

The Scepter and the Star (14 Dec 2023)

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Helpful Terms and Concepts

Here are some terms and concepts you might find useful or helpful as we do our work together today. Note: these are fairly imprecise (i.e., not academic) definitions.

Targum(s) — Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Old Testament, once Jews around the world stopped speaking Hebrew during the Persian period (they spoke Aramaic). Long thought to be Medieval until a fragment was discovered with the Dead Sea Scrolls, suggesting a much older date. Now thought to hark back to the NT period or so, most likely.

LXX/Septuagint — Greek translations of the Hebrew Old Testament after Alexander the Great. After Aramaic, Jews around the ancient world spoke predominantly Greek (as did the early church). The LXX was the Bible of the Jews and Christians until they became separate religions towards the end of the 1st cent. AD.

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha — Texts associated with the world of the OT, usually written under a false name of a biblical hero of old; Jewish (and sometimes Christian) texts from ca. 200 BC to 100 AD that bear witness to life and belief between the Testaments.

Old Testament Apocrypha — A Protestant term for books or passages of Scripture held by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches to be authoritative (*deutero*-canonical). These texts date from the 3rd cent. BC to 1st cent. AD and were included in the LXX (see above). With the parting of the ways, the Jews restored their Bibles to Hebrew (removing these books) and the Early Church retained them.

Dead Sea Scrolls — A library of biblical and sectarian writings from the 3rd cent. BC to 1st cent. AD, discovered at Qumran on the Dead Sea. They bear witness to diverse Jewish sectarian belief and practice, but also a library for many important biblical texts (including the oldest extant copies of many OT writings).

Rabbinical Writings — Jewish writings from the rabbis up through the end of the 1st millennium AD. Beginning with the Mishnah (oral law, traditions, and sayings of the sages) to the Talmuds (expanded study and reflection on the Mishnaic traditions) to many biblical

commentaries, these bear witness to the varied and vibrant intellectual and religious life of ancient Judaism.

Inner- and Intra-textual — Terms I’m using imprecisely to point out both the way later biblical authors will engage with earlier texts to interpret, apply, subvert, or recontextualize for their own day and age, as well as our study of this phenomenon as we try to sort all this out today.

Prophetic fulfillment — A concept I’m raising here because many of our preconceived notions of prophetic fulfillment (based on our particular religious backgrounds and contexts) may be challenged by the way OT texts claim to be fulfilled in the NT (e.g. Matt 2:14-15). Biblical prophetic fulfillment is bigger and more expansive than some of our directly linear (simple predictive) notions of it may be.

Genesis 49:9-12

9 Judah is a lion’s cub. From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bowed down; he crouched like a lion and as a lioness. Who shall rouse him? 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff between his feet, until Shiloh comes. And to him shall be the obedience of nations. 11 Binding his donkey to the vine and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he washes his clothing in the wine and his garment in the blood of grapes. 12 The eyes are darker than wine, and the teeth whiter than milk.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament

Passage	Notes
Judges 1:1-2	
1 Samuel 16:1 (cf. 1 Sam 9:1-2)	
Hosea 5:14 (cf. Ezek 19:1-14)	
Micah 5:1-5	
Zechariah 9:9	
1 Chronicles 5:1-2	

