

THE SECRETS OF R. ŠIM'ŌN BEN YOḤAI

The eminent nineteenth-century historian Heinrich Graetz enthusiastically endorsed the *Secrets* (נסתרות) of R. Šim'ōn ben Yoḥai as 'das älteste Schriftdenkmal aus der gaonäischen Zeit und die älteste mystische Schrift.'¹ While Graetz's temporal evaluation of this apocalypse's significance is no longer a tenable one, his perceptive recognition of its fundamental importance for the history of Jewish apocalyptic thought continues to stand the test of time.

Rabbi Šim'ōn ben Yoḥai, a prominent rabbinic Sage whose *floruit* was in the generation following the disastrous Second Jewish Revolt (132-35 CE), is characterized by Daniel Boyarin as 'the most radical rejector of Rome, its culture, its legitimacy, and its value among the Tannaitic figures.'² His strident opposition to foreign imperial hegemony made him an ideal figure around which to cluster literary expressions of nationalist hopes for ultimate vindication and deliverance. Rabbinic literature also represents R. Šim'ōn as especially prone to consultations with representatives of the celestial world and as an adept in magical lore, thereby fostering a profile which is mimicked in these apocalypses by his successful performance of an efficacious ascetical regimen that invokes Metatron, angelic Prince of the Divine Presence, for the purpose of conveying 'the secrets' (הנסתרות) pertaining to the last days. Emblematic of the popular estimation of R. Šim'ōn's occultist talents will be the later pseudepigraphic

¹ Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart* (3d ed.; 11 vols. in 13; Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1890-1908), 5:412. Graetz dates *Secrets* to between August and October 750 CE, and *Prayer* several centuries later to the time of the last Crusades.

² Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 64.

ascription to him of the Zohar, undoubtedly the most important and influential collection of esoteric teachings which comprise Jewish Kabbalah.³

Given his reputation, it is not surprising to find the name of R. Šim‘on attached to a small number of apocalypses stemming from the post-rabbinic era. The oldest of these works is undoubtedly the *Secrets*, a narrative compilation of traditions which achieved an initial written form sometime not long after the mid-eighth century. The historical section of *Secrets* is notable for its thinly veiled allusions to the prophetic mission of Muḥammad and the Arab conquest of Jerusalem and Eretz Israel during the fourth decade of the seventh century, and its selectively truncated sequencing of seventh and eighth-century Umayyad rulers up until the ‘Abbāsīd revolution. Based upon the originally positive appraisals of the advent of Muḥammad and the early years of the Muslim conquest detectable in this section, it is possible that core portions of the *Secrets* rely on sources which date from the mid-seventh century.⁴ On the other hand, its immediate inclusion of the beginning of a popular eschatological logion attributed to R. Ishmael⁵ alongside a second negatively colored interpretation of Num 24:21 vituperating the ‘kingdom of Ishmael’ as simply another oppressive empire that would enslave and mistreat Israel drastically tempers what must have once been a qualified endorsement of nascent Islam as a type of Jewish messianic movement. Other apocalypses belonging to this same cycle—the so-called ‘*Atidot* (עתידות) of R. Šim‘on ben Yoḥai and the *Prayer of R. Šim‘on ben Yoḥai*—accentuate the invective against Islam and extend the historical narrative of the apocalypse well into the ‘Abbāsīd period and into the era of the Crusades.

The *Secrets of R. Šim‘on ben Yoḥai* were first published in Salonika in 1743 within the same anthology of midrashic texts that contains *Sefer Elijah*. This version of the text was reprinted by Adolph

³ The primary rabbinic traditions about R. Šim‘on have been thoroughly explored in B.-Z. Rosenfeld, “R. Simeon b. Yohai: Wonder Worker and Magician Scholar, *Saddiq and Hasid*,” *REJ* 158 (1999): 349-84. For a stimulating presentation of the ‘messianic’ dimensions of his persona, see Yehuda Liebes, “The Messiah of the Zohar: On R. Simeon bar Yoḥai as a Messianic Figure,” in idem, *Studies in the Zohar* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 1-84.

⁴ See Salo M. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (18 vols.; 2d ed.; New York and Philadelphia: Columbia University Press and the Jewish Publication Society, 1952-83), 3:93, 274 n.27; Gilbert Dagron, “Introduction historique: Entre histoire et apocalypse,” *Travaux et mémoires* 11 (1991): 43. A valuable discussion of the *Secrets* and its possible historical context is provided by Graetz, *Geschichte*, 5:406-13.

⁵ See the translation and commentary to the end of *Pirqe R. El.* §30 in the present volume.

Jellinek in his *Bet ha-Midrash*.⁶ Jellinek's text was subsequently reproduced by Yehudah Even-Shmuel;⁷ using the various extant versions of this midrash, the same scholar also generated a suggested *Vorlage* for the *Secrets*⁸ and also reproduced the variant recension (עתידות ר' שמעון בן יוחאי) contained within a larger eschatological work concerning the 'Ten Kings' which was first published by H. M. Horowitz in 1891. A. Z. Aescoly provides an abridged version of Jellinek's text along with a brief commentary in his important anthology of Jewish messianic literature.⁹ A Cairo Genizah fragment of the opening section of the *Secrets* was published by S. A. Wertheimer.¹⁰ A fifteenth-century manuscript version of *Secrets* is available in Munich Ms. Hebr. 222, a work which also features important editions of *Pirque Mašiah* and *Sefer Elijah*.¹¹ Unpublished manuscript fragments include Oxford Ms. Heb. f. 27 (2642) fols. 42-43 and Oxford Ms. Heb. d. 46 (2643) fols. 72-73.¹² The present translation is based on the text reproduced by Jellinek.¹³

These are the secrets that were revealed to R. Šim'on b. Yoḥai when he was hiding in a cave on account of (the persecutions of) Caesar king of Edom (i.e., Rome).¹⁴ He stood in prayer forty days and

⁶ Adolph Jellinek, ed., *Bet ha-Midrash: Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der jüdischen Literatur* (6 vols.; Leipzig, 1853-77; repr., Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrman, 1938), 3:78-82.

