

# The Tiburtine Sibyl

[From Ernst Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen: Pseudomethodius, Adso und tiburtinische Sibylle* (Halle an der Saale, Max Niemeyer: 1898), pp. 177-187]

Here begins the prologue

Sibyls in general are all the women called prophets who by divine will are accustomed to interpret to men and announce things to come. The most learned authors report there to have been ten sibyls of whom the first was Persis (Persian); the second was Libica (Libyan); the third was Delfica (Delphic), who prophesied before the Trojan War; the fourth was Cymera (Cimmerian) in Italy; the fifth was Heritrea in Babylonia, who was called Heritrea (Erythraen) after the island on which her songs were sung; the sixth was Samia (Samian), after the island called Samos; the seventh was Amaltea or Cimera (Cumaean); the eighth was Ellesponta (Hellespontine); the ninth was Frigia (Phrygian); and the tenth was Tyburtina (Tiburtine) in Greek and Abulnea in Latin, in whose songs are contained many writings about God and Christ.

Here begins the explanation of the dream

This sibyl was the daughter of King Priam, born from a mother by the name of Hecuba. She was called Tiburtina in Greek but in Latin she was called Abulnea. Wandering around various regions of the earth, she preached in Asia, Macedonia, Erostoquia, Agaguldea, Cilicia, Pamphila, and Galacia. When she had filled this part of the world with her prophecies, she came from there to Egypt, Ethiopia, Bagada, Babylonia, Africa, Libya, Penatpolis, Mauritania, and Palarinus. She preached in all of these provinces and, filled with the spirit of prophecy, prophesied good things to the good and bad things to the bad. We know because in her proclamations she predicted things that were true and those things that she predicted were, in a short time, to come true.

Hearing of her fame, the princes of the Romans immediately reported [about her] in the the presence of the emperor Trajan. Sending legates to her, the emperor had her brought to Rome with great honor.

A hundred men from the Roman senate each saw one (and the same) dream one night. They each saw in a vision as if nine suns in the sky, which had various shapes in them, each distinct from the other. The first sun was splendid, shining over the earth. The second sun was more splended and great, having ethereal brightness. The third sun, blazing with the color of blood, was fiery and terrible, and in the end rather splendid. The fourth sun was ruddy, and there were four (suns?) radiating from it midday (*meridie*). The fifth sun was dark, bloody, and flashing as if in dark thunder. The sixth sun was very dark, and had a barb, like the sting of a scorpion.

The seventh sun was terrible and bloody, having a foul sword in the middle. The eighth sun was spread out, having a bloody color in the middle. The ninth sun was very dark, having only one shining ray. When the Roman sibyl arrived, the Roman citizens saw her and marvelled at her great beauty. She was with a lovely face and an beautiful appearance, and, speaking in words, sufficently arranged with all beauty, she offered sweet speech for her listeners. Coming to her the men who had seen the dream said to her: "Mistress and lady, because your body is truly great and beautiful, the likes of which we have never seen in any woman other than you, may you disclose the dream that we all saw on one and the same night, what future thing it might reveal. Responding, the sibyl said to them: "It is not right to unlock the sacrament of this vision in a place filled with filth and polluted with various contaminants. But come, let us ascend the Aventine mountain and there I will pronounce what is to come to the Roman citizens. And they did as she said. Asking them about it, they recounted to her the vision they had seen. And she said to them:

"The nine suns that you saw presignify all the generations to come. Because you saw them to be dissimilar among themselves, life will be dissimilar among the sons of men. The first sun is the first generation. They will be simple and clear men, loving liberty, truthful, gentle, kind, loving consolations of the poor and quite wise. The second sun is the second generation. They will be men living and growing splendidly, greatly worshipping God, conversing without malice on the earth. The third sun is the third generation. People will rise up against people and there will be great battles in Rome. The fourth sun is the fourth generation. They will be men denying what is true and in those days a woman by the name of Mary will rise up from the line of the Hebrews, having a spouse by the name of Joseph, and from her, without the commingling of the man, will be born from the Holy Spirit the son of God by the name of Jesus and this same woman will be a virgin before this birth and after this birth. He who will be born from her will be true God and true man, just as all the prophets prophesized, and will fulfill the law of the Hebrews. And he will add his own [law] at the same time and his kingdom will last forever and ever. With him being born, an army of angels will be there to the right and to the left saying: 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to men of good will.' A voice will come over him saying: 'Here is my beloved son, listen to him.'"