Other Jewish Sources

Passage	Text
LXX (3rd cent. BC)	9 A lion's cub you are, Ioudas; from a shoot, my son, you went up. When you reclined, you slept like a lion and like a cub. Who will rouse him? 10 A ruler shall not be wanting from Ioudas and a leader from his thighs until the things stored up for him come, and he is the expectation of nations. 11 Binding his foal to a vine and his donkey's foal to the tendril, he shall wash his robe in wine and his garment in the blood of a bunch of grapes; 12 his eyes are gladdening from wine, and his teeth are more white than milk.
Targums (2nd–1st cent. BC)	I shall compare you, Judah, to a lion's cub; you saved my son Joseph from his murderers. From the judgment of Tamar, my son, you are innocent, you will rest and dwell in the midst of battle, like the lion and like the lioness, and there is no nation nor kingdom that shall stand against you. 10. Kings shall not cease from among those of the house of Judah and neither (shall) scribes teaching the Law from his son's sons until the time King Messiah shall come, to whom the kingship belongs; to him shall all the kingdoms be subject. 11. How beautiful is the King Messiah who is to arise from among those of the house of Judah. He girds his loins and comes down arranging battle lines against his enemies and slaying kings together with their rulers; and there is no king or ruler who can withstand him. He makes the mountains red with the blood of the slain; his garments are rolled in blood; he is like a presser of grapes. 12. How beautiful are the eyes of the King Messiah, like pure wine, for they have not seen the uncovering of nakedness or the shedding of innocent blood. His teeth are whiter than milk because he has not eaten what has been robbed or taken by force. His mountains and his press will be red from wine, and his hills white from the harvest and from the flocks.
1 Maccabees 3:1-4 (2nd–1st cent. BC)	1 Then his son Judas, who was called Maccabeus, took command in his place. ... He extended the glory of his people. Like a giant he put on his breastplate; he bound on his armor of war and waged battles, protecting the camp by his sword. 4 He was like a lion in his deeds, like a lion's cub roaring for prey.
4Q252 5:1-7 (2nd–1st cent. BC)	1 [...] a ruler shall [no]t depart from the tribe of Judah while Israel has dominion. 2 [And] the one who sits on the throne of David [shall never] be cut off, because the "ruler's staff" is the covenant of the kingdom, 3 [and the thous]ands of Israel are "the feet," until the Righteous Messiah, the Branch of David, has come. 4 For to him and to his seed the covenant of the kingdom of His people has been given for the eternal generations, because 5 he has kept [...] the Law with the men of the Yahad. For 6 [... the "obedience of the people]s" is the assembly of the men of 7 [...] he gave

After the New Testament

Passage	Text
Qohelet Rabbah 1:9 (6th–8th cent. AD)	Rabbi Ḥanina bar Yitzḥak said: Makrin is written. Rabbi Berekhya said in the name of Rabbi Yitzḥak: Like the initial redeemer, so will be the ultimate redeemer: Just as regarding the initial redeemer, it is stated: "Moses took his wife and his sons, and mounted them on the donkey" (Exodus 4:20), so too, regarding the ultimate redeemer it

	<p>is stated: “[Your king is coming to you...] humble and riding on a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). Just as the initial redeemer brought down the manna, as it is stated: “Behold, I will cause bread to rain down from the heavens for you” (Exodus 16:4), so too, the ultimate redeemer will bring down the manna, as it is stated: “There will be an abundance of grain in the land” (Psalms 72:16). Just as the initial redeemer brought up the spring, so too, the ultimate redeemer will bring up the water, as it is stated: “A spring will emerge from the house of the Lord and will irrigate the Shittim valley” (Joel 4:18).</p>
<p>Midrash Rabbah 98:10 (5th cent. AD)</p>	<p>“The scepter shall not depart from Judah” – this is Makhir... “Or the ruler’s staff from between his feet” – as he came and prostrated himself before his feet. “Until Shilo arrives” – this is the messianic king. “And to him nations will assemble” – he will come and blunt the teeth of the idolaters. Another matter: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah” – this is the Sanhedrin, which flogs and subjugates. “Or the ruler’s staff from between his feet” – these are the two scribes of the judges who would stand before them, one to the right and one to the left. “Until Shilo arrives”</p> <p>“His foal” and “his donkey” – upon the arrival of the one in whose regard it is written: “A humble man riding on a donkey...” (Zechariah 9:9). “He launders his garments in wine” – as [the Messiah] clarifies matters of Torah for them; “and in the blood of grapes, his clothes” – as he clarifies their errors for them. Rabbi Ḥanin said: Israel does not need the teaching of the messianic king in the future, as it is stated: “Nations will seek him” (Isaiah 11:10) – not Israel. If so, why does the messianic king come, and what does he come to do? To gather the exiles of Israel and to give them thirty mitzvot. That is what is written: “I said to them: If it is proper in your eye, [give Me My fee...So they weighed out My fee: thirty silver coins]” (Zechariah 11:12) – Rav said: These are the thirty mighty men. Rabbi Yoḥanan said: These are thirty mitzvot.</p> <p>“His eyes shall be red [and his teeth white from milk]” – as they sit and arrange matters of Torah with their teeth until they express them clearly like milk. Another matter: “His eyes shall be red from wine” – these are the residents of the south, whose eyes are bright and who possess great strength for Torah study. “And his teeth white from milk” – wine is better for a person of years than milk is for a baby.</p>