⁷ Yehudah Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge'ullah* (2d ed.; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1954), 401-403.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 187-98.

⁹ Aaron Ze'ev Aescoly, *Messianic Movements in Israel, Volume One: From the Bar-Kokhba Revolt until the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (ed. Yehudah Even-Shmuel; 2d ed.; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1987), 133-38.

¹⁰ S. A. Wertheimer, *Batey Midrashot* (2 vols.; repr., Jerusalem: Ktav wa-Sefer, 1980), 2:25-26; see also 2:506-507.

¹¹ Moses Buttenwieser, *Outline of the Neo-Hebraic Apocalyptic Literature* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye, 1901), 39. *Secrets* occupies fols. 107b-111a of this manuscript, where it 'contains better readings in some places' according to Buttenwieser; whereas Moritz Steinschneider opined that 'die Varianten sind sehr unbedeutend' ('Apokalypsen mit polemischer Tendenz,' *ZDMG* 28 [1874]: 637).

¹² See Adolf Neubauer and A. E. Cowley, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Volume Two* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), 37 §9.

¹³ Another English translation of the Jellinek edition is in David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* (JSOTSup 252; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 329-34; 347-50 (text).

¹⁴ The talmudic legend of R. Šim'on's thirteen-year sequestration in a cave can be found in *b. Šabb.* 33b-34a; see also *y. Šeb.* 9.1, 38d; *Gen. Rab.* 79.6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11.16 (Mandelbaum, 1:191-93); *Qoh. Rab.* 10.8. A comprehensive analysis of the rabbinic legend is provided by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 105-38.

forty nights, and began thusly: ‘Lord God, how long will you spurn the prayer of your servant?’¹⁵

Immediately there were revealed to him the secrets of the eschaton and (various) hidden things.

He began to sit and expound (the passage) ‘and he beheld the Kenite’ (Num 24:21).¹⁶ When he perceived that the kingdom of Ishmael would come (and exercise dominion over Israel), he exclaimed: ‘Is it not sufficient what the wicked kingdom of Edom has done to us that we should also (suffer the dominion of) the kingdom of Ishmael!’¹⁷ Immediately Metatron the prince of the Presence answered him and said:¹⁸ ‘Do not be afraid, mortal, for the Holy One, blessed be He, is bringing about the kingdom of Ishmael only for the purpose of delivering you from that wicked one (i.e., Edom).¹⁹ He shall raise up over them a prophet in accordance with His will,²⁰ and He will subdue the land for them; and they shall come and restore it with grandeur.²¹ Great enmity²² will exist between them and the children of Esau.’

¹⁵ Cf. Ps 80:5. A suitably penitent and supplicatory prayer is supplied in the closely allied apocalypse entitled *Prayer of R. Šim'on ben Yoḥai*.

¹⁶ The identity of the ‘Kenite’ in the *Secrets*, as opposed to the fuller *Prayer*, is allegedly problematic in that it seems to encode the same group as the phrase ‘kingdom of Ishmael.’ See the arguments of Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 35-37; Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634-1099* (trans. Ethel Broido; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 62 n.65. The responsum of R. Hai Gaon (translated later in this volume) explicitly declares the ‘Kenite’ to be ‘Midian’ or ‘Ishmael.’

¹⁷ Genizah fragment reads: *לא דיינו מה שעשת בנו מלכות הרשעה* ‘is it not sufficient what the wicked kingdom has done to us?’

¹⁸ Genizah fragment reads: *אמר ר' שמעון כך נענה לי מטטרון שר הפנים*.

¹⁹ Genizah fragment reads: *אל תירא בני שאין הקדוש ברוך הוא עתיד להוציא את ישראל אלא שגלוי וידוע לפניו בלחץ שישאל לחוצים בו הקדוש ברוך הוא מוציא מלכות ישמעאל עליהם כדי להושיעם מיד מלכות הרשעה*.

²⁰ Genizah fragment reads: *נביא שוטה ואיש הרוח* ‘a demented prophet possessed by a spirit,’ clearly a revision of the older positive evaluation of Muḥammad found in our text above. Munich Ms. Heb. 222 similarly reads: *שוטה נביא ומשוגע* ‘a demented and crazed prophet.’ See the corresponding portion of *Prayer*; also Steinschneider, “Apokalypsen,” 635 n.18; Bernard Lewis, “An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History,” *BSOAS* 13 (1949-51): 323 n.4. For further evidence that Levantine Jews initially welcomed the mission of Muḥammad, see the early seventh-century *Doctrina Iacobi nuper baptizati* (ed. N. Bonwetsch; *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil.-hist. klass., n.f., bd. 12, nr. 3*; Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1910), 86, cited by David M. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 171; see also Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 13; Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1997), 55-61. It has been plausibly suggested that the original text’s recognition of the prophetic status of Muḥammad reflects a close relationship with the eighth-century Jewish ‘Īsāwiyya sect, a messianic movement sparked by Abū ‘Īsā al-Iṣfahānī, who accorded prophetic status to a number of Gentile figures as well as Jesus and Muḥammad. Note S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages* (rev. ed.; New York: Schocken, 1974), 170; Steven M. Wasserstrom, “The ‘Īsāwiyya Revisited,” *Studia Islamica* 75 (1992): 62, 65-70; Yoram Erder, “The Doctrine of Abū ‘Īsā al-Iṣfahānī and its Sources,” *JSAI* 20 (1996): 168. Maqrīzī reports that ‘Ānān likewise acknowledged the prophetic status of Muḥammad: *واثبت نبوة محمد صلعم وقال هو نبي ارسل الى العرب* ‘He (‘Ānān) affirmed the prophetic standing of Muḥammad, God bless him and grant him salvation, and stated that he was a prophet sent (by God) to the Arabs.’ Text cited from A. I. Silvestre de Sacy, *Chrestomathie arabe* (3 vols.; Paris: Imprimerie impériale,