There were in that place some from the priests of the Hebrews who, hearing these words, became indignant and said to her: "These are terrible words! May this queen be silent!" Responding, the sibyl said to them: "Jews, it is necessary that these things be done, just as has been said, but you will not believe in him." And those ones said: "We do not believe, because [given that] God gave the word and the testament to our fathers, will he withdraw his hand from us?" She responded to them again:

"Your heavenly father is about to father a son, as it is written, who will be similar to his father. And afterward, as the child grows through his stages, there will rise up kings in it (or against him? *in eum*) and princes of the land. In those days Caesar Augustus will have a celebrated name and he will rule in Rome, and he will subject the entire world to himself. Later the priests of the Jews will gather against Jesus, on

account of the many signs he will do, and they will arrest him. They will inflict blows on God with unclean hands and will spit venomous spittle in his sacred face. He will openly give his holy back to the blows and, receiving the blows, will be still. They will give him gall as food and vinegar for his thirst. And they will suspend him on a tree and kill him but it will be of no value to them, because on the third day he will rise and will show himself to his disciples and, with these same ones watching, he will rise into heaven and there will be no end to his kingdom.

And she said to the princes of the Romans: “The fifth sun is the fifth generation and Jesus will choose for himself two fisherman from Galilee and will teach them his own law, saying: ‘Go, and the teaching that you have received from me, teach to all the peoples, subjecting all the nations by means of seventy-two languages (*lignas*).<sup>1</sup> The sixth sun is the sixth generation and they will be attacked in the same city three years and six months. The seventh sun will be the seventh generation and two kings (Hadrian and ?) will rise up and will make many persecutions in the land of the Hebrews on account of God. The eighth sun will be the eighth generation and Rome will be desolate, and the women with child will howl in their tribulations and their pains, saying: ‘Do you not think that we should give birth?’ The ninth sun is the ninth generation and princes of the Romans will rise up to the perdition of many. Then two kings from Syria will rise up and their army will be innumerable like the sand of the sea and they will take the cities and the provinces of the Romans all the way to Chalcedon, and then there will be a great shedding of blood. When they remember all these things, the city and people will tremble, as they destroy the eastern parts. And after this two kings of Egypt will attack four kings and will kill them and their entire army and they will rule for three years and six months. And after them another king by the name of C will rise up, powerful in war, and he will rule for thirty years and will build a temple to God and will implement a law and will do justice on earth on account of God. And after this one will rise another king who will reign a short time and they will attack and kill him. But after this there will be a king by the name of B and from B will proceed King Audon and from Audon will come forth A and from A will proceed A and from this A will be generated A, and this second A will be highly bellicose and a warrior, and from this same A will be born a king by the name of R and from R will be born L and he will have power over 19 kings. And after these will rise up a Salian King from France with the name of K. This one will be great and most pious and powerful and merciful and he will do justice for the poor. There will be such grace of virtue in him that when he goes along a path with trees the tops of the trees will lean toward him. And water in his path will never slow (him) at all. There was no similar king in the Roman empire before him and will not be one after. There will come after him a king by the name of L and after him will reign B and after him will proceed 22 Bs and from B will come forth A and this same one will be highly bellicose and strong in war, and he will wage war a lot on water and land. And he will not be given into the hand of his enemies and he will die as exile outside of his kingdom and his soul in the hand of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:1 (Vulgate) has JC sending out 72 disciples. This seems to be conflated with the account of Pentecost in Acts 2.

Then another king will rise up by the name of V from the Salian region and out of another (region) a Lombard and this same one will hold power in the land against his attackers and against all enemies. And in those days will come forth a king by the name of O and he will be most powerful and strong and good and he will do justice to the poor and will judge rightly. And from this same O will proceed another even more powerful O and there will be under him battles between the pagans and the Christians and the blood of the Greeks will pour and his heart will be in the hand of God and he will reign for seven years. And from this same woman will be born a king by the name of O. He will be bloodthirsty and wicked and without faith or truth and through him there will be much evil and a great shedding of blood and churches will be destroyed under this one's power. And in other regions there will be many tribulations and battles. At that time people will rise up against people in Cappadocia and they will capture Pamphylia in this one's time, by him, because he did not enter through the gate in the sheepfold. This king will rule for four years. After him will rise up a king by the name of A and in his days there will be many battles between Hagarenes and Greeks. Between the pagans there will be many battles and much fighting. They will attack Syria and they will capture Pentapolis (Eastern Libya). This same king will be from the line of the Lombards. Then a Salian king will rise up by the name of E and he will attack the Lombards and there will be many battles and much fighting. This same Salian king will be strong and powerful and for a short time he will rule his kingdom. Then Hagarenes and tyrants will rise up and they will capture Tarento and Bari and they will despoil many cities and wishing to come to Rome, there will be no one but the God of gods and the Lord of lords to resist them. Then the Armenians will destroy Persia, so that the cities that they despoil will never be recovered. And rushing in the Persians will place ditches toward the east and they will attack the Romans and will obtain peace for a time. And a very belligerent king of the Greeks will enter into Jerusalem and destroy the temple of idols. And locusts and caterpillars will come and they will eat all the trees and the fruit of Cappadocia and Cilicia and they will be tortured by hunger and afterward they will not be a time of plenty. And another Salian king will rise up, a strong and very belligerent man, and many parents and neighbors will resent him. And in those days brother will hand over brother to them to death and father will commingle with son and brother with sister and there will be in the land many wicked things and the malice of men; old men sleeping with virgins and bad priests with deceived children. There will be bishops of evil-doing sects and there will happen an effusion of blood in the land. And the imposters will pollute the temples and there will be fornications of wantonness and the sin of the Sodomites so that the vision of the same things may appear to them as an insult. And there will be rapacious, insolent men, hating justice and loving falsehood and the Roman judges will be transformed. If they are allowed to administer judgment today, the next day [their judgements] will be changed on account of the money to be accepted and they will not judge rightly but wrongly. And there will be in those days rapacious and greedy and lying men, loving gifts of falseness, and the law and truth will be destroyed and earthquakes will occur in many regions and the cities on the islands will be submerged by immersion, and there will be throughout these places

