

Who is Armilus?

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NOTE: This is not intended to be a teaching directly from Scripture concerning the Anti-Messiah. This teaching merely reveals the ancient Jewish tradition of Armilus and how it plays into Jewish eschatology. Many are unaware of this ancient character in Jewish tradition and how this tradition has fashioned the Jewish view of the end of days.

“And when the ish hamufkarut (man of lawlessness-Anti-Messiah) will be revealed, whom HaAdon will destroy by the Ruach of His mouth...” 2 Thess.2:8a

ARMILUS is the person in Jewish eschatology and tradition known as the anti-Moshiach. Armilus appears frequently in the later *Apocalyptic Midrashim*, such as *Midrash Va-Yosha*, *Sefer Zerubbavel*, and *Nistarot shel R. Shimon b. Yohai*. He is also mentioned in the *Targum pseudo-Jonathan*, **Yeshayahu 11:14** and in the *Targum Yerushalmi A (Devarim 34:3)*.

Armilus¹ is first mentioned in Saadiah Gaon's (b.892, d.942) *Emunot ve-De'ot (Ma'amar 8)*, apparently under the influence of *Sefer Zerubbavel*. The ancient tradition of Armilus thus originated not earlier than the beginning of this period at the latest. Its basis, however, is the Talmudic legend of Moshiach the Son of Yosef, who would be slain in the war between the nations prior to the redemption that would come through Moshiach the Son of David (Suk. 52a). In *Otot ha-Mashi'ah (Midreshei Ge'ullah, p. 320)*, there is reference to "Ha Satan" Armilus whom the *Goyim* (nations) call Anti-Messiah.

- **Talmud - Mas. Sukkah 52a** And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart.¹ is it not, they said, a fortiori argument? If in the future² when they will be engaged in mourning and the Evil Inclination will have no power over them, ³ the Torah⁴ nevertheless says, men separately and women separately, how much more so now⁵ when they are engaged in rejoicing and the Evil Inclination has sway over them.⁶What is the cause of the mourning [mentioned in the last cited verse]? 1 — R. Dosa and the Rabbis differ on the point. One explained, The cause is the slaying of Messiah the son of Joseph, ⁷ and the other explained, The cause is the slaying of the Evil Inclination. It is well according to him who explains that the cause is the slaying of Messiah the son of Joseph, since that well agrees with the Scriptural verse, And they shall look upon me because they have thrust him through, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son; ⁸ but according to him who explains the cause to be the slaying of the Evil Inclination, is this [it may be objected] an occasion for mourning? Is it not rather an occasion for rejoicing? Why then should they weep? — [The explanation is] as R. Judah expounded: In the time to come⁹ the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring the Evil Inclination and slay it in the presence of the righteous and the wicked. To the righteous it will have the appearance of a towering hill, and to the wicked it will have the appearance of a hair thread. Both the former and the latter will weep; the righteous will weep saying, ‘How were we able to overcome such a towering hill!’ The wicked also will weep saying, ‘How is it that we were unable to conquer this hair thread!’ And the Holy One, blessed be He, will also marvel together with them, as it is said, Thus saith YHWH of Hosts, If it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days, it shall¹⁰ also be marvelous in My eyes.¹¹R. Assi stated, The Evil Inclination is at first like the thread of a spider, but ultimately¹² becomes like cart ropes, as it is said, Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope.¹³Our Rabbis taught, The Holy One, blessed be He, will say to the Messiah, the son of David (May he reveal himself speedily in our days!), ‘Ask of me anything, and I will give it to thee’, as it is said, I will tell of the decree etc. this day have I begotten thee, ask of me and I will give the nations for thy inheritance.¹⁴ But when he will see that the Messiah the son of Joseph is slain, he will say to Him, ‘Master of the Universe, I ask of Thee only the gift of life.’ As to life’, He would answer him, ‘Your father David has already prophesied this concerning you’, as it is said, He asked life of thee, thou gavest it him, [even length of days for ever and ever].¹⁵R. ‘Awira or, as some say, R. Joshua b. Levi, made the

¹ He is considered the Gog mentioned by the prophets by Saadia, just under another name.