R. Šim'on answered and said: 'From whence are they (understood as) our deliverance?'²³ He said to him: 'Did not Isaiah the prophet speak thusly? "And should²⁴ he see chariotry of a pair of riders, one riding an ass, (and) one riding a camel" (Isa 21:7).'²⁵ Why did he put the 'rider of an ass' before the 'rider of a camel'? Should he not instead have said 'rider of a camel, rider of an ass'? (No, the textual sequence means that) when the one who rides the camel (Ishmael or Muḥammad) emerges, the kingdom ruled by the 'one mounted upon an ass' (Zech 9:9)²⁶ has manifested (lit. 'sprouted') by his (i.e., Ishmael's or Muḥammad's) agency.²⁷ Another opinion: 'rider of an ass' (means) at the (same) time when he 'rides upon

1806), 1:162.9-10. On the more general possibility that Muḥammad was initially viewed with favor by segments of the Jewish community, see Chaim Rabin, *Qumran Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957; repr., New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 123-28; Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 4-9; Gil, *History of Palestine*, 63 n.65; Uri Rubin, *Between Bible and Qur'ān: The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-Image* (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 17; Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1999), 32-33.

²¹ Genizah fragment reads: והם באים ומחזיקים המלכות בגדולה 'and they shall come and seize the kingdom with might.' Shoemaker reads the singular subject of the base text's verb (ויכבוש) as referring to 'the prophet' and makes a compelling case for this interpretation; see Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 28-33.

²² Read with the Genizah fragment ואיבה here instead of ואימה as in Jellinek's edition; see Graetz, *Geschichte*, 5:407; Lewis, "Apocalyptic Vision," 309 n.2; 312 n.3.

²³ Genizah fragment reads: וכי ישועה הם בני ישמעאל 'are the Ishmaelites a deliverance?!?'

²⁴ See the remarks of Ibn Ezra to this verse.

²⁵ There is no need to posit a reliance upon the targumic rendering of this verse, as suggested by Crone and Cook (*Hagarism*, 153 n.13), since consonantal רכב can just as easily be read רוכב in the pre-Masoretic age. Note, e.g., the 1QIsa^a scroll, where the received text's רכב חמור רכב גמל becomes רוכב חמור רוכב גמל. The רכב צמד פרשים in this specific interpretative context is almost certainly an allusion to the return of Elijah; cf. 2 Kgs 2:12. Contrast the interpretation of this verse contained in the *Prayer of R. Šim'on b. Yoḥai* (Jellinek, *BHM* 4:119.23-28).

For the various uses of this proof-text by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, see Gustave E. von Grunbaum, *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation* (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 17-18. According to Q 7:157, both the Jewish and Christian scriptures contain prophetic predictions of the advent of Muḥammad.

²⁶ See the medieval commentaries *ad loc.* The *Prayer* inserts a quotation from Zech 9:9 at this point in order to cement the identification between the 'ass-rider' and the Messiah.

²⁷ Compare the language of *Prayer* (Jellinek, *BHM* 4:119.26-27: שבימי תצמח מלכות משיח 'for in his (Ishmael's) days the messianic kingdom will sprout.'

This argument may reflect the author's cognizance of a popular Muslim reading of this proof-text. See for example Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-maṣābīḥ*: 'فراكب الحمار كان عيسى عليه السلام وراكب الجمل كان محمد صلى الله عليه وعلى اله 'the rider of the ass is Jesus, upon whom be peace, and the rider of the camel is Muḥammad, may God bless and exalt him.' Text cited from the edition provided by Paul Kraus, "Hebräische und syrische Zitate in ismā'ītischen Schriften," *Der Islam* 19 (1930): 246, and see Kraus's remarks on p. 250. Note also Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqīya 'an-il-qurūn al-khālīya* (ed. C. E. Sachau; repr., Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1923), 19, cited in English translation by Gil, *History of Palestine*, 63; and also the broader discussion of Suliman Bashear, "Riding Beasts on Divine Missions: An Examination of the Ass and Camel Traditions," *JSS* 37 (1991): 37-75.

an ass' (Zech 9:9). Consequently they (Ishmael) are a deliverance for Israel like the deliverance (associated with) the 'one mounted upon an ass' (Zech 9:9).²⁸

Moreover R. Šim'on reported that he learned from R. Ishmael²⁹ at the time when the latter learned that the kingdom of Ishmael was coming that (the kingdom of Ishmael) will measure the land with ropes,³⁰ as Scripture says: 'and the land will be apportioned for wages' (cf. Dan 11:39; also Joel 4:2). They will make cemeteries pastureland for (grazing) flocks,³¹ and when one of them dies, they will bury him any place they please. They will then turn around and plow the grave and sow seed on it, as Scripture attests: 'Thus the children of Israel will eat their food in a state of impurity' (Ezek 4:13). Why so? Because (the location of) impure field(s) will be unknown.

