

24 Yeshua left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its structure. ²But he said to them, Do you see all these things? Amen I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another which will not be thrown down.

commentary

24:1 Yeshua left the temple – A graphic depiction of the Shekhina abandoning the Sanctuary (*see previous note*). This ties with the topic that follows: the destruction of the Temple.

24:1 call his attention to its structure – The sages have taught: “One who did not see Jerusalem in its glory has never seen a beautiful city, and one who did not see the Temple in its constructed state, has never seen a magnificent structure. What is meant by constructed state? Abaye said – and some say it was Rav Hisda who said it – that this refers to Herod’s renovation” (*Sukka 51b*). When king Herod renovated the Temple, he made sure to make it one of the greatest and most beautiful sanctuaries in the world (*cf. Josephus, Antiquities 15:11:1*). The Temple was built with white stones, and the holy place was so tall that it could be seen by those who lived in the country for a great many furlongs (*cf. ibid. 15:11:3*). “The first rising of the sun reflected back a fiery splendor forcing men to close their eyes... it appeared to strangers, when they were coming to it at a distance, like a mountain covered in snow” (*Josephus, Wars 5:5:6*). During the time when the Temple was being built, it did not rain in the daytime, showers only fell at night, so that the work would not be hindered (*cf. ibid. 15:11:7*). “In the morning the wind would blow the clouds and the sun would shine. And so people would go to work knowing that the work of Heaven was being built by their hands” (*Taanit 23a*).

24:2 not one stone here will be left upon another which will not be thrown down – Some critical scholars argue that this portion must have been written at a later time since the author is aware of the Temple’s fall, which took place about 40 years after Yeshua’s death. However, such an argument rests solely upon a disbelief in Yeshua’s ability to anticipate the destruction of Jerusalem. Not only he, but also other Jewish authors of the time were able to see it coming and, in a way, warned about it, as the first Temple and the prophetic literature had served as a precedent (*see Micah 3:12; Jeremiah 26:4-6; Enoch 90:28-29; 89:72-73*). The Testament of the Twelve patriarchs reads: “The sanctuary which the Lord chose will become desolate” (*Testament of Levi 14:1-3*). The Qumran community explicitly says that the corrupt priesthood who work at the Temple would be plundered by the Kittim – i.e., by the Romans (*1QpHab 9:2-7*), because it is written, “Because you have plundered many peoples, all the remnant of the nations will plunder you” (*Hab. 2:8*). It also obviates the destruction of the second Temple when it says, “I will create anew my Sanctuary to prepare it for myself” (*11QTem 28:9*). In addition to this, Yeshua’s prediction can be found in all gospels, and in Mark – which is the earliest synoptic gospel – Yeshua’s only accusation during the trial was that “he claimed he would destroy the Temple” (*Mark 14:57*). To add more to it, Yeshua envisions the Sanctuary fulfilling some kind of role (*v. 15*) prior to the imminent end which comes afterwards (*v. 29*). Had it been written after the facts, this portion would read differently or be entirely missing. This combination of facts provides enough support for the authenticity of the passage. The historical Yeshua did in fact predict the destruction of the Temple. Among the oral traditions that circulated back in the day, some understood Yeshua’s words to mean that the destruction of the Sanctuary was a metaphor for the death of his physical body, since the body is a sanctuary for the Shekhina (*cf. John 2:19*). Others – as in the case of Mattai – took his words at face value. Both interpretations happened to be correct. Certainly, the destruction of the city and the Temple in the year 70 CE was so complete that “those who visited it could hardly believe that it had ever been inhabited” (*cf. Josephus Wars 7:1*).

³And while Yeshua was sitting on the Mount of Olives the disciples came to him privately, asking among themselves and to him, Tell us, when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the consummation of the world? ⁴Yeshua answered and said to them, Watch out that no man deceives you. ⁵For many will come in my name, claiming, I am the Messiah, and will deceive many.

—commentary—

24:3 the sign of your coming – Literally, the sign of your presence or occurrence, in Greek *Parousia* (cf. *James* 5:7). The Aramaic uses *ata* אָתָּא, to arrive, to occur. It is the same verb as in the Talmudic passage: “He [the Messiah] will arrive but I do not desire to live to see it [because of the suffering of those days]” (*Sanhedrin* 98b). In Jewish eschatology, the Messianic era is a bridge between the end of this current world and the beginning of the world to come (Olam haba).

24:3 the consummation of the world – Or the consummation of the age. They seem to be asking when the *Olam haze* (this current world) will come to an end. Alternatively, they wanted to know concerning the end of this age (i.e., the age of the second temple), but both things were synonymous for them. Yeshua’s eschatological discourse pretends to answer both questions: The falling of the Temple and the end of the *Olam haze*. This has led to various interpretations; a common one being that the entire passage is about the end of the world. This is not entirely accurate because the disciples are asking concerning the fall of the second Temple (v. 2), so anything Yeshua says concerning the Sanctuary has the second Temple in mind. In the mind of the first Nazarenes, the end of this world would take place in the very same generation in which the Temple would fall (v. 34; cf. *1Co.* 7:29-31), hence, the two questions are technically one and the same and some, therefore, argue that the answers overlap, thus creating a blurring of specific dates and chronologies. Indeed, the destruction of Jerusalem brought about the “end of the age” for them. In fact, it took place at the end of the Astrological Age of Aries, and was the major event that inaugurated the Age of Pisces (the fish; which is interestingly Christianity’s symbol). However, in our perspective, the world obviously did not end. This is, therefore, the proper interpretation: both questions are addressed in order, indicating that the Temple would fall in that “generation” (v. 34) and that the end of this world would occur at a day and hour “nobody knows” (v. 36), but these two events are interconnected by a series of signs called “the birth-pangs” (v. 8), hence, what is true for the fall of Jerusalem can also be true for the end of this world, for the final redemption has an immanent nature which we are going to explore in this chapter.

24:5 many will come in my name, claiming, I am the Messiah – The Markan version – being probably the original – says “I am he,” instead of “I am the Messiah.” Mattai’s version can be interpreted in two different ways. “Many will come in my name,” meaning, many will assume my character and claim to be the Messiah. Yeshua would be identifying himself as the Messiah here. In the second interpretation, as Rabbi Soloveitchik says, we should read it without commas: “Many will come in my name claiming I am the Messiah,” which means “Many will come as if they were my disciples, and they will teach people that I am the Messiah.” We can make a case for both interpretations, since both incidents took place historically, and both of them led to revolutions and wars. In the book of Acts Rabban Gamliel speaks of many failed Messiahs of that time (*Acts* 5:36-37). Many of them wanted to deliver Israel from the Romans and led revolts. These revolts ultimately convinced the Romans to destroy the Temple. As Josephus says, “The Romans, judging that it was in vain to spare what was round about the holy house, burnt all those places... at that time there was a great number of false prophets... to keep [the people] from deserting... ..The wretched people were deluded at that time by charlatans and pretended messengers of God” (*Josephus, Wars* 6:5:2-3). In the year 132 a man named Bar Kokhva led another revolt and proclaimed himself “the Messiah” (*Sanhedrin* 93b). At first, his revolt was successful enough that even Rabbi Aqiva was convinced of his Messiahship (cf. *Yerushalmi Taanit* 4:5), but eventually he failed too and in the aftermath the Jews were barred from Jerusalem.