following exposition: The Evil Inclination has seven names. The Holy One, blessed be He, called it Evil, as it is said, For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.¹⁶ Moses called it the Uncircumcised, as it is said, Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart.¹⁷ David called it Unclean, as it is said, Create me a clean heart, O YHWH, ¹⁸ which implies that there is an unclean one. Solomon called it the Enemy, as it is said, If thine enemy¹⁹ be hungry, give him bread²⁰ to eat and if he be thirsty give him water to drink.²¹ For thou wilt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord will reward thee;²² read not, 'will reward thee'²³ but 'will cause it to be at peace with thee.'²⁴ Isaiah called it the Stumbling-Block, as it is said, Cast ye up, Cast ye up, clear the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.²⁵ Ezekiel called it Stone, as it is said, And I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh.²⁶ Joel called it the Hidden One, as it is said, But I will remove far off from you the hidden one.²⁷ Our Rabbis taught: 'But I will remove far off from you the hidden one',²⁷ refers to the Evil Inclination which is constantly hidden in the heart of man; and will drive him into a land barren and desolate²⁸ means, to a place where there are no men for him to attack; with his face toward the eastern sea,²⁸ [implies] that he set his eyes against the First Temple²⁹ and destroyed it and slew the scholars who were therein; and his hinder part toward the western sea²⁸ [implies] that he set his eyes against the Second Temple and destroyed it and slew the scholars who were therein. That his foulness may come up and his ill-savour may come up²⁸ [means] that he leaves the other nations in peace and attacks only Israel.³⁰ Because he hath done great things.²⁸ Abaye explained, Against scholars³¹ more than against anyone; ³² as was the case when Abaye heard a certain man saying to a woman, 'Let us arise betimes and go on our way'. 'I will', said Abaye, 'follow them in order to keep them away from transgression' and he followed them for three parasangs across the meadows. When they parted company³³ he heard them say, 'Our company is pleasant, the way is long'.³⁴ 'If it were I', ³⁵ said Abaye, 'I could not have restrained myself', and so went and leaned in deep anguish against a doorpost, when a certain old man³⁶ came up to him and taught him: The greater the man, the greater his Evil Inclination. R. Isaac stated, The [Evil] Inclination of a man grows stronger within him from day to day.

Armilus must be understood within the context assigned to him throughout Torah literature. He is said to be the head of Edom, the King of Rome, and the ultimate enemy of Yisrael. Armilus thus is taught to both sit as head of the Catholic Church and as head of the nations of United Europe, which today can be a reference to the European Union. As such Armilus will represent that world body (the Church) which claims to represent the true messiah of Yisrael. Armilus is thus said to be the anti-messiah, or as most Christians refer to him, the "anti-Christ."

What makes the Christian term "anti-Christ" so ironic is that the Armilus "anti-Christ" is to be the one who is to confront YHWH's true Moshiach. The Christians who believe their "Christ JESUS" is Messiah are destined to be led and ruled over by one who heads the Church as their Messiah, but who in reality will be their own anti-Christ. During his political reign none of this is to be apparent, at least until the true Moshiach Yahshua comes again and destroys both Church and the false "Christ" (who is the Armilus/Jesus). How ironic that the one whom the Christians believe will lead them to world domination will be none other than the archetype adversary of both YHWH and Yisrael. To say it bluntly, the coming "Christ" will be the anti-Messiah. How ironic this will be for sincere, moral and good Christians around the world.

The identity of Armilus, anti-Messiah, with Christ/Jesus must be explained. For the Christians are waiting for what they believe will be a second coming of "JESUS" and indeed they will have this. Christ will come again. JESUS will indeed "return", and he will return to lead his "Church" in the final and ultimate battle against his brothers, Yisrael.

Of the numerous conjectures about the origin of the name Armilus, the most probable is that it is derived from Romulus (founder of Rome, with Remus), although other suggestions are that it may be a corruption of Angra-Mainyu², the Persian Elohim of evil, or from the Greek 'Arimanoj (Ahriman³). The legend that he was born of a beautiful virgin likewise connects it with **Rome**.

² Angra Mainyu (Avestan) or Ahriman (Middle Persian انمیره) is the Evil equivalent of the deity Ahura Mazda in Zoroastrianism. The name does not occur in the Old Persian inscriptions. In the Avesta he is called the twin-brother of the Holy Spirit, and contrasted with Spenta Mainyu. He is the all-destroying Satan, the source of all evil in the world and like Ahura Mazda,

It is most likely that as a result of the sufferings of the Jews at the hands of the Romans at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, and during and after the Bar Kokva War, and especially after Constantine Christianity had conquered the Roman Empire and initiated a ruthless persecution of Judaism from which it had sprung, the Jews began to regard Rome, founded by Romulus, as the kingdom of HaSatan, the antithesis of the kingdom of Heaven. Hence they applied the name of Armilus to that diabolic power which had gained a temporary, global victory.

Throughout Biblical and later Torah literature Rome/Europe is always referred to as Edom. Edom is one of the Scriptural names given to Ya'akov's twin brother and sworn enemy Esav. Therefore, all references to Edom, Scriptural and otherwise must always be understood as a reference first to Rome and then to Christianity in general, which inherited the role of Rome in the world.