Again 'he beheld the Kenite' (Num 24:21). What was the parable that wicked one (Balaam) pronounced? When he foresaw that his (i.e., the Kenite's) descendants³² were destined to arise and enslave Israel, he began rejoicing and said: "'Ethan (איתן) is your place of dwelling" (Num 24:21)—I see human beings who are occupied only with the commandments of "Ethan (איתן) the Ezrahite" (1 Kgs 5:11; Ps 89:1).'³³

²⁸ There are some intriguing messianic dimensions, including the riding of an ass, to the traditions surrounding the advent and activities in Jerusalem of the second caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. See Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 5; Heribert Busse, "'Omar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Jerusalem," *JSAI* 5 (1984): 73-119; idem, "'Omar's Image as the Conqueror of Jerusalem," *JSAI* 8 (1986): 149-68; Suliman Bashear, "The Title «Fārūq» and its Association with 'Umar I," *Studia Islamica* 72 (1990): 47-70.

²⁹ Regarding the source of these traditions, see the following two notes.

³⁰ Some versions of *Pirque R. El.* §30 conclude with a statement attributed to R. Ishmael outlining the 'fifteen things' which the Ishmaelites will do in the land of Israel at the 'end of days.' There too the list begins with *וּמְדְדוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ בַּחבְלִים* 'they will measure the land with ropes.' Text cited from HUC Ms. 75 fol. 44a.

³¹ *Pirque R. El.* §30 (HUC Ms. 75 fol. 44a): *ויעשו בית הקברות מרביץ צאן ואשפתות*. For a possible correlation of this surveying activity with the reign of al-Ma'mūn (813-33 CE), see D. Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus* (2 vols.; St. Petersburg: Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1856), 1:98 n.4; Gil, *History of Palestine*, 295.

³² The Arab tribes. See Judg 4:11; Num 10:29; 1 Chr 2:55. *Tg. Onk.* Num 24:21 translates 'Kenite' as 'Shalmaite' (שלמאיה), the name of an Arab tribe; see also Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 35-36; Moshe Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages* (trans. David Strassler; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 16. Graetz (*Geschichte*, 5:407 n.1) appeals to a parallel passage from a manuscript copy of the *Sefer ha-'Osher* of the eleventh-century Karaite commentator Jacob ben Reuben: *וירא את הקני זו מלכות ישמעאל* 'he beheld the Kenite (Num 24:21)—this is the kingdom of Ishmael.'

³³ Lewis ("Apocalyptic Vision," 313 n.1) notes the frequent midrashic assimilation between Ethan and Abraham; see, e.g., *b. B. Bat.* 15a; *Lev. Rab.* 9.1 (Margulies, 1:174); *Tg. Ps* 89:1 and Rashi *ad loc.*; Rashi and Radaq *ad* 1 Kgs 5:11. Since the Qur'ān expressly equates the religion of Islam with the 'religion of your ancestor Abraham' (Q 22:78) and repeatedly invokes Abraham as a precursor of Muḥammad, this peculiar exegesis reflects a Jewish accommodation to these rhetorical claims. For a suggestive association of one or more 'commandments' with Abraham, see Q 2:124; 43:28. Note also the important discussion of Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 10-15.

The second king who will arise from Ishmael³⁴ will be a friend of Israel. He will repair their breaches³⁵ and (fix) the breaches of the Temple and shape Mt. Moriah³⁶ and make the whole of it a level plain. He will build for himself there a place for prayer (השתחויה) upon the site of the ‘foundation stone’ (אבן שתיה),³⁷ as Scripture says: ‘and set your nest *on the rock*’ (Num 24:21).³⁸ He will wage war with the children of Esau and slaughter their troops and capture a large number of them, and (eventually) he will die in peace and with great honor.³⁹

And there shall arise a great king from Ḥaṣarmawet (cf. Gen 10:26), but he will exercise rule only for a few years. Warriors of the children of Qedar⁴⁰ shall rise up against him and kill him,⁴¹ and bring to

³⁴ Apparently the second caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (634-644 CE); see Graetz, *Geschichte*, 5:407; Aescoly, *Messianic Movements*, 137 n.2; David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002), 55 n.77. Contrary to what is often reported, ‘Umar apparently relaxed the Hadrianic ban against Jewish residence in Jerusalem. See the numerous primary sources cited and discussed by Gil, *History of Palestine*, 68-74; idem, “The Jewish Community,” in *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period, 638-1099* (ed. Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammai; Jerusalem and New York: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and New York University Press, 1996), 163-71. ‘Umar however did not ‘die in peace,’ as the end of the notice states, but was murdered. See Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 311-12.

³⁵ Cf. Amos 9:11.

³⁶ I.e., Zion or the Temple mount. Cf. 2 Chr 3:1; *y. Ber.* 4.5, 8c; *Sifre Deut* §62 (Finkelstein, 128).

³⁷ According to Jewish tradition, this rock marked the site where the Ark of the Presence resided in Solomon’s Temple and was reportedly part of the raw material from which God formed the universe; see *m. Yoma* 5.2 and especially *t. Yoma* 2.14 (Lieberman). It is this same rock that serves as a launching pad for Muḥammad’s tour of the heavens. The author apparently viewed this caliph’s construction activity as tantamount to rebuilding the Temple.

³⁸ Given the proof-text, there is here a possible confusion with the later construction (692 CE) by ‘Abd al-Malik of the shrine known as the Dome of the Rock (*qubbat al-ṣakhra*); see Gil, *History of Palestine*, 91-92. Despite numerous assertions, it is very unclear what ‘Umar might have erected on the Temple Mount. The earliest unambiguous reference to a structure is in the report of the Christian pilgrim Arculfus (from between 679 and 682 CE) which speaks of a ‘quadrangular house of prayer’ (*quadrangulam orationis domum*) constructed of wooden beams and boards which could reportedly hold three thousand worshippers; for his testimony, see F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 195-96; Gil, *History of Palestine*, 91; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 221. An elegant summation of possibilities is provided by Heribert Busse, review of Andreas Kaplony, *The Harem of Jerusalem 324-1099*, in *JSAI* 29 (2004): 435-36. For thorough discussions of ‘Umar’s reputed activities on the Temple Mount, including legends involving the ‘foundation stone,’ see Busse, “‘Omar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Jerusalem,” 73-119, esp. 86-94; Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (2d ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 29-33.

