו נדע מלל, תשרא עדן, חקן מי שיקבל לחייו אתה, המשיח בגטן חרוב, מביט לאתו מקום, עד עגלה לו מקום אתר שנקרא קן צפור, הוהא מקום שסמין עליו צפור הוהא המעוררת בגן עדן בכל יום ויהוה, ג המסנה וקן, א) היה המסנה עליהו דאר ירח, שחכמה זו גמחת משיח ירח בראשית, וריב אין בה שום חרוב חרוב, ולית אתר כאן, אית אתר אחרא סמיר ונניח ובר ומשיח אגניו לבר סחרניה דההוא אתר, כי במקום זה אין שום חרוב אילי למשיח, ב) היה כיהו שחרה העשה המסנה שחכמה זו נמשכים כל המוחין, ויה צמח את המסנה רק למשיח כלבו, ולית אתר כהן (א) אית אתר, ויה בני דמסופין ולית מאן דעיייל בהו, בר משיח, ג) הוה המסנה שבמלכות, המסנה זו בלבוה היה המסנה אל הצדיקים הבודלים שבגלות, הוה רק מכללת ג' קין שבו וקן שנטל שבו, שישו חריש כל המסנה שבו חוסי וי די עמי

## 5. The extract of Isaiah 53:1-8 in Qumran, Plate XLIV

liii 5 1 מי האמין לשמועתנו חרוע יהיה אל מי גלתה 2 ועל כיוצא לפני  
 וכשורש מארץ ציאה לוא תאור לו ולוא הדרלו וטראנו ולוא מראה  
 ונחמדנו 3 נבזה וחדל אישים ואיש מכאובות וידע חולי  
 וכמסתיר פנים ממנו ונבחהו ולוא חשבנוהו 4 אכן חולינו הוא  
 נשא ומכאובינו סבלם ואנחנו חשבנוהו נוע ומוכה אלוהים  
 10 ומענה 5 והואה מחולל מפשעינו ומדוכא מעוותותינו ומוסר  
 שלומנו עליו ובחבורתיו גרפא לנו 6 כולנו כצואן תעינו איש לדרכו  
 פנינו ויהיה הפגיע בו את עון כולנו 7 נש והואה נענה ולוא  
 יפתח פיהו כשה לסבוח יוכל כרחל לפני נחזיה נאלמה ולוא פתח  
 פיהו 8 מעוצ 7 וממשפט לוקח ואת דורו מיא ישחח כיא נזר מארץ  
 15 חיים מפשע עמו נזנע למו

בני הארץ אשר עמנו ודורו ודורו אלפי גלותה ואלו ציונים לפנינו  
 וציונים צאריע עראה לוא תאור לו ולוא הדרלו וטראנו ולוא מראה  
 ונחמדנו 3 נבזה וחדל אישים ואיש מכאובות וידע חולי  
 וכמסתיר פנים ממנו ונבחהו ולוא חשבנוהו 4 אכן חולינו הוא  
 נשא ומכאובינו סבלם ואנחנו חשבנוהו נוע ומוכה אלוהים  
 10 ומענה 5 והואה מחולל מפשעינו ומדוכא מעוותותינו ומוסר  
 שלומנו עליו ובחבורתיו גרפא לנו 6 כולנו כצואן תעינו איש לדרכו  
 פנינו ויהיה הפגיע בו את עון כולנו 7 נש והואה נענה ולוא  
 יפתח פיהו כשה לסבוח יוכל כרחל לפני נחזיה נאלמה ולוא פתח  
 פיהו 8 מעוצ 7 וממשפט לוקח ואת דורו מיא ישחח כיא נזר מארץ  
 15 חיים מפשע עמו נזנע למו

6. We can see above that the Scrolls from Qumran give almost the same text for Isaiah 53:8 as the Masoretic one, מַפְשֵׁעַ עִמּוֹ נוֹגַע לָמוֹ - the conventional text for the possible collective understanding runs as follows: מַפְשֵׁעַ עִמִּי נֹגַע לָמוֹ. The expression of "my people" is here in the form "his people" and the word "was stricken" is in the text of Qumran in the form נוֹגַע or "is stricken" which means literally "touches upon" him. The Hebrew expression לָמוֹ can be understood both in plural and in singular. The Greek Septuagint offered only one alternative: ἀπο τῶν ανομιῶν τοῦ λαοῦ μου ἤχθη εἰς θάνατον or "because of the iniquities of my people he was led to death". Isaiah 53 is missing from the annual readings of the prophets, so called "haphtharoth", in the Synagogue. The whole chapter of Isaiah 53 is also totally omitted from the "Yalkuth Makhiri", which usually offers references to all the respective Talmudic discussions - now we can see in brackets only the words: "Here is a little of the matter missing". Here is presented an extract of it too.

