

# THE TRADITIONAL ROOTS OF PRIESTLY MESSIANISM AT QUMRAN\*

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## 1. *Introduction*

It is well known that some of the sectarian documents from Qumran express the expectation of the arrival of a priestly messiah in the end of days.<sup>1</sup> According to 1QS 9:11, the *locus classicus* for the discussion of Qumran messianism, the “messiah of Aaron,” (משיח אהרֹן) was to be accompanied by two additional eschatological figures: a quasi-messianic prophet (נביא) and a lay, presumably royal, messiah (משיח ישראל). Other sectarian works such as the *War Scroll*, the *Rule of the Congregation*, and the so-called “pierced-messiah text” or 4Q*Sefer ha-Milhamah* (4Q285), also mention eschatological priestly figures, but never refer to them as “messiahs.” Alternative titles for end-time priests found in the scrolls likely include “the interpreter of the law” (דורש התורה; CD 7:18; 4Q*Florilegium* [4Q174] 2 I, 11), the “one who will teach righteousness in the end of days” (יורה הצדק באחרית הימים; CD 6:11), and, simply, “the priest” (הכוהן; 1QSa 2:19; 1QM 10:2).

The variety of epithets attributed to these eschatological celebrities has led to a certain amount of confusion among scholars. Should these figures be identified with the priestly messiah, the messiah of Aaron? According to the minimalist school of thought, such identifications will lead only to more confusion, and the study of Qumran messianism should be limited to those few texts which expressly

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<sup>1</sup> With the phrase “sectarian documents” I refer to those texts likely composed by the Qumran sectarians themselves, as opposed to “non-sectarian documents” composed by predecessors and outsiders, which also found their millennia-long resting place in the caves of Qumran.

mention the word “messiah” (משיח).<sup>2</sup> However, restricting the investigation of messianic figures on the basis of terminology results in the exclusion of several key texts which may be said to pertain to a messiah, in the sense of a future leader who plays a liberating role in the end-time.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the correlation of the various epithets is to be seen as “an essential step in the interpretation of the scrolls.”<sup>4</sup> As such, I utilize the word messiah as a functional term referring to a grand leader of the end-time, regardless of whether or not the character in question is actually described as “anointed.” However, it is advisable to remain cognizant of the possible variety implied by terminological differences.

The present study primarily seeks to shed light on the traditional roots of Qumranite representations of priestly messianic figures. Research has shown that such representations envision the priestly messiah as associated with four, or possibly five, different general roles or characteristics: (1) teaching and the proliferation of the law for the new age, (2) leadership of the eschatological military camp, (3) leadership of the reconstituted cultic community, and, possibly, (4) atonement on behalf of the people. (5) At times he appears alongside another figure of authority often identified as the lay or royal messiah.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> James H. Charlesworth, “Challenging the *Consensus Communis* Regarding Qumran Messianism (1QS, 4QS MSS),” in *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. James H. Charlesworth, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Gerbern Oegema; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1998), 124. See also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Qumran Messianism” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 73.

<sup>3</sup> The definition is Oegema’s. See the survey of definitions of the term messiah in idem, *The Anointed and His People: Messianic Expectations from the Maccabees to Bar Kochba* (JSPSup 27; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 22–27.

<sup>4</sup> John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (ABRL; NY: Doubleday, 1995), 60. On the correlation of messianic titles, see idem, “Messiahs in Context: Method in the Study of Messianism,” in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site: Present Realities and Future Prospects* (ed. Michael O. Wise et al.; N.Y.: New York Academy of Sciences, 1994), 213–27. See also the comments of John C. Poirier, “The Endtime Return of Elijah and Moses at Qumran,” *DSD* 10 (2003): 222.

<sup>5</sup> Teaching and the proliferation of the law for the new age: 1QS 9:11; CD 12:23–13:1; 14:18–19; 4Q175 14–20; cf. 4QpIsa<sup>a</sup>; 4Q541 9; CD 6:11; 7:18; 4Q174 2 I, 11. Leadership of the eschatological military camp: 1QM, passim; 4Q285 7 5–6; cf. CD 19:10–11. Leadership of the reconstituted cultic community: 1QM 2:1–6; 1QSa 2:11–21. Atonement on behalf of the people: CD 14:19; cf. 4Q541 9 2; 11Q13 2:6–8. Appearance alongside another figure of authority often identified as the lay or royal messiah: 1QS 9:11; CD 7:18–21; 4Q174 2 I, 11; 1QSa 2:11–21; 4Q161 8–10 III, 18–25;

The precursors to these roles and characteristics are to be found throughout the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, in several biblical passages, we learn of the didactic, judicial, cultic, martial, and atoning functions of priests.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the split reflected in the Qumran texts between lay and sacerdotal eschatological authority is prefigured by the diarchy of Zerubbabel and Joshua, the “two sons of oil” of the early restoration community mentioned in Zechariah 4.<sup>7</sup> As for the phenomenon of anointing, in Leviticus, various cultic acts are assigned to *הכהן המשיח* (4:3, 5, 16; 6:15). In addition, the book of Daniel likely refers to historical high priests with the word *משיח* (9:25–26).

However, none of the above biblical texts refer to a priest in the sense of a *future* messianic figure. To be sure, the Qumranites did apply Num 24:17 and Deut 33:8–11 to such a personage;<sup>8</sup> but exegesis of these verses alone cannot account for the invention of the notion of a priestly messiah. Indeed, the Qumranites show themselves perfectly capable of interpreting “obvious” messianic passages non-messianically.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore clear that such interpretation was not required by a close reading of the text but rather involved a conscientious choice and reflects the attitudes and perceptions of the interpreters.

It is often noted that beyond the Hebrew Bible, the most fertile grounds for the purpose of illuminating the traditional origins of Qumran’s priestly messianism are to be found in the so-called “authoritative pseudepigraphic” traditions, so popular at Qumran, which employ intricate biblical exegesis in order to portray the patriarch Levi as an ideal figure of priestly wisdom, zealotry, and purity.<sup>10</sup>

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cf. 4Q175; 11QT 58:18–19. For a full discussion of these sources, see Angel, *Otherworldly and Eschatological Priesthood*, 171–208.

<sup>6</sup> For numerous significant citations, see Menahem Haran, “Priests and Priesthood,” *EncJud* 13:1076–80.

<sup>7</sup> Scholars also point to such passages as 1 Chr 29:22, where Solomon and Zadok are anointed simultaneously, and Jer 33:14–26, where priests are elevated beside the king.

<sup>8</sup> Num 24:17: CD 7:18–21. Deut 33:8–11: 4Q175 14–20.

<sup>9</sup> For example, in CD 7:16–17, the “king” of Amos 5:26 is interpreted as the “congregation.” In 4Q174 1 19, the “anointed one” of Ps 2:2 is interpreted as the plural “chosen ones.” See further, John J. Collins, “The Nature of Messianism in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context* (ed. Timothy H. Lim; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 216–17.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 83–95; James C. VanderKam, “Jubilees and the Priestly Messiah of Qumran,” *RevQ* 13 (1988): 353–65. For the term “authoritative pseudepigraphy,” see Moshe J. Bernstein, “Pseudepigraphy in the

These traditions appear mainly in *Jubilees* and the *Aramaic Levi Document*, both of which were certainly of great interest to, and perhaps even authoritative for, the Qumranites.<sup>11</sup> Before turning to these and other texts, it will be helpful to consider some historical developments relevant to the discussion.

## 2. Historical Background

Second Temple period Judah witnessed a dramatic paradigm shift with respect to political structure. With the dissolution of the Davidic dynasty, power swung from the royal palace toward the rebuilt Jerusalem temple, which became the command center of the restored Judahite community.<sup>12</sup> The Persian period saw the rise of a diarchic form of government, in which power was granted to a lay governor and a high priest, both of whom, of course, were subordinate to foreign rule. Although the evidence is sparse for this period, it appears that the lay leader governed civil affairs while the priest attended to cultic matters.<sup>13</sup> By the early Hellenistic period however, there is evidence that the high priest was exercising political power without the assistance of a civil governor.<sup>14</sup> Since the Hellenistic empires did not appoint gov-

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Qumran Scrolls: Categories and Functions,” in *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Esther G. Chazon and Michael E. Stone; STDJ 31; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1–26.

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the *Damascus Document* cites the book of *Jubilees* as an authoritative source (CD 16:3–4) and quotes the “words of Levi” from an unknown Levi apocryphon similar to *ALD* (CD 4:15–18). The fundamental importance of these compositions for the Qumranites is further demonstrated by the large numbers of copies of each work discovered at Qumran (at least fourteen copies of *Jubilees* and seven copies of *ALD*).

