

# THE TORAH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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# JESUS, SON OF JOSEPH AND SON OF DAVID, IN THE GOSPELS<sup>1</sup>

THOMAS RÖMER AND JAN RÜCKL

## 1. Introduction

In the New Testament, Jesus has a double, even a triple sonship. He is son of God in his pre-existence (according to John), by his birth (in Luke and Matthew), or, according to some scholars, he becomes this at his baptism, in Mark.<sup>2</sup> Then, humanly, he is both son of Joseph and son of David.<sup>3</sup>

The New Testament writers attempt on a number of occasions to prove Jesus' messiahship by referring to his Davidic origins. The importance of this argument, manifest in the genealogies of Jesus at or near the beginnings of Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, could almost give the impression that Davidic ancestry was regarded as an obvious attribute of the messiah. But that is probably not unqualifiedly the case, for Second Temple period texts present expectations of several types of messianic figures.<sup>4</sup> For example, according to the Qumran Community Rule, its members must observe its original rules 'until the coming of the prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and of Israel' (1QS 9.11, *וּמִשְׁחֵי אֶהְרֹן וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַד בּוֹא נְבִיא*). Similarly, 1QS 2.11-12 mentions a messiah of Israel alongside a priest. More difficult for us to understand are some passages from the Damascus

1 In the course of this study we were able to benefit from discussions with Christophe Guignard, whom we thank.

2 F. Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (UTB 1873; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 5th edn, 1995), pp. 343-4; A. Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), p. 150.

3 Besides these, Jesus often speaks of himself as 'son of man'; and in Mt. 1.1, he is also designated 'son of Abraham'.

4 However, these expectations, in their respective settings and in particular periods were certainly not as divergent as a superficial reading of the texts might suggest. According to L. H. Schiffman, 'Messianic Figures and Ideas in the Qumran Scrolls' in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity: The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 116-29, citing p. 128, the Qumran scrolls bear witness to concurrent varieties of eschatological ideas, but also to their historical development. Ideas contained in these documents belonging to different stages in the life of the sect cannot just simply be read alongside one another.

Document (CD 12.23-13.1; 14.19; 19.10-11; 20.1), where there is talk of a messiah of Aaron and of Israel (as of a single person), or of a messiah of Aaron and a messiah of Israel. In any case, Davidic ancestry is not ascribed to either of these messiahs (and with the messiah of Aaron, that would, anyway, hardly be possible).

It appears, therefore, that even the 'lay' and 'royal' kind of messiah did not necessarily have to be a Davidic, and this impression is also afforded by accounts of various Jewish leaders active around the early Christian era. Not only with the prophets Theudas and 'the Egyptian' but equally with the popular 'kings' – Judas son of Hezekiah, Simon the slave of Herod, and Athronges, 4 BC; and Menahem, and Simon ben Giora in AD 66–70 – we have no mention of their being considered as messiahs of the family of David.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, if some New Testament authors entitle Jesus 'Messiah, Son of David', it is just one possibility among others.

Strangely enough, in John's Gospel, when Philip declares to Nathaniel that they have found the one who is spoken of in the Law and the Prophets, he does not qualify this as 'Son of David', but as 'Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth' (Jn 1.45); and the same title is used in the dispute between Jesus and the Jews on his messianic status (Jn 6.41).

Now rabbinic Judaism recognized a messiah son of David and a messiah son of Joseph. It seems to us that the double insistence on Jesus as son of David and Jesus as son of Joseph is not tied solely to the historical recollection that Jesus' father was called Joseph, but is also set among discussions of these two messianic figures in the Judaism of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

## 2. *The Two Messiahs in the Judaism of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*

The Talmud, in the tractate *Sukka*, 52, discussing the interpretation of Zechariah 12, mentions two messiahs. One, 'son of Joseph', will be killed before the Redemption (interpreting Zech. 12.10). The other, 'son of David', will inaugurate the age of salvation for Israel. The origin of this idea of the two messiahs is difficult to discern. The Talmud suggests as its source a certain rabbi Dosa who lived in the second century AD.<sup>6</sup>

5 On these figures, see R. A. Horsley, "'Messianic" Figures and Movements in First-Century Palestine' in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, pp. 276–95; R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (New Voices in Biblical Studies; San Francisco: Harper, 1988), pp. 110–28, 161–72.

6 See the discussion in I. Himbaza, 'Ist Jesus von Nazareth die jüdische Randfigur "Messias Ben Joseph"? Ein messianischer Kompromissversuch in talmudischer Zeit', in M. Küchler, P. Reinf (eds), *Randfiguren in der Mitte* (Festschrift H.-J. Venetz; Luzern-Freiburg (CH): Edition Exodus-Paulusverlag, 2003), pp. 147–57.

According to Himbaza, rabbinic tradition created this notion in response to the first Christians' veneration of Jesus as Messiah. Yet it is possible that the idea was around already before the separation of Judaism and Christianity. First we must recall that the idea of two messiahs was already prepared in the Hebrew scriptures. In the vision of Zech. 4.14, we find two figures, 'designated for oil': Zerubbabel, descendant of David, and Joshua, the High Priest. At Zech. 12.10 there is a reference to a mysterious figure, 'the one whom they have pierced'. Is this also a messianic figure?