### 197 ילקוט המכירי ישעיה נב ה י י נ ד ב

כל הנביאים לומר שירה בקול אחד. שנאמר קול צופך נשאו קול יחדו ירננו. איכא רבתי. את מוצא ברבר שחשאו ישראל בו לקו ובו מתנחמין. חשאו ברנל, שנאמר כי ונליהם לרע ירדו (משלי א טו). ולקו ברנל, שנאמר ובסרם יתגשו רנליכם (ירמיה י טו). ומתנחמין ברנל, שנאמר מה נאוו על ההרים רנלי מבשר (י). חשאו בעין, דכתיב ותלכנה נפוזות נרן ומשקרות עינים (ג טו). ולקו בעין, דכתיב עיני עיני יורדה סים (איכא א טו) ומתנחמין בעין, שנאמר כי עין בעין יראו בשוב יי ציון. י. חשקה יי את זרוע קדישו. תנודעמא. אמר אבא בשם רי ודינא. הקביה ררם בקדושת. הילוכו בקדושת. נראה בקדושת. ריבורו בקדושת. חשימת ודוע



בהשכמה עמדו המצרים אחר שהלכו להם. ואמר נרדוף אתיהם מפני שנשלו כל אשר לנו. שנאמר וירדו מצרים אתיהם (שם יד ט). אמר הקב"ה מי נרם כל אלו? חסון שיצאתם ממצרים. מכאן ואילך. כי לא בחסון תצאו ובטוטה לא תלכו. לשעבר אני ובית דיני הייתי הנלך עמכם. שנאמר ויי הנלך לפניו יום (שם י כא). אבל לעתיד . . .

36 (כאן חסר מעט מן הענין.)

## נד

ג. הרחיבי מקום אהלך] . . . ודכותיה אך החצי טאה באסה (שמות כו יח). אמר ישי כי חלמא אך החצי טאה באסת. וכל ישראל עשירי

7. Prof. Neusner has stated that in the category of synagogue-writings everyone agrees about three main sources: "Targumim, Siddur and piyyutim". The Jewish prayerbook, the Siddur ha-Shalem, contains a New Year prayer in connection with the sounding of the shofar horn, which speaks of "Jesus" in its proper form ישוע. In the prayer we read that the blast from the horn should carry "to the tabernacle of God by the instrumentality of our delegate Tartiel, whose name Elijah - may his memory be blessed - has given to him, and through Jesus the Prince of the Countenance and the Prince Metatron. Siddur is actually the catechism of Jewish thinking and the mirror of their soul. Here is the exact extract of it. The quotation can be found from the page 154 in our study.

### סדר תקיעת שופר

400

לחזור ולתקוע שופר השופר. מלבד התקיעה בעד ימין של פיו. ויבטח השופר קנה למעלה ולמטה  
השופר יושב למעלה ולא לצדדים. צריך לברך הברכות ולהקיות סופרו בלא פסינת בלל. תב  
הסופרים נכון שיסבדו !

תקיעה. שברים. תרועה. תקיעה.  
תקיעה. שברים. תרועה. תקיעה.  
תקיעה. שברים. תרועה. תקיעה.

שב

יהודה בלחש ומעבר בין שפתיו ולא יאמיע בו אסור להזכיר המאו בר"ח כקול רם ובלחש  
חוזר והוא רדוקא בין התקיעות כי אז השאן פתקובב ודברי וידוי עולה למעלה כל ירי  
אסועות קול שופר ולא יש קשרת עניו אז. ואמר התקיעות יתפלל זה שיקבל :  
יהי נצון כל שנה שתקיעת תשרית שאנתנו תוקעים תקרא כדוקקסת ביריעה  
של ירי הקסמנה (פרשיא) בעם שקבלת של ירי אליהו דל (וישע)  
של נפנים ושל (קסמא) ותקלא עלינו ברחמים. ברוך אלה בעל נרחמים !

