

Chapter 4

That shall be enough about the false boast and pride of the Jews, who would move God with sheer lies to regard them as his people.

Now we come to the main subject, their asking God for the Messiah. Here at last they show themselves as true saints and pious children. At this point they certainly do not want to be accounted liars and blasphemers but reliable prophets, asserting that the Messiah has not yet come but will still appear.

Who will take them to task here for their error or mistake? Even if all the angels and God himself publicly declared on Mount Sinai or in the temple in Jerusalem that the Messiah had come long ago and that he was no longer to be expected, God himself and all the angels would have to be considered nothing but devils. So convinced are these most holy and truthful prophets that the Messiah has not yet appeared but will still come.

Nor will they listen to us. They turned a deaf ear to us in the past and still do so, although many fine scholarly people, including some from their own race, have refuted them so thoroughly that even stone and wood, if endowed with a particle of reason, would have to yield. Yet they rave consciously against recognized truth. Their accursed rabbis, who in deed know better, wantonly poison the minds of their poor youth and of the common man and divert them from the truth. For I believe that if these writings were read by the common man and the youth they would stone all their rabbis and hate them more violently than they do us Christians. But these villains prevent our sincere views from coming to their attention.

If I had not had the experience with my papists, it would have seemed incredible to me that the earth should harbor such base people who knowingly fly in the face of open and

manifest truth, that is, of God himself. For I never expected to encounter such hardened minds in any human breast, but only in that of the devil. However, I am no longer amazed by either the Turks' or the Jews' blindness, obduracy, and malice, since I have to witness the same thing in the most holy fathers of the church, in pope, cardinals, and bishops.

O you terrible wrath and incomprehensible judgment of the sublime Divine Majesty! How can you be so despised by the children of men that we do not forthwith tremble to death before you? What an unbearable sight you are, also to the hearts and eyes of the holiest men, as we see in Moses and the prophets. Yet these stony hearts and iron souls mock you so defiantly.

However, although we perhaps labor in vain on the Jews for I said earlier that I don't want to dispute with them we nonetheless want to discuss their senseless folly among ourselves, for the strengthening of our faith and as a warning to weak Christians against the Jews, and, chiefly, in honor of God, in order to prove that our faith is true and that they are entirely mistaken on the question of the Messiah.

We Christians have our New Testament, which furnishes us reliable and adequate testimony concerning the Messiah. That the Jews do not believe it does not concern us; we believe their accursed glosses still less. We let them go their way and wait for their Messiah. Their unbelief does not harm us; but as to the help they derive and to date have derived from it, they may ask of their long-enduring exile. That will, in deed, supply the answer for us. Let him who will not follow lag behind. They act as though they were of great importance to us. Just to vex us, they corrupt the sayings of Scripture. We do not at all desire or require their conversion for any advantage, usefulness, or help accruing to us there from. All that we do in this regard is prompted rather by a concern for their welfare. If they do not want it, they can disregard it; we are excused and can easily dispense with them, together with all that they are, have, and can do for salvation. We have a better knowledge of Scripture, thanks be to God; this we are certain of, and all the devils shall never deprive us of it, much less the miserable Jews.

Genesis 49:10

First we want to submit the verse found in Genesis 49:10:
"The scepter shall not depart from Judah..."

until *Shiloh* comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." This saying of the holy patriarch Jacob, spoken at the very end of his life, has been tortured and crucified in many ways down to the present day by the modern, strange Jews, in violation of their own conscience. For they realize fully that their twisting and perverting is nothing but wanton mischief. Their glosses remind me very much of an evil, stubborn shrew who clamorously contradicts her husband and insists on having the last word although she knows she is in the wrong. Thus these blinded people also suppose that it suffices to bark and to prattle against the text and its true meaning; they are entirely indifferent to the fact that they are lying impudently. I believe they would be happier if this verse had never been written rather than that they should change their mind. This verse pains them intensely, and they cannot ignore it.

The ancient, true Jews understood this verse correctly, as we Christians do, namely, that the government or scepter should remain with the tribe of Judah until the advent of the Messiah; then "to him shall be the obedience of the peoples," to him they will adhere. That is, the scepter shall then not be confined to the tribe of Judah, but, as the prophets later explain, it shall be extended to all peoples on earth at the time of the Messiah. However, until he appears, the scepter shall remain in that small nook and corner, Judah. That, I say, is the understanding of the prophets and of the ancient Jews; this they cannot deny. For also their Chaldaean Bible, which they dare oppose as little as the Hebrew Bible itself, shows this clearly.