³⁹ Some of this material that purportedly pertains to the caliphate of ‘Umar probably should be correlated with Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān (661-80 CE), the first Umayyad caliph, who also took an interest in Jerusalem and its holy sites. Note Lewis, “Apocalyptic Vision,” 328; Peters, *Jerusalem*, 200; Averil Cameron, “The Jews in Seventh-Century Palestine,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 13 (1994): 81-82; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 312; Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 23-24.

⁴⁰ The patronymic ‘Qedar’ (קדר) functions as a code for ‘Arabs’; see *Tg. Isa* 21:17; *Tg. Jer* 2:10; *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen* 25:13; and *Radaq ad Isa* 21:13: נבואה זו נאמרה על ערב והם בני קדר. See Moritz Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache zwischen Muslimen, Christen und Juden, nebst Anhängen verwandten Inhalts* (Leipzig, 1877; repr., Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966), 254. For an extended discussion of the mythopoeic dimensions of this name, see Jaroslav Stetkevych, *Muhammad and*

power another king whose name is מריאו.⁴² They shall take him from following flocks and mule-herds and elevate him to the kingship. There shall arise from him ‘four arms’⁴³ who will make repairs on the Temple.

At the end of the reign of the ‘four arms’ there shall come to power another king.⁴⁴ He will diminish measures for quantity, length, and weight, and enjoy three years of tranquility. A dispute will erupt in the world during his reign, and he will send out mighty forces against the Edomites. There (Byzantium?) they⁴⁵ will die of hunger, even though they will have abundant provisions—he will refuse (sustenance) from them, (and) none will be given him. The children of Edom will prevail over the children of Ishmael and slaughter them. Then the children of Ishmael will arise and burn the provisions, and those who are left will flee and depart.⁴⁶

After this a great king will come to power and rule for nineteen years.⁴⁷ These are his distinguishing marks (lit. ‘signs’): reddish-hued, squinty-eyed (?),⁴⁸ and he will have three moles: one on his forehead, one on his right hand, and one on his left arm. He will plant saplings and rebuild ruined cities and tap subterranean waters to bring up water to irrigate his plantings so that his future descendants will have plenty to eat. All who arise to oppose him will submit to his power, and the land will remain undisturbed during his reign, and he will die peacefully.

the Golden Bough: Reconstructing Arabian Myth (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 69-77.

⁴¹ A reference to the rebellion against (*fitna*) and murder of the third caliph ‘Uthmān (644-656 CE)? So Graetz, *Geschichte*, 5:407; more hesitantly, Aescoly, *Messianic Movements*, 137 n.3. A better candidate is probably the ill-fated ‘Alī (656-661); see Steinschneider, “Apokalypsen,” 637; Lewis, “Apocalyptic Vision,” 328; Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 178 n.68.

⁴² Graetz (*Geschichte*, 5:407-408) suggests that this is corrupt for Mu‘āwiya (מעאוייה or מעויאו). His emendation is accepted by Aescoly, *Messianic Movements*, 137 n.4. However, as Steinschneider observes, the same supposedly ‘corrupt’ reading (i.e., מריאו) is also present in Munich Ms. Heb. 222. The corresponding passage in *Prayer* has מרוון; i.e., Marwān. Lewis (“Apocalyptic Vision,” 325 n.4) suggests that it is Marwān I (684-85 CE), father of ‘Abd al-Malik.

⁴³ זרועות ארבע. Lewis identifies this group as the four sons of ‘Abd al-Malik (685-705 CE) who became caliphs (“Apocalyptic Vision,” 327). For a similar vocabulary, see Dan 11:31.

⁴⁴ Sulaymān (715-717 CE)?

⁴⁵ Read with Lewis’s emendation (“Apocalyptic Vision,” 325 n.5).

⁴⁶ A reference to Sulaymān’s expedition against and siege of Constantinople. See Graetz, *Geschichte*, 5:408-409; Lewis, “Apocalyptic Vision,” 327; Harry Turtledove, *The Chronicle of Theophanes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 88-90.

⁴⁷ Hishām (724-743 CE), rather than ‘Abd al-Malik (Gil, *History of Palestine*, 109). Regarding the construction projects of Hishām, see especially the references cited by Garth Fowden, *Qusayr ‘Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 169 n.144; also 280.

Then another king will arise who will seek to cut off the waters of the Jordan.⁴⁹ He will bring far-away peoples from alien lands to excavate and build a canal to bring up the waters of the Jordan to irrigate the land. The excavated portion of the land will collapse upon them and kill them. Their leaders will hear (about this), and then rebel against the king and kill him.

Another king will then arise—a strong (king) and warrior.⁵⁰ A dispute will erupt in the world during his reign. This will be the sign for you: when you see that the western גירון has fallen⁵¹—(the one) at the western side of (the place of) prayer of the children of Ishmael in Damascus—his dominion will have ‘fallen.’ They will be assembled and marched out to do forced labor, and indeed the kingdom of Ishmael will collapse. Scripture affirms concerning them: ‘The Lord has broken the rod of the wicked’ (Isa 14:5), where (the word) ‘rod’ (מטה) signifies Ishmael.⁵² And who is this? It is Marwān.⁵³ Warriors from the sons of Qedar will still remain with him, but the northeastern corner (of his kingdom) will rebel and come up against him.⁵⁴ There shall fall from among his forces three great armies at the Tigris and at the

⁴⁸ So Aescoly, *Messianic Movements*, 137 n.8. The Hebrew is שיפן העין, which Steinschneider (“Apokalypsen,” 638 n.25) connects with شفن and translates ‘cross-eyed.’ Cf. Lewis, “Apocalyptic Vision,” 325 n.7 for further discussion of this difficult text.

