

ArtScroll Gemara, Meseches Sanhedrin 97a/97b

The following Baraisa gives the earliest possible date of the Messiah's arrival¹:
The academy of Eliyahu² taught the following Baraisa: THE WORLD IS destined to exist for **SIX THOUSAND YEARS**: The first **TWO THOUSAND** years were **OF NOTHINGNESS³**; the second **TWO THOUSAND** years were **OF TORAH⁴**; the third **TWO**

¹ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: The Date of the Redemption:**

In discussing the advent of the Messiah, two dates must be considered – the earliest and the latest dates. The exile following the destruction of the Second Temple was decreed to last a certain minimum number of years, and the Messiah will not come during that period under any circumstances. The end of that era is the earliest date for the redemption. From then on, the Messiah will come whenever the people have sufficient merit. The latest date (the “katz” End) is the Divinely preordained deadline by which the exile will certainly have ended (see *Abarbanel* and *Yeshuos Meshicho*).

Between the two das there are several times that are particularly suited for the redemption. *Ramban* states that “many dates were preordained for our future redemption,” but since we continued to act in our usual manner at those times, the opportunity was lost and the redemption did not materialize (*Sefer HaGeulah* ch. 4, Chavel ed. Vol. I p. 292). This concept is echoed by the *Gra*, who writes that each generation has its own appointed “End” depending upon the unique forms of merit and repentance expected of it (*Even Sheleimah* 11:9).

Ben Avraham – (N Source): “*The Messiah was born the day that th Second Temple was destroyed.*” Meaning that the possibility that the End Times prophecies could begin to be fulfilled coincided with the destruction of the Second Temple. If one of the prophecies of the End Times is that the Finl Temple will be built, then it seems logical that the existing, Second Temple, had to be destroyed first.

Daniel 9: “A ‘Second Temple’ to be built, but in troublous times.”

² **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** See Sanhedrin 92a, note 57. [*Yad Ramah* evidently maintains that this *Baraisa* was taught by the prophet Elijah (N See 97b note 6).]

³ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** That is, the world without Torah (Rashi, here, and to *Avodah Zarah* 9a).

It is evident from Scripture that two thousand years after the creation of Adam, Abraham was fifty-two years old. (The calculation is given by Rashi to *Avodah Zarah* 9a.) Tradition teaches that at that age Abraham began to spread the message of the Torah and to influence people to follow its ways, as the verse state (Genesis 12:5) *and the souls they had made in Charan*, which the Targum renders *and the souls they had subjected to the Torah in Charan* (Rashi).

Ben Avraham – Avraham sought to place HaShem's Name in their mouths, so that the people would acknowledge Him. **Rashi, Bereshis 24:7 – The Lord, God of the heavens, Who took me from my father's house** But he did not say, “*and the God of the earth,*” whereas above (verse 3) he said, “*And I will adjure you [by the Lord, the God of the heaven and the God of the earth].*” He said to him, “Now He is the God of the heaven and the God of the earth, because I have made Him familiar in the mouths of the people, but when He took me from my father's house, He was the God of the heavens but not the God of the earth, **because mankind did not acknowledge Him, and His name was not familiar on the earth.**”

⁴ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** As stated in the previous note, the two millennia of Torah began when Abraham was fifty-two years old. The following two thousand years can be calculated as follows:

- 48 years later, Isaac was born.
- When Isaac was 60, Jacob was born.
- Jacob was 130 when he and his family went down to Egypt.
- The Egyptian exile lasted 210 years.
- The First Temple was built 480 years after the Exodus from Egypt (I Kings 6:1).
- The First Temple stood for 410 yeas. (This can be calculated on the basis of the king's reigns.)
- The Second Temple stood for 420 years.

This yields a total of 1828 yeas. Thus, the 2,000 yeas of Torah ended 172 years after the destruction of the Second Temple (Rashi).

Ben Avraham – The above computations equate to 242 ce.

The *Baraisa* does not mean that Torah came to an end after four millennia. It uses the term “two thousand years of Torah” for the sake of contrast with the preceding phrase “two thousand years of

THOUSAND years should have been **THE DAYS OF THE MESSIAH**⁵, (97b) **BUT BECAUSE OF OUR SINS, WHICH ARE NUMEROUS, [THE YEARS] THAT HAVE GONE FROM [THE MESSIANIC ERA] HAVE GONE**⁶.

nothingness [i.e. no Torah]" (Rashi). When the Baraisa says "Torah," it means "Torah before the Messianic era" as opposed to "Torah during the messianic era (see Rashi to Avodah Zarah 9a).

According to *Maharsha*, however, the Baraisa means that Torah *flourished* during those two thousand years. One hundred and seventy-two years after the destruction of the Second Temple, the study of Torah deteriorated significantly. Following the death of Rebbe [in the year 3,952 (*Halei*)], which marked the end of the *Tannaic* era, the tribulations of the exile grew more severe, and the centers of Torah study declined (*Maharsha*; see also *Hagahos Yavetz*).

