

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Intertestamental Period Seminar

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APOCALYPSE!



What is “Apocalypse”?

- Derived from a Greek word meaning “to reveal” or “to uncover.”
- Does not specifically refer to the end of the world or events leading up to it.
- Current usage goes back to the Apocalypse of John, aka, “Revelation”



Eschatology

- Concerned with the end of the world
- Also sometimes called “teleology.”
- When we talk about “apocalypse,” we’re really talking about eschatology.



Precursors: “Day of the Lord”

- Example: "For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low" (Isaiah 2:12)
- Not a permanent alteration of the cosmic order as later envisioned in Inter-testamental and New Testament times.

Day of the Lord: Not All Nice

"Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD!
Why do you long for the day of the LORD?
That day will be darkness, not light"

—Amos 5:18

Social and Political Factors

- Competing “global” empires
- Semi-successful popular revolutions
- Disenfranchisement of the agrarian class
- Concentration of wealth in the hands of the few; rampant and severe poverty



Fraying of Jewish Religious Institutions

- The Temple was in the hands of the “wrong” people
- Factionalism
- Hierarchy was corrupt; High Priesthood had gone to the highest bidder a few times
- Israelite “social safety net” was circumvented or ignored
 - Sabbatical Year
 - Year of Jubilees

Historical Usage:

- “Messiah” was an adjective, not a noun
- “Anointed” meant set apart for a specific task
- Task in question was usually kingship or, sometimes, a prophetic calling
- Usage was unique to Israel.



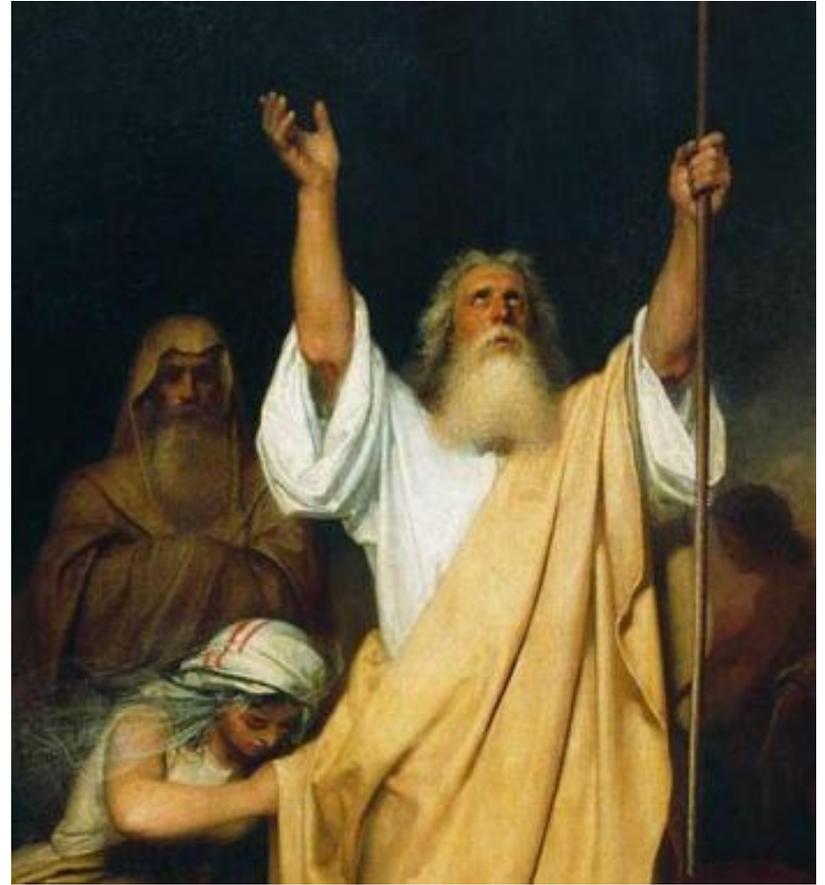
“Davidic” or Political/Military Messiah

- Restore the political state of Judah/Israel
- Possible restoration of Davidic royal dynasty
- Military leader, intended to throw off the yoke of oppressor (i.e., Rome)