⁴⁹ Walīd II (743-744 CE). Walīd’s involvement in the Jordan canal project and his assassination by Yazīd are confirmed by Ṭabarī; see Gil, *History of Palestine*, 108-109. See also Fowden, *Qusayr ‘Amra*, 156-57; 254 n.13.

⁵⁰ Marwān II (744-50 CE), the last Umayyad ruler. See below.

⁵¹ גירון is the *eastern* wall or gate of the Damascus mosque (باب جبرون); it is identified correctly at the end of the present composition in a passage which probably derives from a version of *Prayer*. See especially Steinschneider, “Apokalypsen,” 638-45; note also Naphtali Wieder, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism* (London: East and West Library, 1962), 19-20.

According to an eschatological prophecy attributed to Arṭāt b. al-Mundhir (d. 779-80), an ascetic visionary of Syria, the so-called Sufyānī, the legendary adversary of the ‘Alid Mahdī, would be slain by the Mahdī ‘at the gate of Jayrūn’ in Damascus. Another prophecy associates the advent of the Sufyānī with the time when ‘a portion of the west (front) of her mosque will fall down’; cf. Wilferd Madelung, “The Sufyānī Between Tradition and History,” *Studia Islamica* 63 (1986): 5-48, at 25-28. Compare the intriguing tradition found in *Midr. Tanḥ.* Buber, Wayishlah §8: למדנו רבינו מה סימן נתן ר’ יוסי בן קיסמא לתלמידיו: שהיו מטיילין בטבריא אמרו לו לר’ יוסי רבי אימתני בן דוד בא אמר להם ר’ יוסי אם אני אומר לכם אתם תבקשו ממנו אות אמרו לו לאו אמר להם הרי השער הזה יבנה ויפול יבנה ויפול ואין מספיקין לבנותו עד שבן דוד בא. Note Jacob Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue, Volume 1: The Palestinian Triennial Cycle: Genesis and Exodus* (Cincinnati, 1940; repr., New York: Ktav, 1971), 262-64.

⁵² Read with Munich Ms. Heb. 222 (cited by Steinschneider, “Apokalypsen,” 638 n.27). The equation with ‘Ishmael’ is effected via aural wordplay with the last part of Isa 14:5 (שבר יי מטה רשעים שבט משלים), where ‘the scepter of rulers (*moshlim*)’ is read as ‘the scepter of the Muslims (*musl[em]im*).’

⁵³ Marwān II was termed al-Ḥimār, the ‘wild ass of Mesopotamia’ in Muslim sources. For the corrupt Hebrew מרואן שער, read instead מרואן שעד or as in *Prayer* שעדיין. See Graetz, *Geschichte*, 5:410; Steinschneider, “Apokalypsen,” 638 n.27; Lewis, “Apocalyptic Vision,” 326.

⁵⁴ I.e., Khurāsān, the province where the ‘Abbāsīd movement originated.

Euphrates,⁵⁵ and he himself will flee from them, but he will be captured and put to death. His sons will be hung upon wooden scaffolding.

And after this a king 'strong of face' (עו פנים)⁵⁶ will arise for three months,⁵⁷ and then the wicked kingdom (i.e., Rome) will rule over Israel for nine months, as Scripture says: 'Therefore He will give them until the time the one laboring in childbirth has borne' (Mic 5:2). And there shall sprout up for them the Messiah of the lineage of Joseph, and he will bring them up to Jerusalem. He will rebuild the Temple and offer sacrifices;⁵⁸ fire shall descend from heaven and consume their sacrifices, as Scripture promises: 'and the violent ones among your people will arise' (Dan 11:14). If they are not worthy, the Messiah of the lineage of Ephraim comes; but if they are worthy, the Messiah of the lineage of David will come.⁵⁹

A wicked king will arise whose name is Armilos:⁶⁰ bald, with small eyes and a leprous forehead; his right ear closed up and his left ear open. If a good person should speak to him, he will turn his closed ear toward him, and if a wicked person should speak to him, he will turn his open ear to him.⁶¹ He is the offspring of Satan and a stone (statue),⁶² and he will come up to Jerusalem and incite war with the Messiah of the lineage of Ephraim at the eastern gate, as Scripture states: 'and and they shall look to Me about the one whom they pierced' (Zech 12:10).⁶³ Israel will go into exile into the uncleared wilderness to forage among the salt-plants and broom-sage roots for forty-five days, and then they will be tested and refined, as

⁵⁵ Read *ובפרת* in place of *ובפרס*. See the parallel passage in *Prayer*; also Graetz, *Geschichte*, 5:410; Even-Shmuel, *Midreshey Ge'ullah*, 194.

⁵⁶ See Deut 28:50; Dan 8:23; *Tg. Ket.* Qoh 8:1.

⁵⁷ Graetz identified this ruler as al-Saffāh (*Geschichte*, 5:411-12).

⁵⁸ This reputed activity is presumably dependent upon the cultic tasks ascribed this figure in *Sefer Zerubbabel*.

⁵⁹ This is apparently an application of the interpretation of Isa 60:22 (בעתה אחישנה) found in *b. Sanh.* 98a: זכו אחישנה לא זכו בעתה ' (if) they are worthy, "I will speed it (i.e., redemption) up"; (if) they are not worthy, "(it will unfold) at its predetermined pace."