⁶You will hear of revolutions and rumors of wars, but look out and do not be disturbed, for such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom and there will be famines and plagues and earthquakes in various places.

—commentary—

24:5 many will come in my name, claiming, I am the Messiah – Bar Kokhva’s revolt led to another unexpected and yet major incident: Those who had Yeshua as their Messiah refused to acknowledge or even to help Bar Kokhva. After the failed revolt, most followers of Yeshua disassociated themselves with Judaism (as most of them were gentiles), and Rabbinic Judaism disassociated itself entirely with anything that had to do with Yeshua. The result was the rise of a new religion based solely on the belief that Yeshua is the Messiah, which eventually evolved into making him a deity as well (cf. *Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 4:6:1-2*). Although they were able to coexist in many periods and places, the conversion of Roman emperors to Christianity brought so many wars and persecutions against the Jews for two millennia.

24:6 but the end is still to come – The wars and revolutions preceding the destruction of the Temple are not the end of the age, but signs that everything is being orchestrated, and they will keep going on and increasing until the end of this world, just like birth-pains of pregnancy keep increasing until the baby is born. These incidents which initiate the beginning of birth-pains are a heavenly-decreed chain of events that ultimately lead to the perfection of humankind in God’s omniscient plan (cf. *Ramhal, Derekh Hashem 2:3:8*). But humans who live bound to a space-time reality, who are in the level of Malkhut (the physical realm where the spiritual is concealed) cannot understand how these horrible catastrophes are of any good for the betterment of humankind.

24:7 Nation will rise against nation – Yeshua is using Biblical language (cf. *Isaiah 19:2*). That wars will herald the Messianic era is foretold in Daniel, which says, “The same horn was waging war against the saints and overwhelmed them, until the Ancient of Days came and gave revenge to the high holy ones, and the time arrived that the saints inherited the kingdom” (*Dan. 7:21-22*). A baraita teaches: “On the sixth year-cycle [preceding the coming of Messiah] sounds קולות will be heard, in the seventh, there will be wars, and upon the conclusion of the seventh year, the son of David will come” (*Megillah 17b*).

24:7 earthquakes – Bar Qappara taught that “one must blow the Shofar over an earthquake” (*Yerushalmi Berakhot 9:2*), indicating that it is a catastrophe which is brought by the attribute of judgment and requires repentance. It is, therefore, written, “the day of the Lord has come... before it the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon darken and the stars withdraw their shining” (*Yael 2:1, 10*). “The high mountains will be shaken, the high hills will be made low and will melt like wax before the fire” (*Enoch 1:6*). Mattai says there was an earthquake during Yeshua’s crucifixion which split rocks and torn a curtain of the Temple into two (*Matt. 27:51, 54*), which Eusebius dates in the 19th year of Tiberius (33 CE), and although the details of Mattai’s earthquake might be midrashic, the other synoptics, Mark and Luke, mention the tearing of the curtain (*Mark 15:38*) and a darkness that fell over the land (*Luke 23:44*). The Emperor Julian (4th century CE) sought to rebuild the Temple, promising the people of Israel worship access to it.^a However, the plan of the construction was aborted due to a natural disaster which involved an earthquake and balls of fire emerging out of the earth, which burnt the workers to death. This is described as a historical well-known fact in multiple sources (cf. *Ammianus Marcellinus, Res Getae, book 23; Ambrose of Millan to Emperor Theodosius*). Some even associate it with the earthquake of Galilee in the year 363.

^a cf. Julian “the Apostate” to the community of the Jews, vol 3, pg. 177-181. Cf. Socrates Scholasticus, Eccl. History 3:20.

⁸All these are the beginning of birth-pains. ⁹And you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

commentary

24:8 the beginning of birth-pains – This is a Rabbinic expression which refers to the Scriptural “awesome, dreadful day of the Lord” (*Mal. 3:23*), a time of suffering which precedes the coming of the Messianic era. The word translated as birth-pain, *Habal חבל*, is the same as the word for wound or suffering (cf. *Dan 3:25*). The sages have taught, “The son of David will not come until the evil kingdom [of Rome] will disperse through the land of Israel for nine months, as it is written (*Micah 5:2*)... ..until the time when she who is in labor has given birth” (*Sanhedrin 98b*). The nine months is not to be taken literally; they allude to the suffering which precedes the deliverance of Israel, for nine months equal the forty weeks of pregnancy, and forty is consistently used in Scripture as a suffering that gives birth to a new reality (*Gen. 7:12; Exod. 24:18; Num. 13:25; Eze. 4:6*). The period of suffering that precedes the Messianic era is of such an intensity that Rabbah and Ullah said, “Let it come, but might I not see it” (*Sanhedrin 98b*). Rabbi Eleazar said, “What must a person do to be spared from the birth-pains of Messiah? They must engage in Torah and acts of kindness” (*ibid.*). Many conditions are required for the coming of the Messianic era, including the re-building of the Temple, the ingathering of the exiles... etc. These are considered the works of the spiritual force called “Messiah ben Yosef” (*Qol haTor 1:1, 1:3*). All of this became possible only in this generation, when the State of Israel came into being and many Jews all around the world returned to their homeland, all of it as a consequence of the holocaust and the great suffering that the Jews experienced during the traumatic events of the Second World War. But Israel was awakened from below (through earthly means), and so even after this horrible suffering which the earth had never experienced before in the history of humankind, it keeps receiving opposition from its enemies: Esav, Ishmael and Amaleq. This is a sign that the Messianic era has not yet come to complete fulfilment, but as the prophet says, “Hashem shall go forth and wage war with those nations, like the days he waged war on the day of the [exodus] battle” (*Zech. 14:3*).

24:9 And you will be handed over to be persecuted – All of Yeshua’s disciples were persecuted and many of them were executed before the destruction of the Temple. The earliest gospel hints to the fact that both sons of Zavdai would suffer martyrdom (*Mark 10:39*). Yaaqov ben Zavdai was persecuted and slain by king Herod (*Acts:12-1-2*). The fourth gospel, writing retrospectively, makes it clear that Keifa had experienced martyrdom (*John 21:16, 19*), although it does not say how he died. Acts 12:3 says he was once arrested by Herod. Legend says Keifa was crucified during Nero’s persecution of the Nazarenes in the 64 CE (cf. *Clement to the Corinthians; Tacitus, Annales 15:38-45*). Whether Keifa was in fact put to death during this incident or not, we do not know for certain, but the persecution of Nazarenes in the year 64 is a historical fact. As for Yaaqov the brother of Yeshua and leader of the Nazarenes, he was thrown down from the pinnacle of the Temple and lapidated in the year 60 CE (*Hegesippus 4:22; Josephus, Antiquities 20:9:1*).