In translation it reads thus: "The shultan shall not be put away from the house of Judah nor the saphra from his children's children eternally until the Messiah comes, whose is the kingdom, and the peoples will make themselves obedient to

him." This is a true and faithful translation of the Chaldaean text, as no Jew or devil can deny.

For Moses' Hebrew term *shebet* ["scepter"] we use the word *Zepter* in German, whereas the Chaldaean translator chooses the word *shultan*. Let us explain these words. The Hebrew *shebet* is the designation for a virga; it is really not a rod in the usual sense, for this term suggests to the German the thought of birch switches with which children are punished. Nor is it a staff used by invalids and the aged for walking. But it designates a mace held upright, such as a judge holds in his hand when he acts in his official capacity. As luxury increased in the world, this mace was made of silver or of gold. Now it is called a scepter, that is, a royal rod. *Skeptron* is a Greek word, but it has now been taken up into the German language. In his first book, Homer describes his King Achilles as having a wooden scepter adorned with small silver nails. From this we learn what scepters originally were and how they gradually came to be made entirely of silver and gold. In brief, it is the rod, whether of silver, wood, or gold, carried by a king or his representative. It symbolizes nothing other than do minion or kingdom. Nobody questions this.

To make it very clear: the Chaldaean translator does not use the word *shebet*, mace or scepter; but he substitutes the person who bears this rod, saying *shultan*, indicating that a prince, lord, or king shall not depart from the house of Judah; there shall be a sultan in the house of Judah until the Messiah comes. "*Sultan*" is also a Hebrew term, and a word well known to us Christians, who have waged war for more than six hundred years against the sultan of Egypt, and have gained very little to show for it. For the Saracens call their king or prince "*sultan*," that is, lord or ruler or sovereign. From this the Hebrew word *schilt* is derived, which has become a thoroughly German word (*Schild* ["shield"]). It is as though one wished to say that a prince or lord must be his subjects' shield, protection, and defense, if he is to be a true judge, sultan, or lord, etc. Some people even try to trace the German term *Schultheiss* ["village mayor"] back to the word "sultan"; I shall not enter into this.

Saphra is the same as the Hebrew *sopher* (for Chaldee and Hebrew are closely related, indeed they are almost identical, just as Saxons and Swabians both speak German, but still

there is a great difference). The word sopher we commonly translate into the German by means of Kanzler ["chancellor"]. Everyone, including Burgensis, translates the word saphra with scriba or scribe. These people are called scribes in the Gospel. They are not ordinary scribes who write for wages or without official authority. They are sages, great rulers, doctors and professors, who teach, order, and preserve the law in the state. I suppose that it also encompasses the chancelleries, parliaments, councillors, and all who by wisdom and justice aid in governing. That is what Moses wishes to express with the word *mehoqeq*, which designates one who teaches, composes, and executes commands and decrees. Among the Saracens, for instance, the sultan's scribes or secretaries, his doctors, teachers, and scholars, are those who teach, interpret, and preserve the Koran as the law of the land. In the papacy the pope's scribes or saphra are the canonists or jackasses who teach and preserve his decretals and laws. In the empire the doctores legum, the secular jurists, are the emperor's *saphra* or scribes who teach, administer, and preserve the imperial laws.

Thus Judah, too, had scribes who taught and preserved the law of Moses, which was the law of the land. Therefore we have translated the word *mehoqeq* with "master," that is, doctor, teacher, etc. So this passage, "The mehoqeq, i.e., master, will not be taken from between his feet," means that teachers and listeners who sit at their feet will remain in an orderly government. For every country, if it is to endure, must have these two things: power and law. The country, as the saying goes, must have a lord, a head, a ruler. But it must also have a law by which the ruler is guided. These are the mace and the *mehoqeq*, or sultan and saphra. Solomon indicates this also, for when he had received the rod, that is, the kingdom, he prayed only for wisdom so that he might rule the people justly (I Kings 3). For wherever sheer power prevails without the law, where the sultan is guided by his arbitrary will and not by duty, there is no government, but tyranny, akin to that of Nero, Caligula, Dionysius, Henry of Brunswick, and their like. Such does not endure long. On the other hand, where there is law but no power to enforce it, there the wild mob will also do its will and no government can survive. Therefore both must be present: law and power, sultan and saphra, to supplement one another.