⁶⁰ Hebrew ארמילאוס. As pointed out in the Introduction, Armilos is the Jewish equivalent to the Christian Antichrist and the Muslim Dajjāl. This particular designation is first attested in both Jewish and Christian literature stemming from the first half of the seventh century CE. See Leopold Zunz and Hanokh Albeck, *Haderashot be-Yisrael* (2d ed.; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1954), 429-30 n.31. Note also the remarks of Saadya, *Kitāb al-Amānāt wa'l-I'tiqādāt von Sa'adja b. Jūsuf al-Fajjūmī* (ed. S. Landauer; Leiden: Brill, 1880), 239.4-6; 241.11-13; English translation, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (trans. Samuel Rosenblatt; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 301-302; 304.

⁶¹ Compare the end of *Midrash Wa-yosha'* (Jellinek, *BHM* 1:56): ואזנו הימנית סתומה ואחת פתוחה וכשיבא 'and his right ear will be closed up and the (other) one open. Whenever a person comes to tell him good things, he turns his closed up ear toward him, but if a person wants to speak wickedly, he turns his open ear toward him.'

⁶² This clause is Aramaic: והוא בריה דסטנא ודאבנא. I reject Buttenwieser's suggested emendation; cf. his *Outline*, 34.

⁶³ See *b. Sukkah* 52a; Ibn Ezra *ad Zech* 12:10.

Scripture says: ‘I shall bring a third (of them) through the fire, etc.’ (Zech 13:9). The Messiah of the lineage of Ephraim shall die there, and Israel shall mourn for him. After this the Holy One blessed be He will reveal to them the Messiah of the lineage of David, but Israel will wish to stone him, and they will say to him: ‘You speak a lie, for the Messiah has already been slain, and there is no other Messiah destined to arise.’ They will scorn him, as Scripture says: ‘despised and abandoned (by) men’ (Isa 53:3). He shall withdraw and be hidden from them, as Scripture continues: ‘like one hiding faces from us’ (ibid.). But in Israel’s great distress, they will turn and cry out from (their) hunger and thirst, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will be revealed to them in His glory, as Scripture promises: ‘together all flesh will see’ (Isa 40:5). And the King Messiah will sprout up there, as Scripture says: ‘and behold with the clouds of heaven etc.’ (Dan 7:13), and it is written after it ‘and authority was given to him’ (Dan 7:14). He shall blow (his breath) at that wicked Armilos and kill him, as Scripture forecasts: ‘he will slay the wicked one with the breath of his lips’ (Isa 11:4).

The Holy One, blessed be He, will signal for and gather together all Israel and bring them up to Jerusalem, as Scripture says: ‘Let me signal for them and I will gather them’ (Zech 10:8). Fire will come down from heaven and consume Jerusalem up to three cubits, and uncircumcised foreigners and the impure will be removed from its midst. Then a rebuilt and decorated Jerusalem will descend from heaven; in it seventy-two precious stones will shine from one end of the world to the other. And all the nations will come to (bask in) her splendor, as Scripture affirms: ‘and the nations will come to your light’ (Isa 60:3). A rebuilt Temple will descend from the heavens—the one which was folded within Zebul,⁶⁴ for thus Moses perceived under prophetic inspiration, as Scripture says: ‘You will bring it and You will plant it’ (Exod 15:17).⁶⁵

Israel will dwell in peace for two thousand years.⁶⁶ They will feast upon Behemoth, Leviathan, and Ziz.⁶⁷ They will slaughter Behemoth; Ziz shall rend Leviathan with its ankles; and Moses will come and

⁶⁴ See *b. Hag.* 12b.

⁶⁵ Both a new Jerusalem and a new Temple descend from the heavens, a fusion of what were originally two separate motifs. See Avraham Grossman, “Jerusalem in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” in Praver and Ben-Shammai, *The History of Jerusalem*, 302-304.

⁶⁶ ‘Our apocalyptic writer accepted the old aggadic scheme [see *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 9b and Rashi *ad loc.* — Reeves] wherein the world would exist for only six thousand years, of which the last two thousand would constitute the days of the Messiah.’ Quoted from Baron, *History*, 5:148.

⁶⁷ For the Ziz, a fabulous bird, see *b. B. Bat.* 73b.

slaughter the ‘wild Ziz’ (Ps 50:11; 80:14).⁶⁸ At the end of two thousand years, the Holy One, blessed be He, will sit upon a throne of judgment in the valley of Jehoshaphat.⁶⁹ Immediately the heavens and the earth will wear out and fade away: the sun will be ashamed and the moon embarrassed;⁷⁰ the mountains will shake and the hills will quake (cf. Isa 54:10), so that Israel will no longer have her sins recounted (by them) to her. The gates of Gehinnom will be opened in the Wadi Joshua, and on the third day the gates of Eden (will be opened) in the east, as Scripture attests: ‘He will revitalize us for *two days*; [on the *third day* he will raise us up and we will live before Him’] (Hos 6:2)—this (verse) refers to the days of the Messiah, which are *two thousand years* (cf. Ps 90:4). And this ‘third day’ is the Day of Judgment, and alas for the one who is among all those who perish during it! The Holy One, blessed be He, shall cause to pass before Him every nation, and He shall say to them: ‘You who worshipped gods of silver and gold—see now if they are able to deliver you!’ Immediately they shall pass by and be immolated, as Scripture states: ‘the wicked will return to Sheol’ (Ps 9:18). Israel shall come after them, and the Holy One, blessed be he, shall say to them: ‘Whom have you worshipped?’ They shall respond: ‘indeed You are our Father etc.’ (Isa 63:16). And the nations of the world will gripe from the midst of Gehinnom: ‘Let us see whether He will judge His people Israel like He judged us!’ Immediately the Holy One, blessed be He, will pass with Israel⁷¹ through the midst of Gehinnom, and it will be made like cool water before them, as Scripture attests: ‘and their king shall pass through before them’ (Mic 2:13), and it says: ‘when you walk through fire you will not be burned’ (Isa 43:2). At that time the transgressors among Israel will be dumped into Gehinnom for twelve months,⁷² but after that (period) the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring them up and settle them in Eden, and they will enjoy its fruits, as Scripture says: ‘and your people will *all* be righteous’ (Isa 60:21).⁷³

⁶⁸ On this passage, note the remarks of Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1909-38), 5:48 n.129.