Ben Avraham – Could it be, that with the deterioration of Torah continued reliance upon human beings, as the Sin of the Golden Calf has yet to be atoned for? The past over-reliance on Moshe, and the over-reliance on our future "king of flesh and blood" – the *Mashiach* – are (in our opinion) different symptoms of the same ailment: the focus on the "messenger" rather than on He Who sent the message. Could it also be, that referring to The End of Days as "*Yemos HaMashiach*" lends itself to over-emphasizing a creation to the detriment of our Creator? Naming the "age" after "the man" was first done by Tannaim (*Shemoneh Esrei* and *Birchas HaMazon*); but with the deterioration of Torah, could the over-emphasis not have snowballed?

⁵ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** The Messiah was supposed to come at the end of the first four millennia (*Rashi*).

Yad Ramah explains that the Messiah could not possibly have come before the year 4,000, because the exile was decreed to last at least 172 years (see "The Date of the Redemption" note above). From that date on, the Messiah could come; but our sins have prevented him from doing so.

Maharsha maintains that the final two millennia are the "*Chevlei Mashiach*," travail of the Messiah. At any time during this period it is possible for the Messiah to come and bring an end to our suffering.

The commentators draw an analogy between these six millennia and the six days of creation. The trends of each millennia are foretold by the events of the corresponding day of creation (see Ramban to Genesis 2:3; *Rabbeinu Bachya* *ibid.*; *Abarbanel*, *Yeshuos Meshicho*, *Iyun* 1 ch. 1; see also *Biur HaGra* to *Tamid* 7:4).

Ben Avraham – Yishayhu 51:12. I, I myself, am He Who comforts you; who are you, that you should be afraid of a man who shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as grass; 13. **And have forgotten the Lord your maker,** who has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth....

Yishayahu 51:3. For the Lord shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her ruins; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found in there, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. 4. **Listen to Me,** my people; and **give ear to Me,** O my nation; for **Torah shall proceed from Me,** and I will make my judgment for a light to the people. 5. My righteousness is near; **My Salvation** is gone forth....

["Chevlei Mashiach" The travail preceding the Messiah's arrival:

The period immediately before the Messiah's arrival is termed by the Sages as *Chevlei Mashiach*, *the travail of the Messiah*. During this time, the people will undergo suffering analogous to the travail of a woman in childbirth.

The Gemara below (97b-98a) records a view which maintains that, if necessary, the Jewish people will be "forced" to repent before the Messiah's coming. According to this view, the purpose of the pre-Messianic travail is to force the Jews to realize that their only hope lies with their Father in Heaven and that they must repent to merit His salvation.

Ben Avraham – Michah 5:6. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people like dew from the Lord, like the showers upon the grass, **that do not hope for man, nor wait for the sons of men.** [Rashi, *Michah* 5:6 – **like dew sent by the Lord** -which does not come to the world through man, and people do not ask for it, so **Israel will not hope for the help of man, but for the Lord.**]

Bereshis 49:18. I have waited for **Your Salvation,** O Lord.

Shemos 14:13. And Moses said to the people, Do not fear, stand still, and **see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you today....**

Yishayahu 52:10. The Lord has made bare His Holy Arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see **the salvation of our God.**

Mashiach ben Yosef will, unfortunately, have to die in order to “fore” the Jews to give up hoping for salvation from a man, and to focus on HaShem as their only King, Redeemer, and Savior.

Some commentators explain that the suffering and pain are symptoms of the world’s decline that must necessarily precede the Messianic era. A new order of existence cannot be established before the previous one has deteriorated. (By way of example, *Aruch LaNer* points to a kernel of wheat, which must rot in the ground before it sprouts and brings forth a new stalk.) The Messianic era will be one of profound and comprehensive change. To make way for this new era, the current norms must collapse. This decline will inevitably involve a great deal of suffering (see *Abarbanel*, *Yeshuos Meshicho*, *Iyun* 1 ch. 5; *Maharal*, *Netzach Yisrael* chs. 32, 35; *Aruch LaNer*; see also *Toras Chaim* to 98a).

In line with this approach, *Abarbanel* shows how each of the troubles enumerated in the Gemara is the opposite of a particular phenomenon that will occur after the Messiah’s arrival. For instance, when the Messiah comes, the world will be full of the knowledge of HaShem (Isaiah 11:9). Thus, in contrast, the pre-Messianic era will necessarily see a dearth of knowledge of G-d, as the Gemara states above: “[the number of] Torah scholars will decrease.” The Messianic era will be one of great joy and happiness (Yishayahu 55:12, 61:10). In contrast, the period before his coming will be marked by sorrow – “their eyes will become worn out through grief and anxiety.”

It has been suggested that “the travail of the Messiah” will occur only in the event that the Messiah comes without our positively meriting him. Should we bring the redemption through studying Torah and performing mitzvos, the Messiah’s arrival will not be preceded by suffering (see *Or HaChaim* to *Genesis* 49:11).

Signs indicating the Messiah’s arrival:

The Gemara on this *amud* and on 98a-b records several portents of the Messiah’s imminent arrival. It is difficult to ascertain the exact meaning of these statements. Many are given widely differing interpretations by the commentators. Our elucidation covers only a fraction of these interpretations, drawing primarily from *Rashi*, *Yad Ramah*, and *Maharsha*.