In fact we find, in the *Testament of Benjamin* a speech by Jacob about his son Joseph, 'In you will be fulfilled the heavenly prophecy of the Lamb of God and the Saviour of the World: the one who is spotless will be delivered up for criminals, and the one without sin will die for the ungodly in the blood of the Covenant for the salvation of the nations and of Israel' (*T. Benj.* 3.8). In this form the passage presents distinctly Christian features, but, in the Armenian version the verse is shorter, lacking the more obviously Christian elements: 'For your sake will be accomplished the heavenly prophecy which says that the one who is spotless will be defiled for/by lawless men, and the one without sin will die for the ungodly.' For this reason various scholars think that the Armenian text is closer to a conjectured original Jewish version, and that *T. Benj.* 3.8 is another witness to Jewish expectation of a messiah son of Joseph.<sup>7</sup> But according to other scholars, the Armenian version here (as elsewhere) has only abridged the longer Greek text, and as a result it cannot be used to reconstruct the pre-Christian text.<sup>8</sup> Finally, M. Philonenko asserts that even the longer text may be pre-Christian.<sup>9</sup>

If the entire verse is a Christian composition from the very beginning, it bears witness to the description, frequent in the Church Fathers of Joseph as prefiguring Christ.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the comparison of this typology in *Test. XII Patr.* with its similar employment in Tertullian, Hippolytus and Cyprian, is one of the arguments employed by M. de Jonge for the dating

7 E.g., J. Jeremias, art.  $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ , *TWNT* 5, 685–6 (nevertheless, Jeremias changed his opinion and cut out this passage from the English version of *TWNT*); J. Becker, *Die Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen* (JSHRZ 3, Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1974), pp. 132–3; I. Knohl, "'By Three Days, Live": Messiahs, Resurrection, and Ascent to Heaven in *Hazon Gabriel*, *JR* 88 (2008), 147–58, referring to 152–3.

8 M. de Jonge, 'Test. Benjamin 3.8 and the Picture of Joseph as "a Good and Holy Man"', in idem, *Jewish Eschatology, Early Christian Christology and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Collected Essays* (NovTSup 63; Leiden: Brill, 1991), pp. 290–300; H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (SVTP 8; Leiden: Brill, 1985), p. 412.

9 A. Duppont-Sommer et al. (eds), *La Bible: Ecrits intertestamentaires* (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade; Paris: Gallimard, 1987), p. 937.

10 See below for a few examples.

of the *Testaments* to around AD 200.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, since the verb πληρωθήσεται is in the future tense, and taking into consideration the collection of *Testaments* which foretell the destinies of the descendants of the patriarchs, the Christian origin of the passage could also show that for Christians in the early centuries, Jesus could be regarded as messiah in terms of (spiritual) son of Joseph. But, again, is it necessary to consider the relationship between Christ and Joseph in *Test. XII Patr.* as a Christian creation *ex nihilo*; or does it connect back to an older Jewish tradition?

I. Knohl places the origin of the messiah as son of Joseph right at the beginning of the common era.<sup>12</sup> This figure could have had its origin in a Jewish revolt against Herod in AD 4, one that had failed. Recently Knohl published an article on the *Hazon Gabriel* (*The Vision of Gabriel*), a text discovered just lately which, according to him, confirms his theory.<sup>13</sup> This text mentions two characters in a shared context ('my servant David' and 'Ephraim', column A, line 16), a reference considered by Knohl as analogous to the messiahs 'son of David' and 'son of Joseph' in the Talmud. It is true that in *Pesikta Rabbati* 36 the name of the messiah who suffers for the redemption of Israel is 'Ephraim', but that text is probably much later.<sup>14</sup> Finally, Knohl mentions 4Q541 which includes the letters לבר, where E. Puech proposes to read לבר יוסן.<sup>15</sup> Given that the text speaks of someone suffering, Knohl wonders whether this may not be the messiah son of Joseph. If that were established, we would have evidence of this eschatological figure in a Qumran text dated 'towards the end of the second century, or around 100 BC'.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, let us note that later, when the text was finally published in *DJD*, Puech decided that the reading לבר יוסן is impossible.<sup>17</sup>

As the text of *Hazon Gabriel* is rather fragmentary, it seems difficult for us to evaluate the merits of Knohl's theory as a whole. However, we may

11 M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Study of their Text, Composition and Origin* (GTB 25; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), pp. 121–8.

12 I. Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (The S. Mark Taper Foundation imprint in Jewish Studies; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

13 I. Knohl, "'By Three Days, Live'".

14 The passage is found in the section of the work nowadays entitled *Ruah ha-qodesh Homilies*. For a discussion of the dating of this section of the text as possibly 7th–9th cent., cf. G. Stemmerger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch* (München: C. H. Beck, 1992), pp. 296–7.

15 (Currently 4Q541apocrLevi<sup>b?</sup> ar): E. Puech, 'Fragments d'un apocryphe de Levi et le personnage eschatologique: 4QTestLévi<sup>c-d</sup>(?) et 4QAJa', in J. Treballe Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner (eds), *The Madrid Qumran Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 11, 2; Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 449–501, referring to p. 460.

16 *DJD* 31, p. 227.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 236.

stress that the idea of a plurality of messiahs was certainly present in the Judaism of the first centuries of the common era, as the Qumran texts equally demonstrate. It is therefore not impossible that at the time of the composition of the Gospels their authors were familiar with the idea of two messiahs, one of them son of Joseph, and other son of David. In what follows we propose to interpret the twofold identification of Jesus as son of Joseph and son of David against the background of the idea of the two messiahs.

### 3. *Jesus, Son of David*

The development of the idea of a Davidic messiah is doubtless based on the 'Davidic Covenant', namely the divine promise made to David, according to which his dynasty was to reign over Israel for ever. The origins of this tradition are difficult to track down. The motive for the dynastic promise probably already existed in the pre-exilic period, but the legitimation of royal power, with the help of the promise of an everlasting dynasty, acquired a foundational value when that power was under threat or completely thwarted. Thus, for example, the key formulation of this theme in 2 Samuel 7 obviously reflects the experience of the Babylonian exile. The Deuteronomic author of the chapter links the dynastic promise to a polemic against the traditional meaning of the Temple within the Judaeen royal ideology. The aim of combining the dynastic promise with this refusal of the traditional understanding of the Temple can be explained as an attempt to affirm the promise after the Temple's destruction.