⁶⁹ Cf. Joel 4:2, 12. Note also the corresponding passage in *Midrash Wa-yosha*’.

⁷⁰ Cf. Isa 24:23.

⁷¹ The prooftext would seem to demand this translation.

⁷² See *m. ‘Ed.* 2.10; *t. Sanh.* 13.4 (Zuckerman, 434); *y. Sanh.* 10.3, 29b; *b. Roš. Haš.* 17a; *S. ‘Olam Rab.* 3.

⁷³ Most scholars hold that the *Secrets* originally ends here (Graetz, *Geschichte*, 5:413; Bittenwieser, *Outline*, 39). The remainder of Jellinek’s text is essentially a garbled abridgement of the *Prayer of R. Šim’on bar Yoḥai*.

R. Šim'on said: The Holy One, blessed be He, will signal to the bee who is at the end of the rivers of Egypt, and they shall come and wage war in the midst of Egypt. The first king who leads them and brings them forth is a slave who has rebelled against his master, as Scripture says: 'Thus says the Lord ... to the despised one, to the one loathed by the nation' (Isa 49:7)—that is the one held abominable among the nations; namely, the Canaanites—'to the slave of kings' (ibid.). He shall rebel against his overlord, and others who have rebelled against their masters will be gathered to him, and they shall gradually go out and seize the kingdom by force. They will make war with the Ishmaelites, kill their warriors, and take possession of their wealth and property. They are repulsive men, dressed in black and coming from the East, and they are quick⁷⁴ and impetuous, as Scripture says: 'the nation cruel and impetuous' (Hab 1:6). They will ascend the mountain of the height of Israel intending to tear down the Temple and to uproot the doors, but will (instead) weep bitterly (?).

Four kings shall arise over them: two of them will be princes and two of them chieftains. The first ... (?) and the king who rules after them (*sic!*) will conduct himself humbly: his eyes will be attractive and his hair lovely, and he will die in peace, with no one in the world collecting tribute from him. After him there shall arise a king accompanied by strife. He will station armies by the Euphrates River, but all of them will fall in a single day. He will flee, but will be captured, and all the time he is held captive there will be peace in the world. His brothers will rule over all lands.

The fourth king who shall arise over them will be a lover of silver and gold. He will be a dark man and tall, old and shriveled (?).⁷⁵ He will kill those whom they bring to him, and they will install him as king. He will build boats of bronze and fill them (with) silver and gold, and store them beneath the waters of the Euphrates in order to reserve them for his sons.⁷⁶ But they are destined for Israel, as Scripture says: 'I will give you treasures (concealed in) darkness and secret hidden things' (Isa 45:3). During his reign the

⁷⁴ *Sic.* Read מרים, as in *Prayer* (Jellinek, *BHM* 4:120) in place of the present text's מהרים.

⁷⁵ Lewis emends גרגרן to גרגר 'gluttonous' ("Apocalyptic Vision," 330 n.1).

⁷⁶ Compare the analogous pronouncement found in the apocalypse attributed to 'John the Lesser' in the Syriac *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*: מנמסא כמסכא סמ אכבלמסמ אל כמפא דקלכס סכאום סכאום כמכאום סכאום דקלכס סכאום דקלכס סכאום 'on that day their trust will be in the wealth which they acquired by deceit and despoliation and which they stored in a place by the name of Diglat (i.e., the Tigris River).' Syriac text cited from J. Rendel Harris, ed., *The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles: Together with the Apocalypses of Each One of Them* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1900), 21.10-11 (text), and note especially the remarks of Harris, *Gospel*, 22. For further discussion, see Han J. W. Drijvers, "The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles: A Syriac Apocalypse from the Early Islamic Period," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, I: Problems in the Literary Source*

western quadrant will rebel, and he will dispatch there many troops, but he (the leader of the rebellion) will kill the easterners. Again he (the fourth king) will send out many troops, and they will come and slay the westerners, and take up residence in their land.

And this will be the sign for you—when you see that at the beginning of one week there is rain, and in the second (week) the loosing of the ‘arrows of hunger,’ and in the third a severe famine, and in the fourth no hunger but (also) no satisfaction, and in the fifth there is great satiety. A star shall appear from the east with a rod on top of it—this is the star of Israel, as Scripture says: ‘a star shall step forth from Jacob, etc.’ (Num 24:17). If it shines, it is for the benefit of Israel. Then the Messiah of the lineage of David shall emerge.⁷⁷

And this will be the sign for you—when you see that the eastern גירון in Damascus has fallen, the kingdom of those in the East has fallen.⁷⁸ Then deliverance will sprout for Israel. The Messiah of the lineage of David will come, and they (*sic!*) will go up to Jerusalem and rejoice over her, as Scripture says: ‘the lowly will take possession of the land and delight in an abundance of peace’ (Ps 37:11). May God in His mercy send to us the deliverer quickly in our era, amen!

Material (ed. Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad; Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 1; Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992), 208.

⁷⁷ See the notes to this section in *Prayer*.

⁷⁸ Note the remarks above regarding this particular sign.