The Compositional Setting and Implied Audience of Some Aramaic Texts from Qumran: A Working Hypothesis

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The occasion of the conference that produced this volume of collected papers attests to a growing interest in the Aramaic literature discovered among the Qumran caves. Because the Aramaic scrolls were, generally speaking, published later than many of the Hebrew texts, they have received less attention than their Hebrew counterparts. Consequently, many basic questions pertaining to the Aramaic texts remain to be addressed in a robust way.¹ While my research has dealt with various of these texts in detail, I have become increasingly aware of the benefit of investigating them as a corpus, asking large-scale questions about their overall coherence as a group, their compositional background and history, their intended audiences, their potential relationships with other clusters of ancient Jewish literature, and their connections with Jewish societies more broadly as reflected in the archaeological and textual records. In this two-part essay, I will offer some of my current thoughts on the Aramaic scrolls as they relate to these areas of inquiry. In the first part, I will put forward

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- ¹ The two most important studies on this topic are those of Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 51–65; and Ben Zion Wacholder, “The Ancient Judaeo-Aramaic Literature (500–164 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, JSOT/ASOR Monographs 2 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 257–81. While both of these essays contain important insights about Jewish Aramaic literature of the Second Temple period when viewed as a larger phenomenon, each study overlooks important aspects of the Qumran evidence and in my opinion fails to provide a compelling overall description. On this topic see also Józef T. Milik, “Écrits préesséniens de Qumrân: d’Hénoch à Amram,” in *Qumrân: Sa piété, sa théologie et son milieu*, ed. Mathias Delcor (Paris: Gembloux; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1978), 91–106; 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 J. C. Tigchelaar, JSJSup 122 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 197–205; idem, “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 Stökl Ben Ezra, STDJ 94 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 15–45; and Eibert J. C. 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.

a hypothetical socio-historical scenario for thinking about the majority of Qumran Aramaic literature. Though experimental, I have worked to ground this scenario in extensive study of the Qumran Aramaic texts, related or relevant literature, and current archaeological and historical research on Persian- and Hellenistic-period Judaism. I view the scenario as providing a plausible background for understanding the literature under discussion insofar as it lines up with the evidence currently at our disposal, helping to make better sense of a large part of the Aramaic corpus from Qumran. In the second part of the essay, I aim to connect the hypothetical scenario with the Aramaic texts themselves, in hopes that this will make clear how, in fact, the scenario grew out of close readings of the texts. My goal in all of this is to foster more widely-framed discussions of the Aramaic literature preserved at Qumran.

Before beginning in earnest, I should state an important underlying assumption of the following analysis: I assume that a basic affinity exists between many of the Aramaic texts from Qumran, suggestive of a shared compositional setting. This assumption coincides with the previous opinions of Milik, Segert, Dimant, and a number of others who argue that the Aramaic scrolls are, generally speaking, both “pre-sectarian” and “non-sectarian.”² I will touch on aspects of this affinity in the second part of the essay, building on a theme in some of my recent work.³ However, I must further qualify this point with two caveats.

2 In addition to the studies cited in note 1, see also Józef T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Judean Wilderness*, trans. John Strugnell (London: SCM Press, 1959), 139 (for the original French see Józef T. Milik, *Dix ans de découvertes dans le désert de Juda* [Paris: Les Éditions du CERF, 1957], 95–96); Stanislav Segert, “Die Sprachenfragen in der Qumrängemeinschaft,” in *Qumran-Probleme: Vorträge des Leipziger Symposions über Qumran-Probleme vom 9. bis 14. Oktober 1961*, ed. Hans Bardtke (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963), 315–39; idem, review of *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1*, by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *JSS* 13 (1968): 281–82; Jonas C. Greenfield, “Aramaic and Its Dialects,” in *‘Al Kanfei Yonah: Collected Studies of Jonas Greenfield on Semitic Philology*, ed. Shalom M. Paul, Michael E. Stone, and Avital Pinnick (Leiden: Brill; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2001), 1:361–75; John J. Collins, “The Aramaic Texts from Qumran: Conclusions and Perspectives,” 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 Stökl Ben Ezra, *STDJ* 94 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 547–64; 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.

