

BĪRŪNĪ AND ZECHARIAH TRADITIONS

Bīrūnī, *Āthār al-bāqīya* ‘an-il-qurūn al-khāliya (ed. Sachau):¹

[The expression ‘seven heptads’ in Dan 9:25] ‘points to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and this is what Zakariyyā’ b. Berekhyā b. ‘Iddō² mentioned in his book: “I saw a lamp-stand upon which were seven lamps, and each lamp had seven openings (cf. Zech 4:2).” And he previously said: “The hands of Zerubbābēl have laid the foundation for this house, and his hands will complete it (Zech 4:9).” And the space of time from the beginning when the house was founded until its completion was forty-nine years, which are seven heptads.’

Bīrūnī, *Āthār* (ed. Sachau):³

And the 29th of Ab is the memorial day for the murder of Yaḥyā (i.e., John) and his decapitation.⁴ Al-Ma’mūn b. Aḥmad al-Salamī al-Harawī has said that he saw in Jerusalem some piles of stones by a gate which is called the Gate of the Column,⁵ and they had been piled together like hills or mountains. They said they had been dumped over the blood of Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā’, but that the blood rose over them and bubbled until Bukhtnaṣṣar (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar) killed those who had murdered (him) and poured their blood over it. At that time it became still. There is nothing about this in the Gospel, and I do not know what I should say about this, for Bukhtnaṣṣar came to Jerusalem approximately four hundred and forty-five years prior to the execution of Yaḥyā, and the second destruction (of the Temple) took place by means of Vespasian and Titus, the kings of Rome. It is as if the inhabitants of Jerusalem name everybody who destroys it ‘Bukhtnaṣṣar,’ for I have heard certain authors of histories say that the one mentioned is Jūdharz b. Sābūr b. Afqūshā,⁶ one of the kings of the Ashkāniyya.⁷

¹ Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-āthār al-bāqīya ‘ani’l-qurūn al-khāliya: Chronologie orientalischer Völker von Albērūnī* (ed. C. E. Sachau; Leipzig, 1878; repr., Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1923), 16.15-18.

² As in Zech 1:1.

³ Bīrūnī, *Āthār* (ed. Sachau), 301.2-10.

⁴ According to the Melkite Christian festal calendar.

⁵ I.e., the Damascus Gate. See F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 203.

⁶ Afqūshā = Pacorus? He allegedly ravaged a large portion of Syria and Palestine (including Jerusalem) in 40-39 BCE. See Neilson C. Debevoise, *A Political History of Parthia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), 109-15.

⁷ The name given to the Arsacid or Parthian dynasty of Iranian rulers.