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SCRIPTURES IN THE MAKING:
TEXTS AND THEIR TRANSMISSION
IN LATE SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM



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ASSESSING THE PRIESTLY PROVENANCE OF THE QUMRAN ARAMAIC TEXTS

Jessi ORPANA

1. Introduction

I examine here priestly interests and the use of the priestly or Levitical lineage appearing in the Qumran manuscripts written in Aramaic. While there are some other common features among these writings, features identified as priestly concerns have played a significant role in scholarly assessments of the provenance of these Aramaic writings. I argue here that the study of individual Aramaic works makes the shared priestly milieu of the entire Aramaic corpus unlikely. Some Aramaic writings may indeed have originated in priestly circles but it seems that many shared elements reflect the use of widespread literary strategies among a number of scribal circles active in varying contexts from the late fourth to the mid-second century BCE. In this way, the Qumran Aramaic writings are an important witness to Palestinian literary culture and conventions that preceded the emergence of the Qumran movement.

The last finds from the Qumran caves to be fully published were manuscripts written in Aramaic. Altogether 121 fragmentary manuscripts in Aramaic were found in Qumran caves 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 11, the majority coming from cave 4.¹ This means that a little over thirteen percent of the over 900 Qumran manuscripts were written in Aramaic.² Unfortunately,

¹ See Emanuel Tov, *Revised Lists of the Texts from the Judaean Desert* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

² The exact percentage depends on whether the manuscripts from all Judean Desert sites or only Qumran are counted and whether one includes only literary works or documentary texts as well. Thirteen percent should be seen as a minimum; Emanuel Tov, *The Texts from the Judaean Desert: Indices and an Introduction to the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert Series*, DJD XXXIX (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), calculates the percentage as 14.4%, and Daniel A. Machiela, "The Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls: Coherence and Context of the Qumran Library," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran and the Concept of a Library*, ed. Sidnie White Crawford and Cecilia Wassen, STDJ 116 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 243–58 (244), estimates the percentage to be 16.2% if the documentary material is included.

due to the poor state of preservation, only about eighty of these Aramaic manuscripts have enough content and literary context to be significant for textual analysis.³ So far, scholars have been able to distinguish roughly thirty distinct literary works in these manuscripts.⁴

Over the last decade, these Aramaic manuscripts have been intensely scrutinized by scholars and they are currently one of the focal points of Qumran research.⁵ Significantly, recent studies have shown that the works in these manuscripts also contain other marked similarities with each other beyond just the language choice that formed the initial impetus for studying this material together. These similarities make it possible to study the Aramaic texts both as a distinct corpus and as individual texts.⁶ The choice of Aramaic over Hebrew has been discussed in itself. Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of the first millennium BCE in the ancient Near East,⁷ and some scholars connect the choice of Aramaic with authorial aims of reaching a wider international audience.⁸ Some others

³ Devorah Dimant, "The Qumran Aramaic Texts and the Qumran Community," in *Flores Florentino: The Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez*, ed. Anthony Hilhorst, Émile Puech, and Eibert Tigchelaar, JSJSup 122 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 197–205 (199).

⁴ E.g., Machiela, "The Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls," 244–46.

⁵ See, e.g., Daniel A. Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13–17*, STDJ 79 (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Katell Berthelot and Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, eds., *Aramaica Qumranica: Proceedings of the Conference on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran in Aix-en-Provence, 30 June–2 July 2008*, STDJ 94 (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Andrew B. Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls*, JAJSup 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015); Mette Bundvad and Kasper Siegismund, eds., *Vision, Narrative, and Wisdom in the Aramaic Texts from Qumran: Essays from the Copenhagen Symposium, 14–15 August, 2017*, STDJ 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