3 See, for example Daniel A. Machiela, “Prayer in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls: A Catalogue and Overview,” in *Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature: Essays in Honor of Eileen Schuller on the Occasion of Her 65th Birthday*, ed. Jeremy Penner, Ken M. Penner, and Cecilia Wassén, *STDJ* 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 273–93; “Aramaic Writings of the Second Temple Period and the Growth of Apocalyptic Thought: Another Survey of the Texts,” *JAAJ* (2014): 113–34; “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 Wassén, *STDJ* 116 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 243–58; “The

First, not *all* of the Qumran Aramaic writings should automatically be assumed to belong to the group of loosely-related texts discussed in what follows. There are generic and linguistic attributes suggesting that the translations of Job (11Q10 and 4Q157), for example, ought to be treated separately.⁴ Nevertheless, the group of outliers is fairly small compared to the relatively large cluster of texts included in the purview of this essay. Second, by proposing that these Aramaic texts have a shared compositional setting, I do not mean to imply that they were all written by the same person or group of people within a small window of time. Rather, I would characterize these texts as the products of a distinctive Jewish literary tradition that most likely existed for at least a century, and perhaps for significantly longer than that. Consequently, we might expect that the texts show some signs of development in thought or emphasis over time. A roughly analogous situation may be observed, for example, in the Hebrew sectarian texts from Qumran. While these texts obviously share a core set of tenets and ideologies which bind them together over time and place, scholars have increasingly drawn attention to the ways in which changes in time or social location impacted the various expressions of sectarian thought.

Part One: A Hypothetical Socio-Historical Setting for the Qumran Aramaic Texts

Imagine the situation of a small group of elite priests living and working in Judah sometime during the fourth to mid-second centuries BCE, before the events that led most directly to the Hasmonean revolt. These priests were

Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls: Hellenistic Period Witnesses to Jewish Apocalyptic Thought,” in *The Seleucid and Hasmonean Periods and the Apocalyptic Worldview*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe, Gabriele Boccaccini, and Jason M. Zurawski (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark International, 2016), 147–56; “Wisdom Motifs’ in the Compositional Strategy of the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1Q20) and Other Aramaic Texts from Qumran,” in *HĀ-’ĪSH MÔSHE: Studies in Scriptural Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Moshe J. Bernstein*, ed. Binyamin Y. Goldstein, Michael Segal, and George J. Brooke, STDJ 122 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 223–47; “Situating the Aramaic Texts from Qumran: Reconsidering Their Language and Socio-Historical Settings,” in *Apocalyptic Thinking in Early Judaism: Engaging with John Collins’ The Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Sidnie White Crawford and Cecilia Wassén, JSJSup 182 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 88–109; and Daniel A. Machiela and Andrew B. Perrin, “Tobit and the Genesis Apocryphon: Toward a Family Portrait,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 111–32.

- 4 Some other texts that one might include in this category are: 4Q156, 4Q318, 4Q339, 4Q342, 4Q344 (along with other documentary texts, such as deeds and loans), 4Q559, 4Q560, 4Q561, 4Q569, and 4Q583. As opposed to the main group of Qumran Aramaic texts, those listed here exhibit much more diversity in their contents, genres, and language.

deeply concerned about, and dedicated to, their ancestral occupation as Israel's teachers. They were highly educated and well-acquainted with the governing authorities, having grown up and been trained in the upper echelons of Judean society. They had been taught to read and write with a high level of proficiency in their ancestral Hebrew tongue, but also in the standardized chancery language of Achaemenid Aramaic, used widely across the Persian and eastern Greek empires at all levels of official government relations and communication, down to the second century BCE. In addition, Aramaic was used by Judeans for local business with surrounding peoples, if not within Judah itself. Popular literature that was not exclusively Israelite in nature was published and studied in Aramaic and, to a growing extent, Greek. These priests were, therefore, familiar with internationally-circulated literary works like the Ahiqar story and Darius the Great's Bisitun inscription, alongside an assortment of historical, political, and scientific writings derived from the great centers of learning in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Greek-speaking west, much of it mediated in Aramaic or Greek.⁵ Of course, they were also intimately familiar with their own ancestral Hebrew writings, which they were mandated to teach to Israel.⁶ As leading priests, the chiefs among their ranks were liable to hold positions of high national visibility and significance. After all, the Jerusalem temple, which stood at the center of their vocation, was also the chief economic center of their province, serving as a national bank and treasury.⁷ It was the central institution of learning, too, functioning as a national library, archive, and school where at least a portion of priests were taught the skills of

5 On the Ahiqar story and its textual history, see e.g., James M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Ingo Kottsieper, "Die Geschichte und die Sprüche des weisen Achiqar," in *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*, vol. 3.2, ed. Otto Kaiser et al. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1991), 320–47; and Seth A. Bledsoe, *Wisdom in Distress: The Book of Ahiqar and the Sapiential Tradition*, JSJSup (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). For the Bisitun inscription, see the recent article by Christine Mitchell, "Berlin Papyrus P. 13447 and the Library of the Yehudite Colony at Elephantine," *JNES* 76 (2017): 139–47, along with the bibliography provided there.