The New Testament

Passage	Notes
<p>Matthew 1:17 (cf. Luke 3:23-38)</p>	
<p>Matthew 2:6 (cf. John 7:42)</p>	
<p>Luke 2:3-4 (cf. Hebrews 7:14)</p>	

Matthew 21:5 (and parallels)	
Revelation 5:5	
Revelation 7:14	

What Did We Discover?

Questions —

Observations —

Numbers 24:17-19

17 I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star will go out from Jacob, and a scepter will rise from Israel; it will crush the foreheads of Moab and destroy all the children of Seth. 18 Edom will be a captive; Seir, its enemies, will be a captive, and Israel will be acting [courageously]. 19 Someone from Jacob will rule and will destroy a remnant from the city.”

Elsewhere in the Old Testament

Passage	Notes
2 Samuel 8:11-14	
Isaiah 11:1-2	
Obadiah 17-21	
Psalm 2:9	
Psalm 110	

Other Jewish Sources

Passage	Text
LXX (3rd cent. BC)	17 I will point to him, and not now; I deem him happy, but he is not at hand. A star shall dawn out of Iakob, and a person shall rise up out of Israel, and he shall crush the chiefs of Moab, and he shall plunder all Seth's sons. 18 And Edom will be an inheritance, and Esau, his enemy, will be an inheritance, and Israel acted with strength. 19 And one shall arise out of Iakob, and he shall destroy one being saved from a city.

Targums (2nd–1st cent. BC)	<p>I see him, but he is not here now; I observe him, but he is not nigh. A king is to arise from those of the house of Jacob, and a redeemer and ruler from those of the house of Israel; and he shall kill the mighty ones of the Moabites and blot out all the sons of Seth, and he shall cast out the owners of property. And Edom shall be an inheritance, and the mountain of Gablah shall be an inheritance for its enemies. And Israel shall prosper in abundant riches. A king is to arise from those of the house of Jacob and he will blot out the one who has sinned from the sinful city...</p>
Testament of Levi 18:1-4 (2nd– 1st cent. BC)	<p>1 “When vengeance will have come upon them from the Lord, the priesthood will lapse. 2 And then the Lord will raise up a new priest to whom all the words of the Lord will be revealed. He shall affect the judgment of truth over the earth for many days. 3 And his star shall rise in heaven like a king; kindling the light of knowledge as day is illumined by the sun. And he shall be extolled by the whole inhabited world. 4 This one will shine forth like the sun in the earth; he shall take away all darkness from under heaven, and there shall be peace in all the earth.</p>
Psalms of Solomon 17:21-26 (1st cent. BC)	<p>21 See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time known to you, O God. 22 Undergird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem from gentiles who trample her to destruction; 23 in wisdom and in righteousness to drive out the sinners from the inheritance; to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter’s jar; 24 To shatter all their substance with an iron rod; to destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth; 25 At his warning the nations will flee from his presence; and he will condemn sinners by the thoughts of their hearts. 26 He will gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness; and he will judge the tribes of the people that have been made holy by the Lord their God.</p>
CD 7:18-21 (Damascus Document; 2nd– 1st cent. BC)	<p>The star is the Interpreter of the Law 19 who comes to Damascus, as it is written, “A star has left Jacob, a staff has risen 20 from Israel” (Num. 24:17). The latter (the staff) is the Leader of the whole nation; when he appears, “he will shatter 21 all the sons of Sheth” (Num. 24:17).</p>
1Q28b 5:23-29 (2nd–1st cent. BC)	<p>“[May] the Lord li[ft] you up to an eternal height, a mighty tower in a wall 24 securely set on high! Thus may you ‘be r[ighteous] by the might of your [mouth,] lay waste the earth with your rod! With the breath of your lips 25 may you kill the wicked!’ (Isa. 11:4, modified). May He give [you ‘the spirit of coun]sel and may eternal might [rest upon you], the spirit of knowledge and the fear of God’ (Isa. 11:2). May ‘righteousness 26 be the belt [around your waist, and faithful]ness the belt around your loins’ (Isa. 11:5). May He ‘make your horns iron and your hoofs bronze!’ (Mic. 4:13). 27 May you gore like a bu[ll] ... May you trample the nati]ons like mud in the streets! For God has established you as ‘the scepter’ (Num. 24:17) 28 over the rulers; bef[ore you peoples shall bow down, and all nat]ions shall serve you. He shall make you mighty by His holy name, 29 so that you shall be as a li[on among the beasts of the forest;] your [sword will devour] prey, with none to resc[ue.] Your [sw]ift steeds shall spread out upon [the earth ...]”</p>
1QM 11:4-7	<p>The battle is Yours, the strength is from You, 5 it is not our own. Neither our power nor the strength of our hand have done valiantly, but by Your power and the strength of Your</p>