Thus the councillors who gathered in Jerusalem and who were to come from the tribe of Judah were the saphra; the Jews called them the Sanhedrin Herod, a foreigner, an Edomite, did away with this, and he himself became both sultan and saphra, mace and mehoqeq in the house of Judah, lord and scribe. Then the saying of the patriarch began to be fulfilled that Judah was no longer to retain the government or the saphra. Now it was time for the Messiah to come and to occupy his kingdom and sit on the throne of David forever, as Isaiah 9:6] prophesies. Therefore let us now study this saying of the patriarch.

"Judah," he declares, "your brothers shall praise you," etc. [Gen. 49:8]. This, it seems to me, requires no commentary; it states clearly enough that the tribe of Judah will be honored above all of his brothers and will enjoy the prerogative. The text continues: "Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies," etc. This also declares plainly that the famous and prominent tribe of Judah must encounter enemies and opposition, but that all will end successfully and victoriously for it. We continue: "Your father's sons shall bow down before you," etc. Again it is clear that this does not refer to the captivity but to the rule over his brothers, all of which was fulfilled in David. But not only did the tribe of Judah, in David, become lord over his brothers; he also spread his rule beyond, like a lion, forcing other nations into submission; for instance the Philistines, the Syrians, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites.

This is what he praises in these beautiful words [Gen. 49:9]: "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, and as a lioness; who dares to rise up against him? This is to say that he was enthroned and established a kingdom which no one could overwhelm, though the adjacent nations frequently and mightily tried to do so.

All right, up to this point the patriarch has established, ordained, and confirmed the kingdom, the sultan, the rod, the saphra in the tribe of Judah. There Judah, the sultan, sits enthroned for his rule. What is to happen now? This, he says: He shall remain thus until the Messiah comes; that is, many will oppose him, at tempting to overthrow and destroy the kingdom and simply make it disappear from the earth. The histories of the kings and the prophets amply testify that all

the Gentile nations ever earnestly strove to do this. And the patriarch himself declares, as we heard before, that Judah must have its foes. For such is the course of events in the world that wherever a kingdom or principality rises to a position of might, envy will not rest until it is destroyed. All of history illustrates this with numerous examples.

However, in this instance the Holy Spirit states: This kingdom in the tribe of Judah is mine, and no one shall take it from me, no matter how angry and mighty he may be, even if the gates of hell should try. The words will still prove true: *Non auferetur*, "It shall not be taken away." You devils and Gentiles may say: Auferetur, we shall put an end to it, we shall devour it, we shall silence it, as Psalm 74 bemoans. But it shall remain undevoured, undevastated. "The shebet or sultan shall not depart from the house of Judah, nor the saphra from his children's children," until the *shiloh* or Messiah comes-no matter how you all rant and rage.

And when he does appear, the kingdom will become far different and still more glorious. For since you would not tolerate the tribe of Judah in a little, narrow corner, I shall change him into a truly strong lion who will become sultan and saphra in all the world. I will do this in such a way that he will not draw a sword nor shed a drop of blood, but the nations will voluntarily and gladly submit themselves to him and obey him. Such shall be his kingdom. For after all, the kingdom and all things are his.

Approach the text, both Chaldaean and Hebrew, with this understanding and this thought, and I wager that your heart together with the letters will surely tell you: By God! that is the truth, that is the patriarch's meaning. And then consult the histories to ascertain whether this has not happened and come to pass in this way and still continues to do so. Again you will be compelled to say: It is verily so. For it is undeniable that the sultan and saphra remained with the tribe of Judah until Herod's time, even if it was at times feeble and was not maintained without the opposition of mighty foes. Nevertheless, it was preserved. Under Herod and after Herod, however, it fell into ruin and came to an end. It was so completely destroyed that even Jerusalem, once the throne-seat of the tribe of Judah, and the land of Canaan were wiped out. Thus the verse was fulfilled which said that the sultan has departed and the Messiah has come.

I do not have the time at present to demonstrate what a rich fountainhead this verse is and how the prophets drew so much information from it concerning the fall of the Jews and the election of the Gentiles, about which the modern Jews and bastards know nothing at all. But we have clearly and forcefully seen from this verse that the Messiah had to come at the time of Herod. The alternative would be to say that God failed to keep his promise and, consequently, lied. No one dare do that save the accursed devil and his servants, the false bastards and strange Jews. They do this incessantly. In their eyes God must be a liar. They claim that they are right when they assert that the Messiah has not yet come, despite the fact that God declared in very plain words that the Messiah would come before the scepter had entirely departed from Judah. And this scepter has been lost to Judah for almost fifteen hundred years now. The clear words of God vouch for this, and so do the visible effect and fulfillment of these same words.