6 The best discussion of the teaching role of priests in the Second Temple period is in the unpublished article of Steven D. Fraade, "'They Shall Teach Your Statutes to Jacob': Priests, Scribes, and Sages in Second Temple Times." The article can currently be found online at: https://www.academia.edu/301787/They_Shall_Teach_Your_Statutes_to_Jacob_Priest_Scribe_and_Sage_In_Second_Temple_Times. See also the comments of Annette Y. Reed, "Writing Jewish Astronomy in the Early Hellenistic Age: The Enochic Astronomical Book as Aramaic Wisdom and Archival Impulse," *DSD* 24 (2017): 1–37.

7 A useful summative overview and bibliography of the function of the Jerusalem temple in Jewish society is found in Timothy Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple and Early Christian Identity*, WUNT 11.291 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 13–30.

a scribe, which at this time implied high social standing and power.⁸ Alongside the provincial governor (the Persian *pehah* or Greek *oikonomos*) and an accompanying hierarchy of government officials, the high priest was a chief political figurehead and leader of the Judean people, at least as viewed from an internal perspective.⁹ He oversaw all aspects of the temple, including the training of priests in the literature and traditions of their people, a task in which our priests were deeply invested.¹⁰

8 One frequently-cited reference to the Jerusalem temple library is found in 2 Macc 2:13–14. For discussion of this passage and other relevant sources, see Armin Lange, “The Qumran Library in Context: The Canonical History and Textual Standardization of the Hebrew Bible in Light of the Qumran Library,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran and the Concept of a Library*, ed. Sidnie White Crawford and Cecilia Wassén, STDJ 116 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 262–79, esp. 273–77. On education taking place within the priestly, temple-centered social sphere, see Sylvie Honigman, “Intercultural Exchanges in the Hellenistic East: The Respective Roles of Temples, Royal Offices, Courts, and Gymnasias,” in *Centres and Peripheries in the Early Second Temple Period*, ed. Ehud Ben-Zvi and Christoph Levin, FAT 108 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 79–107.

9 The elevated role of the high priest in this period is attested, for example, in the descriptions of Hecataeus of Abdera (as retold in Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 40.3.1–8). For a discussion of the role of the high priest in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, see Deborah W. Rooke, *Zadok's Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); James C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004), 99–124; Maria Brutti, *The Development of the High Priesthood during the Pre-Hasmonean Period: History, Ideology, Theology*, JSJSup 108 (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple*, 31–40; Vasile Babota, *The Institution of the Hasmonean High Priesthood*, JSJSup 164 (Leiden: Brill, 2014). Further discussion of the interaction of priestly and secular authorities may be found in Eric M. Meyers, “The Shelomith Seal and the Judean Restoration: Some Additional Considerations,” *ErIsr* 18 (1985): 33–38. On the difficulties of distinguishing between what we would now call the civil and religious social domains in Mediterranean antiquity, see Sylvie Honigman, *Tales of High Priests and Taxes: The Books of Maccabees and the Judean Rebellion against Antiochus IV* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 51–64.

10 This picture of the high priest's prominent national role during the Second Temple period may find further support in the so-called Letter of Aristeas, especially in §§ 121–123: “Thus, Eleazar selected excellent men who excelled in education, inasmuch as indeed they were the product of parents of high distinction. These had not only acquired skill in the literature of the Judeans, but also not incidentally they had given heed to preparation in Greek literature. Therefore they were well suited to be appointed to embassies, and they discharged them whenever it became necessary. They possessed great natural disposition for conversations and questions about the Law, being zealous for the middle way—for this is the best state—and avoiding coarse and rude thought ... All were worthy of their leader and the virtue that he possessed. It was evident, given the difficulty that they had leaving, how they loved Eleazar and he them” (English translation from Benjamin G. Wright III, *The Letter of Aristeas: Aristeas to Philocrates' or 'On the Translation of the Law of the Jews,'* CEJL [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015]). The appropriateness of this description for the Ptolemaic