The theme of the Davidic Covenant has enjoyed a rich reception history.<sup>18</sup> Some texts seem to look for the restoration of the dynasty (for example, Jer. 33.14-22), but we are also aware of texts from the first century BC that expect the advent of an eschatological figure from David's line (notably *Pss. Sol.* 17, 4Q174 and 4QComGen A).<sup>19</sup>

18 See for example M. Pietsch, '*Dieser ist der Sproß Davids ...*': Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Nathanverheißung im alttestamentlichen, zwischentestamentlichen und neutestamentlichen Schrifttum (WMANT 100; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003).

19 Several passages from *Test. XII Patr.* (see especially *T. Jud.* 21-24) seem to expect an eschatological figure descending from Judah, but the value of these texts for a study of pre-Christian eschatology is debatable; see M. de Jonge, 'Two Messiahs in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs?', in idem, *Jewish Eschatology*, pp. 191-203; K. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism* (SBLEJL 7; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), pp. 246-55; M. Pietsch, '*Dieser ist der Sproß Davids ...*', pp. 203-11.

### 3. a. *Jesus son of David in Mark's Gospel*

Several passages in Mark's Gospel depict Jesus in royal colours (see, e.g., the citation of Ps. 2.7 at the Baptism and at the Transfiguration of Jesus, Mk 1.11; 9.7). In the passion narrative Jesus is judged, mocked and executed as 'the Christ, son of the blessed', 'the Christ, King of Israel' and 'the King of the Jews'.<sup>20</sup> But if we look for passages where he is set explicitly in relationship with David, we find only three.

The expression 'son of David' appears in Mark for the first time at 10.47, where Jesus is thus addressed by blind Bartimaeus, asking for healing. Immediately afterwards Jesus enters into Jerusalem to the shouts of 'Hosanna! Blessed in the name of the Lord be the one who comes. Blessed be the kingdom which is coming, the kingdom of David our Father!' A little later, while teaching in the Temple, Jesus asks the question, How can the scribes affirm that the Messiah is son of David, if David himself calls the Messiah his Lord (in Ps. 110.1)?

The final image is at least ambivalent. On the one hand we can say that 'the cry from Bartimaeus ("son of David!") and the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem ... lead to the passion of Jesus understood as the passion of a royal messiah'.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, not only does Jesus never refer to himself as 'son of David', but he is never described as such by the narrator (or by the voice from heaven). And, on the occasion of the debate in the Temple, he seems to deny the idea that the messiah is son of David.

The majority of commentators harmonize Mk 12.35-7 with other New Testament passages that unambiguously do regard Jesus as Messiah, son of David. According to D. Roure, the pericope aims to show the inadequacy of the expression 'son of David', 'if it is reduced to a single sense which would fail to include all the work and reality of the messiah'.<sup>22</sup> According to Juel, Jesus is son of David by reason of being enthroned as Lord.<sup>23</sup> These interpretations are based on the analysis of David Daube, who attempted to show that the four questions raised in Jesus' debates with adherents of various Jewish factions (Mk 12.14, 18-23, 28, 35), correspond to the four categories of questions found in rabbinic thought (*b. Nid.* 69b-71a).<sup>24</sup> The last question asked by Jesus accordingly belongs to the category of haggadic question in which two contradictory

20 D. H. Juel, 'The Origin of Mark's Christology' in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, pp. 449-60, referring to p. 452.

21 D. Roure, 'La figure de David dans l'Evangile de Marc: Des traditions juives aux interprétations évangéliques' in L. Desrousseaux and J. Vermeylen (eds), *Figures de David à travers la Bible: XVII<sup>e</sup> congrès de l'ACFEB (Lille, 1<sup>er</sup>-5 septembre 1997)* (LD 177; Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1999), pp. 397-412, referring here to p. 404.

22 D. Roure, 'La figure de David dans l'Evangile de Marc', p. 410.

23 D. H. Juel, 'The Origin of Mark's Christology', p. 455.

24 D. Daube, 'The Earliest Structure of the Gospels', *NTS* 5 (1959), 174-87, referring here to pp. 180-3.

scriptural verses are set against each other. In the passage referred to, at *b. Nid*, 70b, Rabbi Joshua ben Hanania demonstrates each time that the contradiction is only apparent, because the verses are meaningful on different levels. But Mk 12.35-7 corresponds only partially with the Talmudic text. Jesus does not offer a solution to 'the supposed scriptural contradiction'.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Jesus does not present the case as a scriptural contradiction, but as contradiction between scribal opinion and the scripture, in a manner completely analogous to his reply to the Sadducees at Mk 12.18-27. This is why the text seems, rather, to refute a false opinion held by the scribes, and all the more so because it is followed by a violent attack against them (Mk. 12.38-40).<sup>26</sup>

It seems to us, then, that Mark evaluates this title, 'son of David', in much the same way as the identification of Jesus as John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets (Mk 2.8). It is a title proposed by certain people, but in the end inappropriate for Jesus, acknowledged in the final *anagnorisis* as 'son of God' (Mk 15.39).<sup>27</sup> The true identity of Jesus is typically recognized by a pagan, and therefore without any link to the messiah's Davidic sonship.