It should also be noted that any one of several different factors could cause the Messiah to come (N see 98a notes 41-44). Depending on the factor, the redemptive process itself may vary (see *Or HaChaim* to Numbers 24:17, cited in 98a note 48). Some of these signs may pertain to one type of redemptive process and some to another.

In a related context, *Rambam* writes (*Hilchos Melachim* 12:2): “All these matters and those related to them, no one will know how they will happen until they happen. For these matters are left cryptic by the prophets. Also the Sages have no tradition in these matters, rather [they discussed them] based on the nuances of the verses, and therefore they have disputed these matters. At any rate, the order in which these events will occur and their details are not a fundamental principle of the religion. A person should not occupy himself in the words of *aggados* [concerning these matters], nor spend excessive time in [the study of] the *midrashim* on these and similar matters, and should not regard them as primary. For they lead neither to love [of G-d] nor the fear [of G-d].... Rather, he should wait, and maintain belief in the general fate of the matter...”

Ben Avraham – One question is: “When did “The End of Days” (as the “End Times” are referred to in *Tanakh*, from HaShem’s Torah, all the way through His *Navi'im*) become “*Yemos HaMashiach*”? Why did we name the “Age” after a “king of flesh and blood,” rather than after The King of kings, Whom we acknowledge each and every day, “Other than You, we have no king, no redeemer, no savior”? IF, as we state each day, HaShem is our King, our Redeemer, our Savior, why do we say so nonchalantly, “We can hardly wait for the day when our king, the *Mashiach*, will come to redeem us and save us”?”

Yishayahu 2:11. The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the arrogance of men shall be brought low, and **the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day...** 17. And the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the arrogance of men shall be brought down, and **the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.**

Zechariah 14:9. And **the Lord shall be King over all the earth**; on that day the Lord shall be one, and His Name one.

Rashi, Zechariah 14:9 – shall the Lord be one For all the nations shall abandon **their vanities** and **acknowledge Him**, that He is one, and [that] no strange deity is with Him. and **His name one** That His Name shall be mentioned by everyone.

The prophet Elijah reveals the date for the Messiah's arrival:

Elijah said to Rav Yehudah the brother of Rav Salla the Pious: "The world is destined to exist for not less than eighty-five jubilee cycles. In the final cycle, the son of David will come⁷." [Rav Yehudah] asked [Elijah]: "Will he come at the beginning of [the last jubilee cycle] or at its end?" [Elijah] answered him: "I don't know⁸." Rav Yehudah then asked Elijah: "Will [the final jubilee cycle] have ended by the time the Messiah comes, or will it not have ended?" [Elijah] answered him: "I don't know¹⁰."

The Gemara cites a different version of Elijah's last reply:

Also, we would focus on the words of the Rambam, that "the Sages have no tradition in these matters, rather [they discussed them] based on the nuances of the verses, and therefore they have disputed these matters." We are not challenging the Sages on matters of *Halachah*, but rather we are questioning the exalted stature given to a "king of flesh and blood," (seemingly, at least in the *lashon* we hear *Yidden* use on a daily basis) over the exaltation due to our only King, Redeemer, and Savior. We have examined the writings of the prophets, and we have noted that the prophetic emphasis on HaShem and how the world will be in the End Times, but a stunning lack of focus on the Mashiach, who is merely HaShem's messenger of His Redemption.

⁶ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Because of our sins the Messiah did not come at the end of the fourth millennium. The final two millennia, which were supposed to have been the Messianic era, have turned out differently, for the Messiah has still not come (*Rashi*).

⁷ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** A jubilee cycle is fifty years long. Hence, eighty-five jubilee cycles amount to 4,250 years (*Rashi*).

The Gemara below discusses whether Elijah was referring to the earliest or the latest date for the Messiah's arrival (see 97a note 60).

An allusion to Elijah's prediction is found in the Torah. In Numbers 10:35-36, Moses prays that G-d will rise and disperse His enemies (i.e. the enemies of Israel [*Rashi* ad loc.]) and that He will reside among the Jewish people. These verses are separated from the rest of the Torah by means of an inverted letter *nun* before and after them. Since these two verses are set off from the rest of the Torah, the Gemara in Shabbos (115b-116a) speaks of them as a separate "book," indicating that it has a message of its own. These verses contain exactly eight-fifty letters. The letter *nun* has a numerical value of fifty – the number of years in a jubilee cycle. The Torah thus indicates that in the eighty-fifth jubilee cycle an era will begin during which G-d will arise, disperse the enemies of the Jewish people, and reside among His people (*Abarbanel, Yeshuos Meshicho, Iyun 1 ch. 5*).

⁸ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** A different version of the Gemara's text records Elijah as answering that the Messiah will come at the *end* of the last jubilee cycle (*Dikdukei Sofrim*). This version is followed by *Yad Ramah* and *Abarbanel (Yeshuos Meshicho, Iyun 1 ch. 5)*.