relevant quotes

“The mother contracts ritual impurity as a result of giving birth. Here the Torah alludes to the way God initiates a process which culminates in the rehabilitation of Israel... ..The years which are viewed as the birth-pains of Messiah, **חבלי משיח**, last for seven years during which Israel will be refined spiritually in preparation of his arrival. He will make his appearance during the eighth year. On the eighth day, at the beginning of the eighth day, the baby is to have its foreskin removed, i.e., the concept of a foreskin [the *qlipa*] which acts as a barrier between man and God will be removed from the universe. We read in Zechariah (*13:2*) that God will destroy the spirit of impurity from the earth. This will occur during the eighth year.” (*Ohr haHayim on Vayiqra 12:2*)

¹⁰At that time many will stumble, and they will betray and hate one another,
¹¹and many false prophets will rise up and deceive multitudes. ¹²Because of
the growth of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold, ¹³but he who stands
firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this annunciation of the kingdom will be
preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end
will come.

commentary

24:10 At that time... they will betray and hate one another – The second Temple was destroyed due to baseless hatred (*Yoma 9a*), and this was the beginning of birth-pains. “Due to baseless hatred a person will have great conflict within his own house” (*Sefer haMiddot, conflict and strife 1:106*). This conflict will increase before the coming of the Messianic era, as it is taught, “In the footsteps of Messiah... the people who fear sin will be held in disgust and the truth will be absent. The youth will shame the face of the elders, elders will stand before minors, a son will revile his father, a daughter will rise against her mother... a man’s enemies will be members of his own household. The face of the generation will be like the face of a dog; a son will not be ashamed in front of his father” (*Sotah 49b*).

24:14 And this annunciation of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world – Annunciation, in Hebrew, *besorah*; what is often translated as gospel. Yeshua’s annunciation of the kingdom is: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (*Matt. 4:17*; see second note on *Matt. 3:2*). “Great is repentance, for it brings about redemption” (*Yoma 86b*). “To all nations” must have been borrowed from Mark: “And the annunciation must first be preached to all the nations” (*Mark 13:10*). The phrase “as a testimony” is a sign of judgment, similar to what the midrash teaches, “When the Blessed Holy One was about to give the Torah to Israel, He took it to Esav and Ishmael. Although it was clear to him that they would not accept it, nevertheless, he began with them in peace” (*Rashi on Deut. 2:26*; cf. *Midrash Tanhuma*). “The Blessed Holy One offered the Torah to every nation and tongue, but they did not accept it. Then he came to Israel and they accepted it... This serves as a rebuke of them” (*Avoda Zara 3a*). Similarly, it is taught, “The Blessed Holy One exiled Israel among the nations only so that *geirim* [converts] will join them” (*Pesakhim 87b*).

24:14 and then the end will come – “Jerusalem was destroyed because its rulers adhered strictly to the letter of the Torah and did not go beyond the letter of the Torah [i.e., did not apply piety]” (*Bava Metzia 30b*). It stands to reason that the correction of the world will imply the dissemination of teachings that go beyond the letter of the Torah. “The Baal Shem Tov ascended to the *heikhal* [heavenly palace] of Messiah and asked him, When will the master come? And Messiah responded, When your wellsprings be disseminated far afield” (*Baal Shem Tov, 5507, Ben Porat Yosef*). The study of Hassidut is a prelude and a vessel-preparation for the coming of Messiah and the end of the *olam haze*. While *hallakha* (the physical practices of the Torah) is known as the *guf*, i.e., the body of the Torah, Hassidut is called *nishmat d’Oraita*; the soul of the Torah (cf. *Zohar 3:152b*), for a Hassid relates to the soul or the innermost part of the Torah. Embracing the Torah in our hearts, internalizing its ethical aspects is the essence of the Torah of Messiah, as it is written, “I will give them a heart of flesh, in order that they will walk in my statutes” (*Eze. 11:19-20*). The basis of Hassidut is going above and beyond the superficial text, as it is written, “Do what is right and good in the sight of Hashem” (*Deut. 6:18*), which means “acting beyond the strict demands of the Torah” (*Rashi*). All these elements correlate with Yeshua’s teachings, where God’s kingdom is only experienced by living a form of righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (cf. *Matt. 5:20*).^b Some of the main elements in Hassidut are piety, selflessness, repentance, the understanding of God’s immanence in creation (i.e., mysticism), and the intention to fix the world – *tiquin olam* – through a revolution of Torah interpretation,

^b In its interpretation of Exodus 18:20, *Bava Qama 100a* discusses how the Torah demands to behave above and beyond its strict letter.

¹⁵But when you see standing in the holy place the abomination of desolation spoken of through Daniel the prophet—he who reads let him understand—

—commentary—

all common themes in Yeshua's doctrines. "A [new] Torah will issue out of me" (*Isa. 51:4*), this is, as Rabbi Avin bar Kahana says, "a *hidush*, an innovation in the interpretation of the Torah" (*Vayiqra Rabbah 13:3*). "In the world to come they will look at the soul of the soul of the Torah" (*Zohar 3:152b*).

24:15 But when you see standing in the holy place the abomination of desolation – This is the sign of the Temple's imminent destruction. Daniel says, "Companies will come... from the Kittim [i.e., from the Romans]... and they will profane the Sanctuary, the stronghold, and they will remove the daily sacrifice and place a desolate abomination" (*Daniel 11:30-31*). Hence, Luke paraphrases it as: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that desolation is near" (*Luke 21:20*). The same word for desolate **שׁוּמָם** can also be interpreted as the statue of a pagan deity (cf. *Rashi on Dan. 9:27*). When a temple was destroyed, the Romans performed a ritual called *Suovetaurilia*, to rededicate the place to their pagan deities. Part of the practice consisted of sacrificing a pig (cf. *Cato, Agrig. 141*), which is why Josephus parallels the first Roman war with Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificing a pork during the Maccabean war (cf. *Wars. 1:1:3; cf. 1Macc. 1:54*).

24:15 through Daniel the prophet – Daniel is called a prophet in the Gemara (*Megillah 15a*) and in *Sikhot haran (220:8)*.^c

24:15 he who reads let him understand – This refers to understanding Daniel's words, as it says, "The wicked will not understand but the wise will understand" (*Dan. 12:10*). Gabriel told Daniel that Jerusalem would be rebuilt again, but Judah would have a deadline of seventy weeks [i.e., seventy *Shmitta* cycles] – that is 490 years – to expiate for their sins: "Seventy weeks have been determined for your people and for the city of your Sanctuary to finish the transgression and to end sin, and to expiate iniquity, and to bring eternal righteousness" (*Dan. 9:24*). These 490 years cover the period from the destruction of the first Temple to the destruction of the second (cf. *Abarbanel*). In the first seven weeks an "anointed" commander would appear to send the captives back to Jerusalem (*Dan. 9:25*). This was king Cyrus of Persia, in the 52nd year (cf. *Isaiah 45:1, 44:28; Rashi on Dan. 9:25*). Daniel only counts complete *Shmitta* cycles, so the first period of seven weeks (theoretically 49 years) is in truth seven *Shmitta* cycles plus three years, making a total of 52 years, as the sages have taught, that nobody passed through Judea for fifty-two years (*Yoma 54a*), as it is written, "Until בהמ"יח [=52] they wandered; they were gone" (*Jer. 9:9*). These 52 years are followed by 4 years of king Cyrus' command and a period of sixty-two weeks (434 years) of rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple. At the culmination of these two periods, the Temple would be destroyed, as it says, "After the sixty-two weeks... the people of the coming monarch will destroy the city and the Sanctuary" (*Dan. 9:26*). According to Pharisaic tradition the first Temple was destroyed around the year 423 BCE (cf. *Seder Olam Rabbah*), so Daniel predicts that the second Temple would be destroyed by the Kittim – i.e., by the Romans (*Dan. 11:30*) – between the years 68/70 CE, and this is what Yeshua is telling his disciples to watch for to determine when the Temple would be destroyed. Consequently, Yeshua's correct calculations lead him to conclude that "this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place" (*v. 34*).^d

^c He is also called a prophet by Josephus (*Antiquities 10:11:4*) and by Rambam (*Yesodei haTorah 1:9*).