Archaeologists and historians have helped to inform our picture of Judean and neighboring societies at the times during which our priests lived. By the fourth century BCE, Persian rule had led to a more internationalized environment than this part of the world had ever known. The Persian satrapy of “Beyond the River” (satrapy v)—subdivided into smaller provinces governed from regional urban centers such as Dor, Samaria, Jerusalem, and Ashdod—controlled the bustling trade and military routes connecting Mesopotamia and Egypt, and felt the significant influence of western peoples through a steady presence of Phoenician settlements and traders.¹¹ Already during Persian rule, the archaeological record attests to considerable Greek influence in Palestine, especially in the major cities on the coast. These cities were vibrant hubs of international business, supplying their citizens and smaller towns inland with Greek, Phoenician, Persian, Syrian, Egyptian, and Cypriot pottery, jewelry, foods, and other goods, accompanied by many local imitations.¹² Athenian

period, in which the story is purported to have occurred, is a matter of scholarly debate. While van der Kooij accepts the portrayal of the priestly establishment in the Letter as an essentially plausible one for the third century BCE, Wright argues that it can only be considered to reflect the situation of the second century BCE, during which the text was written. See Arie van der Kooij, “The Septuagint of the Pentateuch and Ptolemaic Rule,” in *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*, ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 289–300 (293–94); Wright, *The Letter of Aristeas*, 243.

- 11 On the satrapy system and “Beyond the River” in particular, see Anson F. Rainey, “The Satrapy ‘Beyond the River,’” *AJBA* 1 (1969): 51–78. A more fine-grained look at some of the smaller administrative units discussed below may be found in Yigal Levin, “Judea, Samaria, and Idumea: Three Models of Ethnicity and Administration in the Persian Period,” in *From Judah to Judaea: Socio-economic Structures and Processes in the Persian Period*, ed. Johannes Unsok Ro, Hebrew Bible Monographs 43 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 4–53. Also, in the same volume, Avraham Faust, “Social, Cultural, and Demographic Changes in Judah during the Transition from the Iron Age to the Persian Period and the Nature of Society in the Persian Period,” 106–32, as well as Alexander Fantalkin and Oren Tal, “Judah and Its Neighbors in the Fourth Century BCE: A Time of Major Transformations,” 133–96.
- 12 See the overview of Ephraim Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period, 538–332 B.C.* (Warminster: Aris and Philips; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1982), 229–55; idem, “The Archaeology of Persian Palestine,” in *The Persian Period*, ed. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, vol. 1 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 88–114, esp. 96–99; idem, “Between Persia and Greece: Trade, Administration and Warfare in the Persian and Hellenistic Periods,” in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Thomas Levy (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 432–45; Andrea M. Berlin, “Between Large Forces: Palestine in the Hellenistic Period,” *BA* 60 (1997): 2–51, esp. 3–4; Einat Ambar-Armon and Amos Kloner, “Archaeological Evidence of Links between the Aegean World and the Land of Israel in the Persian Period,” in *A Time of Change: Judah*

coins were being minted in some cities in the Persian period, with Gitler, Ponting, and Tal noting that much of the silver bullion appears to have come from Greek mines.¹³ The more mountainous, isolated hinterlands of Samaria, Judah, and Transjordan saw far less of this international economic activity, but they were by no means immune from it, as seen in the Persian-period Attic pottery found at regional centers like Samaria, Lachish, and 'Ein-Gedi.¹⁴ While cities on the coast increasingly became a dynamic fusion of eastern and western cultures, adopting changes in civic and domestic architecture, pottery, and social customs, the mountain regions tended to maintain the older Levantine (or 'eastern') traditions in these domains, especially in the many agricultural farmsteads and villages. This remained true well into the Hellenistic period.¹⁵ The considerable western presence in Palestine during the Persian period is important in the context of this paper, because it suggests that the transition to Greek rule, while surely of major conceptual, symbolic importance, had a relatively small impact on the daily life of ordinary people. Researchers such as Oded Lipschits and Oren Tal have shown that the transition from Persian to Greek rule was broadly characterized by the *continuation* of earlier, Persian-period material culture into the Hellenistic era, rather than a radical break caused by an influx of Hellenism.¹⁶ Some administrative titles changed, taxation practices and economic policies were adjusted, new coinage types were introduced, and Hellenistic ideals in city planning increased in popularity, but much stayed as it had been, simply taken over by the latest foreign rulers. Despite the growth of western influences during the Persian period, the Persian presence was clearly felt through its governance structure, its more demanding taxation policies, and especially its military infrastructure. Stern observed that, "[t]he military strongholds and many granaries discovered at

and Its Neighbors during the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods, ed. Yigal Levin, LSTS 65 (London: Continuum, 2007), 1–22.