<sup>12</sup> To be sure, the first two governors of Yehud, Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar, were Davidides, but the Persians appear to have discontinued this policy for fear of arousing the nationalistic hopes of the Judahite community. For the early government of the province of Yehud in the early Persian period, see Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 73–79.

<sup>13</sup> See the discussion of Deborah W. Rooke, *Zadok’s Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel* (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 120–22.

<sup>14</sup> See Uriel Rappaport, “The Coins of Judea at the End of the Persian Rule and the Beginning of the Hellenistic Period,” in *Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period: Abraham Schalit Memorial Volume* (ed. Aharon Oppenheimer, Uriel Rappaport, and Menahem Stern; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, Ministry of Defense, 1980), 7–21 [Hebrew]; James C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 122–24.

ernors alongside the high priests, the power and prestige of the high priestly office rose to unprecedented heights.<sup>15</sup> Eventually under the Hasmoneans, who were independent from foreign rule, the originally separate offices of high priest and king were unified by a succession of individual rulers. These days saw the advent of the Qumran community. The Qumranite expectation of an ideal priestly figure who would arrive in the future reflects the community's expressed dissatisfaction with the exercise of the sacerdotal office in Jerusalem from the time of the Hasmonean priest-kings and its dismay with what it perceived as the pollution of the temple. With the arrival of the priestly messiah who would teach the new law to, preside over, and possibly atone for the purified cultic community, this situation would be rectified.<sup>16</sup>

Another notable shift in the Second Temple period was brought about by the emergence, under the Persians, of the Torah as the law of the land (see Ezra 7:25–26). The unparalleled authority of the written word of God necessarily gave rise to a new type of power; that of the scribe trained in the close reading and interpretation of the Torah.<sup>17</sup> In order to become a scribe one needed both natural intelligence and a good education. As Ben Sira pointed out in the second century B.C.E., such education required the opportunity of leisure, and by inference, plenty of money (38:24–33). Naturally, priests were top candidates for this position as the temple and its leadership enjoyed the backing of the foreign imperialistic powers. However, the scribal office certainly did not require priestly lineage.<sup>18</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup> David M. Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Jewish Self-Government in Antiquity* (TSAJ 38; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1994), 7–23.

<sup>16</sup> See Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 84.

<sup>17</sup> For Jewish scribalism in Second Temple times, see Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (trans. F. H. Cave and C. H. Cave; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 233–45; David E. Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal* (JSNTSup 25; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989); Elias Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 161–76; Meir Bar-Ilan, "Scribes and Books in the Late Second Commonwealth and Rabbinic Period," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Martin J. Mulder; CRINT 2.1; Maasticht: Van Gorcum, Assen; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 21–24.

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, several influential scholarly accounts posit a shift of scribal power from priests to elite laymen in the Second Temple period. See for example, Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979) 2:322–23; Elias Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees: Foundations of Postbiblical Judaism* (NY: Schocken, 1962), 67–71; Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the*

concurrent rise of these two offices, priest and scribe, as well as the disappearance of Davidic authority in the Second Temple period provides important historical background for the understanding of the traditional roots of priestly messianic expectation at Qumran.

### 3. *The Magnetic Quality of Priesthood in Second Temple Literature*

In light of the magnified political and religious importance of the priesthood in the Second Temple period and the critical eyes under which it operated, it is no surprise to encounter a variety of texts from that era reflecting a range of fervent opinions regarding the proper behavior and role of priests in society. With the support of scriptural exegesis, these compositions craft ideal patterns of priestly conduct and exemplary priestly figures. In doing so, they often expand the traditional biblical portrait of the priest, which includes mostly cultic, but also judicial, instructional, and other responsibilities,<sup>19</sup> and attribute to him the key social roles of external figures (such as king, sage, or scribe)—a literary phenomenon that may be termed “priestly magnetism.”<sup>20</sup> It is safe to assume that this literary practice reflects the value systems of the authors, as well as their polemical or apologetic reactions to

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*Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 102, 160–161, 218; idem, “The Temple and the Synagogue,” in *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives* (ed. Truman G. Madsen; Provo: Brigham Young University, 1984), 151–74, esp. 161–62; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1:78–83; Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (trans. S. Applebaum; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966), 124–25, 197, and notes on 456–57. However, a number of scholars have challenged the assumption that a class of popular lay scribes arose in Second Temple times. See, e.g., Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1993), 53–58; Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1988), 241–76, esp. 273–76; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 B.C.E.–66 C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1992), chaps. 18, 21; Steven D. Fraade, “‘They Shall Teach Your Statutes to Jacob’: Priest, Scribe, and Sage in Second Temple Times” (unpublished paper). I thank Professor Fraade for sharing his work with me.

<sup>19</sup> See Haran, “Priests and Priesthood,” 1076–80.

<sup>20</sup> Michael E. Stone, “Ideal Figures and Social Context: Priest and Sage in the Early Second Temple Age,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. Patrick D. Miller, Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 582, defines the literary phenomenon of magnetism generally as “the tendency of certain ideal figures to attract broad and significant characteristics.”

their particular historical settings. Therefore the study of instances of priestly magnetism serves as a good basis “for discovering which ideals were considered central to people’s world views.”<sup>21</sup>

In attempting to clarify the traditional roots of priestly messianism at Qumran, it will thus be instructive to investigate the priestly magnetism of the *Aramaic Levi Document* and *Jubilees*. To be sure, the portraits of Levi in these works do not necessarily have eschatological import. However, they do provide idealized paradigms of priestly leadership that are far closer to Qumranite notions of priestly messianism than the biblical texts. The Qumranites were surely interested in these paradigms, and, even if they were not utilized consciously, they constituted an important element of the Qumranite religious imagination responsible for the propagation of the notion of priestly messianism. In addition, it will be illuminating to compare the priestly magnetism of these works with that of a roughly contemporary non-sectarian document which was also known at Qumran, Hebrew Ben Sira. All three of these compositions, the *Aramaic Levi Document*, *Jubilees*, and Hebrew Ben Sira date from the middle of the second century B.C.E. and earlier, prior to the establishment of the community at Qumran.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.1. *Hebrew Ben Sira*

Ben Sira is clearly a non-sectarian text, originally composed by the Jerusalemite sage Jesus ben Sira between the years 190 and 175 B.C.E. Ben Sira was a steadfast proponent of the Jerusalem temple establishment and an avid supporter of the Zadokite priesthood. In this regard, his work differs from many of the blistering criticisms of the Jerusalem establishment discovered at Qumran.<sup>23</sup> In the “Praise of the Fathers,”

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<sup>21</sup> On this methodological assumption, see Stone, “Ideal Figures and Social Context,” 575–86. For several examples of its application, see the collection of essays in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism* (ed. John J. Collins and George W. E. Nickelsburg; SBLSCS 12; Chico: Scholars Press, 1980).

<sup>22</sup> For discussions of the dating of the composition of *ALD*, *Jubilees*, and Hebrew Ben Sira respectively, see Robert A. Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest: The Levi-Priestly Tradition from Aramaic Levi to Testament of Levi* (SBLEJL 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 134–35; James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 17–21; Richard J. Coggins, *Sirach* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 18–20.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., Benjamin G. Wright, “‘Fear the Lord and Honor the Priest,’ Ben Sira as Defender of the Jerusalem Priesthood,” in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference 28–31 July 1996*

the long panegyric dedicated to the patriarchs of Israel at the end of the work, Aaron receives more attention than Moses, David, or any other figure from Israel's past (45:6–22). The attention devoted to Aaron is surpassed only by the verses describing Simon, the high priest of Ben Sira's own days (50:1–21).

Although it has been argued that Ben Sira advocates a diarchic model of government,<sup>24</sup> it is more likely that the book envisions the priesthood as the ideal governing authority, while demoting the importance of the royal monarchy. This view is substantiated by the fact that in addition to normal cultic functions, royal qualities are consistently and deliberately attracted to the idealized high priestly figures. For example, as John Snaith observes, the reference to a "golden crown" (עטרת פז) in addition to Aaron's high priestly head-dress (מצנפת) in 45:12 recalls the עטרת פז of Ps 21:4. There, the crown is placed by God on the head of the king, not the priest.<sup>25</sup> According to 45:15, Aaron "and his seed" (וזרעו) will enjoy an eternal covenant "as the days of heaven" (כימי שמים). The phrases זרעו and כימי שמים also appear in the context of a covenantal blessing in Ps 89:30, but there the subject is the Davidic dynasty. The fact that the context of the Psalm is a lament about the failure of the promise of an eternal Davidic dynasty makes Ben Sira's use of this language for Aarons' descendants all the more pointed.<sup>26</sup>

It has been noted that the high priest of Ben Sira's day, Simon, likewise attracts royal qualities.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, in 50:21, Simon receives the same royal blessing earlier granted to Aaron: "May his love abide upon Simon and may he keep in him the covenant of Phinehas; may one never be cut off from him; and as for his offspring, (may it be) as

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Soesterberg, *Netherlands* (ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes; BZAW 255; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 189–222; idem, "Putting the Puzzle Together: Some Suggestions Concerning the Social Location of the Wisdom of Ben Sira," *SBLSP* 35 (1996): 133–49.