⁹ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Will the Messiah come after the jubilee cycle has ended, or during (i.e. at the end) of the cycle? (*Rashi*).

Since Elijah already said that he did not know whether the Messiah will come at the beginning of the end of the final jubilee cycle, it is difficult to understand why Rav Yehudah subsequently asked him this question. [This difficulty obviously does not arise according to the version of the text cited in the previous note.]

Maharsha raises a different problem: Elijah said explicitly that the Messiah will come "in (i.e. during) the final jubilee cycle." How, then, could Rav Yehudah ask whether he might come after this cycle has ended? Maharsha explains, therefore, that Rav Yehudah was asking whether the date predicted by Elijah was the *earliest* date for the coming of the Messiah of the *latest* date (see 97a note 60). Rav Yehudah's words are interpreted thus: *Will [this cycle] certainly end* after his arrival (i.e. he will certainly have come by this date), *or will it not necessarily end* after his arrival (i.e. he will come only after this date)? [According to this explanation, Rav Ashi's version of the response given by Elijah directly answers Rav Yehudah's question (see the continuation of the Gemara).]

¹⁰ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** *Yad Ramah* asserts that Elijah certainly knew the preordained date for the redemption. See there for an explanation of Elijah's doubt.

Rav Ashi says: This is what [Elijah] answered [Rav Yehudah]: “Until then, do not expect [the Messiah]. From then on expect him¹¹.”

The Gemara cites another prediction concerning the redemption:

Rav Chanan bar Tachalifa sent the following message to Rav Yosef: I met a man in whose hand there was a scroll, written in Ashuri script¹² and in the Holy Tongue¹³. I asked him: “From where did you get this scroll?” He answered me: “I was hired as an aid to one of the soldiers of Rome, and I found it among the hidden treasures of Rome¹⁴.” And in it was

¹¹ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** That is, the year 4,250 is the earliest possible date for the Messiah’s arrival (see end of note 4).

Yad Ramah points out the contradiction between the two teachings of Elijah. It was recorded above in the name of Elijah that the Messiah could come any time during the final two millennia (which began in the year 4000), whereas here it is stated that Elijah told Rav Yehudah not to expect the Messiah before the year 4,250 (see 97a note 61).

Yad Ramah answers that in fact the date is 4,250. Hence, the period during which the Messiah could come is actually less than two millennia (1,750 years). The Baraisa above defined this period as two millennia because it treats the majority of a millennium as a complete millennium.

¹² **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** There are two Hebrew scripts: *Ashuri* and *Ivri*. [*Ashuri* is our standard square script ; *Ivri* is the script found on coins dating from Temple times.] In those times, *Ashuri* was reserved for sacred purposes, whereas *Ivri* was the commonly used script (see above, 21b-22a; Rabbeinu Chananel *ibid* 21b; Ramban in an appendix to his commentary on Chumash regarding the weights of Biblical coins; *Rivvah to Megillah 2b*; se Torah Sheleimah for a complete treatment of this topic).

The *Ashuri* script is called by this name because it cam from *Ashur* [Assyria] (*Rashi*). [That is, its use became more widespread among the Jews when they were in Assyria (see *HaMikra VeHaMesorah*).]

Rashi cites only one of two Tannic views on the matter. According to the opposing view, *Ashuri* means choicest (from the root for “praise”). *Rabbeinu Chananel* (*ibid.*) accepts he latter view as authoritative.

¹³ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** [i.e. the Hebrew language.] The fact that the scroll was written in the *Ashuri* script *and* in the Hebrew language proved that it was of Jewish origin (*Yad Ramah*; see *Maharsha*).

Ben Avraham – What bout the Rambam on questioning the authenticity of a scroll dug up from the desert? (Source: _____) Just because a scroll is written in Hebrew, or even in a particular script, does not make up for the fact that we have no idea who the author was, what his credentials were, or that the scroll comes with no *Mesorah*. Attempting to decipher a lost text leves the understanding up to the will of the one reading it, and thus could call into question the authenticity of that understanding (**Makkos 10b**: “*As a person wishes to go, so he is led.*”).

¹⁴ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** The Romans had confiscated it when they pillage Jerusalem (*Yad Ramah*).

Sanhedrin 98a – R. Joshua b. Levi met Elijah standing by the entrance of R. Simeon b. Yochai's tomb... He then asked him, ‘When will the Messiah come?’ — ‘Go and ask him himself,’ was his reply. ‘Where is he sitting?’ — ‘At the entrance (of the town). [*The Vilna Gaon deletes this and substitutes ‘the entrance of Rome.’*]1 And by what sign may I recognize him?’ — ‘He is sitting among the poor lepers: all of them untie [them]42 all at once, and re-bandage them together,43 whereas he unties and re-bandages each separately, [before treating the next], thinking, should I be wanted, [it being time for my appearance as the Messiah] I must not be delayed [through having to bandage a number of sores].’ So he went to him and greeted him, saying, ‘peace upon thee, Master and Teacher.’ ‘peace upon thee, O son of Levi,’ he replied. ‘When wilt thou come Master?’ asked he, ‘To-day’, was his answer. On his returning to Elijah, the latter enquired, ‘What did he say to thee?’ — ‘peace Upon thee, O son of Levi,’ he answered. Thereupon he [Elijah] observed, ‘He thereby assured thee and thy father of [a portion in] the world to come.’ ‘He spoke falsely to me,’ he rejoined, ‘stating that he would come to-day, but has not.’ He [Elijah] answered him, ‘This is what he said to thee, To-day, if ye will hear his voice.’44