⁶ Cf. Dimant, "The Qumran Aramaic Texts," 197–205; Eibert Tigchelaar, "Aramaic Texts from Qumran and the Authoritativeness of Hebrew Scriptures: Preliminary Observations," in *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism*, ed. Mladen Popović, JSJSup 141 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 155–71; Machiela, "The Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls," 251–53; idem, "Situating the Aramaic Texts from Qumran: Reconsidering Their Language and Socio-Historical Settings," in *The Apocalypse and the Sage: Engaging with John Collins' The Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Sidnie White Crawford and Cecilia Wassen, JSJSup 182 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 88–109 (91–93); Andrew B. Perrin, "Capturing the Voices of Pseudepigraphic Personae: On the Form and Function of Incipits in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls," *DSD* 20 (2013): 98–123; idem, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation*, 30–37.

⁷ See Henryk Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text from Qumran: A New Interpretation of the Levi Document*, JSJSup 86 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 61; Machiela, "Situating the Aramaic Texts," 101–02. An overview is provided by Holger Gzella, *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam*, HdO 111 (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

⁸ E.g., Elias Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Ben Zion Wacholder, "The Ancient Judaeo-Aramaic Literature (500–164

perceive it as a literary device connected to the chosen pre-Sinai and foreign court settings of nearly all of the Aramaic literary works.⁹ In addition to the choice of language and literary setting, the common features are mostly similar literary strategies. These include the frequent use of a first-person singular authorial “I” that is rare in Hebrew prose works but employed in the majority of the Aramaic works¹⁰ and the prominence of dream-vision revelations.¹¹ A final connecting feature that should be mentioned at this point is that nearly all of these Aramaic works are typically dated to the early to mid-Hellenistic period (roughly between the fourth and mid-second centuries BCE).¹² Hence, they precede the Qumran movement and potentially provide important information about Jewish writing circles active in the third century BCE, plausibly in Palestine.

In this article, I study the emphasis on the priestly/Levitical lines and priestly concerns in general, a similarity that is present in some of the Aramaic works. This feature has been used as one argument for a shared social setting of the actual authors whom some scholars have regarded as belonging to the priestly circles.¹³ However, other scholars have

BCE): A Classification of Pre-Qumranic Texts,” in *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman, JSPSup 8 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 257–81; Machiela, “Situating the Aramaic Texts,” 88–109. Cf. John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

⁹ E.g., Dimant, “The Qumran Aramaic Texts,” 203–04; Jonathan Ben-Dov, “Hebrew and Aramaic Writing in the Pseudepigrapha and the Qumran Scrolls: The Ancient Near Eastern Background and the Quest for a Written Authority,” *Tarbiz* 78 (2009): 27–60 (in Hebrew). Cf. Anthea Portier-Young, “Languages of Identity and Obligation: Daniel as Bilingual Book,” *VT* 60 (2010): 98–115.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Devorah Dimant, “Themes and Genres in the Aramaic Texts from Qumran,” in *Aramaica Qumranica: Proceedings of the Conference on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran in Aix-en-Provence 30 June-2 July 2008*, ed. Katell Berthelot and Daniel Stöckl Ben Ezra, STDJ 94 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 15–45; Machiela, “The Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls,” 250; idem, “Situating the Aramaic Texts,” 91.

¹¹ See esp. Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation*.

¹² Machiela, “Situating the Aramaic Texts,” 91. Cf. Holger Gzella, “Dating the Aramaic Texts from Qumran: Possibilities and Limits,” *RevQ* 93 (2009): 61–78.