<sup>24</sup> See for example, Saul M. Olyan, "Ben Sira's Relationship to the Priesthood," *HTR* 80 (1987): 283–286, and, more cautiously, Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle*, 60–61. Cf. J. Priest, "Ben Sira 45, 25 in the Light of the Qumran Literature," *RevQ* 5 (1964–66): 111–18.

<sup>25</sup> John G. Snaith, "Biblical Quotations in the Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus," *JTS* 18 (1967): 7, n. 3.

<sup>26</sup> So Martha Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 35.

<sup>27</sup> Burton L. Mack, *Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic: Ben Sira's Hymn in Praise of the Fathers* (CSH); Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 35–36; Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests*, 36.



the days of heaven” (לו ולזרעו כימי שמים).<sup>28</sup> Like kings before him, especially Hezekiah, Simon is responsible for fortifying the city from the enemy and digging a reservoir. In addition, he renovates and fortifies the temple, which is termed, strikingly, “the temple of the king” (היכל המלך; 50:1–4). In the concluding hymn of blessing, the author prays that “wisdom” (חכמה) and “peace” (שלום) will permeate society (50:23). In the Hebrew Bible, these two qualities are mentioned as present in Israel only during the time of King Solomon (see, e.g., 1 Kgs 5:26). It is thus clear that Ben Sira intended for his readers to recognize that the primary functions of the king were to be associated with the high priest.<sup>29</sup>

A further notable example of priestly magnetism appears in 45:25, where the praise of Phinehas is interrupted with references to David and Aaron:

וגם בריתו עם דוד בן ישי למטה יהודה  
נחלת אש לפני כבודו נחלת אהרן לכל זרעו

Admittedly, the passage is difficult to render and many scholars detect textual corruption, especially in the second half of the verse.<sup>30</sup> Helge Stadelmann translates, “Und auch Sein Bund mit David, dem Sohne Isais vom Stamme Juda, ist das Erbe eines Mannes vor dem Angesicht Seiner Herrlichkeit, das Erbe Aarons für all seine Nachkommen.” He argues that the “Mannes vor dem Angesicht Seiner Herrlichkeit” must refer to the high priest, who is so closely associated with God’s glory in Ben Sira 45 and 50. Moreover, he claims that this passage reflects the transfer of the Davidic covenant to the seed of Aaron.<sup>31</sup> While this

<sup>28</sup> The translation is from the notes of the *Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Expanded Edition Containing the Third and Fourth Books of the Maccabees and Psalms 151* (ed. Bruce M. Metzger; NY: Oxford University Press, 1977), 196.

<sup>29</sup> Mack, *Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic*, 35. Cf. the comments of Menahem Kister on the description of Samuel in Sir 47:31 in “Metamorphoses of Aggadic Traditions,” *Tarbiz* 60 (1991): 205 [Hebrew].

<sup>30</sup> For various proposals and bibliography, see Olyan, “Ben Sira’s Relationship to the Priesthood,” 285–6.

<sup>31</sup> Helge Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter: eine Untersuchung zum Berufsbild des vor-makkabäischen Sofer unter Berücksichtigung seines Verhältnisses zu Priester-, Propheten- und Weisheitslehrertum* (WUNT 2,6; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1980), 159: “Das zeigt an, dass er auch für die zukunft keinen Davididen an der Spitze des Volkes erwartet, sondern diese Position als bleibendes Privileg der Hohenpriester betrachtet.”

interpretation is questionable on many grounds,<sup>32</sup> it remains compelling in light of the above examples of priestly magnetism as well as the literary context of the verse. The verse appears just after the praise of Phinehas and his eternal covenant of high priesthood (vv. 23–24), and just before a hymn in which Ben Sira prays for other high priests, especially the contemporary Simon (vv. 25–26), who, as we have seen, is portrayed in royal terms.<sup>33</sup> The introduction of David here may indeed indicate that Ben Sira views monarchic rule by high priests as the ideal. At the very least, we may conclude that Ben Sira sees the ruling power of the high priesthood as comparable with that of the Davidic dynasty.

Further support for this hypothesis may be adduced from Ben Sira's penchant to downplay the monarchy. Indeed, kingship is portrayed as a flawed institution: "Besides David, Hezekiah, and Josiah, they were all corrupt. They abandoned the law of the Most High; the kings of Judah until their end" (49:4). As Stadelmann points out, in Ben Sira's praise of David, there is no reference to an eternal covenant, like that guaranteed for Phinehas. Rather, God only gives David "the law of kingship" (חק ממלכת), and it is only David's *power* that is deemed eternal (וירם קרנו לעולם).<sup>34</sup> Martha Himmelfarb has recently noted that the prestige of the monarchy is demoted also in Ben Sira's discussions of the only other kings mentioned by name in the Praise of the Fathers—Solomon, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Josiah is praised highly, but in cultic terms that recall the power of the priesthood: "The memory of Josiah is like a blending incense (בקטרת סמים) prepared by the art of the perfumer" (49:1). Hezekiah's acts are largely overshadowed by those of Isaiah (48:20–25), who is given credit for the failure of Sennacherib's siege. Solomon is a particularly important case because as the ideal biblical figure of wisdom, he might have been thought to

<sup>32</sup> For one, as Leo G. Perdue (*Wisdom and Cult: A Critical Analysis of the Views of Cult in the Wisdom Literature of Israel and the Ancient Near East* [SBLDS 30; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977], 193) notes, the word **שן** should most likely be translated "fire," since Hebrew Ben Sira usually utilizes plene orthography. Cf. the vocalization of Moshe Z. Segal, *Sefer Ben Sira ha-Shalem* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1976), 312. But with either reading, the Hebrew remains extremely difficult.

<sup>33</sup> Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; Garden City: Doubleday, 1987), 514.

<sup>34</sup> Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter*, 161. Cf. Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests*, 36.

illustrate the correctness of the notion of rule by kings. This is especially true considering Ben Sira's belief that more than anyone else, the sage possesses the tools necessary to govern society (see 38:24–39:11). However, echoing Deuteronomy's Law of the King (Deut 17:17), Ben Sira criticizes Solomon as a sinner whose wisdom was corrupted by his royal powers (47:18–21).<sup>35</sup>

As we might expect, it is rather the idealized high priestly figure whose personality attracts the ideal quality of wisdom. Since Ben Sira emphatically identifies wisdom with Torah (see esp. 24:23),<sup>36</sup> Aaron's position as arbiter of statutes and judgment in Israel (45:17) is to be viewed not only as an expression of the instructional role of the priesthood known from such scriptural passages as Deut 33:8–11 and Mal 2:6–7, but also as an outgrowth of his role as sage. The priestly connection with wisdom is even stronger in the case of the high priest of Ben Sira's day, Simon. This is made clear by a comparison of the description of the service of personified wisdom in the temple (chapter 24) with that of Simon's service in the temple (chapter 50). As C. T. R. Hayward has shown in detail, there is a deliberate parallelism in the accounts that aims to identify Simon with wisdom.<sup>37</sup> It follows that according to Ben Sira, the high priest, not the king, possesses the authority of wisdom which best suits a political governor.

We may thus speak of two aspects of priestly magnetism in Ben Sira, the attraction of the king's qualities and the attraction of the sage's qualities to the figure of the high priest. Although Israel had been a monarchy in the past, this certainly was not the ideal. Rule by high priest was preferable and, indeed, scripturally supported. The idealized high priest's possession of wisdom also made him an authority in matters concerning God's law. There is no doubt that in

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<sup>35</sup> See Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests*, 36–37.

<sup>36</sup> For Ben Sira's identification of wisdom with the Torah, see Gerald T. Sheppard, "Wisdom and Torah: The Interpretation of Deuteronomy Underlying Sirach 24:23," in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Essays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor* (ed. Gary A. Tuttle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 166–76. See also A. A. Di Lella, "The Meaning of Wisdom in Ben Sira," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie* (ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard B. Scott, and William J. Wiseman; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 133–48.