What do you hope to accomplish by engaging an obstinate Jew in a long dispute on this? It is just as though you were to talk to an insane person and prove to him that God created heaven and earth, according to Genesis 1, pointing out heaven and earth to him with your hands, and he would nevertheless prattle that these are not the heaven and earth mentioned in Genesis 1, or that they were not heaven and earth at all, but were called something else, etc. For this verse, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah," etc., is as clear and plain as the verse, "God created heaven and earth." And the fact that this scepter has been removed from Judah for almost fifteen hundred years is as patent and manifest as heaven and earth are, so that one can readily perceive that the Jews are not simply erring and misled but that they are maliciously and willfully denying and blaspheming the recognized truth in violation of their conscience. Nobody should consider such a person worthy of wasting a single word on him, even if it dealt with Markolf the mockingbird, much less if it deals with such exalted divine words and works.

But if anyone is tempted to become displeased with me, I will serve his purpose and give him the Jews' glosses on this text. First I will present those who do not dismiss this text but adhere to it, particularly to the Chaldaean version, which no sensible Jew can deny. These twist and turn as follows: To be

sure, they say, God's promise is certain; but our sins prevent the fulfillment of the promise. Therefore we still look forward to it until we have atoned, etc. Is this not an empty pretext, even a blasphemous one? As if God's promise rested on our righteousness, or fell with our sins! That is tantamount to saying that God would have to become a liar because of our sin, and conversely, that he would have to become truthful again by reason of our righteousness. How could one speak more shamefully of God than to imply that he is a shaking reed which is easily swayed back and forth either by our falling down or standing up?

If God were not to make a promise or keep a promise until we were rid of sin, he would have been unable to promise or do anything from the very beginning. As David says in Psalm 130:3: "If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, Lord, who could stand?" And in Psalm 102 [143:2]: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for no man living is righteous before thee." And there are many more such verses. The example of the children of Israel in the wilderness can be cited here. God led them into the land of Canaan without any righteousness on their part, in fact, with their great sins and shame, solely on account of his promise. In Deuteronomy 9:5 Moses says: "Know therefore that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn and a disobedient people (it seems to me that this may indeed be called sin), but because of the promise which the Lord gave to your fathers," etc. By way of example he often wanted to exterminate them, but Moses interceded for them. So little was God's promise based upon their holiness.

It is true that wherever God promises anything conditionally, or with reservation, saying: "If you will do that, I will do this," then the fulfillment is contingent on our action; for instance, when he declared to Solomon [I Kings 9], "If you will keep my statutes and my ordinances, then this house shall be consecrated to me; if not, I shall destroy it." However, the promise of the Messiah is not thus conditional. For he does not say: "If you will do this or that, then the Messiah will come; if you fail to do it, he will not come." But he promises him unconditionally, saying: "The Messiah will come at the time when the scepter has departed from Judah." Such a promise is based only on divine truth and grace, which ignores

and disregards our doings. That renders this subterfuge of the Jews inane, and, moreover, very blasphemous.

The others who depart from this text subject almost every single word of it to severe and violent misinterpretation. They really do not deserve to have their drivel and filth heard; still, in order to expose their disgrace we must exercise a bit of patience and also listen to their nonsense. For since they depart from the clear meaning of the text, they already stand condemned by their own conscience, which would constrain them to heed the text; but to vex us, they conjure up the Hebrew words before our eyes, as though we were not conversant with the Chaldaean text.

Some engage in fantasies here and say that Shiloh refers to the city of that name, where the ark of the covenant was kept (Judges 21 [cf. I Sam. 4:3]), so that the meaning would be that the scepter shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes, that is, until Saul is anointed king of Shiloh. That is surely foolish prattle. Prior to King Saul not only did Judah have no scepter, but neither did all of Israel. How, then, can it have departed when Saul became king? The text declares that Judah had first been lord over his brothers and that he then became a lion, and therefore received the scepter.

Likewise, before Saul's time no judge was lord or prince over the people of Israel, as we gather from Gideon's speech to the people in reply to their wish that he and his descendants rule over them: "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you" (Judges 7 [8:23]). Nor was there a judge from the tribe of Judah, except perhaps for Othniel [Judg. 3:9], Joshua's immediate successor. All the others down to Saul were from the other tribes. And although Othniel is called Caleb's youngest brother, this does not prove that he was of the tribe of Judah, since he may have had a different father. And it does not make sense that Shiloh should here refer to a city or to Saul's coronation in Shiloh, for Saul was anointed by Samuel in Ramath (I Samuel 10) and confirmed at Gilgal.