- 13 Haim Gitler, Matthew Ponting, and Oren Tal, "Metallurgical Analysis of Southern Palestinian Coins of the Persian Period," *INR* 3 (2008): 13–27. See more generally Stern, "Archaeology of Persian Palestine," 109–10; Rami Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine: Settlement Patterns and City Planning, 337–31 B.C.E.*, BAR International Series 485 (Oxford: B.A.R., 1989), 135; Fantalkin and Tal, "Judah and Its Neighbors," esp. 148–50.
- 14 Stern, *Material Culture*; idem, "Archaeology of Persian Palestine," 99, 112; Berlin, "Between Large Forces."
- 15 This is one of the main conclusions of Oren Tal's book-length study of Hellenistic-period archaeology of Palestine: Oren Tal, *The Archaeology of Hellenistic Palestine: Between Tradition and Renewal* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2006).
- 16 Oded Lipschits and Oren Tal, "The Settlement Archaeology of the Province of Judah: A Case Study," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 33–52.

nearly all large sites in Palestine reflect the Persian military system, and—most important—a large part of the weapons and several chariot accessories found in the tombs of that period are of the Scytho-Iranian type, just like those found in the guard rooms at Persepolis.”¹⁷ For Judah, it seems that a shift to more autonomous regional governance was granted sometime near the end of the fifth century BCE, if we can judge by the change from general Achaemenid royal seal impressions on vessel handles to the *Yehud* types.¹⁸ Importantly, the many ostraca from Idumea and elsewhere show that Aramaic continued to be employed heavily in Palestine throughout the Hellenistic period, even while the use of Greek steadily increased in some social domains.¹⁹

When our priests considered their constituency, of whom were they thinking? The Judean population in the cities and agricultural villages was growing, following the utter devastation of the province and its population during the Babylonian deportations. These events had introduced what Avraham Faust calls a “post-collapse” society, and Judean leadership, which surely included priests, had been focused on rebuilding the people and their identity in a challenging environment.²⁰ Ever since the return of some of their ancestors from the

17 Stern, “Archaeology of Persian Palestine,” 113.

18 Stern, “Archaeology of Persian Palestine,” 113; Fantalkin and Tal, “Judah and Its Neighbors,” 151–53.

19 There is a constantly-expanding published collection of ostraca and other inscribed material from Idumaea and surrounding regions, in particular. However, this is by no means the full extent of the relevant evidence. Much of the relevant bibliography for the Idumaeian material can be found in the short article of Amos Kloner, “The Introduction of the Greek Language and Culture in the Third Century BCE, according to the Archaeological Evidence in Idumaea,” in *Judah between East and West: The Transition from Persian to Greek Rule (ca. 400–200 BCE)*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Oded Lipschits, LSTS 75 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 158–62. Some of the additional material of relevance to the topic can be found in Jonas C. Greenfield, “Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period,” in *‘Al Kanfei Yonah: Collected Studies of Jonas Greenfield on Semitic Philology*, ed. Shalom M. Paul, Michael E. Stone, and Avital Pinnick, (Leiden: Brill; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2001), 1:232–46; Berlin, “Between Large Forces”; Jan Dušek, *Les manuscrits araméens du Wadi Daliyeh et la Samarie vers 450–332 av. J.-C.*, CHANE 30 (Leiden: Brill, 2007 [with the bibliography cited there]); Hanan Eshel and Hagai Misgav, “A Fourth Century B.C.E. Document from Ketef Yeriho,” *IEJ* 38 (1988): 158–76. Public documents such as the Hefzibah inscription (Jezreel Valley), the Heliodoros inscription (Shephelah), and the Yavne-Yam inscription (Coastal Plain), all dating to the first half of the second century BCE, were written in Greek. This suggests that a segment of the local population (though perhaps quite small) could read the language.

20 See, e.g., Avraham Faust, “Settlement Dynamics and Demographic Fluctuations in Judah from the Late Iron Age to the Hellenistic Period and the Archaeology of Persian Period Yehud,” in *A Time of Change: Judah and Its Neighbors during the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods*, ed. Yigal Levin, LSTS 65 (London: Continuum, 2007), 23–51; idem,

Persian east, beginning during the reign of Cyrus the Great, the region's Judean inhabitants had been surrounded by a mixture of other peoples with some of whom they shared important ancestral ties. On Judah's northern frontier were the residents of Samaria, who worshiped the same deity as the Judeans, but differed in both their regional political history and their position on where the central place of worship was to be located—differences that would eventually lead to a deep rift between the two groups.²¹ We would expect that the central sanctuary's placement was of major ideological and theological importance to Judeans and Samaritans, but it also bore significant political and economic dimensions, being closely tied to regional leadership, commercial power, and perception by the ruling empire. To the south and east were the Arabian and Idumean provinces, which at places like Ashdod on the coast, or Maresha in the Shephelah, were intermingled with the inheritors of earlier Phoenician and Philistine cultures.²² Here there existed considerably greater differences than with Samaria, with the Arabs, Idumeans, and Phoenicians worshipping an assortment of gods, such as Qos, 'Uzza, Baal, and Dagon, alongside a variety of Mesopotamian and Greek deities.²³

Our priests must also have been acutely aware of the many Judeans living outside Judah. The textual and archaeological records suggest that a large number of individuals, families, or communities lived both near to and far

"Social, Cultural, and Demographic Changes in Judah." On the flourishing of farmsteads in the hill country during the Persian period, and declining around the Hasmonean period, see idem, "Farmsteads in the Foothills of Western Samaria: A Reexamination," in *I Will Speak Riddles of Ancient Times: Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Aren M. Maier and Pierre de Miroschedji (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 2:477–504.