<sup>37</sup> C. T. Robert Hayward, "Sacrifice and World Order: Some Observations on Ben Sira's Attitude to the Temple Service," in *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology* (ed. Stephen W. Sykes; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 23–24; idem, "The New Jerusalem in the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira," *SJOT* 6 (1992): 127.

making these assertions, Ben Sira reflects the historical circumstances of the early second century B.C.E. As noted above, in the wake of the dissolution of the monarchy, the local power vacuum in the Second Temple period was filled by the concurrent rise of priestly and scribal authority. By Ben Sira's day the priestly establishment certainly held temporal authority. Since many, if not most, scribes were priests at this time,<sup>38</sup> the establishment also exercised a good measure of control over the interpretation of the Torah. Ben Sira thus represents a powerful endorsement of the status quo when he argues, by means of reworking Scripture, that both royal authority and the authority of the Torah most naturally rested in the idealized high priestly figure of his day, Simon.

Before moving forward, it is worth noting that Ben Sira was not alone in his sentiments regarding the priesthood. In an excerpt preserved by Diodorus Siculus, the Hellenistic ethnographer Hecataeus of Abdera describes the religious and political status of Judean priests and high priests as follows:

He [Moses] picked out the men of most refinement and with the greatest ability to head the entire nation, and appointed them priests; and he ordained that they should occupy themselves with the temple and the honors and sacrifices offered to their God. These same men he appointed to be judges in all major disputes, and entrusted to them the guardianship of the laws and customs. For this reason (δῖό) the Jews never have a king, and authority over the people is regularly vested in whichever priest is regarded as superior to his colleagues in wisdom and virtue. They call this man the high priest, and believe that he acts as a messenger to them of God's commandments. It is he, we are told, who in their assemblies and other gatherings announces what is ordained, and the Jews are so docile in such matters that straightway they fall to the ground and do reverence to the high priest when he expounds the commandments to them. And at the end of their laws there is even appended the statement: "These are the words that Moses heard from God and declares unto the Jews."<sup>39</sup>

Despite the obvious influence of Greek ethnographical tradition and political utopianism on this passage, most scholars agree that it is

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<sup>38</sup> Fraade ("They Shall Teach Your Statutes to Jacob,") points out the lack of evidence for the existence of non-priestly scribes in Second Temple period sources.

<sup>39</sup> Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historica* XL 3; translation from Francis R. Walton in the LCL edition, reproduced in *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism, Volume One: from Herodotus to Plutarch* (ed. Menahem Stern, Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1976), 1.26–29.

historically reliable.<sup>40</sup> Since it cites two biblical verses, it appears that Hecataeus is using information supplied by Jewish informants.<sup>41</sup> The broad correspondence of this passage with the ideology of Ben Sira is noteworthy. The high priest is a figure of supreme wisdom and virtue. Priests not only govern the nation, but also hold the authority of sages/scribes as judges of “all major disputes” and guardians of “the laws and the customs.” Furthermore, it is *because* (διό) of the priestly leadership that the Jews do not have a king. This state of affairs is viewed as stemming from Moses, and thus as God ordained. Since Hecataeus may be dated to the late fourth century B.C.E.,<sup>42</sup> we may conclude that the attraction of royal and scribal qualities to the priesthood in Judahite thought preceded Ben Sira by at least a century.

A famous passage from Josephus indicates that this perspective remained popular for centuries:

Some peoples have entrusted the supreme political power to monarchies, others to oligarchies, yet others to the masses. Our lawgiver, however, was attracted by none of these forms of polity, but gave to his constitution the form of what—if a coerced expression be permitted—may be termed a “theocracy,” placing all sovereignty and authority in the hands of God. (*Against Apion* 2.164–65)<sup>43</sup>

A few lines later he describes this “theocracy” in further detail:

Could there be a finer or more equitable polity than one which sets God at the head of the universe, which assigns the administration of its highest affairs to the whole body of priests, and entrusts to the supreme high-priest the direction of the other priests? These men, moreover, owed their original promotion by the legislator to their high office, not to any superiority in wealth or other accidental advantages. No; of all his companions, the men to whom he entrusted the ordering of divine worship as their first charge were those who were pre-eminently gifted with persuasive eloquence and discretion. But this charge further embraced a strict superintendence of the Law and of the pursuits of everyday life; for the appointed duties of the priests included general supervision, the trial of cases of litigation, and the punishment of condemned persons. (*Against Apion* 2.185–87)<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> See Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle*, 11, and bibliography in nn. 19–20.

<sup>41</sup> Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle*, 11, 32–33; Henryk Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text from Qumran*, (JSJSup 86; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 72.

<sup>42</sup> See Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Translation from Henry St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus: Against Apion*, (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1927), 359.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

As David Goodblatt has illustrated, it appears that Josephus' testimony is independent from that of Hecataeus.<sup>45</sup> Once again, priests are portrayed as virtuous sages exercising royal authority and custodianship of the law. This form of government is traced back to Moses, and thus to the will of God himself. The testimonies of Josephus and Hecataeus thus provide evidence that the characteristics of king and sage continued to be viewed as appropriate to the priesthood throughout the Second Temple period. But in altogether ignoring the existence of monarchy in Israel, these two witnesses go beyond Ben Sira, who felt obliged to deal with the undeniably entrenched tradition of the monarchical covenant.

### 3.2. *The Aramaic Levi Document*

It has often been observed that the *Aramaic Levi Document* (henceforth, *ALD*) takes an extreme position with regard to the centrality of the priesthood.<sup>46</sup> As in Ben Sira, the idealized priest attracts the characteristics of the king and the sage. But more in line with the passages from Hecataeus and Josephus cited above, there is no acknowledgment of a separate royal governmental paradigm. *ALD* differs from all of these sources in removing its ideal priest far from contemporary times and placing him even before the time of any of the great priestly figures of the Bible. Indeed, it expends considerable exegetical effort in order to justify the elevation of the patriarch Levi to the high priesthood.<sup>47</sup> When the author of *ALD* does appear to refer to the priestly establishment of his own day, his judgment is far from positive:

You will darken...and upon whom will be the guilt...is it not upon me and you, my sons, for they will know it...w]ays of truth you will abandon and all the paths of...you will be lax and you will walk in

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<sup>45</sup> Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle*, 34.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, Jonas C. Greenfield, Michael E. Stone, and Esther Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary* (SVTP 19; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 20–21.

<sup>47</sup> Of course, this portrait differs considerably from the rather ill-tempered and violent character presented by Genesis. For an exemplary demonstration of the exegetical strategies employed in the rehabilitation of Levi by both *ALD* and *Jubilees*, see James L. Kugel, "Levi's Elevation to the Priesthood in Second Temple Writings," *HTR* 86 (1993): 1–64.

it...that d[ar]kness will come upon you...now, at ti[m]es you will be lowly. (4QLevi<sup>a</sup> frg. 4)<sup>48</sup>

According to some scholars, this prophetic warning delivered by Levi to his sons is aimed at a group of priests contemporary with the author with whom he was at odds. The sentiment expressed in this passage has helped convince them that *ALD* arose in anti-temple establishment priestly circles.<sup>49</sup> However, there are reasons to doubt this conclusion (see below).

At any rate, there are several examples of the attraction of royal roles to the priesthood in *ALD*. Unfortunately, the fragmentary state of the text does not allow for certainty in all of the following cases:

First, in *ALD* §§99–100, Levi tells his children that they will be chiefs, judges, priests, and kings (4QLevi<sup>a</sup> 2 13–15). The same fragment also contains a tantalizing reference to “[Levi’s children’s] kingdom” (מלכותכן; l. 16).<sup>50</sup>

Second, according to a passage preserved only in the Greek Mt. Athos manuscript, Levi’s son Qahat and “his seed, will be the beginning of kings, priesthood for Israel.” Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel make a compelling argument that this passage originally existed in the Aramaic text.<sup>51</sup>

Third, the application of the title, “priest of God Most High” (כהן ביהוה אל עליון), to Levi in §9 and §13 is most likely a deliberate allusion to Melchizedek, the priest-king of Gen 14:18–20.<sup>52</sup>

Fourth, another mysterious Qumran fragment, 1QLevi 1, claims that “the kingdom of the priesthood is greater than the kingdom[...” (מלכות כהונתא רבא מן מלכות). Based on thematic and linguistic

<sup>48</sup> Text and translation follow Michael E. Stone and Jonas Greenfield, in George J. Brooke et al., *Qumran Cave 4.XVII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 3* (DJD 22; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 21–23.