¹³ For claims of a shared priestly social setting, see Machiela, “Situating the Aramaic Texts,” 105. For suggestions connecting one or more of the Aramaic texts with priestly writing circles, see, for instance, Florentino García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran*, STDJ 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 121; idem, “The Temple Scroll and the New Jerusalem,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment, Vol. 1*, ed. Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 457; Robert A. Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest: The Levi-Priestly Tradition from Aramaic Levi to Testament of Levi*, EJL 9 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 225; Jonas C. Greenfield, Michael Stone, and Esther Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary*, SVTP 19 (Leiden: Brill,

cautioned against drawing overly broad conclusions about the authors of all the Aramaic works simply because of an emphasis on the priestly/Levitical lines as the implied caretakers and transmitters of these traditions in some of the Aramaic works as well. It has been shown that such an emphasis can be found in other late Second Temple works as well. Furthermore, the priestly/Levitical lines provide the only well-recorded lineages of probably literate persons that authors could have utilized as a guarantee for their audiences about the ancestry and reliable transmission of their works.¹⁴ It is thus imperative to analyze the individual works further to see where exactly such an emphasis on the priestly/Levitical lineage is found. It must be asked whether these works contain any other elements directly related to priestly interests or presumed priestly style of writing (e.g., the use of extensive lists) relying on connections with the supposed P-source of the Pentateuch and its style.

In the main part of this study, the three Aramaic works that most clearly emphasize the line of Levi will be discussed, viz., the Aramaic Levi Document, the Testament of Qahat, and the Visions of Amram. In these sections, the priestly elements present in these works will be analyzed as will other central literary elements, such as wisdom discourse and prophetic revelations. This is necessary so that we can assess the relative importance of the priestly features in the preserved parts of the works. After this, four other Aramaic works that contain some less distinctive priestly elements will be briefly explored. It should be noted already at this point that these seven Aramaic works from Qumran are the only ones where priestly elements are sufficiently noteworthy to be considered as part of an authorial agenda. At the end of this study, I will bring together the findings from the analysis of the individual works and

2004), 22; Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 63–69; Robert R. Duke, *The Social Location of the visions of Amram (4Q543–547)*, StBibLit 135 (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 110; Armin Lange, “Between Zion and Heaven: The *New Jerusalem Text* from Qumran as a Paratext,” in *Biblical Figures in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature*, ed. Hermann Lichtenberger and Ulrike Mittmann-Richert, *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2008* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 397–412 (403); Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras*, JSJSup 90 (Leiden: Brill 2004), 147–52, 263.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Joseph L. Angel, *Otherworldly and Eschatological Priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 86 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1–20; Mika S. Pajunen, “Transmitting Patriarchal Voices in Aramaic: Claims of Authenticity and Reliability,” in *Vision, Narrative, and Wisdom in the Aramaic Texts from Qumran: Essays from the Copenhagen Symposium, 14–15 August, 2017*, ed. Mette Bundvad and Kasper Siegismund, STDJ 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2019). Cf. Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation*, 158–59.

evaluate what impact they should have when we draw conclusions about the actual authors of these works and their potential target audiences.

2. Priestly Interests and Authorship: Three Potential Cases

2.1 *Aramaic Levi Document (1Q21, 4Q213, 4Q213a, 4Q213b, 4Q214, 4Q214a, 4Q214b)*

The first work to be discussed further is the Aramaic Levi Document (ALD), which is the most likely of these works to have been composed by priestly circles.¹⁵ Parts of it were known from Greek fragments and finds from the Cairo Genizah before the Qumran discoveries, but seven highly fragmentary manuscripts of it in Aramaic were found in caves 1 and 4.¹⁶ The very beginning and end of the work have not been preserved and the order of the contents is at points unclear. Drawnel has thematically divided the work into three sections: Levi's pseudepigraphical life story (ALD 1a–10; 62–81), his priestly education and that of his descendants (ALD 11–61; 82–98), and the future destiny of the Levitical priesthood (ALD 99–104).¹⁷ He dates ALD to the early third century BCE.¹⁸

The work is presented in the first-person singular voice of Levi and it presents further elements related to some of the main points of his life as related in Genesis, such as the Shechem incident (Gen 34) where Levi and Simeon take an active role. However, while Genesis transmits little information about Levi (cf. Gen 29:34; 34:25, 30; 35:23; 46:11; 49:5)

¹⁵ See, e.g., Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest*, 225; Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 22. The most far-reaching conclusions regarding the author and social setting of ALD are drawn by Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 61–69 and idem, "Priestly Education," 551, who claims that ALD is the main representative of priestly school literature in post-exilic Israel, reflects actual teaching practices, and points to the existence of a Levitical school. Even if the circles responsible for ALD can be claimed to be from priestly circles, Drawnel's other conclusions about the actual social setting seem to reach beyond what the text of ALD can be confidently used to deduce.