Roman Catholicism has stood at the pinnacle of world-wide Christianity for nearly two thousand years. In spite of it not being the only Church, it is nevertheless the greatest, wealthiest and most powerful Church. As such it has carried out the mission of its Edomite ancestor Esav and has mercilessly persecuted Ya'akov (Yisrael) in the most cruel and unyielding of ways. While some wish to embrace the opinion that since World War Two the anti-Semitism of the Catholic Church has waned and that today Jews and Catholics enjoy unprecedented good relations, others however, are most weary of this.

Most Jews in positions of knowing look today upon the Catholic Church with the wisdom of King Solomon of Yisrael who said, "there is nothing new under the sun." In other words, any and all apparent gestures of good will from the Catholic Church towards Yisrael are viewed with the greatest of suspicion as having ominous ulterior motives. Those espousing this view point to the terrible relationship between the Vatican and the State of Yisrael as ample proof of the Church's real intent and outlook on Yisrael. Those holding to this view believe that the Church is as much the adversary of Yisrael today as it has always been. In light of this, the coming integration of secular Europe under the religious/secular leadership of the Vatican is considered and feared to be an all too real possibility.

Armilus and his evil deeds are described in detail only in the above-mentioned later Hebrew *Midrashim* now republished with detailed introduction and valuable notes, by J. Even Shemuel (Kaufmann) in his *Midreshei Ge'ullah* (1942). Armilus is the least of the kings, the son of a bondwoman, and monstrous in appearance (*Midreshei Ge'ullah*, *Sefer Eliyahu*, 42; *Yemot ha-Mashi'ah*, 96-97; *Nistarot shel R. Shimon b. Yohai*, 4, 195; see also textual variants, 382b, 402). He is frequently referred to briefly as "the son of a stone." This brief reference is fully explained in a legend:

existed since the beginning of the world. Ahriman chose evil consciously, and by this act he created death. On Judgment Day he will be defeated by Spenta Mainyu and will disappear from the present world forever. The later sect of the Zurvanites held that both were visible manifestations of the primeval principle *zruvan akarana* (infinite time). Some scholars believe the Zoroastrian belief in Angra Mainyu was passed onto Judeo-Christian beliefs through the concept of Satan, the chief agent of evil. According to this view, prior to Babylonian captivity (586-538 BCE), Judaism held the belief that Satan was an agent of YHWH and that he tested man's loyalty to YHWH. After Cyrus the Great permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem, some Jewish groups came to regard Satan as YHWH's rival and the master of evil. The dualism of Zoroastrianism was a seminal influence on the Book of Revelation and on Apocalyptic literature. Neoplatonism also references Ahriman. By contrasting Angra Mainyu with Spenta Mainyu, Zoroaster distinguished the two poles of a particular dynamic, that of creation and destruction, which was whole within Ahura Mazda. Zoroastrians believed in a completely dualistic form of religion.

"Zoroaster was thus the first to teach the doctrines of an individual judgment, Heaven and Hell, the future resurrection of the body, the general Last Judgment, and life everlasting for the reunited soul and body. These doctrines were to become familiar articles of faith to much of mankind, through borrowings by Judaism, Christianity and Islam; yet it is in Zoroastrianism itself that they have their fullest logical coherence... "Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the revealed world-religions, and it has probably had more influence on mankind, directly and indirectly, than any other single faith." - Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979, p. 1)

³ Ahriman is the inspirer of materialistic science and commercialism, and permeates modern culture with deadening forces. Ahriman manifests especially at 666-year intervals; the contemporary is 1998 CE = 3x666. Ahriman-in-the-flesh will likely present himself as the Messiah. This Messiah does not reappear in a physical body, but in a super-physical, ethereal form. Ahriman may incarnate "macrocosmically" in our computers. Ahrimanic secret societies influence politics, finance, and culture.

"They tell that in Rome there is a marble statue⁴ of a beautiful virgin⁵, fashioned not by human hand but by the Holy One Blessed be He, who created it in His might.

The wicked of the nations of the world, the sons of Belial⁶, come and warm her and lie with her, and He preserves their seed within the stone from which He creates a being and forms it into a child, whereupon she splits asunder and there issues from her the likeness of a man whose name is HaSatan Armilus, whom the *Goyim* (nations) call Anti-Messiah. He is 12 cubits tall and two cubits broad, there is a span between his eyes which are crooked and red, his hair is golden-colored, the soles of his feet are green, and he has two heads" (*Pirkei ha-Mashi'ah*, in *Midreshei Ge'ullah*, p. 320). This Armilus will deceive the whole world into believing that he is Elohim and will reign over the entire world. He will come with ten kings⁷ and together they will fight over Jerusalem.