<sup>49</sup> Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest*, 130, 136–37; Gabriele Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 74.

<sup>50</sup> See Stone and Greenfield, DJD 22, 16–18.

<sup>51</sup> Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 186–87.

<sup>52</sup> See VanderKam, “Jubilees and the Priestly Messiah of Qumran,” 364–65; Robert Doran, “The Non-Dating of Jubilees: Jub 34–38; 23:14–32 in Narrative Context,” *JSJ* 20 (1989): 3–4; Anders Aschim, “Melchizedek and Levi,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 1997* (ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman, Emanuel Tov, and James C. VanderKam; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, Israel Museum, 2000), 776.

similarities, J. T. Milik placed this fragment next to §§4–6,<sup>53</sup> which refers to two kingdoms, an unnamed positive kingdom and a negative “kingdom of the sword” (מלכות חרבא) characterized by fighting, battle, chase, toil, conflict, killing, and hunger. By contrast the former kingdom is characterized by, “peace, and all choice *first-fruits* of the whole earth for food.” If the references to “peace” and “first-fruits” refer respectively to Phinehas’ covenant of peace (Num 25:12) and the first fruits owed to priests (Num 18:13),<sup>54</sup> then it is possible that the kingdom of priesthood in Milik’s fragment is the one here being contrasted with the kingdom of the sword.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, this passage may represent a unique understanding of the notion of ממלכת כהנים found in Exod 19:6. However, since the text is fragmentary this conclusion remains speculative.<sup>56</sup>

Fifth, and finally, perhaps the best known example of the priesthood assuming royal qualities concerns the naming of Levi’s second son Qahat in §§66–67:

[וקרא]תי שמה ק[הת וחזי]ת די לה [תהו]ה כנשת כל [עמא וד]י לה  
תהוה כהנותה רבתא [לכל יש]ראל

[And I cal]led his name Qa[hat. And] I [sa]w that to him [would] be an assembly of all [the people and that] he would have the high priesthood for [all Is]rael.<sup>57</sup>

As Greenfield and Stone have shown, this “name midrash” transfers Jacob’s royal blessing of Judah in Gen 49:10 to Qahat, the second son of Levi through whom the high priestly line passed.<sup>58</sup> It does this by deriving the name קהת from the strange Hebrew word יקהת of Gen. 49:10 (ולו יקהת עמים). In *ALD*, as in several other ancient Jewish

<sup>53</sup> Józef T. Milik, *Qumran Cave 1* (DJD 1; Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), 88–89.

<sup>54</sup> Suggested by Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests*, 49. Cf. Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 242–43.

<sup>55</sup> Assumed by Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 213, 242–43.

<sup>56</sup> On the ambiguous import of this verse in the proposed context of *ALD* in which it appears, see Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 139–40.

<sup>57</sup> Text, translation, and reconstruction basically follow Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 94–95.

<sup>58</sup> Jonas Greenfield and Michael E. Stone, “Remarks on the Aramaic Testament of Levi from the Geniza,” *RB* 86 (1979): 223–24.



traditions, the word *קהת* is interpreted in the sense of “assembly.”<sup>59</sup> Thus *ALD* explains of Qahat, “to him ) [would] be an assembly of all [the people]” (לה [תהו]ה כנשת כל [עמא]). Since Gen 49:10 was used as a prediction of the Davidic messiah in antiquity,<sup>60</sup> some scholars believe that *ALD* is here attributing to the priesthood the role of the royal messiah.<sup>61</sup> This view might be thought to gather support from *ALD*’s employment of another biblical text classically used to predict the arrival of the royal messiah, Isaiah 11.<sup>62</sup> In his prayer, Levi asks that God show him “the holy spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) and grant him “counsel and wisdom and knowledge and strength” (עטה וח[כמה] ומנדע וגבורה; *ALD* supp. 8). As several scholars have noted, this echoes Isa 11:2, רוח ה' רוח חכמה ובינה רוח עצה וגבורה.<sup>63</sup> However, since in the context of *ALD* the allusion to Isaiah 11 is not utilized to refer to a future messianic figure, it cannot be said with certainty to possess eschatological import. This same judgment applies to the application of Gen 49:10 to Qahat, also an idealized figure from the distant past.<sup>64</sup> However, it is worth noting that a non-sectarian Aramaic composition lying very close to the tradition of *ALD*, known as 4QApocryphon of Levi<sup>b</sup>? (4Q541), does provide a tantalizing portrait of a grand, unnamed future figure who is to be identified as a priestly messiah. According to the relevant fragment (4Q541 9), this figure will possess and teach supernal wisdom and “atone for all the children of his generation” (ויכפר על כול בני דרה). His teaching will be “like the will of God” (ואלפונה כרעות אל) and “his eternal sun will shine”

<sup>59</sup> Michael E. Stone (“The Axis of History at Qumran,” in *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives*, 134) cites Aquila’s translation (σύστημα λαῶν), 4Q252 5:6, and *Gen. Rab.* 99 as examples of this interpretive tradition. See also Greenfield and Stone, “Remarks,” 223; Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 184–86.

<sup>60</sup> For an example from the Dead Sea Scrolls corpus, see 4Q252 5. For further examples, see Onkelos to Gen 49:10; *Gen. Rab.* 98:8; *b. Sanh.* 98b. As Collins (*The Scepter and the Star*, 62) points out, in these instances, the word *שילה* is interpreted as a name for the messiah.

<sup>61</sup> Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 20–21, 186.

<sup>62</sup> For example, 4QpIsa<sup>a</sup> 8–10 III, 15–29; 4Q285 7; *Pss. Sol.* 17:21–25; 18:6–8; cf. Rom 15:12; 4 *Ezra* 13:2–10.

<sup>63</sup> See David Flusser, “Qumran and Jewish ‘Apotropaic’ Prayers,” *IEJ* 16 (1966): 196; Michael E. Stone and Jonas Greenfield, “The Prayer of Levi,” *JBL* 112 (1993): 261. Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 214–15, points out an additional parallel with Solomon’s prayer for wisdom in 1 Chr 1:9. See also Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest*, 73, n. 48, who sees a reference here to Prov 8:10–14 as an equally attractive possibility.

<sup>64</sup> See Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 87–88.

(שמש עלמה תניר). If he is indeed a priestly messiah, then we have evidence that the notion was not far off in this branch of non-sectarian Aramaic literature.

Regardless of whether Levi and Qahat attract messianic qualities in *ALD*, it is clear that they attract royal ones. In my opinion, the evidence cited above is enough to illustrate at least that like Ben Sira, the author of *ALD* envisioned priestly monarchy as the ideal governmental form.<sup>65</sup>

*ALD* also shows a pronounced tendency to associate the wisdom of the sage and scribe with the priesthood. This is most evident in Levi's parenetic speech to his children, which was appended to the end of *ALD*.<sup>66</sup>

And in the [hundred and ei]ghteenth ye[ar] of my life, that is the ye[ar] in which my brother Joseph died, I called my child[ren and] their children and I began to instruct them concerning all that was on my mind. I spoke up and said to my chil[dren, "List]en to the word of your father Levi and pay attention to the instructions of God's friend. I instruct you, my sons, and reveal the truth to you, my beloved. May truth be the essence of all your acts and it will be with you forever. If you s[o]w righteousness and truth, you will bring in a blessed and good harvest... And now, my sons, teach reading and writing and teaching of wisdom to your children (וכען בני ספר ומוסר וחוכמה אליפו לבניכון) and may wisdom be eternal glory for you (ותהוי חכמתא עמכון ליקר) (עלם). For he who learns wisdom will (attain) glory through it, but he who despises wisdom will become an object of disdain and scorn. Observe, my children, my brother Joseph [who] taught reading and writing and the teaching of wisdom, for glory and for majesty; and kings he advised... do not be lax in the study of wisdom... a man who

<sup>65</sup> See Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 71; Greenfield and Stone, "Remarks," 219, 223–24; Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Study of Their Text, Composition, and Origin* (Van Gorcum's Theologische Bibliotheek 25; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1953), 42.