21 Levin, "Judea, Samaria, and Idumea," 13–23; Menachem Mor, "The Samaritans in Transition from the Persian to the Greek Period," in *Judah between East and West: The Transition from Persian to Greek Rule (ca. 400–200 BCE)*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Oded Lipschits, LSTS 75 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 176–98; Gary N. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 102–216.

22 See the discussion and bibliography in Levin, "Judea, Samaria, and Idumea," 24–39.

23 Much of the evidence comes from the archeological discoveries at Persian- and Hellenistic-period Maresha. For a presentation and discussion of the theonyms found there, see Ian Stern, "The Population of Persian-period Idumea according to the Ostraca: A Study of Ethnic Boundaries and Ethnogenesis," in *A Time of Change: Judah and Its Neighbors during the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods*, ed. Yigal Levin, LSTS 65 (London: Continuum, 2007), 205–38. See also Michael Heltzer, "The Galgula Family in South Judah and the Local Sanctuaries," in *Studien zu Ritual und Sozialgeschichte im Alten Orient: Tartuer Symposien 1998–2004*, ed. Thomas R. Kämmerer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 127–32 (129); Esther Eshel and Ian Stern, "Divination Texts of Maresha—Archeology and Texts," *Archaeology and Text* 1 (2017): 7–25. This reality is also reflected in literature of the period (e.g., 1 Macc 10:82–11:7; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.99 ff).

from their homeland during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. We have evidence suggesting a Judean presence elsewhere in Palestine at Tell Qasile, Tell Abu-Zeitun, Makmish, and Ashdod on the coast, and at Makkedah, Maresha, and Arad in the interior.²⁴ When combined with literary sources such as Ezra-Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, and Josephus, we gain a picture of Judeans interspersed throughout Palestine, from the Galilee to the Negev.²⁵ A similar situation existed outside of Palestine, with archaeological evidence coming from places as far flung as Nippur and Al-Yahudu in Mesopotamia, or Elephantine in southern Egypt, though the latter settlement had been destroyed by the time of our Judean priests.²⁶ The Hellenistic era saw the vigorous growth of Judean populations in distant regions and urban centers such as Lydia, Phrygia, Antioch, Hierapolis, and Alexandria.²⁷ All of these examples are merely emblematic of a scenario that must have been repeated in myriad locations now lost from our view. To a large extent, Judah and Jerusalem were the symbolic center for a people strewn across many thousands of kilometers, living in a diverse collection of communities and cultural contexts from the Nile to the Tigris, and stretching far to the north and west.

In light of the geographic diffusion of the Judean people, our priests faced a situation fraught with difficulties for maintaining national identity and remaining faithful to the God of Israel. Long gone were the days of autonomous reign by a domestic king. The Judeans were now but one subjected people among many, ruled by the formidable empires of Persia and then Greece.

24 Stern, *Material Culture*, 242.

25 I do not mean to suggest that all of the literary sources portrayed actual historical situations, but that they presented a situation which would have seemed plausible to readers and listeners at the times in which the texts were written and first read.

26 A helpful overview of the cuneiform material from Babylonia, which includes the Murashu and Al-Yahudu corpora, is provided by Laurie E. Pearce, "Cuneiform Sources for Judeans in Babylonia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: An Overview," *RC* 10 (2016): 230–43. An introduction to the Elephantine corpus can be found in Bezael Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968). See also Alejandro F. Botta, ed., *In the Shadow of Bezael: Aramaic, Biblical, and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Bezael Porten*, CHANE 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

27 Josephus's sources know of large communities in all of these places by the end of the Hellenistic period. On the Jewish military colonies stationed in Lydia and Phrygia by Antiochus III in the late third century BCE, see the extended discussion of Abraham Schalit, "The Letter of Antiochus III to Zeuxis regarding the Establishment of Jewish Military Colonies in Phrygia and Lydia," *JQR* 50 (1960): 289–318. For Alexandria, see the discussion and bibliography in Lester L. Grabbe, *The Coming of the Greeks: The Early Hellenistic Period (335–175 BCE)*, vol. 2 of *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 181–85.