(War Scroll; 1st cent. BC – 1st cent. AD)	great valor. Jus[t a]s You told 6 us in time past, saying: “There shall come forth a star from Jacob, a scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall crush the forehead of Moab and tear down all sons of Sheth, 7 and he shall descend from Jacob and shall destroy the remnant from the city, and the enemy shall be a possession, and Israel shall do valiantly” (Num. 24:17, 19, 18a, c).
Hasmonean Coin (103–76 BC)	A coin minted by Hasmonean King Alexander Janneus (also on the slides) with a star on one side of the coin.

After the New Testament

Passage	Text
Testament of Judah 24:1-6 (1st cent. AD)	24 1 “And after this there shall arise for you a Star from Jacob in peace: And a man shall arise from my posterity like the Sun of righteousness, walking with the sons of men in gentleness and righteousness, and in him will be found no sin. 2* And the heavens will be opened upon him to pour out the spirit as a blessing of the Holy Father. 3* And he will pour the spirit of grace on you. And you shall be sons in truth, and you will walk in his first and final decrees. 4 This is the Shoot of God Most High; this is the fountain for the life of all humanity. 5 Then he will illumine the scepter of my kingdom, 6 and from your root will arise the Shoot, and through it will arise the rod of righteousness for the nations, to judge and to save all that call on the Lord.
y. Ta’an 4:5 G-I (Jerusalem Talmud; 4th cent. AD)	R. Simeon b. Yohai taught, “Aqiba, my master, would interpret the following verse: ‘A star (kokhab) shall come forth out of Jacob’ (Num. 24:17)—‘A disappointment (Kozeba) shall come forth out of Jacob.’” [H] R. Aqiba: When he saw Bar Kozeba, he said, “This is the King Messiah.” [I] Said to him R. Yohanan ben Toreta, “Aqiba! Grass will grow on your cheeks, and the Messiah will not yet have come!”

The New Testament

Passage	Notes
Matthew 2:2	
2 Peter 1:19	
Revelation 2:28	
Revelation 19:11-21	
Revelation 22:16	

What Did We Discover?

Questions —

Observations —

Implications for Today From Both Passages

How (if at all) should any of this matter today?

Thanks so much for joining us today!

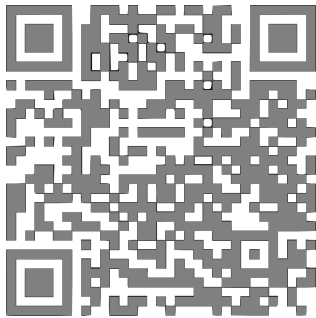
We are so delighted you'd choose to join us today for this Advent workshop, and we do hope it's been encouraging and helpful to you in some way. If you have any questions, or would like to engage further about anything, here is our contact information (below). Please do not hesitate to reach out if you would like to discuss participating with Pillar in some way, whether it be as a student, or as a board member, a volunteer, or as a partner.

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Thanks, and have a Merry Christmas!