Finally, we should note that if the traditional interpretation of the Christological formula at Rom. 1.3, as a *Zweistufenchristologie* (two-stage Christology) is correct, we find a similar position: Jesus is born David's descendant, but it is not by reason of being son of David that Jesus is son of God.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. *b. Jesus son of David in Matthew's Gospel*

In Matthew, the position is completely different. If the 27th edition of Nestlé-Aland is right, Mark's Gospel begins with the heading, 'Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, son of God'. In contrast, Matthew begins with 'Book of the origins of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham'. And that is followed by a genealogy of Jesus that aims to prove that he came from the family of David through his father Joseph. In summing up his genealogy Matthew says that there were 'fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the deportation

25 Phrase used by Daube, *ibid.*, pp. 181-2.

26 If Daube is correct, and the arrangement of Mk 12.13-37 according to the four categories of questions is pre-Markan, it is necessary to point out that in Mark the fourth problem has lost its original sense as an apparent scriptural contradiction, so as now to become a scriptural refutation of a false opinion. This then would show still more clearly Mark's own position. Compare the way in which the Davidic sonship of Christ is simply denied as heretical, and with the same argument, in the *Epistle of Barnabas* 12.10f.

27 The case of the title 'son of David' is more sensitive, because it is a matter of a messianic title, and Mark, of course, does regard Jesus as a messiah.

28 However, this interpretation is very debatable; see M. Pietsch, '*Dieser ist der Sproß Davids ...*', pp. 321-31.

to Babylon, and from the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations to Christ'. Now it is well known that the numerical value of the name *dwd* by gematria is fourteen.<sup>29</sup> In the narrative of Jesus' birth, it is Joseph who is called 'son of David', by an angel (Mt. 1.16), and then Jesus is born in Bethlehem, the city from which David came (cf. 1 Sam. 16.4; 17.12, etc.).

In the following story of the magi from the east, the Davidic theme continues with the compound and modified quotation from Micah 5.2 and 2 Sam. 5.2: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the leading [communes] of Judah, for out of you shall come a leader to shepherd my people Israel' (Mt. 2.6). In Mark, the first person to acknowledge Jesus as son of God was a Roman centurion; similarly, in Matthew, the first people coming to honour Jesus are pagan magi from the East.<sup>30</sup> But in the gospel of Matthew they arrive to bow down to him as 'king of the Jews' (2.2). The star that leads them to the new-born Jesus picks up Num. 24.17, 'from Jacob rises a star, from Israel comes forth a sceptre'; and the fact that it is magi from the east who have seen it surely indicates their knowledge of Mesopotamian astronomical and astrological lore. But perhaps there is another factor. According to Plato's *Alcibiades* (121e-2a), and to Cicero's *De Divinatione*, the Persian princely heir had to be taught by a magus. Simply the presence of magi around the new-born Jesus is therefore a sign of his royal dignity as son of David.<sup>31</sup>

In agreement with all the foregoing, in the remainder of the Gospel Jesus is called 'son of David' more frequently (9 ×) than in Mark (3 ×), and Jesus himself accepts this title. When he arrives in Jerusalem, in Mk 11.10 his disciples shout 'Blessed be the coming kingdom, the reign of our father David!' But at Mt. 21.9 the crowds shout more specifically, 'Hosanna to the son of David!' Later, in Mt. 21.15-16, the priests and the

29 W. D. Davies, 'The Jewish Sources of Matthew's Messianism' in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, pp. 494-511, here referring to pp. 499-500. In the MT, David's name is written thus (with a few exceptions), in Sam., Kgs, Pss., Prov., Eccles, Isa., Jer. and Hos. It is written *plene* in Chr., Ezra, Neh., Song, Amos, Zech. The effort Matthew devotes to including 3 × fourteen generations is also apparent in the fact that his calculations are not entirely correct. In his genealogy there are effectively fourteen generations from Abraham to David, including both of them. To arrive at fourteen generations from David to the Babylonian captivity one must count either David (which is logical) or Jeconiah. But then, in order to obtain fourteen generations from the Captivity to Christ, it is necessary to begin with Jeconiah. Thus one cannot always calculate according to the same method.

30 The geographical difference may reflect the place of composition of each Gospel; see a similar note on the comparison of Mt. 2.1-12 with Luke 2 in R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, new updated edn, 1993), p. 182.

31 See A. Mastrocinque, 'I Magi e l'educazione del principe' in V. A. Troncoso (ed.), *ΔΙΑΔΟΧΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ: La figura del sucesor en la relaza helenística* (Gerión-Anejos: Serie de monografías 9; Madrid: Publicaciones Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2005), pp. 177-84.

scribes are indignant at the children shouting 'Hosanna to the son of David', but Jesus replies that it is in accordance with the scriptures.

Finally, the discussion over messiah as son of David at Mt. 22.41-6 is closer than in Mark's version to the haggadic question over scriptural contradiction. In Matthew Jesus does not directly deny the opinion of the Pharisees, that the messiah is the son of David; rather does he seem to ask how then you can agree with the fact that David calls him Lord. In any case, in the context in Matthew, this passage cannot be read as a refutation of the Davidic sonship of the Messiah.

For Matthew, Jesus' Davidic sonship is proof of his messianic nature. As son of David, Jesus is portrayed as the true messiah proclaimed in the scriptures and expected by all the Jews. Even the priests and the scribes independent of Herod are capable of correctly deducing the place of Jesus' birth from the scriptural prophecies (Mt. 2.4-6).<sup>32</sup>

### 3. c. Jesus son of David in Luke's Gospel and in Acts

Out of the whole New Testament, the theme of the Davidic messiah is most fully developed in Luke's works. Much as Matthew does, Luke begins his Gospel with an account of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (called 'city of David', Lk. 2.4), and his genealogy, the latter proving that Jesus is of the family of David. 'If Luke emphasizes this descent ... alongside the virgin birth, it is because he holds as true the genealogy that, through Joseph, sets Jesus among the descendants of David.'<sup>33</sup> But, curiously, the messianic dignity of Jesus *as son of David* is proved above all by his resurrection. That is evident from the beginning of the Gospel, when an angel is sent 'to a young woman betrothed to a man called Joseph of the family of David' (Lk. 1.26), to announce the birth of her son who 'will be great, and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign for ever over the family of Jacob, and his reign will have no end' (Lk. 1.32-3). Thus the angel announces to Mary a 'messianic fulfilment [in Jesus] of Nathan's promise' (2 Samuel 7).<sup>34</sup> As is evident in Acts 2.30-6 and 13.33-7, the promise of an eternal kingship for a descendant of David is, according to Luke, definitively fulfilled in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, by which he entered for ever into his messianic reign.