תקיעה. שברים. תקיעה.  
תקיעה. שברים. תקיעה.  
תקיעה. שברים. תקיעה.

שב

אחודת בין התקיעות כל כל המאו ובלחש בין שפתיו כגיל ויתפלל על החיות  
יהי נצון כל שנה שתקיעת תשרית שאנתנו תוקעים שתעשה עמך ספנד  
של ירי הקסמנה (פרשיא) להיות עולה וישוב בראש אלפי העבאית  
ויעשה עמך אות המכה ותקלא עלינו ברחמים. ברוך אלה בעל נרחמים !

8. The separate prayerbook for the feast days, the **Maḥzor Rabbah**, which belongs to the "piyyutim", contains a literary prayer by **Rabbi Eleazar Qalir** probably from the sixth century AD. According to it "the Messiah our Righteousness has turned away from us" and "he was wounded for our transgressions and suffered on his shoulders our iniquities", "in his wounds we are healed". He gives "a new creation". The prayer hopes also that God would "send him back from the circles and redeem us for a second time" so that we would "hear of his grace a second time in everyone's sight". Maḥzor belongs to the additional prayers for ordinary days. This extract can be found from the page 111 in our study.

מוֹסַף לַיּוֹם כַּסֵּד

330

אֲזַמְלִכְנִי בְּרֵאשִׁית, נְהַיְנוּן הַשִּׁית: תְּלִפּוּת מְרוֹם מְרֵאשׁוֹן,  
תִּכְנֵן סָרְסָם כֵּל עִם וְלִשׁוֹן, שִׁכְנֵנו עֵץ שָׁם לְהַשְׁרֹת, שׁוּגִים  
לְהַדְרִיךְ בְּדַרְכֵי יִשְׁרָוֹת: רְשַׁע אִם הַאֲדִים, בְּחֻצוֹ וְהַזְנוּ  
הַקְדִּים קִצְף אִם קִצְף בְּאַיְמָחוֹ, קְדוֹשׁ לֹא יַעִיר כֵּל חֲמָתוֹ:  
אֶשְׁתַּנוּ גְבַזְעֵנוּ עַד עֲתָה, צוּרְנוּ עֲלֵינוּ לֹא גִעְתָּה: פְּנֵה מִנוּ  
מִשִּׁיחַ צְדָקְנוּ, וְלִצְנוּ וְאִין מִי לְצַדִּיקְנוּ: צוּנוּ מִינֵנו וְעַל פֶּשַׁעֵינוּ,  
עוֹמֵם וְהוּא מַחֲלֵל מִפֶּשַׁעֵינוּ: סוֹכֵל עַל שְׁכָם חֲטָאֵינוּ, סְלִיחָה  
מִצֵּא לְצוּנוּ מִינֵנו, נִרְפָּא לְנוּ בְּחַבּוּרְתוֹ, נִצַּח בְּרִיָּה חֲדָשָׁה עַתָּה  
לְבִרְאָתוֹ, מִחוּג הַעֲלֵהוּ, מִשְׁעִיר הַדָּלְהוּ: לְהַשְׁמִיעֵנוּ בְּהַר  
הַקְּבֵנוּ, שְׁנִית כִּיד יְנוּן:

הוּא אֵל הֵינוּ, הוּא אָבִינוּ, הוּא מְלִכְנוּ, הוּא  
מוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ, וְהוּא יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ וַיִּגְאֹלְנוּ שְׁנִית.  
וַיִּשְׁמִיעֵנוּ בְּרַחֲמָיו שְׁנִית לְעֵינֵי כֵּל חֵי לֹא מֵר,  
הֵן גְּאֻלְתֵּי אֲתָכֶם אַחֲרִית בְּרֵאשִׁית לְהִיּוֹת לְכֶם  
לְאֵל הֵים, אָנִי יְיָ אֵל הֵיכֶם: אֲדִיר אֲדִירְנוּ, יְיָ  
אֲדוּנֵינוּ, מִה אֲדִיר שְׁקֵה בְּכֵל הָאָרֶץ: וְהִיָּה יְיָ  
לְמִלְךָ עַל כֵּל הָאָרֶץ, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיָּה יְיָ  
אֶחָד וְשִׁמּוֹ אֶחָד:

אֲזַמְלִכְנִי בְּרֵאשִׁית, שְׂבָעָה אֵלֶּה הַשִּׁית: כּוֹנֵם מַעַת נוֹדָדוּ,  
כְּתוּרִים בְּסָרְסָם הַרִים יְדוּ: יִצְרָם וְאֲצִלוּ גְּלִילֵנוּ חֲדָד לְפָנֵינוּ  
גְּבַעוֹת חֲלָלוּ, סֹפֵל בְּאִבְסֵם תְּשׁוּבָה, סְבוּעָה הִיא לְכַת הַשׁוֹבְבָה:

9. The name Jesus appears in its correct Hebrew form ישוע also in the book of RaMBaM, "Hilkhoth Melakhim", "the Statutes" of the King Messiah. In the end of our extract it speaks about Jesus the Nazarene who "seemed to be the Messiah". In the middle of the page it explains that if there will be a king from the house of David who keeps the Torah and "coerces the whole Israel" to obey it, "makes war for the Lord" and "builds the Temple in its place", it will confirm that he is the Messiah.

טז

הלכות מלכים פ"ד

ש"ס"ט

המלך, והוא הנה אומר עליו שהוא המלך המשיח, ודקה  
היא וכל חכמי דורו שהוא המלך המשיח עד שנהרג  
בעונות. כיון שנהרג, נודע להם שאינו, ולא שאלו ממנו  
חכמים לא את ולא מופת. ועקר הדברים ככה הם, שהתורה  
הזאת, חקיה ומשפטיה לעולם ולעולמי עולמים, ואין מוסיפין  
עליהם ולא גורעין מהם.

כי אם יעמד מלך מבית דוד הונה בתורה ועוסק במצות  
בדוד אביו, כפי תורה שבכתב ושבועל-פה, ויכה כל ישראל  
לידו כה ילחוק בדקה וילחם מלחמות ה', הרי זה בסוקת  
שהוא משיח. אם עשה והצליח ויבנה מקדש במקומו וקבץ  
נדחי ישראל, הרי זה משיח בנבואי, וימנן את העולם כלו  
לעבד את ה' ביסוד, שנאמר, כי-אז אהפך אל-עמים שפה  
ברורה לקרא כלם בשם ה' ולעבדו שקם אחד (צפניה ג ט).

ינאם לא הצליח עד פה, או נהרג, בידוע שאינו זה  
שהבטיחה עליו תורה, והרי הוא ככל מלכי בית דוד השלמים  
והקשרים, שמתו. ולא הצמידו הקדוש-ברוך-הוא אלא לנפות  
בו רבים, שנאמר, ומן-המשכילים יבשלו, לצרוף בהם,  
ולקרר וללבן עד-עת קץ, כי-עוד לפועד (דניאל יא לה).

אף ישוע הנוצרי שדמה שיהיה משיח ונהרג בבית-  
דיו, כבר נתנבא בו דניאל, שנאמר, ובני פריצי עמה ינשאו  
להצמיד חזון ונכשלו (שם ס"ח יד), וכי יש מכשול גדול מזה.

## 10. Copy of the flyleaf in

**MIKRAOTH GEDOLOTH**, part I, Genesis, Wilno 1922. This commentary has 42 special sources. 32 of them are related to the books of Moses, called in Hebrew as "ḥumash". The "new" ten additional sources are linked with "haphtaroth", the readings of the prophets. Targum Onkelos is attached to this collection as an official text:

1. Targum Jonathan Ben Uzziel, 2. Targum Jerushalmi, 3. Perush RaSHI according to Rabbi Solomon Ben Isaac, 4. Ibn Ezra in accord with Rabbi Abraham Meir Ben Ezra, 5. RaSHBaM, Rabbi Shmuel in the name of Meir, the son in law of RaSHI, 6. RaMBaM, Rabbi Moshe Nahman, 7. Ba'al Haturim given by Jacob Ben Asher, 8. Da'at Hazekenim, Geonic interpretation, 9. Sipureinu according to Rabbi Obadiah and Rabbi Ja'akob, 10. Perush Kli Yakar in accord with Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim and Rabbi Aharon, 11. Perush Or Ha-ḥajjim, 12. Sfatei Hakhamim based on RaSHI, 13. Megin Ha-mitzvoth, 14. Perush le-Targum Jonathan, 15. Perush le-Targum Jerushalmi, 16. Perush Abi Ezer to Ibn Ezra in the name of Shlomo ha-Cohen, 17. Toldoth Aharon, which combines the text with the Bible, 18. Targum which is linked with "ḥumash", 19. Additional Perush to Ibn Ezra, 20. Perush "ha-teamin" or the guide to read correctly the dots and dashes, 21. Perush Rabbi Obadiah Bertinoro or Obadiah Ben Abraham Yare - a commentator of Mishnah who is considered as important as RaSHI and is also an expert of Megillat Ruth, 22. Perush Sipureinu, an interpretation of the Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes, 23. Targum Sheni, an expert to Esther, 24. Patsheken (Aramaic) ha-ktav or a "summary" to Targum Sheni, 25. Perush Omrei Yosher, an interpretation to Megillat Ruth, 26. Perush Megillat Setarim or the "secrets" in the book of Esther, 27. Perush Zror Hamor or the equivalences of the Song of Solomon, 28. Perush Palgei Majim linked with Lamentations, 29. Perush Ta'alumoth ḥokhmah, a guide to Ecclesiastes, 30. Perush Metzudat David given by David and his son Yeḥiel Altschüler as well as 31. Metzudat Ziyon given by the Altschülers and 32. Rishon Le-Ziyon given also mostly by these two Rabbis as an easy-to-read commentary on the Prophets and Hagiographa.

The additional new sources are linked mostly with haphtaroth: 33. Perush Ibn Ezra which is mentioned already in number 4, 34. Perush Joseph Kara, who was active before 1070 A.D., considered also as the compiler of Genesis Rabbah, 35. Perush RaLBaG of Rabbi Lewi Ben Gersom, 36. Perush RaDaK of Rabbi David Kimḥi, 37. Perush Abrabanel of Rabbi Jitzhak Abrabanel, 38. Perush Alshekh of Moshe Alshekh, 39. Da'at Zekenim miba'alei ha-tosaphoth, 40. Perush Kli Yakar, 41. Perush Algasi, 42. Perush MALBIM or Rabbi Meir Loeb Ben Jeḥiel Mikhael, died in 1879 - the wide commentar of MALBIM with its 12 parts bears his name.

The legitimate Jewish selfunderstanding can be seen only in the light of Mikraoth Gedoloth and MALBIM written in RaSHI script. The following appendix shows the flyleaf of Genesis in Mikraoth Gedoloth:

# סקראות גדולות

ספר

# בראשית

סן

## חמשה חומשי תורה

עם תרגום אנגלוס. מונה ומחיק באופן נעלה. ועם

### שנים וארבעים פירושים:

פירושים יקרים על החמש מגילות  
לפי רש"י ושפתו הכסום.

- (א) תרגום על כל המושג מגילות.
- (ב) תרגום אנכי עזרא על כל המושג.
- (ג) תרגום המגנים למאכלי על מגילת אבות.
- (ד) תרגום רבני עובדי ברסטרוא על כל מגילת אבות.
- (ה) תרגום ספרדני על מגילת שיר השירים וקבלת.
- (ו) תרגום שני על מגילת אסתר.
- (ז) תרגום פרושנין הכתוב על תרגום שני.
- (ח) תרגום אמרו יוסף על מגילת דניאל.
- (ט) תרגום מגילת כתריום על מגילת אסתר.
- (י) תרגום צרור הסוד על מגילת שיר השירים.
- (יא) תרגום שלמי סיים על מגילת אבות.
- (יב) תרגום תעלומות הכסות על מגילת קהלת.
- (יג) תרגום מצודות דוד.
- (יד) תרגום מצודות ציון.
- (טו) תרגום ראשון לציון.

- (טז) תרגום ישתן בן שושאל.
- (יז) תרגום ירושלמי.
- (יח) תרגום מליטות מאת רבני שלמה יצחקי על.
- (יט) תרגום אבן עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (כ) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (כא) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (כב) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (כג) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (כד) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (כה) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
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- (כח) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (כט) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (ל) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (לא) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
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- (לח) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (לט) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (מ) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.

עשרה פירושים יקרים מגילת החומש על כל המגילות:

- (א) תרגום אבן עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (ב) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (ג) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
- (ד) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.
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- (מ) תרגום רבני עזרא פירוש אברהם בן מאיר עזרא על.

# ווילנא

בדפוס הדפואות האלמנה והאחים ראָם

CHUMESZ

1. księga Mojżeszowa z 43 komentarzami

Drukarnia „Wdowa i Brać Romm”

Wilno — 1922

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