^d Taking into account that no calendar in the world is 100% accurate, most Jewish works follow or are influenced by the chronology of the midrash *Seder Olam Rabbah*. Only a handful exceptions are noted (cf. *Pirquei d'Rabbi Eliezer*; *Midrash Lekach Tov*; *Sefer Yosipon*; *Ibn Ezra on Dan. 11:2*; *Azariah Dei Rossi*). Scholars argue that *Seder Olam* is inaccurate for at least 164 years, since it calculates the Persian period only by the four Persian kings of Daniel, when in fact had 13 kings (186 years). Perhaps Daniel's prophecy of four kings refers to the most notable Persian kings for Israel rather than all of them (This explains *Azariah Dei Rossi's* scientific chronology). Regardless, Yeshua followed a Pharisaic method of counting the years for determining the time of the Temple's fall and it was accurate. The primary source for the kings of Persia (*Ptolemy I*) was not entirely correct either. The *Proleptic Julian Calendar* cannot be more trusted than any other calendar made from inference.

¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷And he who is in the roof let him not go down to take anything out of the house.

commentary

24:15 he who reads let him understand – “After sixty-two weeks a messiah will be cut off, and he will be no more, and the people of the coming monarch will destroy the city and the Sanctuary... ..he [the coming monarch] will abolish sacrifice and meal-offerings, and for the overspreading of abominations he will make it desolate, even until the consummation, until destruction and extermination befall the desolate” (*Daniel 9:26-27*). According to Saadia Gaon this “messiah that is cut off” refers to many righteous of the house of David and of the house of Aaron who would be killed by the hand of the Romans. The “coming monarch” is, according to the Saadia Gaon, the Roman emperor Titus, and the abomination of desolation is a graven image which the Romans erected within the Sanctuary together with all the barbarities Titus did within the Temple (cf. *Daniel im targum u’perush Saadia ben Yosef Fayumi*). That the monarch will abolish sacrifice and meal-offerings was fulfilled “On the seventh of Tammuz” as the sages say, “The daily offering was nullified [by the Romans], the city walls were breached, Apostemos burned a Torah scroll, and an idol was placed in the Sanctuary” (*Taanit 26b*). Rashi says the “messiah” who is cut off is Herod Agrippa, who was murdered nearly 30 years prior to the destruction of the Temple. Another interpretation which orthodoxy does not contemplate is that the “messiah” being cut off refers to Yeshua being ostracized by his people, since the word translated as “cut off” *yikareit* refers to **כרת** *karet*, being expelled from the community. Then it says, “*v’ain lo*” which means he will no longer be part of the community. The exact year in which Yeshua died is unknown,^e but the chronologies suggest that he died between the 30 to 40 years prior to the Temple’s fall.

24:16 let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains – Nobody in the city would be safe. Since the Jewish revolt and until the siege of Jerusalem the Judeans had become surrounded by the armies of both the Zealots and Vespasian. So many in Judea fled; those who did not flee on time were terribly hit by the war. Many were taken into captivity, others murdered or tortured either by the Romans or by the Zealots themselves (cf. *Josephus, Wars. 4:9:1; 5:1:1*). According to Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History 3:5*), the Nazarenes in the community at Jerusalem “commanded by certain oracle... took refuge at certain town of Perea called Pella” right before the siege of Jerusalem and were spared from the desolation.

relevant quotes

“The wicked Titus entered the Holy of Holies with a drawn sword in his hand and he cut the curtain. He seized two prostitutes in his hand and engaged in relations with them atop the altar. He emerged with his sword full of blood. Some say that it was blood of sacrifices and some say it was the blood of the Yom Kippur goat.” (***Qohelet Rabbah 5:8***)

“Even if the [nazarites] had known that the second Temple would be destroyed, they did not know when. Abaye responded, Did they really not know when? Is it not written, Seventy weeks have been determined for your people and for the city of your Sanctuary [indicating that the second Temple would be destroyed 490 years after the first one]? And still, we did not know which day.” (***Nazir 32b***)

^e A tradition inferred from the gospel of John suggests that his ministry lasted only 3 years (placing his death in the year 33 CE). In truth, we do not know, as John is a mystical late work, not reliable for historical accuracy, nor does it state anywhere that his ministry lasted 3 years. Also, Yeshua was not born in the year 0. The years 6 BCE or 4 BCE are more plausible since he was born in the days of Herod the Great, whose death occurred in 4 BCE. Yeshua began his ministry at the age of 30, but the exact date is unknown; we only know that the Immerser started his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar’s reign (Luke 3:1), which can be as early as the year 26 CE, since Tiberius was appointed co-Princeps in the year 12 CE. In the same way, Pilate, who presided over Yeshua’s trial, ruled between the years 26 and 37, and this is as far as we can infer. Yeshua was, therefore, between 33 and 40 years old when he died.

¹⁸And he who is in the field, let him not go back to get his vestment. ¹⁹But woe to those who are with child and to those who are nursing in those days! ²⁰But pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on Shabbat. ²¹For then there will be great suffering, such as has never happened from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will be.

commentary

24:19 but woe to those who are with child – Because they will not be able to flee quickly. If they are caught in the misery of war, they will see their children die of hunger or tortured or separated from their mothers. Josephus relates that the hunger in those days was so devastating that when children died in their hands, their mothers were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops of water that could preserve their lives (*Wars of the Jews* 5:10:3), and during Jerusalem's siege, mothers driven by starvation fed on their infants' flesh (*ibid.* 6:3:4). Luke records Yeshua lamenting on women: "Do not weep for me, weep for yourselves and for your children, because, behold, days come when people will say, Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore" (*Luke* 23:29).