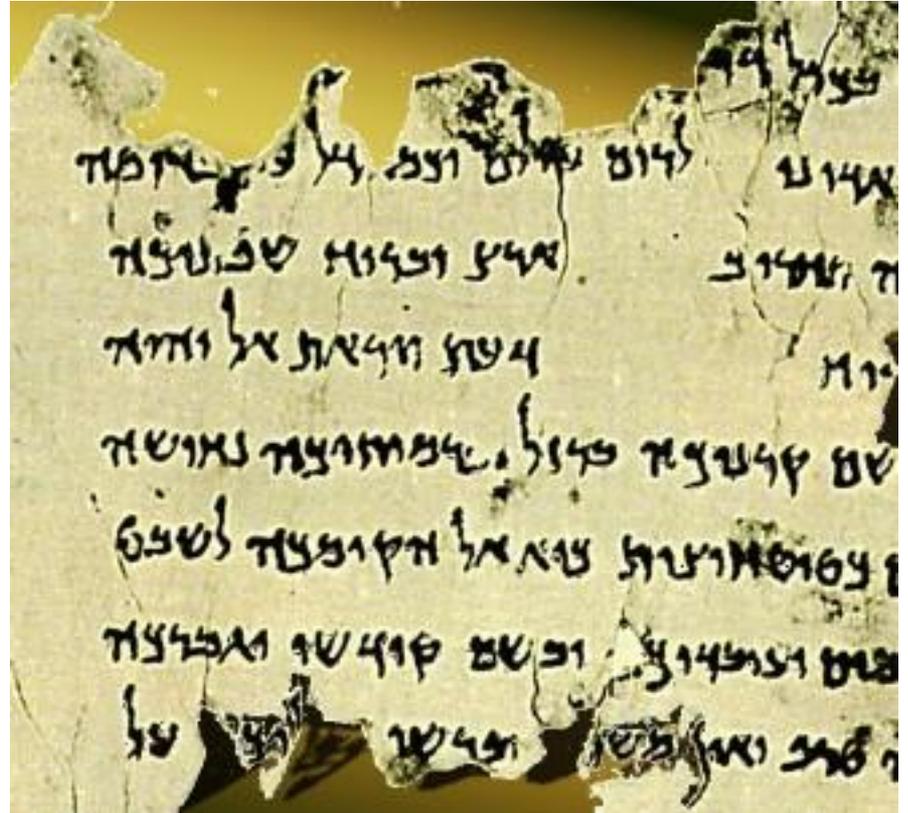
Priestly “Son of Man”

- Restore Zadokite family to the High Priesthood
- Cleanse and restore proper Temple practices
- Usually non-military or overtly political
- Might pre-date Davidic Messiah.



“Blessings” 1QSb=1Q28b

- Three separate blessings:
 - To the Faithful
 - To the “High Priest”
 - To the “Prince of the Congregation”
- Describes pre-eschatological moment



“Son of God” 4Q246

- Possibly an earthly political ruler with eschatological implications
- Brings all earthly kingdoms under his reign
- Demands to be worshiped as god.