¹⁶ For the official DJD edition of the Qumran fragments, see Michael Stone and Jonas C. Greenfield, "Aramaic Levi Document," in *Qumran Cave 4: XVII. Parabiblical Texts, Part 3*, ed. George Brooke et al., DJD XXII (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 1–72. For information on all the preserved manuscripts of ALD, see Henryk Drawnel, "The Visions of Levi and Priestly Education in Israel," *FO* 42–43 (2006–2007): 237–240 (238 n. 2); idem, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, § 1.4. For composite texts of ALD, see Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document* and Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*. The numbering of the text in this article follows Drawnel's edition.

¹⁷ Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text*, 79–81.

¹⁸ Henryk Drawnel, "Priestly Education in the Aramaic Levi Document (*Visions of Levi*) and Aramaic Astronomical Book (4Q208–211)," *RevQ* 88 (2006): 547–74 (548).

and has very little to say about a priestly role or covenant ascribed to him, a focal point in other literature (e.g., Exod 40:15; Jer 33:21; Neh 13:29; Sir 45:24), the ALD brings these roles of Levi to the fore. It emphasizes his role as the first ordained priest, and Levi is presented as relating specific instructions and admonitions to his descendants, the priests and Levites.¹⁹

The ALD contains many priestly interests and elements, such as detailed descriptions of purification, detailing the use of pure and running water (e.g., 1a vv. 1–2, 19–21), a prayer (ALD 1a), and mentions of serving God in a proper fashion (ALD 1a vv. 8–12). Furthermore, the eternal nature of priesthood and the kingdom of priesthood are set against the earthly kingdom of the sword (ALD 3c–6). This highlights the special role of priests as the leading figures and lineage in the society. The work also contains a description of how Levi was ordained as a priest (ALD 9–10), and, perhaps most importantly, it relates what is termed the law of the priesthood (ALD 14–61).

The law of the priesthood is taught directly by Isaac to Levi in the work. It is said to be based on the teaching of Isaac by Abraham (ALD 50, 57) that is in turn said to derive largely from a Book of Noah (ALD 57): Noah who was the first to offer an animal sacrifice after the Flood according to Genesis (Gen 8:20). But the instruction is clearly not a retelling of that book but contains elements added by Abraham, such as the need to check the wood used in sacrifices for worms as Abraham did (ALD 22). The law of the priesthood forms the largest part of the extant work and it gives detailed instructions concerning priestly purification (ALD 16–21, 26, 53), making of sacrifices (ALD 22–47, 52), and admonitions to marry only women from the line of Jacob, that is, other Israelites, because that is seen as the holy seed (ALD 16–17). At the end of this law, Isaac is said to declare that Levi will be more beloved than his brothers will, which again emphasizes the priests and Levites over and against other Israelites (ALD 58–61). Such elements strongly imply that the actual author and his addressees were most likely part of the priestly circles because priesthood, the proper conduct of priests, and their special position among the people are emphasized throughout the work (cf. ALD 1a v. 18, 3c, 17–18, 58–61, 98–101). Towards the end of the work, there

¹⁹ Cf. Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest*, 18; Henryk Drawnel, “The Literary Form and Didactic Content of the Admonitions (Testament) of Qahat,” in *From 4QMMT to Resurrection: Mélanges qumraniens en hommage à Émile Puech*, ed. Florentino García Martínez, Annette Steudel, and Eibert Tigchelaar, STDJ 61 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 55–73 (69); Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation*, 149.

is also an explanation of how and why the priestly line will continue after Levi through his son Qahat, not the elder Gershon or the other children (ALD 62–74). This and the general list-like style and the genealogy at the end, typically seen as elements present most of all in priestly works, can be seen as further evidence of potential priestly authorship.