24:20 pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on Shabbat – Winter because of the extreme cold temperatures (*Eikha Rabbah* 1:42), and Shabbat, so that there will not be any need to desecrate it. A Jew should not go beyond 2000 cubits from his place on Shabbat (*Eiruvim* 51a). This is derived through *remez*, as the word "place" **מקום** *maqom* (*Exodus* 16:29), implies a surrounding (cf. *Num.* 35:27) and the limitation of such surrounding cannot go further than 2000 cubits (*Num.* 35:5). It is also forbidden to carry objects from a private domain to a public domain on Shabbat (*Shabbat* 49b), as it says "do not carry a load on Shabbat or bring it through the gates" (*Jer.* 17:21). The Qumran community adamantly forbade to carry anything on Shabbat (*Damascus Document* 11:7-9). The sages, however, stated that if during a Shabbat journey one is concerned of a danger that may await, a person is allowed to carry clubs or other weapons even on Shabbat for self-defense, and if the journey is long, he may take sustenance with him as well (*Rosh haShana* 22a). Saving a life overrides Shabbat (*Yoma* 85b), but Shabbat should be desecrated only out of necessity, which means people fleeing Judea would only take with them whatever is essential to survive and nothing else.

24:21 great suffering, such as has never happened from the beginning of the world –Yeshua is paraphrasing Daniel: "At that time, Michael the great prince who protects your people will arise. And it will be a time of distress unlike anything that happened since any nation existed until then. But at that time, your people will escape; anyone who is inscribed in the book" (*Daniel* 12:1). The verse that follows says, "and many who sleep in the dust will arise." Therefore, Yeshua is talking of an eschatological future. In his mind, the end of this world would happen immediately after the destruction of the Temple (see verse 34). Because of the suffering in the last birth-pangs that precede the coming of the son of David, Ullah said "May it [the Messianic era] come, but let me not see it" (*ibid.* 98b). "In the generation when the son of David will come, there will be refinement after refinement, as it is written (*Isaiah* 6:13), and if there be a tenth in it, it will again be eaten up. Rav Yosef taught, despoilers and despoilers of despoilers [will plunder the sons of Israel] (*Ketuvot* 112b). "In the generation when the son of David will come, scholars will be few in number, and as for the rest, their eyes will fail through sorrow and grief. Multitudes of trouble and evil decrees will be promulgated anew, each new evil coming with haste before the previous one has ended" (*Sanhedrin* 97a).

24:21 nor ever will be – This speaks of a very specific kind of suffering that will not be repeated in the *olam haze*, similar to the great flood, for which God gave Noah the sign of the rainbow, to remind us that even if he does not actively bring judgment upon the entire planet, it does not mean we do not deserve it. The horrors of the siege in Jerusalem and the wars that followed were devastating for the Jewish people. The Romans wiped out Qumran entirely on their way to Jerusalem, the seditions and the sieges brought hunger, poverty, tortures, the Temple-centered Judaism disappeared, Jerusalem was burnt to ashes, and the Jews who survived were dispersed around the world, on many occasions facing anti-Semitism.

²²And unless those days be cut short, no flesh will survive; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. ²³At that time if anyone says to you, Look, here is the Messiah! or, There he is! do not believe it. ²⁴For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and exhibit great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the chosen ones. ²⁵Behold that I have told you beforehand.

commentary

But as atrocious as the destruction of the Temple was, this was not the greatest suffering this world had seen yet. Come and see: The people of Israel has gone through four exiles: the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Persian and the Roman (which is the longest exile of them all). Prior to the liberation from each exile, Israel underwent a birth-like pain, as it is written, "He [the king of the world] has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all" (*Exod. 5:23*). Throughout history, Israel has gone through many horrors under the kings of the nations, but the level of suffering, dehumanization and savage cruelty that the Jews experienced during the seven years of the *Shoah* (World War II – 1939-1945 CE) has no precedent in the history of humankind. Hitler – who is the *gilgul* of Haman – persecuted, plundered, tortured, experimented on and massacred at least six million Jewish men, women and children, as if they were nothing but cattle, because they were "the nation of Mordechai" (cf. *Esther 3:5-6*). It was a time of wars, famine, influenza, and the first time in history that an atomic bomb was used to eradicate more than 220,000 citizens from the face of the earth in one single instant. There has never been a time on earth more terrible than during the Nazi holocaust, may God protect us. After Daniel's words of "distress unlike anything" there comes "many who sleep in the dust will arise" (*Dan. 12:2*). Similarly, after the horrors of the holocaust, the nation of Israel returned from its ashes after almost 2,000 years, many exiles around the world returned en masse to the Holy Land, whose trees began to give fruit again. On Purim 5730 [1970 CE] the Steipler Gaon said that "we are very close to the coming of Messiah, since we underwent most of the birth pains of Messiah during World War II with its dreadful suffering" (*Orkhot Rabbeinu, vol. 1, p. 297*). However, even if this suffering was the greatest Israel has ever experienced, the Torah predicts a similar measure of suffering which is going to befall the seventy nations of the world as a retribution for their sins. As it is written, "Your name will no longer be called Yaaqov" (*Gen. 32:29*), Sforno says, "In the end of days Israel will survive the destruction of the pagan nations, and no one will ever use again the name Yaaqov" (*Sforno on Genesis 32:29*). It is thus written, "All the nations surround me, yet in the name of Hashem I will destroy them" (*Psalms 118:11*), and: "I will seek to destroy all the nations that come upon Jerusalem" (*Zech. 12:9*). "At the time of the coming of [the era of] Messiah, great wars will be stirred up against Israel. These are the wars of Gog and Magog, as described in the prophets" (*Shaarei haIshem, part 2:11; cf. Eze. 38-39*).

24:23 Look! Here is the Messiah – Yeshua believed the end of days would immediately happen after the destruction of the Temple. Therefore, he is speaking eschatologically about incidents that chronologically took place after the siege of Jerusalem. "When Rabbi Aqiva saw Bar Koziba, he said, This is the king Messiah! Rabbi Yohanan ben Torta responded to him, Aqiva, grass will grow up on your cheeks [in your grave] and still the Messiah will not have come" (*Eikha Rabbah 2:4*).

²⁶Therefore, if anyone tells you, There he is, out in the wilderness, do not go out; or, Here he is, in the inner chamber, do not believe it. ²⁷For as the lightning that comes out of the east, and it is seen in the west, so will be the coming of the son of man. ²⁸Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures gather. ²⁹Immediately after the affliction of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of heaven will be shaken. ³⁰Then the sign of the son of man will appear in heaven.

—commentary—

24:27 as the lightning that comes out of the east, and it is seen in the west – When the true Messiah – the son of man – comes upon the nations, there will be no need for debate or guessing because it will become evident. He will strike fear in the heart of all the kings of the earth, as it says, “Kings will shut their mouths because of him” (*Isaiah 52:15*). However, he will come like a lightning, i.e., unexpectedly, as the sages taught: “three things come unexpectedly, a scorpion, the finding [of a lost item] and Messiah” (*Sanh. 97a*).

24:28 Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures gather – Wherever there is a false leader, people without understanding gather to him, feeding themselves with his false teachings and his wonders. Alternatively, “the eagles gather,” similar to: “they will fly like an eagle that is ready to devour” (*Hab. 1:8*).

21:29 the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light – This is a quotation from the prophets (*Isaiah 13:10*). Because of the distress of those days it will seem as if the sun has become dark (as if God is not helping). As it is written one verse earlier, “Behold the day of Hashem is coming, cruel with wrath and burning anger, to make the land desolate, and its sinners he will destroy from it” (*ibid. 13:9*).