written: “After four thousand two hundred and ninety¹⁵-one years from the world’s creation, the world will end¹⁶. During some of them¹⁷ there will be the wars of the great sea creatures¹⁸. During some of them there will be the wars of Gog and Magog¹⁹. And the rest²⁰ will be the days of the Messiah²¹. And the Holy One, Blessed is He, will not renew His World until after seven thousand years²².”

The Gemara records a different version of the scroll’s text:

Rav Acha the son of Rava said: “After five thousand years” is what was stated in the scroll²³.

The following Baraisa underscores the futility of attempting to predict the date of the redemption:

It was taught in a Baraisa: R’ NASSAN SAYS: THIS VERSE PIERCES AND PLUMMETS TO THE DEPTHS²⁴! FOR THERE IS ANOTHER VISION OF THE

¹⁵ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Gra emends the text to read *shloshim, thirty* (See Avodah Zarah 9a).

¹⁶ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** [I.e. the world in its current state will end. A new era will commence in which events will move in the direction leading to the advent of the Messiah.]

Alternatively, “*yasom*” means orphan. Like children without father to control them, the nations will war against each other (*Yad Ramah*).

¹⁷ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** I.e. during the years that follow the first 4,291 years (*Yad Ramah*; cf. *Abarbanel* in *Yeshuos Meshicho, Iyun 1* end of ch. 1).

¹⁸ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** A “*tannin*” is some type of gigantic sea creature (see Rashi and Ramban to Genesis 1:21). In the present context, this word is used allegorically for kings whose dominion includes seas or other major bodies of water [see Ezekiel 29:3] (*Yad Ramah*).

Alternatively, this is a general reference to the nations of the world, who will fight against each other before the war of Gog and Magog breaks out (*Abarbanel, Yeshuos Meshicho, Iyun 1* end of ch. 1, *Maharsha*). *Abarbanel* (*ibid.*) also suggests that this term signifies the nations that have persecuted the Jews, or the false messiahs [whose claims led to wars of religion].

Ben Avraham – Further evidence of Mashiach Mishugas? When the focus is not the Messiah – rather than on HaShem – it is understandable why people can be misled. Trying to identify who the Messiah is before he is introduced to us by Eliyahu HaNavi is, according the *Rambam (Iggeres Teiman)*, as useless as trying to predict when the Redemption will begin. Our duty is to learn and apply HaShem’s Torah, and to do *T’shuvah Shalaymah (Yishayahu 59:20. And a redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord)*; the Mesianic Age will take care of itself.

This is akin to the fact that Yidden are not usually preoccupied with *Olam Haba*. We concern ourselves with *Olam Hazeih*, and rest assured that *Olam Haba* will take care of itself.

¹⁹ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Gog, the king of Magog, will lead the nations in a cataclysmic war against the Jews in Eretz Yisrael, as described in *Ezekiel* chs. 38-39. (See 94a note 12)

²⁰ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** [I.e. the years remaining before the year 6,000 (N).]

²¹ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** The Jews will no longer be under foreign domination and the Messiah will have come (*Rashi*).

²² **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** This accords with Rav Katina’s teaching (97a) that the world will be destroyed after six thousand years (*Yad Ramah*). Then, after a thousand years of destruction, G-d will renew the world (*Abarbanel*; see 97a note N).

²³ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Instead of saying 4,291 years, the scroll said 5,000 years (*Yad Ramah*).

According to *Abarbanel* and *Toras Chaim*, Rav Acha was correcting only the first digit – the date recorded in the scroll was not 4,291, but 5,291.

²⁴ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** I.e. this verse is as unfathomable as the ocean. Just as it is impossible to measure the depth of the ocean, so too it is impossible to determine the “End” to which this verse applies (*Rashi*).

APPOINTED TIME; IT SHALL SPEAK OF THE “END,” AND IT SHALL NOT LIE. IF IT TARRIES, WAIT FOR IT, BECAUSE IT WILL SURELY COME; IT WILL NOT DELAY²⁵.

This verse implies that the date of the redemption is concealed from us²⁶. Thus, it is **CONTRARY TO OUR SAGES WHO EXPOUNDED** the verse: **UNTIL A TIME, AND TIMES, AND HALF A TIME**, to determine the date of the redemption²⁷; it is also **CONTRARY TO R’ SIMLAI, WHO EXPOUNDED** the verse: **YOU FED THEM BREAD OF TEARS;**

Yad Ramah explains R’ Nassan’s exclamation as follows: Even if the exile is as long as the ocean is deep, the following verse will always provide hope to the Jews (“*it will descend [with them] to the depths*”), for **it [the *passuk*] assures them that the redemption will ultimately come.**

²⁵ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Habakkuk 2:3.