In any case, what is the meaning of the Chaldaean text which says that the kingdom belongs to Shiloh and that nations shall be subject to it? When was the city of Shiloh or Saul ever accorded such an honor? Israel is one nation, not many, with one body of laws, one divine worship, one name. There are many nations, however, which have different and various

laws, names, and gods. Now Jacob declares that not the one nation Israel which was already his or was under Judah's scepter but other nations would fall to Shiloh. Therefore this foolish talk reflects nothing other than the great stubbornness of the Jews, who will not submit to this saying of Jacob, although they stand convicted by their own conscience.

Others indulge in the fancy that Shiloh refers to King Jeroboam, who was crowned in Shiloh, and to whom ten tribes of Israel had defected from Rehoboam, the king of Judah (I Kings 12). Therefore, they say, this is Jacob's meaning: The scepter shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh, that is, Jeroboam, comes. This is just as inane as the other interpretation; for Jeroboam was not crowned in Shiloh but in Shechem (I Kings 12). Thus the scepter did not depart from Judah, but the kingdom of Judah remained, together with the tribe of Benjamin and many of the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of these two tribes, as we hear in I Kings 12. Moreover, the entire priesthood, worship, temple, and everything remained in Judah. Furthermore, Jeroboam never conquered the kingdom of Judah, nor did other nations fall to him, as they were to fall to Shiloh.

The third group babbles thus: "Shiloh means 'sent,' and this term applies to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon." So the meaning is that the scepter shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh, that is, the king of Babylon, comes. He was to lead Judah into exile and destroy it. This also doesn't hold water, and a child learning his letters can disprove it. For Shiloh and shiloch are two different words. The latter may mean "sent." But that is not the word found here; it is Shiloh, and that, as the Chaldee says, means "Messiah." But the king of Babylon is not the Messiah who is to come from Judah, as the Jews and all the world know very well. Nor did the scepter depart from Judah even though the Jews were led captive into Babylon. That was just a punishment for seventy years. Also during this time great prophets Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel appeared who upheld the scepter and said how long the exile would be. Furthermore, Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, was regarded as a king in Babylon. And many of those who were led away into captivity returned home again during their lifetime (Haggai 2). This cannot be viewed as loss of the scepter, but as a light flogging. Even if they were deprived of their country for a while by way of punishment, God nonetheless pledged his

precious word that they could remain assured of their land. But during the past fifteen hundred years not even a dog, much less a prophet, has any assurance concerning the land. Therefore the scepter has now definitely departed from Judah. I have written more about this against the Sabbatarians.

The fourth group twists the word shebet and interprets it to mean that the rod will not depart from Judah until Shiloh, that is, his son, will come, who will weaken the Gentiles. These regard the rod as the punishment and exile in which they now live. But the Messiah will come and slay all the Gentiles. That is humbug. It ignores the Chaldaean text entirely something they may and dare not do and is a completely arbitrary interpretation of the word shebet. They overlook the preceding words in which Jacob makes Judah a prince and a lion or a king, adding immediately thereafter that the scepter, or shebet, shall not depart from Judah. How could such an odd meaning about punishment follow right on the heels of such glorious words about a principality or kingdom? The sins which provoked such a punishment would have to have been proclaimed first. But all that we find mentioned here are praise, honor, and glory to the tribe of Judah.

And even if the word shebet does designate a rod for punishment, how would that help them? For the judge's or the king's rod is also a rod of punishment for the evildoers. Indeed, the rod of punishment cannot be any but a judge's or sultan's rod, since the right to administer punishment belongs solely to the authority (Deuteronomy 32): *Mihi vindicatam, "Vengeance is mine."* In any event, this meaning remains unshaken that the scepter or rod of Judah shall remain even if this rod is one of punishment. But this arbitrary interpretation of the rabbis points to a foreign rod which does not rest in Judah's hand but on Judah's back and is wielded by a foreign hand. Even if this meaning were possible which it is not what would we do with the other passage that speaks of the saphra or mehoqeq at his feet? This would then also have to be a foreign lord's mehoqeq and a foreign nation's feet. But since Jacob declares that it is to be Judah and the mehoqeq of his feet, the other term, the rod, must also represent the rule of his tribe.