The recalling of 2 Samuel 7 at Lk. 1.32-3 indicates one of the advantages of this identification of Jesus as Messiah son of David. At 2 Sam. 7.14 YHWH promises to David's descendant, 'I will be a father to him, and he will be my son.' In the angelic annunciation to Mary, the

32 R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*.

33 F. Bovon, *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc 1-9* (CNT 3a; Genève: Labor et Fides, 1991), p. 185.

34 M. Pietsch, 'Dieser ist der Sproß Davids ...', p. 265.

divine sonship of Jesus appears twice: firstly in Lk. 1.32, by way of the eschatological fulfilment of the promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. Immediately after that, the theme appears again in relation to conception through the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1.35). Thus, it appears that through the promise in 2 Sam. 7.14, this identification of Jesus as Messiah son of David, allows, at the appropriate moment, the move to a higher Christology.

Let us return once more to the controversy over the Messiah as son of David in Mk 12.35-7. In the light of the foregoing, this latter passage seems even more puzzling. Why does Mark, in the interests of a Christology of divine sonship, refuse the title Son of David, when it allows the identification of Jesus as son of God? The evangelist may well have motives of a political nature, but if we try to explain its significance for Christology, it is best seen as expressing the idea of the pre-existence of the Messiah.<sup>35</sup> In fact, we find the same kind of reasoning at Jn 8.48-59, where Jesus says that he is greater than Abraham, and already existed before the latter's birth. Entirely logically, the fourth evangelist himself also aims to construct his Christology without the idea of Jesus as son of David (7.41-4).

#### 4. Jesus, 'Son of Joseph' or the New Joseph

The story of Joseph (Gen. 37-50), though it left very few further traces in the Hebrew Bible, did, however, very quickly arouse debates and questions in various Jewish milieus. Here is not the place to go through the dossier on the origin, date and social context of the Joseph sage. We start from the hypothesis that Genesis 37-50 (in its original form) is a 'romance from the Jewish diaspora in Egypt that legitimizes a Judaism open to its host country, one that saw the light of day in the sixth or fifth century BC.'<sup>36</sup> The rabbis in fact stressed Joseph's natural aptitude for life

35 According to R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 8th edn, 1970), p. 270, it is probable that Mark had, 'as a hellenistic Christian, belonging to the Pauline circle, regarded Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God'.

36 This opinion has become almost a consensus, in spite of differences over the development of the story. See, among others, D. B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)* (VTSup 20; Leiden: Brill, 1970); T. C. Römer, 'La narration, une subversion: L'histoire de Joseph (Gn 37-50) et les romans de la diaspora', in G. J. Brooke, J.-D. Kaestli (eds), *Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts* (BETL 149; Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2000), pp. 17-29; C. Uehlinger, 'Fratricide, filiations et paternités dans l'histoire de Joseph (Genèse 37-50\*)', in J.-D. Macchi, T. Römer (eds), *Jacob: Commentaire à plusieurs voix de Gen. 25-36* (Festschrift A. de Pury; Le Monde de la Bible 44; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001), pp. 303-28; K. Schmid, 'Die Josephsgeschichte im Pentateuch' in J. C. Gertz, K. Schmid and M. Witte (eds), *Abschied vom Jahwisten: Die*

in a foreign country and culture.<sup>37</sup> But this openness to other nations very soon created problems, as is shown, for example in the rewriting of Genesis 37–50 in the romance *Joseph and Asenath*, which perhaps antedates the separation between Judaism and Christianity.<sup>38</sup>

In the Judaism of the Hellenistic and Roman periods we often find ambiguous positions with regard to the character of the biblical Joseph. Philo of Alexandria, author of a treatise on Joseph (*De Josepho*), praises the qualities of Joseph as those of an exemplary head of state; yet, on the other hand, in the second book of his *De Somniis* (On Dreams), he criticizes Joseph for being captivated by Egypt and its extravagancies (2.42), and for being tempted by his accumulation of wealth (2.6).<sup>39</sup> In *Genesis Rabbah* 84.16–17, we find the same ambiguity: Joseph is definitely a man who is saved by divine providence, but his sale into Egypt is justified by his earlier tongue-wagging. The character who comes out better is Judah. As Costa emphasizes, the rabbis, like Philo, discerned profound allegories in the story of Joseph.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the dry cistern into which Joseph is thrown symbolizes his brothers who have forgotten the Torah. Allegorical interpretation is similarly very obvious in the Church Fathers for whom Joseph is a figure of the Christ, and his story an allegory looking forward to Jesus' life and death. Thus, for Origen (*Homilies on Genesis*), Joseph's descent into the cistern signifies the laying of Christ in the tomb. For Asterius of Amamsa (died 410), 'Joseph is a figure of the Christ. The slanders of the Egyptian woman threw Joseph into chains; the false testimonies of the high priests delivered Christ in chains to Pilate ... Joseph seized by the Egyptian woman threw off his clothes and escaped; Christ seized by death escaped by abandoning in the tomb the shroud that covered him.'<sup>41</sup> This reading of Joseph as a messianic allegory is also found in Luther, who makes a parallel between the rejection of Joseph by his brothers and the rejection of Jesus by the

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*Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion* (BZAW 315; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2002), pp. 83–118; A. Kunz, 'Ägypten in der Perspektive Israels am Beispiel der Josefsgeschichte (Gen 37–50)', *BZ* 47 (2003), 206–29.