<sup>66</sup> Scholars have long noted that a natural ending for *ALD* appears at the end of the autobiographical section in §81, where Levi announces, "and all the days of my life were one hundred [and thir]ty-seven years and I saw my thi[rd] generation before I died." See Jürgen Becker, *Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Testamente der Zwölf Patriarchen* (AGJU 8; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 94–95; Jarl Henning Ulrichsen, *Die Grundschrift der Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen: Eine Untersuchung zu Umfang, Inhalt und Eigenart der ursprünglichen Schrift* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum 10; Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1991), 186. However, as Kugler (*From Patriarch to Priest*, 129) points out, it is not necessary to assume that the appended speech was an external written source. Rather, it could well be "a fresh composition constructed from existing resources by the author of Aramaic Levi." Cf. Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 324–25.

studies wisdom, all [h]is days are l[ong] and hi[s] reputa]tion grows great...And now, my sons, reading and writing and the teaching of wi[sdo]m which I lea[rned]... (§§82–98)<sup>67</sup>

In this passage, which is among the best-preserved Aramaic poems from the Second Temple period, Levi exhorts his children to act righteously (§§85–87) and strongly emphasizes their charge to teach reading, writing,<sup>68</sup> and instruction (§§88–89; cf. 90; 98). The poem also details the benefits of teaching and seeking wisdom (§§90–93; 97) and describes the priceless and eternal nature of wisdom (§§94–96), two well-known motifs in early Jewish sapiential material.<sup>69</sup>

Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel maintain that the attribution of the vocation of wisdom instruction to Levi and his descendants may be traced to the instructional role attributed to priests in Deut 33:10 and Mal 2:7.<sup>70</sup> The biblical instructional aspect of the priesthood is thus imbued with sapiential motifs.<sup>71</sup> In the case of *ALD*, this assumption is unconvincing. Deuteronomy 33 and Malachi 2 portray the teaching of Torah by priests to all of Israel. By contrast, the teaching of wisdom in *ALD* is directed to Levites alone: “And now, my sons, teach reading and writing and teaching of wisdom to *your* children and may wisdom be eternal glory *for you*” (§88). This “selfish” concern is mirrored by the fact that the priestly instructions transmitted by Isaac, which comprise about one-third of the extant document (§§14–61),<sup>72</sup> are exclusively connected to Levi and his descendants. Additionally, whereas Deuteronomy 33 and Malachi 2 refer to the Torah as the subject of instruction, *ALD* never comes close to identifying wisdom with the Torah.<sup>73</sup> Rather, the wisdom in Levi’s speech

<sup>67</sup> Following the composite text and translation of Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 104–7.

<sup>68</sup> Following Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel’s translation of ספּר. Drawnel (*An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 329–31) prefers to translate “scribal craft” since the term also probably included “all the aspects of Levitical education in the document...linked to, and dependent upon, the knowledge of writing,” including metrological and mathematical instruction.

<sup>69</sup> For parallels in Jewish and Mesopotamian literature, see Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 333–41.

<sup>70</sup> Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 34.

<sup>71</sup> See Stone, “Ideal Figures and Social Context,” 580.

<sup>72</sup> For this figure, see Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest*, 93 and n. 115.

<sup>73</sup> Interestingly enough, the Christian redactor of *T. Levi* does associate the Torah with wisdom. Adapting the word חוכמה in *ALD*, he renders it “law of God”: “And do you, too, teach your children letters that they may have understanding all their life, reading unceasingly the law of God. For everyone who knows the law of God

is more akin to the “recipe wisdom” of the book of Proverbs.<sup>74</sup> This contrasts strikingly with Sir 45:17, where Aaron teaches God’s law [=wisdom] to all of Israel. It thus appears that rather than sapiential motifs being attracted to the priestly role of instruction, the author of *ALD* “began with an interest in sapientializing the priesthood.”<sup>75</sup> This conclusion seems to be substantiated by the fact that it is Joseph, not Levi, who is held up as the paradigmatic wise man in a poem addressed to priests. This surprise indicates that the author did not view the qualities of the sage/scribe as inherent to the priesthood, but rather as an ideal that required effort to attain—Levi’s descendants were to follow the example of a layman, Joseph, in their quest to acquire wisdom. Just as Joseph’s wisdom brought him to the height of power in Egypt, the acquisition of wisdom by priests would put them in proper position to govern, and to sit on a “throne of glory” (כורסי די יקר).<sup>76</sup>

One final role attributed to the priesthood in *ALD* should be noted—that of the warrior. In §78, Levi admits that he “was eighteen when he killed Shechem and destroyed the workers of violence.” In the very next line he announces that “he was nineteen when he became a priest.” The juxtaposition of these two statements does not necessarily illustrate a causative relationship, but in light of the violent zeal for purity associated with the covenant of the priesthood in the Hebrew Bible and in Second Temple times, it is certainly suggestive.<sup>77</sup> Levi’s passion for righteousness and purity is explicitly stated in Levi’s prayer: “End lawlessness from the face of the earth, purify

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will be honored, and he will not be a stranger wherever he goes” (*T. Levi* 13:2–3). It remains a mystery why a supposedly Christian redactor would place such an emphasis on the law.

<sup>74</sup> Consider for example, *ALD* §87: “If you s[o]w righteousness and truth, you will bring in a blessed and good harvest. He who sows good brings in a goodly (harvest), and he who sows evil, his sowing turns against him.” For the phrase “recipe wisdom,” see Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 32.

<sup>75</sup> So Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest*, 129, n. 234.

<sup>76</sup> See Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests*, 48–49.

<sup>77</sup> See, e.g., Exod 32:26–29; Num 25:7–8, 13; cf. Ps 106:29–31. See further John J. Collins, “The Zeal of Phinehas: The Bible and the Legitimation of Violence,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 12–13. In the Second Temple period, both *ALD* and *Jubilees* share a positive assessment of Levi’s violent acts in Shechem, connecting them to his ordination as priest. Cf. *T. Levi* 5, where Levi is first appointed to the priesthood and then immediately given the charge to wage revenge against Shechem.

my heart, Lord, from all impurity” (*ALD* supp. 5).<sup>78</sup> By killing Shechem, Levi eradicates doers of lawlessness (וגמרת לעבדי חמסא) and shows just how far his passion for justice and purity goes. When it comes to matters of justice and purity, the ideal priest of *ALD* takes to the sword.<sup>79</sup>

In summary, the portrayal of Levi and his descendants in *ALD* may be said to attribute the roles of king, sage, and warrior to the ideal priesthood. Unlike the case of Ben Sira, the *Sitz im Leben* underlying this depiction remains unclear. Of particular interest for our purpose is the debate whether the document derives from a group friendly to the temple establishment or from an opposition group of some kind. Robert Kugler takes the latter opinion and claims that *ALD* was crafted with two aims in mind, “to polemicize against a priesthood that its author perceived to be inadequate, and to promote a more pure model of the office.”<sup>80</sup> He finds support for his first assertion not only in the bitter condemnation of Levi’s descendants cited above, which he takes as directed against the priests of the author’s own day, but also in the narrative and thematic patterns of *ALD*. He points out that rooting the ideal priesthood in a figure more ancient than Aaron who was heir to authoritative ancestral priestly tradition predating the cultic rules given to Moses implicitly undermines the sons of Aaron currently in power.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, he detects in the cultic laws transmitted from Isaac to Levi, especially those pertaining to cleansing ablutions, an intentional intensification of the standards of purity

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<sup>78</sup> The correspondence of the ideal of purity with Levi and the priesthood is underscored when Isaac finds out about Levi’s appointment to the priesthood. There (*ALD* §§13–16), he emphasizes the ideal of priestly purity by warning against impurity and sexual sin.

<sup>79</sup> Noting this motif, Pierre Grelot (“Notes sur le Testament araméen de Lévi [Fragment de la Bodleian Library, colonne a],” *RB* 63 [1956]: 396) suggests that the kingdom of the sword mentioned above should be attributed to Levi. He is followed by Klaus Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texten vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 188–209. As we have seen, this does not fit the evidence. It is interesting to note that in ancient Babylonia, the role of destroying evildoers was assigned to the king. See Moshe Weinfeld, *Justice and Righteousness in Israel and the Nations: Equality and Freedom in Ancient Israel in Light of Social Justice in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 25–31 [Hebrew].

<sup>80</sup> Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest*, 110. Followed by Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 74.