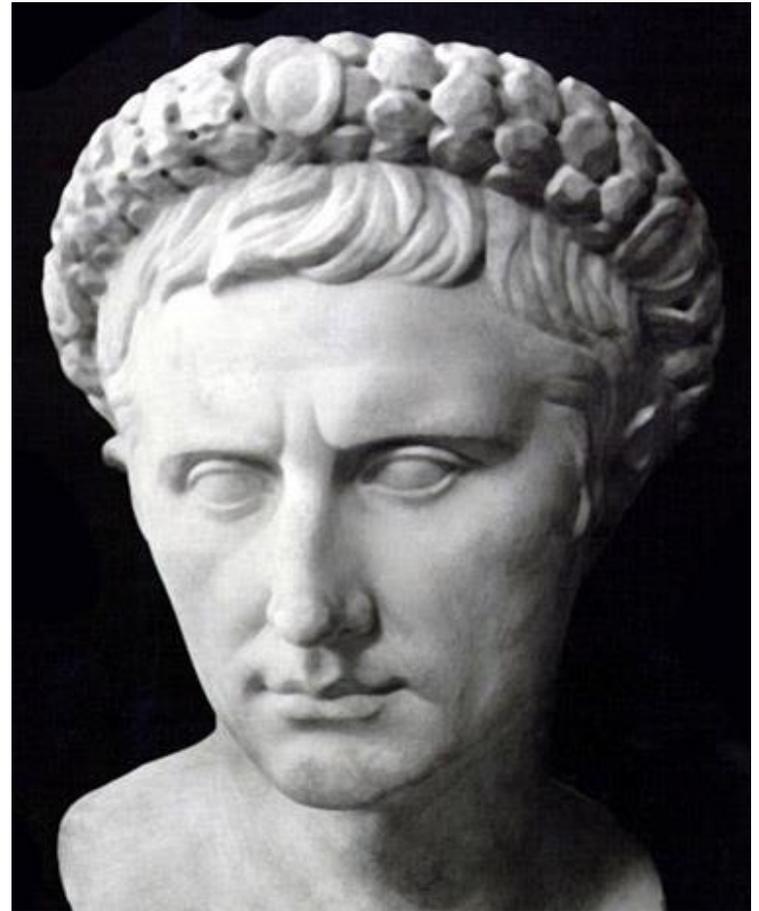
Teacher of Righteousness?

- Not presented as a messianic figure or a forerunner per se
- Role was to teach
- Reference to *maskilim* students and instructors
- Would be responsible for conversion of many to the truth
- Knew secrets of *when* the end was coming



Incitements to Revolt

- Roman tolerance of local religion
- Pontius Pilate; flouted religious sensibilities
- Ruled for ten years (26-36 CE) as Fifth Procurator



The War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness (1QM)



The War Scroll (1QM)

- Best dated to mid- to late 1st Century BCE
- Several fragments, highly variant
- Some extra-Qumran texts found, probably of similar genre
- Describes conflict with enemy that looks a lot like Rome



The War Scroll: Main Points

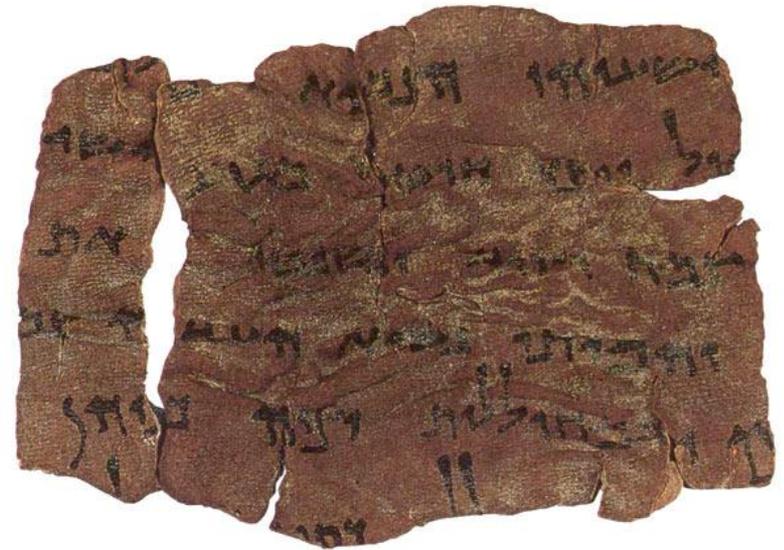
- Final eschatological conflict is in the very near future
- Enemy is not just Rome, but an amalgam of all of Israel's traditional enemies
- At stake is the very existence of Jewish people and religion
- Perhaps the ultimate expression of the "Two Ways" doctrine we saw in the Community Rule.

The War Scroll: Summary

- Coming War is in two segments: “War Against the Kittim” and “The War of Divisions”
- Combined conflicts will last 40 years
- First war will be won with divine help, the second war not so.
- During the war, the Temple will be destroyed and rebuilt and restored to full purity and functionality

Additional Fragments?

- Two fragments, “The War of the Messiah” and the “Pierced Messiah Text”, once thought to be separate, may turn out to be part of the War Scroll.