37 G. Wigoder (ed.), *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du Judaïsme* (Paris: Cerf and Robert Laffont, 1996), p. 525.

38 M. Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (SPB 13; Leiden: Brill, 1968); for discussion on the dating, E. M. Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 28–37.

39 Here Philo argues on the basis of the etymology of Joseph's name as 'addition'.

40 J. Costa, *La Bible racontée par le Midrash* (Paris: Bayard, 2004) pp. 65–7.

41 Quoted from Sœur Isabelle de la Source, *Lire la Bible avec les Pères: I. La Genèse* (Paris and Montréal: Médiaspaul and Editions Paulines, 1998), pp. 118–19.

Jews.<sup>42</sup> In our own time there are sites on the internet affirming that Jesus is a reincarnation of Joseph.<sup>43</sup> These various allegorical interpretations regarding Jesus as a 'new Joseph' can be understood as arising from a theological position which takes the Old Testament as announcing and preparing for the New Testament. As for the figure of Joseph, it seems to us, however, that the evangelists construct their figure of Jesus by borrowing, not only from Moses, but also from Joseph.

4. a. *The recapitulation of the story of Joseph in Stephen's speech in Acts* The speech in Acts 7 marks an important turning point in the narrative of Acts, and in that it is comparable with the great speeches that structure the Deuteronomistic history.<sup>44</sup> The historical recapitulation of Acts 7 comprises four sections: 2–8, Abraham and the patriarchs; 9–16, Joseph; 17–43, Moses; and 44–50, the construction of the sanctuary.<sup>45</sup> In this survey, Joseph appears as a precursor both of Moses and of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>46</sup> But Joseph primarily prefigures Jesus, God's final envoy. The opposition of Joseph's brothers, identified as 'the fathers', finds a parallel in the speeches earlier addressed to the Jews, in which the latter, just like their fathers (Acts 7.51) are accused of opposing the one sent by God, not hesitating to deliver him up to the ungodly (Acts 2.23), just as Joseph's brothers delivered him up to the Egyptians. Thus Joseph begins the series of messengers from God, rejected by the people, but acknowledged by God.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, as Daniel Marguerat emphasizes, the story of Joseph in Acts shows that the divine blessing is no longer localized: God's saving power shown in Joseph is also a source of blessing for the

42 'So God has in the figure of Joseph portrayed Christ and his whole reign most finely and spiritually . . . Just as it turned out for Joseph with his brothers, so it did for Christ with his brothers, that is, with the Jews.'

43 See <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/origen043.html>.

44 T. Römer and J.-D. Macchi, 'Luke, Disciple of the Deuteronomistic School' in C. M. Tuckett (ed.), *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays* (JSNTSup 116; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 178–87.

45 On this analysis see J. Kilgallen, *The Stephen Speech: A Literary and Redactional Study of Acts 7.2–53* (AnBib, 67; Roma: Biblical Institute Press, 1976); see also the proposals of J. Dupont, 'La structure oratoire du discours d'Étienne (Actes 7)', *Bib* 66 (1985), 153–67; S. Légasse, *Stephanos: Histoire et discours d'Étienne dans les Actes des Apôtres* (LD 147; Paris: Cerf, 1992).

46 The parallels between Joseph and Moses appear in the theme of Egyptian wisdom (Acts 7.10, 22), and in the opposition of 'the fathers' against both.

47 R. Lux, *Josef: der Auserwählte unter seinen Brüdern* (Biblische Gestalten 1; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), pp. 266–7. For Luke's Christology, see the classic study by O. H. Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes im Alten Testament, Spätjudentum und Urchristentum* (WMANT, 23; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967).

nations.<sup>48</sup> The portrait of Joseph in Acts 7 concludes with the burial of Jacob and with Joseph at Sichem, in Samaritan territory. The link between Sichem, Joseph and Jesus is likewise found in the Gospel of John.

#### 4. b. *Jesus, the new Joseph, in John 4*

The story of the meeting with the Samaritan woman in John 4, is situated at Sychar, modern Askar, on the slope of Mount Ebal. About 3 km to the east of Sichem, or, more precisely, 'not far from the plot of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph, at the very place where Jacob's well is found' (Jn 5.4-5). In the conversation with the Samaritan woman the question is raised of the true source of water. By saying 'he who will drink of the water I will give him will never be thirsty any more' (Jn 4.14), Jesus in effect substitutes himself for Jacob's well, and subsequently presents himself to the woman as the Messiah who is to come (Jn 4.25-6). By this the author establishes a continuity between Jacob, Joseph and the messianic status of Jesus. When Jesus identifies himself with the Μεσσίας expected by the Samaritan woman, it is evident that he assumes his interlocutor's expectation, namely that of a messiah from 'the north'.<sup>49</sup> The narrative concludes with a confession of faith by a group of Samaritans that Jesus is the ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου (Jn 4.42). The expression, almost unique in the New Testament (only found again at 1 Jn 4.14) has a parallel in the text already quoted from the *T. Benj.* 3.8 where the messiah sprung from Joseph is called 'Saviour of the world'. As H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge note, this expression is a title frequently used for Jesus by the Church Fathers.<sup>50</sup> But at Jn 4 and *T. Benj.* 3.8, its use is perhaps prompted by the connection with Joseph who was able to save 'a great number of people' (Gen. 50.20), and whose Egyptian name, furthermore, is translated in the Vulgate as *Salvator mundi* (Gen. 41.45).<sup>51</sup> Let us note that the passage in Zach. 12.10, on the basis of which the Talmud develops its discussion of the messiah son of Joseph, is only used in the New Testament at Jn 19.34-7, and Rev. 1.7.