The verse refers to the *latest* date for the redemption (see 97a note N). It is understood thus: *and [that date] shall not lie* (i.e. it will not pass without redemption). *If it taries* (i.e. the date seems long in arriving), *wait for it, because once it arrives [the Messiah] will certainly come and will not delay* (Abarbanel, Yeshuos Meshicho, Cheilek §1 pg. 18).

Ben Avraham – EMES!!! The above understanding of *Chavakkuk* 2:3 is, we believe, the *p’shat emes* of the *passuk*. The question is (assuming that this IS the *p’shat emes*): “How can this *passuk* be used to demonstrate an *ikkar* if the meaning of the *passuk* that is used is not even the *p’shat* that the *navi* intended? Yes, yes, yes – there are seventy interpretations to Torah, but as Rashi teaches us, ““A *passuk* can never leave its *p’shat*,” meaning that the *p’shat* is the foundational understanding of the verse and all other subsequent understandings must be secondary to the *p’shat*. IF the *navi* had wanted to emphasize the “man” over the “age” he certainly could have done so; but since *Chavakkuk* did not do this – and because virtually every *Shomer Shabbos* Jew quotes this *passuk* as referring to the “man” (and are seemingly ignorant of the intent, in context, of the *navi*) – how can we justify such a practice?

Lehavdil: We cry out when Christians read heir “Messiah” into our Scriptures, but haven’t we done the same thing? Haven’t we taken *pasukim* that refer to HaShem, or the “End Times,” and interpreted the *Mashiach* into them?

N Examples:

- a)
- b)
- c)

[*Rashi* and *Radak* ad loc. explain the verse [*Chavakkuk* 2:3] as referring to the end of the Babylonian exile. The Gemara, however, interprets it as alluding to the final redemption.]

²⁶ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** For in stating when the Messiah will come, the verse only says: If he taries, wait for him. This implies that we cannot know the date of his arrival – all we can do is wait for him (see *Rashi*).

Ben Avraham – The previous note interprets the verse (*Chavakkuk* 2:3) according to (in our opinion) the *p’shat*. And the ArtScroll explanatory insertion in the text of the Gemara refers clearly to the “date of the redemption.” So why does this footnote (*without any explanation that this is – perhaps – a midrashic interpretation of the passuk*) make the meaning of the text the Messiah?

Alternatively, the proof is from the words there is another vision of the appointed time. This means that whatever appointed time for the redemption is alluded to in the verse, there is more to it than meets the eye (*Maharal*; see also *Maharsha*). R’ Nassan infers from here that any allusion to the “End” is too enigmatic for its meaning to be discernable.

²⁷ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Daniel 7:25. R’ Nassan warns us not to rely on the date projected by those Sages (*Rashi*).

These Sages understand that “time” signifies the length of the Egyptian exile, which was 400 years (see Genesis 15:13). The verse mentions three and a half such “times” – a *time* (1), *and times* (2), *and half a time* (½). This yields a total of 1,400 [$3\frac{1}{2} \times 400$] year (*Rashi*). [Rashi does not say whether these 1,400 years are counted from the destruction of the first Temple or from the destruction of the Second Temple (see *Yad Ramah*).]

Many diverse calculations based on this verse have been offered (see, for example, *Rashi* ad loc. in the name of *Rav Saadia Gaon*, and *Yad Ramah*). *Rashi* (ad loc.) comments: “The early Sages interpreted this verse, each according to his understanding, but the ‘Ends’ [that they predicted] have passed.”

YOU MADE THEM DRINK TEARS for A **THIRD**, to determine the date of the redemption²⁸; and it is **CONTRARY TO R' AKIVA WHO EXPOUNDED** the verse: *There shall be ANOTHER ONE, IT SHALL BE SLIGHT, AND then I WILL SHAKE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH*, to determine the date of the redemption²⁹. **IN FACT**, the verse expounded by R' Akiva refers to a different matter all together³⁰ – namely, that after the second Temple is built, **THE FIRST Jewish KINGDOM** will last **SEVENTY YEARS**, **THE SECOND Jewish KINGDOM** will last **FIFTY-TWO YEARS**, **AND THE KINGDOM OF BEN KOZIVA** will last **TWO AND A HALF YEARS**³¹.

The Gemara discusses the verse cited at the beginning of the *Baraisa*:

What is the meaning of: *It shall speak of the End, and it shall not lie?*³²

The Gemara answers:

R' Shmuel Bar Nachmani said in the name of R' Yonasan: May the very essence of those who calculate “Ends” suffer agony!³³ **For thy say: “Since the date of the End that we**

²⁸ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Psalms 80:6. According to R' Simlai, *You made them drink tears* [for] *a third* means that G-d made the Jewish people drink the bitter waters of exile – first in Egypt and subsequently in Babylonia – for a period equal to one-third of the final exile. Since the Egyptian exile lasted 400 years (see previous note) and the Babylonian exile 70 years (Jeremiah 29:10), it follows that the final exile will last 1,410 [3 x 470] years (*Rashi*).