21:29 the stars will fall from the sky and the powers of heaven will be shaken – This is a paraphrase on what is written, “For Hashem has indignation against all the nations... all the host of heaven will melt, and the heavens will be rolled like a scroll, and all their host will wither as a leaf withers from a vine” (*Isaiah 34:4*), and also, “I will make heaven quake and the earth will quake out of its place” (*ibid. 13:13*). The stars refer to angelic powers that rule over the pagan nations. The authority of Edom (the kingdom of Rome), whose angel is Samael, will be shaken and wither. “For the Blessed Holy One does not punish the nations until he does not punish their heavenly princes first, as Scripture states (*Isaiah 24:21*), Hashem will punish the powers in heavens above and the kings of the earth below” (*Rashi*).

21:30 Then the sign of the son of man will appear in heaven – Here Yeshua means the coming of the messianic era, probably with the coming of a leader who will be the king Messiah himself leading the people of Israel. By heaven he means the spiritual realm. The sign **☉** is the light – i.e., wisdom – which will emanate from this son of man upon the earth. It is written, “the root of Yishai will stand as a sign to the peoples, to him will the nations inquire” (*Isaiah 11:10*). “In the hour that the king Messiah comes, he will stand on the roof of the Temple, making himself heard to all Israel saying, Humble ones! Humble ones! The time of your redemption has come. If you do not believe it, look at my light that is shining” (*Peshiqta Rabbati 36:1*). Another interpretation: the sign of the messianic era will be visible on the sky. The sages speak of three eras: *Tohu*, *Torah* and *Yemot haMashiakh* – 2000 years of void, 2000 years of Torah and 2000 years of the days for Messiah to come (*Avoda Zara 9a*). The sign of the days of Messiah was about 2000 years ago, when the constellation of Pisces (the fish) placed itself upon the Earth’s equinox (the age of Pisces). We are currently in the transition between ages. In the seventh millennium – the so-called messianic era – Aquarius will replace Pisces, as it is written, “The earth will be filled with the glory of Hashem as the waters cover the sea” (*Habakkuk 2:14*).

And then all the tribes of the Land will mourn and see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud sound of shofar, and they will gather his chosen ones from the four corners, from one end of the heavens to the other.

³²But from the fig tree learn a parable: When its twigs are tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.

—commentary—

24:30 all the tribes of the Land will mourn – The Land is Jerusalem. The mourning is of supplications and repentance, as it is written, “I will pour on the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of η grace and supplication.” The supplication would be triggered by “anxiety” of seeing “the powers of heaven” being “shaken” (*Luke 21:27*), as it says, “all the nations of the earth will gather against [Jerusalem]” (*Zech. 12:3*), followed by “and Jerusalem will still stay in its place” (*ibid. 12:6*). It is written afterwards, “They will look to me because of he who was pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns over an only son [who is slain]... And the land will mourn, every family apart” (*Zechariah 12:10-12*). “For all Israel are responsible for each other” (*Tanhuma Nitzavim 5*). Rabbi ben Dosa says the son for whom the land mourns is Messiah ben Yosef, whereas the Rabbis say the land mourns because the evil inclination will be slain in the future (*Sukka 52a*). The Gemara accepts both opinions as valid. “Messiah ben Yosef does not come for his own sake but for the sake of Messiah ben David, because he will offer his own life and will be ready to die in order to accomplish this. His blood will atone for the sins of God’s people in such a way that the kingdom of the house of David will be eternal” (*Shnei Lukhot haBrit, vayeshev-miqetz-vayigash, Torah Ohr 85*). Another source says: “Many sorrows and evils will multiply in connection with the killing of Messiah ben Yosef [which is learnt from the fact that] all of Yosef’s brothers died after him” (*Hen Tov, Yalkut Mashiakh, Shemot 7:2*). The suffering imposed on the tzaddiq “comes to provide the help necessary to bring about the chain of events leading to the ultimate perfection of mankind” (*Derekh Hashem 2:3:8*).

24:30 and see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven – This is taken from Daniel’s vision of the son of man “coming with the clouds of heaven” (*Daniel 7:13*). “With power and great glory” parallels “And he gave him dominion and glory and a kingdom” (*ibid. 7:14*). This combination of Zechariah followed by Daniel is not unique to Mattai; it appears various times throughout the Nazarene literature pointing to a pre-gospel tradition, having each author offering a unique perspective (cf. *Luke 21:26-27; Mark 13:25-26; John 19:37; Revelation 1:7*). In fact, the combination of the two passages gives us the imagery of the kingdom of Messiah being established after the war of Gog uMagog – in which the evil inclination will be finally slain (cf. *Maharsha on Sukka 52a; Hilkhoh Melakhim 12:2*).

24:31 he will send his angels with a loud sound of shofar – Yeshua’s words parallel the tenth blessing of the Amidah, which says, “תקע Blow the great shofar to announce our freedom, and raise a sign to gather our exiles, and gather us together quickly from the four corners of the earth” (*Amidah*). Notice in both sources there is mention of a great shofar, a sign, and the four corners of the earth. This prayer is based on the prophet’s words: “Our God Hashem will sound the shofar and he will go with the whirlwinds of the south” (*Zech. 9:14*). The idea is also present in the Apocalypse of Avraham, which mentions ten plagues that God would impose upon the pagans. Afterwards it says, “Then I will sound the shofar from the sky and I will send my chosen one, having in him a measure of all my power, and he will summon my people” (*Apoc. Avraham 31:1*). The sound of the shofar will mark the end of the Roman exile (*Rabbenu Bahya on Gen. 22:13*). The imagery of angels has already been explained (cf. *note on Matt. 13:41*).

24:31 they will gather his chosen ones from the four corners – The return of the exiles to the Holy Land accompanied by national repentance is one of the most obvious signs of the messianic era (cf. *Ezekiel 36:24; Isa. 27:12-13; Nehemiah 1:9*).

³³So also you, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁴Amen I say to you, that this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.

commentary

24:33 when you see all these things – All the signs mentioned above, starting from the ones pointing to imminent destruction of the Temple: the false messiahs, the rumors of wars, the persecutions, the abomination of desolation.... Etc.

24:34 this generation will not pass away – There are three possible interpretations. First, I will explain why two of them are erroneous. Some claim that the word “generation” should be translated as “race” as in “the Jewish people.” The reason is that the Peshitta uses the Aramaic word *sharebta*, שרבתא which has a wide variety of meanings: race, nation, tribe, staff.. etc. Could it be that Yeshua meant “all these things will be fulfilled but this race [i.e., the people of Israel] will still stand?” However, this is grasping at straws. ‘Generation’ is still one of the possible translations for *sharebta* in Syriac, and *hador* הדור – (i.e., the generation) is still the majority reading in virtually all manuscripts. Besides, the construction of the phrase implies “generation” must be understood as a measure of time, not of people. A second interpretation is that by ‘generation’ Yeshua meant those who should witness all the signs in this chapter, including the son of man coming with the angels at the sound of shofar, which is the end of the Roman exile and the sign of the *olam haze* coming to an end. “Not all the people in that generation will die; some will live.” The problem with this interpretation is that Yeshua is clearly talking about “this” generation, not “that” generation. In other words, he means his own generation, the generation of the first century. This can be proven by taking at face value Yeshua’s own claims in other passages: “Some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the son of man” (*Matt. 16:28*) or “You will not finish going through the towns in Israel before the son of man comes” (*Matt. 10:23*). In addition to this, the Temple and Jerusalem were – as Yeshua accurately prognosticated – destroyed in that very same generation, year 70 CE. Therefore, their destruction are not a sign for those living in the end of days.