48 D. Marguerat, *Les Actes des Apôtres (1-12)* (CNT 5a; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2007), p. 246.

49 The term Μεσσίας is attested elsewhere in the New Testament only at Jn 1.41.

50 H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, p. 160. In the *Testaments*, the title occurs again at *T. Levi* 10.2; 14.2.

51 Cf. also Jerome's comment in *Qu. hebr. Gen.* (ad loc.), 'Interpretatur ergo sermone aegyptio Zapfanethfane siue (ut LXX transferre uoluerunt) Psontonphanech saluator mundi, eo quod orbem terrae ab imminente famis excidio liberarit.' ['The Egyptian name Zapfanethfane or, (as the LXX prefers to translate it) Psontonphanech, means saviour of the world, in that he freed the whole round world from the extinction by famine that threatened.'] Sadly we do not know whether Jerome gleaned this (erroneous) interpretation from an older source.

#### 4. c. *Jesus, Joseph and Egypt (in Matthew)*

The scattering of references to Egypt in the New Testament make it appear, in agreement with the majority of references in the Hebrew scriptures, as a place of oppression from which God delivered his people (Acts 7.14-40; 13.7; Heb. 3.16; 8.9; 11.27; Jude 5), or as a place characterized by materialism and decadence (Heb. 11.26; Rev. 11.8). The only episode which brings Egypt in touch with Jesus, by telling of Joseph's flight there with his family (Mt. 2.13-23), is also, with Acts 7.11-15, the only place in the New Testament where Egypt appears as a land offering refuge and welcome, exactly as in the case of Joseph in Genesis 37-50. The descent of the child Jesus into Egypt has a parallel not only in the story of Moses, and this is often stressed.<sup>52</sup> But the descent into Egypt is also based on the figure of Joseph in the Hebrew scriptures. In Genesis 37, the descent of Joseph into Egypt is part of the divine providential action that enables him to escape from his brothers who want to kill him, while in Matthew 2, the flight of Joseph and Jesus into Egypt is similarly a means of protecting the child from the death intended by Herod. Moreover, in Matthew 2, God communicates with Joseph in dreams, as he does with the other Joseph in Genesis 37. Yet another allusion to the Joseph of Genesis is the quotation Jer. 31.15 in Mt. 2.18, which introduces the tears of Rachel, mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Again, we should note that the key word in Mt. 2.13-23, παραλαμβάνω (2.13, 14, 20, 21), quite rare in the LXX, appears in the Joseph story at Gen. 45.18, when Joseph gives the order to bring his father and brothers into Egypt.<sup>53</sup> Mt. 2.13-23 does not only make Jesus a new Moses; it also presents Jesus as doubly 'son' of Joseph.

#### 4. d. *Joseph and Judah, Jesus and Judas*

In the tradition of the passion of Jesus, it is the figure of Judas that stands out as Jesus' antagonist. In the Joseph saga, again it is Judah [LXX, 'Ioudas] who stands out among his brothers. But a difference between the two Judahs/Judases is apparent. Whereas in Genesis 37 and 44 Judah stands out among his brothers in wanting to save the life of Joseph and then of Benjamin, the Judas of the gospels decides to hand Jesus over to be killed. In Genesis, Judah suggests to his brothers that they should sell

52 See the commentaries. An obvious parallel is the order for the return at Mt. 2.20, which is a quotation from Exod. 4.19. However, see also P. Bonnard, *L'Evangile selon Saint Matthieu* (CNT 1; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2nd edn, 1970), pp. 28-30, and U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus 1: Mt 1-7* (Zürich and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benzinger Verlag and Neukirchener Verlag, 5th edn, 2002), p. 182, who underline the fact that one must not limit the allusions present in these texts to the single figure of Moses; yet, oddly, neither mentions the Joseph saga.

53 The verb παραλαμβάνω appears 37 times in all in the LXX.

Joseph in order to spare his life (Gen. 37.26-27), and this they do for the price of twenty shekels of silver (Gen. 37.28, cf. Lev. 27.4-5).<sup>54</sup> According to Mt. 26.15, Judas hands Jesus over for thirty pieces of silver.<sup>55</sup> The New Testament confrontation between Judas and Jesus can almost be read as a reversal of the rabbinic antagonism between Joseph and Judah. In the story of Joseph, a later editor inserted the material for Judah in order to emphasize, in the Persian period, the superiority of the south (the province of Yehud), compared with the north.<sup>56</sup> The midrashic reading of Genesis 37 followed up that notion by elaborating an opposition between 'Joseph the victim and Judah the saviour', that is, between the destiny of the northern kingdom and the restoration of the Davidic kingdom.<sup>57</sup> The Gospels in turn take up that opposition, but turn it round, since they make Judas the traitor, even an instrument of the devil. This reversal can doubtless be understood as an anti-Jewish polemic together with an affirmation of the universality of Messiah Jesus. Jesus himself remains a victim, like Joseph, but it is in this status as victim that he reveals himself as Messiah. We should again recall that the sale of Joseph into Egypt, in Genesis 37, is accompanied by the brothers sharing a meal together, and it is in the Gospels on the occasion of the last meal of Jesus with his disciples that Judas is identified as the one who will hand over the Messiah.

#### *4. e. Other parallels between Joseph and Jesus*

In the Gospels we can find other parallels between these two figures, some of which have been noticed and interpreted by the Church Fathers. The following examples of intertextuality, need, however, to be treated with caution, for often it is simply a matter of motifs or literary conventions, without necessarily involving deliberate allusion to the Joseph saga. However, in the light of the foregoing investigations, these further allusions are not to be definitively excluded.