The enormously powerful and resourceful Persian Empire had put in place basic administrative, legal, martial, and economic systems that tied the empire together in at least a superficial way, with most of the structures being kept in place and expanded under the Greeks, despite shifts in the basic ideology of kingship.²⁸ These initiatives included the construction of much better international roads for the movement of goods and armies, numerous military forts manned by foreign or conscripted domestic soldiers, new monetary currencies, and the dispersal of officials and government-affiliated businesspeople throughout the empire to oversee taxation of the satrapies and crown agricultural lands.²⁹ As far as we can tell, until the successful Egyptian revolt against the Persians at the very end of the fifth century BCE, during the reign of Artaxerxes II, Persia took a fairly lax attitude towards intervention in the local affairs of far-flung provinces like Judah. After the revolt, however, Judah and the area to its south became the southern line of defense against Egypt, receiving greater attention and an influx of Persian military resources as a result.³⁰ For Judah, this meant a heightened Persian presence, with the area to the south becoming what Ephraim Stern described as “the arena of extensive battles between Egypt ... and the Persians.”³¹ During and after the transition to Greek rule, there would have been regular reminders of the occupying empire,

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- 28 On the continuation of localized systems of governance that had existed under the Persians, see Lester L. Grabbe, “Hyparchs, *Oikonomoi* and Mafiosi: The Governance of Judah in the Ptolemaic Period,” in *Judah between East and West: The Transition from Persian to Greek Rule (ca. 400–200 BCE)*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Oded Lipschits, LSTS 75 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 70–90. While there is no doubt that the Hellenistic rulers of lands taken from the Persians kept many of the Achaemenid governmental structures and policies in place by necessity, questions remain about the extent to which such continuation was a consciously implemented policy. For two different takes on this question, see Christopher R. Tuplin, “The Seleucids and Their Achaemenid Predecessors: A Persian Inheritance?” and G. G. Aperghis, “Managing an Empire—Teacher and Pupil,” both in *Ancient Greece and Ancient Iran: Cross-Cultural Encounters. 1st International Conference (Athens, 11–13 November 2006)*, ed. Seyed Mohammad Reza Darbandi and Antigoni Zournatzi (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2008), 109–36 and 137–48, respectively. For an overview of the situation in Egypt, see Joseph G. Manning, *The Last Pharaohs: Egypt under the Ptolemies, 305–30 BC* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 73–116. For the ongoing influence of the former Persian empire more generally, see Rolf Strootman and Miguel J. Versluys, eds., *Persianism in Antiquity*, OeO 25 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017).
- 29 Many of these structures are assumed in archival material from the Hellenistic period, such as the Zenon papyri.
- 30 On the Persian-era forts built on the southern frontier of Palestine see Stern, *Material Culture*, 252; Fantalkin and Tal, “Judah and Its Neighbors,” 153–69.
- 31 Stern, *Material Culture*, 254; idem, “Archaeology of Persian Palestine,” 114. See also Dan Barag, “The Effects of the Thennes Rebellion on Palestine,” *BASOR* 183 (1966): 6–12.

such as the taxing Syrian Wars waged between the Ptolemies and Seleucids over the third and second centuries BCE for domination of the lucrative, strategic territory that included Palestine. The literary and archaeological sources combine to tell an up-and-down story of this period, with peaceful phases punctuated by military interventions of various sorts that would at times force leaders in Judah and other territories to gamble on a winning side. These incursions sometimes resulted in cities and villages being violently destroyed. No one in Hellenistic Syria could have overlooked, for instance, the decimation of Samaria after their ill-fated revolt against Alexander in the late 330s BCE.³² For those in Judah, the reality of the powerful foreign empire(s) to which they were subservient must never have been far out of mind, and at many places outside Judah this reality would have been felt just as acutely. How did our priests react to this situation? In my opinion, they took a fundamentally pragmatic, accommodationist approach that sought, at the same time, to remain faithful to their identity as Israelites who worshipped the Most High God. On the one hand, they embraced a basic stance of interaction with, and support of, the ruling authorities, to the point of endorsing high governmental offices being held by Judeans and other Israelites.³³ On the other hand, they drew a line at transgressing distinctive, non-negotiable practices that set their people apart as those who worshipped the one, true God, the Lord of heaven and earth. These practices included, for example, observing Israelite dietary laws, maintaining ancestral burial practices, and a strict refusal to worship foreign gods. This last point was of considerable ideological importance, for in the face of a national situation that was far from ideal, these priests maintained a strong belief that their God remained firmly in control of the cosmos and all of human history, including the destiny of his chosen people, Israel.