pestilences of men and of cattle and mortality of men, and the land will be emptied by enemies and the vanity of the gods will not be able to console them. After this a king will rise up by the name of B and there will be under him wars and he will reign for two years. And after this will rise up a king by the name of A and coming, he will seize the kingdom for some time and will come to Rome and will seize it and his soul will not be killed in the hands of his enemies for all the days of his life, and he will be good and great and he will do justice to the poor and he will live for a long time. But after this one will rise up another king by the name of B and from his same B will proceed 12 B's and he will be from the people of the Lombards and he will rule for up to 100 years. Then after him will rise up a Salian from France by the name of B. Then will be the beginning of sufferings, the likes of which there have not been since the beginning of the world. And there will be in the days of this one great battles and many tribulations and an effusion of blood and earthquakes throughout the cities and the regions of much of the earth will be made captive. And there will be no one who can resist the enemies because at that time God will be angry on the earth. Rome will be attacked with persecution by the sword and it will be captured by the hand of the same king and there will be greedy, tyrannical men hating the poor and oppressing the innocent and saving the guilty. There will be unjust and wicked men and the discreditors of extermination will be made captive, and there will not be in the land anyone who might resist or destroy them on account of their evils and their greeds.

Then there will arise a king of the Greeks by the name of Constans, and he will be king of the Romans and of the Greeks. And he will be great in stature and handsome in appearance, splendid in the face and well put together in every single feature of his members. And his kingdom will end after 112 years. In those days there will be great riches and the land will give fruit abundantly, such that a measure of wheat will be sold for one *denarius*, a measure of wine for two *denarii*, and a measure of oil for one *denarius*. And that same king will have writing before his eyes saying: "King of the Romans, you will conquer for yourself all the kingdom of the Christians." He will lay waste all the islands and the cities of the pagans and destroy all the temples of the idols and he will gather all the pagans for baptism and the cross of Jesus Christ will be erected throughout all the temples. Then Egypt and Ethiopia will come to give his hand to God. He who will not have adored the cross of Jesus Christ will be punished and when 120 years have been completed, the Jews will be converted to the Lord and his will be [regarded as] glorious to all. In those days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in confidence. In that time a prince of iniquity, who will be called Antichrist, will rise up from the tribe of Dan. He will be a son of perdition, the head of pride, the master of error, the fullness of malice, who will subvert the earth and will do prodigies and great signs by means of false simulations. He will delude many through the art of magic so that fire will seem to descend from heaven. And the years will be reduced as if they were months, and the months as if weeks, and the weeks as if days, and the days like hours, and the hours like points. And the foul peoples, that is, Gog and Magog, which Alexander as king of India enclosed, will rise us from the north. These are the 22 kingdoms, whose number is like the sand of the sea. When the king of the Romans shall have heard of this, assembling his army he

will attack them and lay them low to the point of annihilation and afterward he will come to Jerusalem and, with his diadem and all of his royal regalia deposited there, he will surrender the kingdom of the Christians to God the Father and to Jesus Christ, his Son. And when the empire of the Romans shall have ceased, then Antichrist will be clearly revealed and he will sit in the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. With him ruling, the two most excellent men Elijah and Enoch will come forth to announce the coming of the Lord and Antichrist will kill them, and after three days they will be resurrected by the Lord. Then there will be a great persecution, the likes of which never happened before or since. But the Lord will shorten those days on account of the elect and Antichrist will be killed by the power of the Lord, by the archangel Michael in the Mount of Olives.

When the Sibyl had predicted to the Romans these things and many other things to come, and by which signs the Lord would come for the sake of judging, she thundered, saying by way of prophecy:

The sign of judgment will be moistened with sweat, etc.

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A river of fire and sulphur will fall from the heavens.

Then the Lord will judge according to the work of each one and the impious will go to the hell of eternal fire and the just will receive the reward of eternal life. And there will be a new heaven and a new earth and both will remain in perpetuity, and the sea will no longer exist and the Lord will rule with his saints and these same ones will rule with him forever and ever. Amen.