There are some other interests and elements present in the work not typically associated with priestly writing or interests. One of these is the use of patriarchal voices. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Levi are mentioned, but mainly as a guarantee of the authenticity of the details concerning Levi's life and the priestly ordinances passed on by Levi. Similarly, the work contains several prophetic visions (ALD 1b, 3a–7, 98–104) but they also abound with priestly concerns and matters related to the priesthood,²⁰ not more general revelation directed to other Israelites as well. The only element in the work that is not directly related to Levi or the priesthood is a wisdom poem (ALD 85–98). It is very general in nature and speaks mainly about the importance and benefits of pursuing wisdom. It therefore stands out from the other parts of the work and may derive from a source used by the author or be a later addition. Regardless of this, the poem does not take away from the general nature of the work, which can be concluded to be a discourse directed at priests and almost entirely related to matters concerning priests and their proper service of God. It would be hard to argue that such a work would have been written by persons not in frequent contact with priests and their practices.

2.2 *Testament of Qahat (4Q542)*

The second work to be discussed is the Testament of Qahat.²¹ Only a portion of it is preserved in a single manuscript, 4Q542. Only three fragments of the work have been preserved, only one of which (4Q542 1) is of significant size for textual analysis. This fragment contains text from the lower part of two consecutive columns that may derive from the very beginning of the work, judging by the content that appears to be the opening of a longer admonition²² and by stitching on the right edge

²⁰ Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation*, 150.

²¹ For the edition of 4Q542, see Émile Puech, *Qumran Grotte 4: XXII, Textes araméens, première partie, 4Q529–549*, DJD XXXI (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 257–82.

²² It has been debated whether the work should be labeled a testament or an admonition, but Drawnel, "The Literary Form," 57, 70–73, is correct in that in the present state of preservation the work does not contain elements of a testament and should instead be seen as an admonition.

of fragment 1i that indicated it was either preceded by another inscribed sheet or just a handle sheet. As is the case with the previous and the next example, the Testament of Qahat is written from the perspective of an ancestor in the Levitical line, this time Levi's son Qahat. Qahat's name does not appear in the actual manuscript, but, as Levi is mentioned as the father of the figure and Amram as his son (4Q542 1ii 9–12), the identification seems certain.²³

The Testament of Qahat is also similar to the Aramaic Levi Document in claiming that parts of the work derive from the written works and teachings of the same patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and especially Levi and Qahat (4Q542 1i 7–12, 1ii 10–12). Furthermore, Qahat now entrusts this literary heritage to the care of his descendants, the priests and Levites (4Q542 1ii 9–13). Priestly interests are not otherwise as clearly present in the preserved portion of the work as in the Aramaic Levi Document. There is a blessing at the very beginning of the preserved section (4Q542 1i 1–4) but it is not a liturgical priestly blessing but rather in a continuum with other patriarchal blessings of their descendants found, for instance, in Genesis (e.g., Gen 49). The work is overall more like wisdom admonitions than priestly instructions. It contains passages concerning the faithful passing down of heritage reminiscent of Deuteronomic admonitions (4Q542 1i 4–7, 11–12; 1ii 9–10) as well as a discourse concerning ideals the addressees should pursue (4Q542 1i 12–13). The little that is preserved of the work is hence much more didactic in character than the Aramaic Levi Document. While it also contains a prophetic revelation (1ii 1–8), the vision is not as clearly related to priests as in the Aramaic Levi Document. Nevertheless, there are a few further elements, in addition to the emphasis on priests and Levites as transmitters of traditions that could perhaps be taken as possible indicators of priestly authorship of the work. In fragment 1i 8–9 and 13, purity and holiness are highlighted as important to keep up, and the need to remain separate from other nations is mentioned several times (4Q542 1i 4–10), all elements also found in the Aramaic Levi Document as is the general list-like style of the work. Furthermore, when the ideals that the audience is admonished to strive for are listed, it is noteworthy that they are only fully achievable by priests because priesthood is mentioned as one of the ideals, along with holiness and purity (4Q542 1i 13).