<sup>81</sup> Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest*, 110. Compare the Christian use of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7. Contrast Ben Sira’s extended praise of Aaron.

found in the Pentateuch. Kugler thus concludes that *ALD* speaks of two types of priests, those

who do not realize the ideal evinced by Levi with his passion for purity and attachment to the roles of scribe and sage...and...priests who accept the norms established in Levi, the most ancient priest of all; they are the adherents to the author's views, those who prize purity, wisdom, and learning as traits proper to the priesthood. *Aramaic Levi* is a rejection of the former kind of priest, and a plea for acceptance of the latter type.<sup>82</sup>

Against Kugler, many scholars do not detect a polemic against the contemporary priesthood in *ALD*. As Henryk Drawnel points out, Levi's prediction of a dark future for his sons is addressed to all of them, and does not exclude any particular group. Thus, we cannot simply assume that *ALD* pits one group of priests against another.<sup>83</sup> Himmelfarb has shown that where Isaac's cultic instructions differ from those of the Pentateuch they do not represent intentional diversions but rather supplementation to the rather sparse rules of the Torah.<sup>84</sup> Supporting her hypothesis, analysis of *ALD*'s sacrificial halakhah has shown that it does not fit the proto-sectarian legal mold of 4QMMT, the *Temple Scroll*, and the *Damascus Document*. Rather, the laws of *ALD* "are as close to rabbinic laws as they are to sectarian ones."<sup>85</sup> Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel likewise detect no polemical characteristics in *ALD* and remain undecided as to whether the document derives from a group friendly to or opposed to the temple.<sup>86</sup>

Whatever the original purpose of the document, it is clear that when it was brought to and studied at Qumran, it was incorporated into an ideological environment hostile to the temple. The clearest evidence of this conclusion is found in CD 4:15–18, which, as noted above, quotes words of Levi that derive from a Levi apocryphon similar to *ALD* in a context highly critical of the temple establishment.

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<sup>82</sup> Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest*, 136–37.

<sup>83</sup> Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 84.

<sup>84</sup> Martha Himmelfarb, "Earthly Sacrifice and Heavenly Incense: The Law of the Priesthood in *Aramaic Levi* and *Jubilees*," in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 103–22.

<sup>85</sup> Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Sacrificial Halakhah in the Fragments of the Aramaic Levi Document from Qumran, the Cairo Genizah, and Mt. Athos Monastery," in *Reworking the Bible: Apocryphal and Related Texts at Qumran* (ed. Esther G. Chazon, Devorah Dimant, and Ruth A. Clements; STDJ 58; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 202.

<sup>86</sup> Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 22.

### 3.3. *Jubilees*

It is widely held that *ALD* or something very close to it served as a source for the accounts pertaining to Levi in the book of *Jubilees* (30:1–32:9).<sup>87</sup> It is therefore unsurprising to find comparable instances of priestly magnetism.<sup>88</sup> For instance, the warrior-like role of Levi at Shechem is mentioned in tandem with the elevation of Levi and his descendants to the priesthood. In contrast with *ALD*, the author of *Jubilees* makes clear that Levi's violent zeal for purity and justice is related to his reception of the gift of the priesthood:

Levi's descendants were chosen for the priesthood and as levites to serve before the Lord as we (do) for all time. Levi and his sons will be blessed forever because he was eager to carry out justice, punishment, and revenge on all who rise against Israel. (30:18)<sup>89</sup>

The phrase "revenge on all who rise against Israel" hints at the paradigmatic nature of Levi's warrior role—his wrath is not only properly directed at Shechem but at all of Israel's enemies, the doers of injustice and impurity. For the author then, this violent passion for purity underscores Levi's ideal candidacy for the sacerdotal office.

In addition, the biblical instructional and judicial roles of the priesthood are emphasized in Isaac's blessing of Levi in *Jub.* 31:15. Relying especially on Deut 33:9–11 and Mal 2:5–7, this passage envisions Levi's descendants as "judges and leaders" of the nation, who are to "declare the word of the Lord" and instruct Israel in the ways of God. Moreover, *Jub.* 45:16 mentions the transmission of "books" in connection with Levi and his children: "[Israel] gave all his books and the books of his fathers to his son Levi so that he could preserve them and renew them for his sons until today." Presumably, these books were filled with the primordial priestly instructions passed first in oral form, and then, from the time of Noah, in written form from

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<sup>87</sup> However, James L. Kugel has made a case for the priority of *Jubilees*. See idem, "Levi's Elevation," esp. 52–58; and, more recently, idem, "How Old Is the 'Aramaic Levi Document'?" *DSD* 14 (2007): 291–312.

<sup>88</sup> For the unique aims of the book of *Jubilees*, see James C. VanderKam, "The Origins and Purposes of the Book of *Jubilees*," in *Studies in the Book of Jubilees* (TSAJ 65; ed. Matthias Albani, Jörg Frey, and Armin Lange; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1997), 3–24.

<sup>89</sup> All translations of *Jubilees* are from James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (CSCO 511; *Scriptores Aethiopic* 88; Louvain: Peeters, 1989).

father to favorite son.<sup>90</sup> These written instructions may have resembled those passed from Isaac to Levi in *ALD* §§14–61. The *Testament of Qahat* (4Q542) also makes tantalizing mention of “writings” passed from Levi to Qahat to Qahat’s children, which “contain great value in their being carried on with you” (בְּהוֹן זָכוּ רַבָּה בְּאַתְהִילְכוֹתֶהוֹן עִמּוֹן) (1 II, 11–13). While it is difficult to ascertain the precise nature of these writings, it is clear that the transmission of written tradition by Levi and his descendants assumes a priestly scribal function. This association is evident also in *Jubilees*’ linking of priestly and scribal roles in the figure of Enoch. Enoch is both the inventor of writing, the first man to “learn writing and knowledge and wisdom” (4:17) and a cultic functionary who burnt “incense of the sanctuary” before God (4:25).<sup>91</sup>

Finally, like *ALD* and Ben Sira, *Jubilees* attributes political responsibilities to the priesthood. As in *ALD*, *Jub.* 32:1–2 intentionally refers to Levi and his children with language echoing that used for the priest-king Melchizedek in Gen 14:18 (cf. Ps 110:4): They have been “appointed and made into the priesthood of the Most High God forever.” Returning to 31:15, Isaac refers to Levi’s descendants as “princes, judges, and leaders of all the descendants of Jacob’s sons.” The fact that Isaac goes on to curse any “nation” that curses Levi (31:17) reinforces the view of the priesthood as an ideal governing institution in Israel. However, throughout, *Jubilees* keeps the royal and priestly offices distinct. *Jub.* 16:18, playing on Exod 19:6, divides the descendants of Jacob into “a kingdom, a priesthood, and a holy people” (cf. *Jub.* 33:20).<sup>92</sup> Moreover, while in *ALD* Isaac blesses Levi alone, in *Jubilees* 31 he blesses both Levi and Judah, giving primacy to the former.<sup>93</sup> The descendants of Judah are granted “an honorable throne that is rightly theirs” (31:20), but strikingly, they are never called “kings.” In fact, the word translated by VanderKam as “princes”

<sup>90</sup> See *Jub.* 7:38–39; 10:14; cf. 12:27; 21:10; 39:6–7.

<sup>91</sup> Enoch’s role as priest-scribe appears in the *Book of the Watchers* as well. For further instances of Enoch’s scribal activities, see 2 *En.* 53:2, and *T. Abr.* B 11:3, where, as in *Jub.* 4:24, he records human deeds for the purpose of the final judgment.

<sup>92</sup> See Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 37, n. 147. For an alternate view of the use of Exod 19:6 in *Jubilees*, see Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests*, 53.

<sup>93</sup> Just as Jacob illustrates the primacy of Ephraim over Menasseh by taking the former by his right hand and blessing him first (Genesis 48), Isaac illustrates Levi’s primacy over Judah (*Jub.* 31:12).



with reference to the children of Levi is applied also to the descendants of Judah in 31:18. This equation of political power shows that, in its present form at least, *Jubilees* argues for a Levi-Judah diarchy.<sup>94</sup> The exalted position of Levi, the priority of his blessing, and his association with Isaac's right hand all indicate that supremacy in this diarchy was granted to the priesthood.

One is led to wonder why the author of *Jubilees*, who utilized the same solar calendar as the author of *ALD* and many of his traditions idealizing Levi, did not also follow *ALD*'s view of the priest as the ideal ruler of the Jewish polity. Considering the later dating of the book of *Jubilees* (mid-second century B.C.E.), we may relate its diarchic ideology to the rise of the Hasmonean state. The call for the separation of powers in *Jubilees* is best seen as a response to the combination of priestly and royal power in a single Hasmonean figure.<sup>95</sup> A similar *Sitz im Leben* most likely underlies the *Temple Scroll*'s marked interest in the division of royal and priestly powers and its attribution of primacy to the priesthood.<sup>96</sup> Although both *Jubilees* and

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<sup>94</sup> Goodblatt (*The Monarchic Principle*, 47–48) speculates that in its original context Isaac's blessing of Levi (*Jub.* 31:13–17) expressed the notion of priestly monarchy similar to that found in *ALD*. Later on, a redactor inserted a blessing for Judah which left the division of labor between the Levi "princes" and the Judah "princes" unclear.