²⁹ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Haggai 2:6. R' Akiva interpreted this verse as teaching that after the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jews will enjoy another period of limited glory – *Another one, it shall be slight*. Then the Messiah will come – *I will shake the heavens and the earth* (see *Rashi*).

According to *Maharsha*, however, R' Akiva understood the verse as meaning that there will be another *exile*, but it will be slight, and then the Messiah will come. In R' Akiva's view, this prophecy referred to Bar Koziva, who led a revolt against Rome approximately fifty-three years after the Second Temple's destruction. R' Akiva considered Bar Koziva to be the Messiah (see Midrash *Eichah Rabbasi*; Yerushalmi Taanis 4:4; Gemara above, 93b note N; Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 11:3; Doros HaRishonim vol. 4 §621).

³⁰ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Unlike the verses expounded by the Sages and R' Simlai, which indeed speak of the final redemption, the verse expounded by R' Akiva refers to a different topic (*Yad Ramah*).

³¹ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** The verse expounded by R' Akiva does not refer to the period *after* the Second Temple was destroyed. Rather, it means that *during* the Second Temple era, the Jews will enjoy a relatively short period of sovereignty. For the rest of that era, they will be ruled by foreign powers. This is indeed what happened. The Second Temple stood for 420 years, but the Jewish people enjoyed complete independence for only the 70 years of the Hasmonean dynasty and the 52 years of the Herodian dynasty. (Although it is stated in Seder Olam Rabbah ch. 30 [and Avodah Zarah 9a] that the Hasmonean and Herodian dynasties each lasted 103 years, they were fully independent for only 70 and 52 years respectively.) Several years after the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jews enjoyed a short period of independence during the two-and-a-half years of Bar Koziva's reign in Jerusalem [3,886-9] (*Rashi*).

³² **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** Why does the verse use the verb **N** to signify speaking?

³³ **ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note:** The Gemara is answering that the verb **N** is used to allude to this curse.

[The Gemara in Rosh Hashanah (31a; see Hagahos HaBach ibid §7) and Kesubos (105b) records a slightly different version of the curse: May their soul suffer agony (see *Rashi* here; cf. Kiddushin 29b). A similar expression appears in Jeremiah (15:9), which *Rashi* (ad loc.) relates to the verse in Deuteronomy (28:65): agony of the soul (see also Job 1:20 and 31:39; Shabbos 127b and *Rashi* ibid.)]

Yirmiyahu 15:9. She who has borne seven languishes; she has fainted away; her sun has gone down while it was still day; she has been ashamed and confounded; and the remnant of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, says the Lord.

Devarim 28:65. And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of your foot have rest; but the Lord shall give you there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.

calculated **has arrived and [the Messiah] did not come, he will never come!**³⁴ Rather, one should wait for him, as it is said: *if he tarries, wait for him.*³⁵ Lest you counter that we are

³⁴

ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: Calculating the date of the Redemption:

The Gemara apparently forbids any attempt to calculate when the Messiah will come. This prohibition is codified by *Rambam* in *Hilchos Melachim* 12:2. Yet, throughout the generations, great sages have predicted and announced such dates (see *Margaliyos HaYam* §10, who cites several examples). *Rambam* deals with this problem in *Iggeres Teiman*, where he is hard put to explain *Rav Saadia Gaon's* calculation of the "End." The only justification he finds is that in the Gaon's generation there was a need to strengthen the faith in the coming of the Messiah and so he offered a possible "End" in the near future. [This is presumably the reason why *Rambam* himself advanced a date.]

Ben Avraham – forgive us for belaboring this point (it is, though, the *ikkar* of our concern), but throughout Tanakh the emphasis is on HaShem as our Savior and Redeemer, and the emphasis is on what will happen in association with, and what the world will look like, in the "End" times (*Katz HaYamim*). When did the *ikkar* become "faith in the coming of the Messiah"? Oh, yes, we have heard over, and over, and over again that what we MEAN when we SAY, "**The greatest simchah with the coming of the Mashiach tzidkeinu,**" is not that we are over-emphasizing the *Mashiach*, but rather we are interested in *Yemos HaMashiach* – the Messianic Age and all that those days will entail. However, when the phrase, "**there was a need to strengthen the faith in the coming of the Messiah,**" is injected into the conversation, are we just to assume that everybody knows what we really mean? (See *Avos* 2:5.)

In our opinion, what the 12th *ikkar* of the *Rambam* represents in the proverbial "light at the end of the tunnel." No matter how long the Exile, no matter how desperate the circumstances are, we are to have steadfast faithfulness that the *Geulah* is ever approaching, and we are not to give up on HaShem, His Torah, or our obligation to be true to Yiddishkeit. But to name the Age after a man, and to strengthen the belief in the coming of a man, concerns us greatly.

The *goyim* have already over-emphasized the Messiah (at least according to their misinterpretation of the concept). Should we not distance ourselves from the *goyim* on this subject, especially when we have perfectly reasonable alternatives: Placing the emphasis on HaShem and the prophecies of the "End Times"?