The Testament of Qahat is therefore a more difficult case to decide than the Aramaic Levi Document, not least because so little is preserved.

²³ See also Drawnel, "The Literary Form," 55–58.

It is possible that this author too came from the priestly circles but it is much less evident. While there are some elements obviously stressing priestly concerns and their special status, they do not permeate the extant parts of the work in the same way as in the Aramaic Levi Document. The deciding factor here is whether these priestly elements can be seen as a deliberate emphasis of the actual author or if they are part of taking on the voice of the implied author. It is difficult to say where the line should be drawn to determine when a work contains enough interests from a certain perspective to enable drawing conclusions from them about the social setting and background of the actual author. It is possible that the Testament of Qahat was written by priestly circles but with the current state of preservation of the work this cannot be decided conclusively.

2.3 *Visions of Amram (4Q543–548, 4Q549[?])*

The third example, the Visions of Amram, is preserved in part in five to seven fragmentary manuscripts.²⁴ This time the first-person speaker is explicitly identified as the next person from Qahat in the Levitical line of succession, Amram. The beginning of the work is extant this time and it is introduced as a copy of the book, the words and visions of Amram that he told his sons, Moses and Aaron (4Q543 1a–c 1). Although Amram is part of the Levitical line, the work itself has very little that could be termed as priestly. It mostly retells in greater detail some of the events in Amram's life (e.g., 4Q544 1 and parallels), and recounts prophetic visions he has concerning himself and his descendants (4Q543 2 a–b and 5–9, and parallels). The visions foretell the future roles of both Moses and Aaron, and they are naturally centered on Moses' leadership role in leaving Egypt and in the wilderness as well as Aaron's and his sons' role as priests (4Q545 4).²⁵ Aaron does not therefore stand out in any way, but his significance in the text is quite similar to that of Moses.

²⁴ See the official editions of the manuscripts in Puech, *Qumran Grotte 4: XXII, Textes araméens, première partie*, 283–406. The first five of the manuscripts (4Q543–547) have enough overlapping text that they can be treated as copies of the same work. Both 4Q548 and 4Q549 do not overlap with the other manuscripts, which makes it possible that they could be from some other literary work. The text of 4Q549 at least deals with Miriam, which links it with the literary setting of the Visions of Amram, but the small preserved portion of 4Q548 is characterized by a dualistic worldview dealing with the sons of light and darkness, which is more reminiscent of works of the Qumran movement than the preserved parts of the Visions of Amram.

²⁵ There has been a tendency to stress Aaron's role and the supposed priestly emphasis of the Visions of Amram based on the scant remains of this fragment. For a detailed

There are a few small fragments that mention the making of sacrifices (4Q546 12; 4Q547 5, 6, 8), but these are not ordinances regarding sacrifices but rather narratives where someone is making a sacrifice. On one of these occasions, the one offering the sacrifice is Levi but otherwise such details have not been preserved (4Q547 8). If 4Q549 is seen as a copy of the work, there is possibly a genealogy at the end of it that lists Amram's descendants (4Q549 2 8–11). Naturally a genealogy is not a definitive marker of priestly writing (cf. Ruth 4:18–22, which is not typically considered a priestly text) and seems like a fitting conclusion to the work after Amram's death has just been related (4Q549 2 5–6). What remains of this work cannot thus be used to claim priestly authorship for the work. Naturally, it cannot be excluded that the author might have been a priest but the preserved parts of the work do not offer enough evidence to support such a view.