<sup>95</sup> The first Hasmonean to take the title "king" was either Aristobulos I or his brother Alexander Jannaeus at the end of the second century B.C.E. See Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 1:216–17. Even though these figures came to rule decades after the composition of *Jubilees*, various sources indicate that prior Hasmonean rulers possessed monarch-like authority. See, e.g., 1 Macc 13:42; Josephus, *War* 1.68; *Ant.* 13.299.

<sup>96</sup> See Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, the Shrine of the Book, 1983), 1:345–46; Mathias Delcor, "Le Status du roi d'après le Rouleau du Temple," *Henoch* 3 (1981): 47–68; Martin Hengel, James H. Charlesworth, and Doron Mendels, "The Polemical Character of 'On Kingship' in the Temple Scroll: An Attempt at Dating 11QTemple," *JJS* 37 (1986): 28–38; Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The King, His Guard and the Royal Council in the Temple Scroll," in *The Courtyards of the House of the Lord: Studies on the Temple Scroll* (ed. Florentino García Martínez; STDJ 75; Leiden: Brill 2008), 487–504; idem, "Utopia and Reality: Political Leadership and Organization in the Dead Sea Scrolls Community," in *Emanuel: Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (ed. Shalom Paul et al.; VTSup 94; Leiden: Brill, 2003); Steven Fraade, "The Torah of the King (Deut 17:14–20) in the Temple Scroll and Early Rabbinic Law," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity: Papers From an International Conference at St. Andrews in 2001* (ed. James R. Davila; STDJ 46; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 31.

the *Temple Scroll* are pre-Qumranite<sup>97</sup> and are not necessarily speaking in an eschatological sense, their ideal visions of leadership represent the polemical seedbed out of which Qumranite conceptions of dual messiahship grew. Among the sectarian texts, this is best illustrated by 4QTestimonia, which has been convincingly interpreted as a polemic against the Hasmoneans, who merged royal and priestly (and perhaps prophetic)<sup>98</sup> roles in single figures.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

In the above survey we have observed several examples of the tendency of Second Temple literature to craft ideal patterns of priestly conduct and exemplary priestly figures. In addition to the traditional cultic, judicial, instructional, and other responsibilities of the priesthood known from the Hebrew Bible, the literature variously attributes the characteristics of king, sage, scribe, and warrior to the model priest. Since these ideal portrayals occur in such a wide variety of sources as Ben Sira, Hecataeus, Josephus, *ALD*, *Jubilees*, 4QApocryphon of Levi<sup>b?</sup>, and the *Temple Scroll*, it is clear that they are not a product of sectarian imagination. Rather, they must be related in general to the rise of priestly and scribal powers in Second Temple society described above. The differing pictures of ideal priestly figures in the above texts must be seen either as attempts to legitimize the contemporary roles of priests (as in Ben Sira, Hecataeus, and Josephus) or as polemics which present an alternative to the present establishment (as in *Jubilees*, the

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<sup>97</sup> For the dating of *Jubilees*, see the work of VanderKam cited in n. 22. For the pre-Qumranite origins of the *Temple Scroll*, see, e.g., Florentino García Martínez, "Temple Scroll," *EDSS* 2:927–33; idem, "The Temple Scroll and the New Jerusalem," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment* (ed. James C. VanderKam and Peter W. Flint; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1998–1999), 2:441–42. Cf. the opinion of Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Law of the Temple Scroll and Its Provenance," in *The Courtyards of the House*, 3–18.

<sup>98</sup> See *War* 1.68; *Ant.* 13.299, where, along with the government of the nation and the privilege of the high priesthood, Josephus attributes the gift of prophecy to John Hyrcanus.

<sup>99</sup> The correspondence between Josephus' description of John Hyrcanus cited in the previous note with the biblical verses cited in 4QTestimonia has been noted by numerous scholars. See for example, André Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (trans. G. Vermes; Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1962), 318; David Flusser, *The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect*, (trans. C. Glucker; Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 1989), 87–88; Hanan Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State* (Grand Rapids/Jerusalem: Eerdmans; Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2008), 63–87.

*Temple Scroll*, and perhaps *ALD*). It is striking that even in the polemical cases, priestly powers and abilities are expanded far beyond biblical parameters. This indicates that, in general, the association of the priesthood with the realms of civil government and wisdom/scrubalism was deemed as a given and indeed as scripturally authorized by most if not all of Jewish society in the Second Temple period.

Qumranite notions of priestly messianism are best understood within this intellectual milieu. In most general terms, they may be said to reflect the inflated significance of the priesthood. To narrow it down, we might expect the proto-sectarian texts, so close to the hearts of the Qumranites, such as *ALD*, *Jubilees*, and the *Temple Scroll* to be most influential in this regard. The models of priesthood contained in them provided the world of ideas which nurtured Qumranite visions of the future priest. This is readily seen in sectarian texts such as 1QSa, 4QFlorilegium, and 4QSefer ha-Milhamah, which envision a diarchic eschatological leadership that gives priority to the priest. These texts are to be related with the anti-Hasmonean polemics of *Jubilees* and the *Temple Scroll*, which insist on the separation of priestly and royal powers, and the primacy of the former.<sup>100</sup> The martial role attributed to Levi in *ALD* and *Jubilees* may also have had reflexes in the Qumran community. In 11QMelchizedek, the celestial high priest Melchizedek is pictured as leading his armies, violently administering justice and exacting God's vengeance on Belial and his lot. According to the *War Rule*, the eschatological war effort is to be led by priests. However, unlike Levi and Melchizedek, these priests are not to participate directly in the carnage for fear of corpse impurity. Apparently the purity concerns of the community made the

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<sup>100</sup> From the almost complete lack of reference in *Jubilees*, the *Temple Scroll*, and the sectarian corpus to the relevant passages in the books of Haggai and Zechariah, the diumvirate of Joshua and Zerubbabel apparently did not serve as an important biblical model for the Qumranite expectation of a priestly messiah accompanied by a royal counterpart. See Vanderkam, "Jubilees and the Priestly Messiah," 365. Shemaryahu Talmon ("Types of Messianic Expectation at the Turn of the Era," in *King, Cult and Calendar in Ancient Israel: Collected Studies* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986], 214–15, 220–21) explains this phenomenon as a result of the community's self-identification with the returnees from Babylonian captivity. Since they themselves were the returnees, they could not make use of Zechariah's or Haggai's prophecies. However, with the publication of 4QCommentary on Genesis C (4Q254), which does contain a reference to Zech 4:14 in an extremely broken context (frg. 4), these suggestions must be reevaluated. George J. Brooke (DJD 22, 224) tentatively suggests that the Zechariah verse may have been utilized in this case as a messianic interpretation of Gen 49:8–12.

attribution of such a bloody role to its own priesthood unthinkable. Finally, the important judicial and didactic roles ascribed to the priests in *ALD*, *Jubilees*, and the *Temple Scroll* are mirrored by the association of Qumran's eschatological priest with teaching and the proliferation of the law for the new age. However, it should be noted again that no literary dependence can be shown in these cases, and while conceptual influence is probable, it is not possible to demonstrate direct influence.

Finally, 4QApocryphon of Levi<sup>b</sup>? (4Q541 9) contains the only straightforward reference to a priestly messiah in a non-sectarian text. This exception is of utmost importance for it indicates that the notion existed before the formation of the Qumran community. Based on the fragment's discovery at Qumran and its close relationship to the Levi tradition-complex so popular there, we may assume that it exerted some influence on the way in which the Qumranites imagined the priestly messiah. Indeed, the overall dualistic framework of the fragment and the report that its unnamed figure will possess wisdom, atone for all the children of his generation, and teach the will of God aligns quite nicely with sectarian pictures of the eschatological priest as teacher and interpreter of the law, and perhaps as making atonement in the age to come.

Ultimately, the flourishing of priestly messianic speculation in sectarian literature may be said to reflect the unique historical circumstances and apocalyptic worldview of the Qumran community. The Qumranites were profoundly disturbed by what they perceived as the corruption of the contemporary priestly leadership in Jerusalem and the pollution of the temple. Marginalized and isolated at their settlement in the desert, they yearned for the day when they would come to power and return to a restored Jerusalem temple. In this context, they crafted the image of a grand future priest who would rise to power, purge the temple, and enforce the community's utopian vision of the new age. For the pious traditionalists of Qumran, this expectation was not perceived as an innovation, but as a reflection of the true meaning of traditional written sources.