24:34 this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place – What things? The signs of the Temple’s destruction, or the signs of the end of days? It is clear that he meant both when he said “all these things.” One may argue that 2000 years have passed since he made this claim and Messiah has not yet appeared. Since a generation lasts no longer than 75 years, did Yeshua make a mistake with the second half of his prediction? It is important to note that, just a few verses below, he concedes that only God knows the day and the hour of the son of man’s manifestation (*24:36*). Come and see: Yeshua correctly predicted the date (the generation) of Jerusalem’s fall based on his interpretation of the book of Daniel. Daniel is precisely the one that implies the end of days would occur immediately following the destruction of the Temple, as it says, “Seventy weeks have been determined for your people and for the city of your Sanctuary to finish the transgression and to end sin, and to expiate iniquity, and to bring eternal righteousness” (*Dan. 9:24*). The meaning is that after the seventy weeks (when the Sanctuary and the city would be destroyed) there will come “eternal righteousness.” The imminence was expected in all the pre-destruction Nazarene writings (cf. *1Thess. 4:15-17; 1Cor. 15:51-52; 1Pet. 1:5-6*). However, when it comes to the “eternal righteousness” Daniel’s words are conditional, as it says “have been determined for your people... to finish the transgression.” Depending on Israel’s behavior God would alter the appointed time, as it is written “in its time I will hasten it” (*Isa. 60:22*). The sages explain, “If they merit [redemption] I will hasten it, if they do not merit it, [it will come] in its time” (*Sanhedrin 98b*). This is the nature of prophecy, because the prophets see accurately, but because of sin [or repentance] Hashem alters the predicted times, and so the words of Hashem are fulfilled at a later time or at the end of days. Learn this from Yonah, for he said, “In forty days Nineveh will be overturned” (*Yonah 3:4*). But what happened afterwards? “God saw that they had repented...

³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³⁶But about that day or the hour no man knows, not even the angels in heaven, but only the Father.

—textual variants—

24:36 not even the angels in heaven – Many ancient manuscripts read “not even the angels in heaven nor the son.” These include the Codex Sinaiticus, the Vaticanus, the Diatessaron and the best representatives of the Western and Caesarean text-type. It is also quoted by 2nd century Irenaeus (cf. *Adversus haereses* 2:28:6). This reading parallels Mark, which reads: “But that day or hour no man known, no, not the angels who are in heaven neither the son, but only the Father” (*Mark* 13:32). However, the Semitic family (including the Peshitta, the Old Syriac and DuTillet) together with other Greek manuscripts – mostly of Byzantine type – omit “the son.” On the one hand, we could argue that a scribe removed the phrase to solve a theological difficulty. On the other hand, “the son” might have been a later interpolation. Did a scribe add “the son” into Mattai to harmonize it with Mark? Did the author of Mattai remove it himself to prevent redundancy, since “no man knows” and “nor the son but only the Father” imply the same thing? The solution is not an easy task. However, the phrase is still present in virtually all the manuscripts of Mark, therefore, it is an authentic first century phrase, regardless of its appearance in Mattai.

—commentary—

and Hashem relented concerning the calamity which he spoke he would bring upon them, and he did not” (*Yonah* 3:10). This concept is clearly articulated by the prophets: “If at any time I announce that a nation or a kingdom is to be built up and planted but it does evil... I will relent the good I had intended to do for it” (*Jer.* 18:9-10). The relent means that the prophecy could be delayed or fulfilled at another time or in another different way, since God’s words are not wasted.

24:35 but my words will not pass away – Some may think that perhaps Yeshua was lying when he assured us so vehemently that the end would come in that generation. This concept is also found in the Talmud: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi found Eliyahu the prophet. He sent him to the Messiah, who was sitting among the poor and the lepers at the gates of Rome. He spoke to the Messiah and said “Peace upon you, my rabbi and my teacher. He responded, Shalom to you, son of Levi. He asked, When will the master come? The Messiah responded: Today. Some time later the rabbi returned to Eliyahu, who asked him, What did he say to you?... ..He lied to me, because he said, I will come today, but he did not come. Eliyah responded, This is what he meant: Today, if you hear his voice” (*Sanhedrin* 98a). The last phrase is a quote from Psalm 95:7, a verse used to imply that the coming of Messiah can be hastened or delayed. Now come and see: Although certainly the king Messiah did not physically come, the destruction of the Temple brought an end to an era, the era of the Temple-based Judaism. It also brought indirectly a chain of events that transformed the world entirely. (1) The Jews were dispersed all around the world and (2) the religion of Christianity served to spread the Noahide laws, the knowledge of monotheism, of Torah and of Messiah all around the earth. For the first time in the history of humankind, the entire human race had in mind the hope of a redeemer coming from God himself. This is the era of Pisces and the 2000 years known as the days of Messiah (cf. *Sanhedrin* 97a). This parallels what our sages have taught in an aggadah, “In the day the Temple was destroyed, the Messiah was born” (cf. *Yerushalmi Berakhot* 4:2).

24:36 But about that day or the hour no man knows, not even the angels – Meaning, it is certainly going to happen, but exactly when? I do not know. As it is written, “There will be a unique day that is known to Hashem” (*Zech.* 14:7), and somewhere else, “The day of vengeance is in my heart” (*Isaiah* 63:4). The sages ask, what does it mean that the day is in his heart? Rabbi Yohanan says “It means that I revealed the day to my heart, but not to my limbs. Shimon ben Lakish explains, he did reveal it to his heart [i.e., is only known to him] but did not reveal it even to his ministering angels” (*Sanhedrin* 99a). “Seven things are hidden from men” and one of them is “the time when the kingdom of David will be restored” (*Pesakhim* 54b). Some manuscripts

³⁷As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the son of man.

³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the son of man.

commentary

harmonized with Mark include the phrase “nor the son” [knows the day]. Although the son can be the tzaddiq, who is called “son” because he strives to know Hashem and his mysteries (*Sulam on Zohar, Behar 81:1*), most interpreters identify this “son” with the eschatological son of man who comes with the angels. It is worth noting that in the story of Yehoshua ben Levi, when he meets Messiah sitting among the poor and lepers at the gates of Rome, the lepers changed their bandages all at once, but the Messiah untied and tied them one at a time, in case redemption would come, so that his coming would not be delayed (*Sanh. 98a*). This teaches that Messiah expects redemption as much as we are, and he does not know the day or the hour either.