3. Priestly Interests and Authorship: Four Minor Cases

In addition to the above three texts, there are four other Aramaic texts from Qumran that contain some issues related to priests or matters that could be directly relevant to them. The first of these is a visionary work labeled New Jerusalem that is extant in seven fragmentary manuscripts (1Q32, 2Q24, 4Q554, 4Q554a, 4Q555, 5Q15, and 11Q18)²⁶ and is once more written from a first-person singular perspective. This time, however, the identity of the visionary is not evident, although the text has sometimes been associated with Jacob.²⁷ New Jerusalem describes in detail a heavenly/future Jerusalem where the temple at the very center of the city stands as the culmination of the vision. The work is made up of long lists containing detailed measurements of the city and its different parts, starting with the walls and gates and working inward, as well as descriptions of the materials used. The interest in the temple and the use of such detailed lists might imply priestly interests, as might the liveliness

discussion, see Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation*, 166–71. However, a prophetic vision concerning Moses apparently precedes the vision concerning Aaron and its remains and the other preserved parts of Visions of Amram do not indicate that Aaron's role was meant to be emphasized above his brother's.

²⁶ For the manuscripts and text, see Lorenzo DiTommaso, *The Dead Sea New Jerusalem Text: Contents and Contexts*, TSAJ 110 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

²⁷ See, for instance, Eibert Tigchelaar, "The Imaginal Context and the Visionary of the Aramaic New Jerusalem," in *Flores Florentino: The Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez*, ed. Anthony Hilhorst, Émile Puech, and Eibert Tigchelaar, JSJSup 122 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 256–70.

of the temple cult in relation to the emptiness of the rest of the city.²⁸ But priests were certainly not the only ones interested in Jerusalem and the temple. Indeed, the closest parallel to the work would be the temple vision in the Book of Ezekiel (Ezek 40–48).²⁹ Thus, there exists a possibility that priestly circles might have been responsible for this work but it goes far beyond the available evidence to claim this as more than a possibility.

The second work with some possible priestly interests is the Genesis Apocryphon (1Q20).³⁰ In a work that mostly retells and adds to the account of Genesis by narrating the events in the first-person voices of Enoch, Lamech, Noah, and Abram, the most telling elements for this investigation are the places where the two accounts differ. It is at those places where one should potentially be able to discern the particular emphasis of the authors of the Genesis Apocryphon. It should also be borne in mind that the Genesis Apocryphon is most likely a composite work, made up of individual sources. Hence, even if parts of the work contain marked priestly interests, that might only pertain to a specific source used in the current work.

On a general level the most distinct difference from Genesis is that the patriarchs have considerably more prophetic dream visions and their interpretation is given a prominent place. The content of these visions is not in any way priestly or concerned with issues related to priesthood. They are most often related to forewarnings given by God concerning certain events, so the interest is exegetically grounded in the storyline or in matters related to acquiring heavenly wisdom and knowledge. There is some concern over maintaining endogamous marriage in Genesis Apocryphon,³¹ but whether this should be seen as a purely priestly concern is debatable. However, in general the main difference from Genesis is additional prophetic and wisdom discourses that do not pertain to priestly matters. As a small detail worthy of note, Noah's sacrificial

²⁸ For possible priestly authorship of New Jerusalem, see, e.g., García Martínez, "The Temple Scroll and the New Jerusalem," 457; Lange, "Between Zion and Heaven," 403.

²⁹ For contrasts and consistencies between *New Jerusalem* and Ezekiel 40–48, see García Martínez, "The Temple Scroll and the New Jerusalem," 451; Lange, "Between Zion and Heaven," 397–412. Cf. Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation*, 171–77.

³⁰ For the edition and research history of Genesis Apocryphon, see Daniel A. Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13–17*, STDJ 79 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1–84.