Armilus will banish Yisrael "to the wilderness" and it will be a time of unprecedented distress for Yisrael: there will be increasing famine, and the *Goyim* (nations) will expel the Jews from their lands, and they will hide in caves and towers. Armilus will conquer not only Jerusalem but also Antioch. "He will take the stone from which he was born," and make her "the chief of all idolatry."

All the *Goyim* (nations) will bow down to her, burn incense and pour out libations to her, "and whosoever will venture to look upon her will be unable to do so, for no man can look upon her face by reason of her beauty" (*Sefer Zerubbavel*, in *Midreshei Ge'ullah*, p. 80ff.). The legendary "marble virgin" is based on the fable current in the Middle Ages, and associated with the name of Virgil, that in Rome there was a stone statue of a virgin with which the Romans had immoral relations, though it also probably contains elements of the immaculate conception and the Roman worship of images.

Elohim will war against the host of Armilus (**Gog and Magog**), and all this host and all Yehudah's enemies will perish in the valley of Arbel. 500 men of Yisrael, with Nehemiah and Eliyahu at their head, will defeat 500,000 of the host of Armilus. Then there will be a great deliverance for Yisrael and the Kingdom of Heaven will spread over all the earth.

⁴ An entirely different conception of Armilus is found in the pseudepigraphs: "Zerubbabel," "Otot ha-Mashiaĥ" (Signs of the Messiah) and "Tefillat R. Simon b. Yoĥai" (Prayer of R. Simon b. Yochai). Aside from a few unimportant variants in these three versions—the Zerubbabel seems to show the earlier, shorter form—they agree in the following description of Armilus: In Rome there is a splendid marble statue of a beautiful girl which Elohim Himself made in the beginning of the world (מששת ימי בראשית).

⁵ The city of the statue is obviously Rome; the association of a statue of a woman to this place is a not-to-subtle reference to the Madonna, the virgin Mother Mary. The child who comes forth from the statue sired by the priests, who in this case would be interpreted as Catholic, would be none other than Jesus. What the ancient prophecy is apparently telling us is the true secret identity of Armilus. Armilus is none other than Jesus. Judging from this Midrash, the Christians will have their long awaited "second" coming, only their Jesus Christ and anti-Christ will actually be one and the same person. Now here is the greatest stroke of historical irony, Jesus the Christ will "appear" to lead a modern day religious/secular new European empire under the banner of what will become a re-organized Church. Jesus/ Esav will sit upon his throne and as in the past lust to usurp the position of his brother Ya'akov. Thus, Armilus will attack Yisrael and Yerushalayim. The True Moshiaĥ of Yisrael (Yahshua) will return to face him. A great battle (Gog & Magog / Armageddon,) will occur. Armilus is destined to wreck havoc on all those Jews who did not accept him as their messiah. Much is to happen during this period of great travail. Yet, in the end, Armilus will meet his fate at the hands of the true Moshiaĥ Ben David-the Jewish Yahshua.

⁶ The lawless one of 2 Thess. In Hebrew it means "without-yoke". So Belial is one without the yoke of Torah.

⁷ Could be a symbol for the false 10 Sefirot of the back side of the Tree of Life rather than real kings.

These are the main features of the Armilus legend, as contained in *Sefer Zerubbavel*. In the other smaller *Midrashim*⁸ and in the works of *Saadia Gaon* and *Hai Gaon*. All these legends, that embody the beautiful and the moral as well as the curious and the coarse, originated from an intermingling of Persian, Roman, and Christian beliefs with an ancient Jewish tradition concerning "Messianic birth pangs" which would precede the Messianic age and during which Moshiach the Son of Yosef would be killed by Romulus-Rome, even as Yahshua was killed by Rome, which had adopted the belief, so strange in Jewish eyes, in a Queen of heaven and in beautiful stone images and idols.

The yearning for the downfall of Christian Rome, which persecuted Yisrael after adopting its Torah⁹, gave rise to the legend of Armilus, the anti-Moshiach, who would multiply evils upon Yisrael. But Moshiach the Son of David would vanquish him (Romulus-Rome) and bring the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth.

⁸ **Armilus in the Apocalyptic Midrashim.** Armilus is for Saadia, or rather for Saadia's sources, nothing more or less than the last powerful anti-Jewish king, the Gog of the prophets under another name (compare "Emunot we-De'ot," ed. Fischel, viii. 152-154; ed. Landauer, pp. 239-241). The same thing is said of Gog that Saadia says of Armilus in "Aggadot Mashiaĥ" in Jellinek, "B. H." iii. 141; but the role ascribed there to the Messiah, son of Joseph, shows that this Midrash is not Saadia's source.

⁹ Throughout history, the persecutions of Yisrael have come from Rome.