First, we may note that Joseph begins his career in Egypt at the age of 30; and that, according to Luke, is the age of Jesus at the start of his ministry.<sup>58</sup> It is also David's age when he becomes king (2 Sam. 5.4). It is therefore possible that Luke (or his source) here picks up this age to emphasize the parallel between Jesus, David and Joseph.

54 The LXX talks of 20 gold pieces. The present text gives the impression that it is Midianite merchants who sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites. But that is due to the editorial additions, which complicate our understanding of the text.

55 Mark and Luke fail to specify the sum. The word ἀργύριον appears in the Joseph saga at Gen. 42.24-25; 43.15-23; 44.1, 8; and 47.14-18.

56 J.-D. Macchi, *Israël et ses tribus selon Genèse* 49 (OBO 171; Fribourg and Göttingen: Presses universitaires and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), pp. 109-13.

57 J. Costa, *La Bible racontée par le Midrash*, p. 67.

58 J. Werlitz, *Das Geheimnis der heiligen Zahlen: Ein Schlüssel zu den Rätseln der Bibel* (Wiesbaden: Fourier Verlag, 2003), pp. 108-9, indicates that the age of 30 is the ideal age for

The theme of the rejection of Joseph by his brothers can be compared to the statement in John's Gospel. 'even his brothers did not believe in him' (Jn 7.5). The brothers' decision to get rid of Joseph (Gen. 37.18, LXX καὶ ἐπονηρεύοντο τοῦ ἀποκτεῖναι αὐτόν) finds a parallel in the decision of the religious leaders of the people to have Jesus put to death (Mt. 26.4, κρατήσωσιν καὶ ἀποκτείνωσιν).

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is crucified in the company of two criminals. Luke alone relates an episode in which one of them will be saved, because he recognizes Jesus as both innocent and Messiah (Lk. 23.39-43). In Genesis 40, Joseph also finds himself in the company of two criminals, whose dreams he interprets. To one he announces death, to the other life and restoration. Moreover, we find a literary parallel: Joseph asks the cupbearer (who will be released from prison), 'Remember me . . . when things go well with you' (Gen. 40.14). And the 'good' criminal makes the same request to Jesus, 'Remember me when you come as king' (Lk. 23.42).

Gen. 40. 14 (LXX) ἀλλὰ μνήσθητί μου διὰ σεαυτοῦ ὅταν εὖ σοι γένηται καὶ ποιήσεις ἐν ἐμοὶ ἔλεος καὶ μνησθήσῃ περὶ ἐμοῦ Φαραώ καὶ ἐξάξεις με ἐκ τοῦ ὀχυρώματος τούτου

Lk. 23.42 μνήσθητί μου ὅταν ἔλθῃς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν σου

If the intertextuality is deliberate, we can see here another form of role reversal: when Joseph makes the request to the cupbearer, the latter forgets it, but the request of the criminal to Jesus is immediately granted. These different allusions to the Joseph saga can very well be understood as either taking up or reacting to the idea of a messiah son of Joseph.

## 5. Conclusion

Our study of Jesus, son of David and son of Joseph, does not allow us to state categorically that the writers of the Gospels were acquainted with the Jewish tradition of the two messiahs, the messiah of Joseph sent to the nations (but who fails in some measure), and the messiah son of David, sent for the salvation of Israel. However, we can read the gospel narratives as an attempt to show that Jesus has this double function: he is the Messiah for the nations, but he is also, and first, the Messiah of Israel. It is for this reason that he must be born in Bethlehem, while at the same time being from Nazareth, from the north, as messiah son of Joseph. This

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the start of a political and religious career. F. Bovon, *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc 1-9*, p. 184, notes that according to Epiphanius, the Ebionite *Gospel of Matthew* similarly gives 30 years for Jesus at the start of his ministry.

double identity is also expressed through his sonship, descendant of the line of David, but also son of Joseph.

If the confrontation between Jesus and Judas in the passion narrative is not historical (and its historicity is very unlikely), we can also interpret this strand as a rehabilitation of the messiah, son of Joseph over against the messiah, son of David, son of Judah. Certainly, that rests a theoretical speculation. Yet the fact remains that the Gospels make use, at one and the same time, of references to David and references to Joseph to expound the messianic identity of Jesus. With regard to the references to David, we can pick out differences among the Gospels. Whereas Mark and John seem to have a critical attitude towards Davidic sonship, for Matthew and Luke it is a proof that Jesus is in fact the Messiah, sent to Israel and rejected by his people. The references to Joseph in John's Gospel stress that Jesus is (also) the Messiah for the Samaritans, while Matthew depicts Jesus as both the new Moses and the new Joseph. It appears that the Gospels are taking part in a debate to discern what images and what associations are suitable for confirming that Jesus of Nazareth is fully the Messiah announced in the scriptures.

But our investigation also shows that the Gospel references to the relationship between Jesus and David are of a different kind from the references to his relationship with Joseph. With regard to the Davidic sonship of Jesus, whether it be with Mark or John who deny it, or with Matthew and Luke who affirm it, we have always been able to describe each evangelist's point of view by taking into account only passages which deal with this theme explicitly. In contrast, the deployment of the figure of Joseph is more often typological, and Joseph's presence in the text is frequently through intertextual allusion.

It matters little how one judges the relationship between the Gospel stories and the theory of two messiahs in the Judaism of the early centuries of the common era (or even of the last few centuries preceding it). The construction of the messiahships of Jesus in the New Testament can be understood, however, only in dialogue with the Judaism of the period.