³¹ Drawnel, "The Literary Form," 69–70; Machiela, "Situating the Aramaic Texts," 95.

offering after the flood is presented in a more detailed manner, which accords with the later regulations given to priests, in the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen X 12–17) than in Genesis (Gen 8:20). But whether only a priestly author would deem it necessary to depict Noah offering the sacrifice properly is open to question. Therefore, Genesis Apocryphon does not seem to be a priestly work; at least some wisdom circles emphasizing the secrets of the universe, the partly revelatory nature of wisdom, and having interest in the details of the Genesis text, such as the ones behind 4QInstruction, would be more probable candidates for the writers of this work than priests.

A third work, a so-called Pseudo-Daniel Text (4Q245)³² contains very little now but it does include an apparent list of high priests that extends from Levi at least to Simon (4Q245 1i 5–10). As little else remains of the work and as this list seems to be directly followed by another list containing Davidic kings (4Q245 1i 11–12), nothing can be concluded concerning the actual authors of this work, even if the preserved portion is made up of lists.

The fourth, and final, work is also very fragmentary, the so-called Testament of Jacob(?) (4Q537).³³ The overall nature of the work cannot be decided because so little remains. But it does contain prophetic visions and one of these (4Q537 12) talks about future structures and priests offering sacrifices there as well as eating their portion of the sacrifices. None of the other fragments contain anything particularly priestly so the quite general description of priests in this one fragment cannot be taken as compelling evidence concerning the circles that wrote this work.

4. Conclusions

As this investigation of priestly interests and style of writing in the Aramaic corpus from Qumran has shown, only in the case of the Aramaic Levi Document can it be fairly certainly said that the work originated in priestly circles. This is because it contains so many different matters related to priests, legislates priestly practices, and endorses the position of priests over earthly rulers and other Israelites. With the Testament of Qahat priestly authorship may also be the most plausible of the

³² For the edition of 4Q245, see John J. Collins and Peter Flint, “4Qpseudo-Daniel^a ar,” in *Qumran Cave 4: XVII. Parabiblical Texts, Part 3*, ed. George Brooke et al., DJD XXII (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 153–64.

³³ For the edition of 4Q537, see Puech, *Qumran Grotte 4 XXII: Textes araméens, première partie*, 171–90.

perceivable options, but even in this case there are also other possibilities open because so little remains of the overall work. All the other Aramaic works covered in this article, *Visions of Amram*, *New Jerusalem*, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, 4Q245, and 4Q537, do not offer enough evidence for claims concerning priestly authorship in their extant parts, and in a few of the cases, such as the *Genesis Apocryphon*, writing circles other than priestly seem more probable. What these circles might be has to be dealt with in a separate study. If the over twenty other Aramaic literary works that were not presented here in detail because they do not contain even this many elements connectable with priests were to be investigated, more works likely composed by other than priestly writers would most probably emerge. On the basis of this study a shared writing milieu of all these Aramaic works in priestly or other circles seems highly unlikely. The works do not seem to have originated from the same writers and there is no need to assume that they would have been composed in exactly the same historical setting, apart from their general dating to the early to mid-Hellenistic era. Rather, the shared elements seem more likely to be tied in with a wider use of similar literary strategies that spanned roughly a hundred and fifty years from the late fourth to the mid-second century BCE and were used by a number of different writing circles. This might also imply that the use of Aramaic should be seen as another such literary strategy because otherwise one would have to posit a similar societal setting and international target audience for a number of different writing circles probably also operating partly at different times. This is of course possible, but when the other shared elements in these Aramaic works seem rather clear literary strategies, such claims seem to require needlessly complex explanations.

Another significant detail readily perceivable in these works is that one cannot clearly distinguish priestly writing, prophetic writing, wisdom writing, and so on from each other. All of these works contain an abundance of prophetic revelations, many of them contain wisdom elements, and some of them reflect priestly concerns. Different combinations of such aspects are of course present in most of the late Second Temple period writings, and this together with the small amount of text preserved from most of these works makes the positive identification of particular writing circles extremely difficult, and in many cases nearly impossible.

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