Rambam and *Abarbanel* give broader grounds for permitting the search for the "End." In their view, the prohibition is only against making a *definite* prediction, which, if proven wrong, could cause people to lose their faith. These commentators point out that after expressing the prohibition, the Gemara adds, in explanation: *For thy say, "Since the End came and [the Messiah] did not come, he will never come."* Therefore, if one advances an interpretation of these verses only as a possible meaning, not as a definite conclusion, it is permitted (*Sefer HaGeulah* ch. 4; *Mayanei HaYeshuah* 1:2; see *Rashi*).

Ramban (*ibid.*) also suggests that the Sages, being close to the destruction of the Temple, knew that the redemption was still far off. Therefore, they forbade all investigation of the 'End' so as not to discourage the people with the length of the bitter exile. This, he maintains, is no longer applicable in his times, 1,200 years into the exile.

Rashi apparently follows the lenient approach. After explaining a passage dealing with the 'End' (*Daniel* 8:14), *Rashi* concludes: "We await the fulfillment of G-d's promise to redeem us, even though one [predicted] 'End' after another has passed. If the 'End' predicted by a commentator passes, then we know he erred, and whoever comes after him should search and interpret otherwise."

In explaining how great sages (including even *Tannaim*) erred in their calculations, *Rambam* (*ibid.*) states that it was G-d's will that then "End" be concealed (see also *Rashi* to *Daniel* 11:35; *Ibn Ezra*, end of commentary to v. 30 *ibid.*).

However, these sages did not necessarily err in the conventional sense of the word. As mentioned above (97a note N), there are many times suited for the redemption, when the Messiah would have come if only the generation had been worthy. The various predictions made by our great sages were for those propitious times (see *Ramban* *ibid.*; see also *Maharal*, *Netzach Yisrael* end of ch. 44; *Bnei Yisaschar*, cited by *Margaliyos HaYam* end of §10).

³⁵

ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: Habakkuk 2:3. That is, *if he tarries* after the time ... N ...

Chavakkuk 2:2. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, so that he who reads it may run. 3. For the vision is still for an appointed time, and it [the vision] speaks concerning The End, and does not lie; though it [the fulfillment of the vision of The End] seems slow, wait for it [The End]; because it [The End] will surely come, it [the fulfillment of the vision of The

awaiting the Messiah, but [G-d] is not awaiting him,³⁶ Scripture therefore states: *And therefore HaShem waits³⁷ – to grant you favor; and therefore He is exalted – to grant you mercy.*³⁸ And if you ask that since we are awaiting the Messiah and G-d is awaiting him – who is preventing his arrival – the answer is that the Divine Attribute of Justice is preventing him from coming.³⁹ And if you ask that since the Divine Attribute of Justice prevents him from coming, why do we await him [?]⁴⁰ – the answer is that we await him in order to receive reward,⁴¹ as it is stated: *Fortunate are all who wait for him.*⁴²

The Gemara digresses to record another teaching based on this verse [*Habakkuk 2:3*]:
Abaye said: the world is comprised of not less than thirty-six righteous people in each generation who receive the countenance of the Divine Presence,⁴³ as it is stated: *Fortunate are all who wait for Him,*⁴⁴ and the word “for Him” has the numerical value of thirty-six.⁴⁵

The Gemara challenges Abaye’s teaching:

End] will not come late. 4. Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright in him; but **the just shall live by his faith.**

³⁶ ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: ... N ...

³⁷ ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: ... N ...

³⁸ ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: ... N ...

³⁹ ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: ... N ...

⁴⁰ ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: ... N ...

⁴¹ ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: ... N ...

⁴² Ben Avraham – Avos states that we are to serve without seeking or expecting a reward ... ?

⁴³ ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: ... N ...

Yishayhu 30:18. And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious to you, and **therefore will He be exalted**, that He may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; **happy are all those who wait for Him.** 19. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more; **He will be very gracious to you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you.**

Rashi, Yishayahu 30:18 – Therefore Because you would not obey. **the Lord shall wait to be gracious to you** He (acc. to *Parshandatha*) does not skip for you over the evil decree, which was decreed upon you, in order to hasten and to bring the good, but He will wait until its end comes. **and therefore, He shall withdraw to have mercy upon you** (ירום) He shall draw Himself far away to have mercy upon you. **for the Lord is a God of justice** and He first metes out justice upon those who rebel against Him. **fortunate are all who wait for Him** for the consolations that **He promised, for nothing shall fail.**

Rashi, Yishayahu 30:19 – For days will yet come that he who remains to be dwelling in Zion and in Jerusalem, will be righteous. ([Manuscripts read:] For days will yet come and a righteous nation will dwell in Zion and in Jerusalem.) ([Other manuscripts read:] For the nation that He shall leave to be dwelling in Zion and in Jerusalem, shall be righteous people.) **you shall not weep** You shall not need to offer supplication to the Holy One, blessed be He, with weeping, for, at the sound of your cry, **He shall respond to you.**

⁴³ ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: ... N ...

⁴⁴ Rashi, *Yishayahu 30:18* –

⁴⁵ ArtScroll Gemara Foot Note: ... N ...