24:38 In the days before the flood – The generation of the flood, *dor haMabul*. The great flood was a disaster of cataclysmic consequences; it ended the world as it was and gave birth to a totally different new world, in the aspect of a miqveh (a ritual bath). It became a proverbial prototype of the end of days that our world is going to experience upon the birth of the messianic era. Hence, it says, “Go to Noah... and reveal him the end that is coming” (*Enoch 10:2*). “The Holy great One will come from his dwelling... and the watchers will quake... and there will be judgment upon all men” (*ibid. 1:3-7*). The story of Noah is a prototype of redemption. Sin brings judgment upon the earth, the righteous are commanded to separate themselves from the sinners by working in building an ark which is the Torah, the watchers bring destruction upon the sinners, but the ark is like the messianic era, where the “wolf dwells with the lamb” (*Isaiah 11:6; cf. Liquei Sikhhot 25, pp. 29-30*).

24:38 people were eating and drinking – The cataclysm overtook them unexpectedly. The world functioned as if no judgment was coming to the earth, with everybody going about their own business.

24:38 marrying and giving in marriage – It is written, “and the sons of God saw the daughters of men... they took themselves wives from whomever they chose” (*Genesis 6:2*). “They took wives from whomever they chose means: even those who were married to other men” (*Bereshit Rabbah 26:5*). The phrase מכל אשר בחרו ‘from whomever they chose’ also reads ‘from everything they chose,’ which means they also married other men and even animals. Rabbi Huna adds, in the name of Rabbi, that “the generation of the flood was sealed for destruction the moment they legalized their marriages with other men and with animals through a marriage document. ... Wherever sexual perversion is found, pestilence comes to the world” (*Bereshit Rabbah 26:5*). The acts of taking someone else’s wife or marrying a man or an animal was called *khamas חמס*; robbery, rapine, violence, as it is taught: “The generation of the flood violated every precept, but their sentence was not sealed until they extended their hands in robbery, as it is stated (*Gen. 6:13*), For the earth is filled with חמס robbery through them” (*Sanhedrin 108a*).

⁴⁰Two will be in the field; one is taken and the other left. ⁴¹Two will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and the other left. ⁴²Watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your master will come. ⁴³But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be plundered.

commentary

24:40 Two will be in the field – Yeshua continues with his parallelism of the great flood and explains the nature of the judgment. Everybody is living their lives as usual, both the righteous and the wicked. Some will be in the field or grinding at the mill (or like Luke says, in bed sleeping), but in spite of the appearance that everybody is doing the same thing, the judgment separates the righteous from the wicked.

24:41 one is taken and the other left – This phrase on its own does not clarify which one is receiving mercy; the taken or the left. The one who is taken: Is he being collected by the angels of verse 31? Or is he taken away in judgment? As scholars are left to deduce the interpretation on their own, many have attempted to eliminate such ambiguity by applying passages from other Nazarene authors (such as Paul or the later book of Revelation). However, we must remember that all the Nazarene books are independent from each other and that Mattai is a self-contained book; he did not necessarily agree with or even know the other authors.^f In the immediate context, Yeshua has just compared the coming of the son of man with the great flood. Notice verse 39 which says, “the flood came and took them away.” Parallel to the great flood, in the end of days the judgment will also take some. Whom? The wicked. The righteous will be spared from it, in the aspect of: “Hashem watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy” (*Psalm 145:20*). “At that time the Messiah of Hashem will be for joy and for glory... to those that keep the Torah... and he that is doing the Torah will be established in Jerusalem... and the Lord will take away from her midst those that shed the blood of the innocent” (*Targum Yonathan on Isaiah 4:2-4*). Mattai’s Aramaic for being “left” – *ishtabaq*, ישתבק – means to be left alone, or to be spared (cf. *Peshitta on Matt. 12:31 and Acts 8:22*). This is also found in the Targum: “If you make your work good in this world, will [the judgment of Gehenna] not be forgiven and spared וישתביק for you in the world to come?” (*Targum Yerushalmi on Genesis 4:7*). The parallel in Luke says: “Two will be in bed; one will be taken, one will be left... [the disciples asked] where [will they be taken], master? He replied: Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather” (*Luke 17:34-37*). I conclude that the ones being taken are being destroyed or taken into judgment, whereas the ones who are left, are being spared, set free to inherit the earth, as he said, “Blissful are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (*Matt. 5:5*). Rabbi Lichtenstein in his commentary offers an alternative point of view, considering these words as a reference to the entrance into the Jerusalem of the world to come, but the words “two will be grinding at the mill” refer to the status of this world before the coming of Messiah, not the world to come.

24:43 At what time of night the thief was coming – Comparing the coming of the son of man to a thief who plunders a house substantiates the interpretation above that the one who is taken is the one receiving judgment. In the coming of the son of man the righteous will feel like they have unexpectedly found a long-lost object, while the wicked will feel like they have suddenly been stung by a scorpion (cf. *Yalqut Shimoni 2:585*). In the aspect of, “Three things come when your mind is diverted” (*Sanh. 97a*). The parable appears twice in Thomas, although not in an eschatological context (cf. *Thomas #21; #103*). This suggests Yeshua is the author of the parable, but its application to the end of days perhaps came from his disciples.

^f The Christian theology of the “rapture” which gained popularity in recent years through its adaptation in films and other media, is an evangelical doctrine based mostly on this Matthean passage and on Paul’s 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. The doctrine, as presented by evangelicals, is not found in any form of Judaism and is rejected by most Christian denominations. The doctrine was developed by Jesuits and evangelicals not earlier than the 1700s CE. Which means it has been absent in Christianity for over 1700 years, and of course, it was absent in Yeshua’s mind at the time when he spoke these words.

⁴⁴For this reason you also must be ready, because the son of man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

⁴⁵Who then, is that faithful and wise servant, whom his master has appointed over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blissful is that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷Amen I say to you, he will place him over all he has. ⁴⁸But if that servant is wicked and says to himself, My master has delayed his coming, ⁴⁹and he begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards, ⁵⁰the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹He will scourge him and give him a portion with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

—commentary—

24:44 at an hour when you do not expect him – It is written, “This is the night, this belongs to Hashem” (*Exod. 12:42*); “this is the night of redemption” (*Mekhilta*). In the likeness of the first redemption, this teaches that Messiah will come at night (*Targum Neofiti on Exod. 12:42*); meaning, the day and the hour are obscure, for nobody knows.

24:49-51 if that servant... begins to beat his fellow... a portion with the hypocrites – “He who calls names to his fellow, one who embarrasses his fellow in public, one who takes pride in his fellow’s shame, he who disgraces Torah sages, he who disgraces his teachers, he who degrades the festivals and he who profanes the holy things... they do not have a portion in the world to come” (*Mishneh Torah, Teshuva 3:6*). The concept of a servant usurping his master’s position, eating, drinking and beating his fellow, reflects the members of the *erev rav* who will be ruling the sons of Israel during those days. It has been taught, “Before the coming of Messiah, most of the rabbis will be from the *erev rav*, because Israel in themselves are holy, but the *erev rav* only work for their own benefit... wanting to rule over the public” (*Divrei Hayim, parashat Vayakheil, omissions*).