The War of the Messiah (4Q285)

]Isaiah the prophet: [The thickets of the forest] will be cut [down with an axe and Lebanon by a majestic one will fall. And there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse [] the Branch of David and they will enter into judgement with [] and the Prince of the Congregation, the Bran[ch of David] will kill him [by stroke]s and by wounds. And a Priest [of renown (?)] will command [the s]lai[n] of the Kitti[m]

The Pierced Messiah Text (11Q14)

- Refers to the "stump of Jesse"—the Messiah—from the Branch of David, to a judgement, killing, and cleansing of the land of the dead by the Messiah's soldiers.
- “Pierced” or “piercing” messiah?

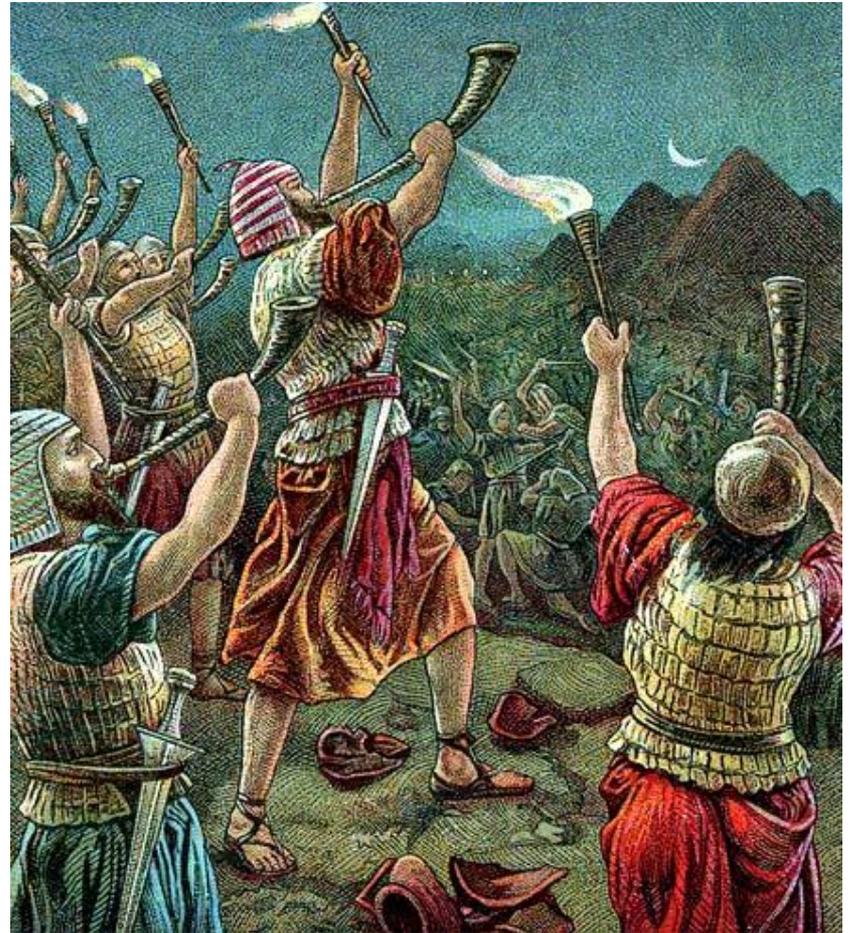


The “Pierced Messiah” Controversy

- September 1992 article in *Time* on the War Scroll suggested two possible readings for a part of 11Q14: A piercing or pierced messiah.
- A "piercing messiah" supports the traditional Jewish view of a triumphant messiah. On reading it as a "pierced messiah," anticipates the New Testament view of the preordained death of the messiah.
- Scholarly consensus leans heavily towards “piercing.”

Israelite Holy War

- Covenant: Prohibition from bloodshed
- Covenant: God will fight your battles
- Very small, outmatched forces win stunning victories via divine intervention



Aversion to Killing?

- Does the requirement not to shed human blood influence the conduct of Jewish “holy war”?

Comparison: Eschatological Battle Accounts

- In the following books, faithful and believers *do not fight*:
 - Revelation 20:7-10
 - Ezekiel 38-39
 - 4 Ezra 13:5-11
 - Sibylline Oracles 3,657-731
 - 1 Enoch 56:5-8
- The War Scroll the faithful fight the enemy directly