Our priests also fretted over the harmful effects of the pluralistic environments in which their people lived. Various details from the available Murashu, Al-Yahudu, Elephantine, and Idumean texts confirm what is stated much more plainly in Ezra-Nehemiah concerning the residents of Judah: many Judeans were quite happy to take full advantage of the intercultural situation of the Persian and Hellenistic periods, as seen in their embracing various facets of

32 See the account in Quintus Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander* IV 8.34.9–11. This event has received dramatic archaeological confirmation in the excavations at Samaria and Wadi Daliyeh. See Frank Moore Cross, "The Discovery of the Samaria Papyri," *BA* 26 (1963): 109–21; idem, "The Historical Importance of the Samaria Papyri," *BAR* 4 (1978): 25–27; Hanan Eshel, "The Governors of Samaria in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.E.," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 223–34.

33 As will be discussed below, this stance is clearly seen in texts like Daniel and Tobit.

non-Judean cultures that, in the opinion of some, stood at odds with Judean ancestral traditions.³⁴ A special concern of our priests was intermarriage with foreigners, for it represented in a singular way crossing the line of acceptable cultural accommodation. Of course, we hear of marriages to foreigners in Ezra 9–10 and Neh 13, where the priests and Levites come in for an especially harsh rebuke due to their holy status within Israel. We also find two apparent cases of intermarriage among the marriage contracts at Elephantine from the fifth century, in the context of what John Ray and Ian Stern described as a Judean community with a high level of ethnic boundary maintenance, relative to surrounding groups in Late period Egypt.³⁵ Stern contrasts this situation with that in late Persian and early Hellenistic period Idumea and Judah, which he claims was marked instead by low ethnic tension, intense ethnic integration, and low ethnic boundary maintenance, based on a revealing study of names in the fourth- and third-century ostraca.³⁶ To put it in a less academic way, there appears to have been a lot of mingling going on between Judeans and foreigners. Judging by some of their writings, our priests were not impressed. There is onomastic evidence suggesting that a similar situation obtained at Al-Yahudu on the Euphrates. The fact that, in both Idumea and Al-Yahudu, people with Yahwistic names quite regularly named their children after foreign deities, and vice versa, suggests not only that intermarriage was occurring, but also that the Judean communities near and far from Judah were not as revolted by foreign gods as our priests would have liked.

I wish to propose that it was in the midst of a political and social situation like the one just described that our learned priests resolved to take action by developing a new sort of literature. Their decision grew from a wish to offer the people of Judah, and Israel more broadly, a paradigm for how to live in a way faithful to their God and his laws in light of the challenging political and cultural conditions that prevailed under the Persians and/or Greeks. This literature would provide guidance, encouragement, hope, and even a sense of national pride. The decision also grew from a strong desire to reinforce the legitimacy of the Aaronic priesthood and its teachings, which our priests no doubt considered to be a force for great good among their people.

34 Concern over interactions with, and influence by, foreigners is reflected especially in Ezra 9–10 and Neh 13.

35 John D. Ray, "Jews and Other Immigrants in Late Period Egypt," in *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyse to Constantine and Beyond*, ed. Janet H. Johnson, SAOC 51 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1992), 273. Stern, "Population of Persian-Period Idumea," 234.

36 Stern, "Population of Persian-Period Idumea," 220–25.

This literature would be grounded firmly in the older Hebrew ancestral stories, but would extend and reshape them for the purpose of addressing the trying times in which Judeans and other Israelites now found themselves. Such extending and reshaping would be accomplished primarily through the medium of entertaining, didactic narratives focused on human or angelic characters, who could speak to readers directly in the first-person voice, much as Ahiqar and Darius did in the texts already known by our priests. Many of the characters would be those found in the ancestral writings now comprising the Pentateuch, especially the books of Genesis and Exodus—figures like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and Levi—but other characters could also be developed. Our priests would write, for example, of the pious Tobit, his son Tobiah, and his eventual daughter-in-law Sarah. There were also Daniel, Patireza, and Bagasrav, all of whom are portrayed serving in the Babylonian and Persian royal courts. In fact, our priests tended to cluster their writings around two historical eras, that of Israel's nomadic patriarchs and matriarchs, and that of the exile.³⁷ Why did they do so? In my opinion, it was because these two eras provided especially relevant analogies to the present situation insofar as they were times in Israel's past when political autonomy, and therefore the ability to set and enforce broad societal norms, did not exist. As a result, the periods of the patriarchs and matriarchs, on the one hand, and of the exile, on the other, provided literary settings especially fitting to Judeans living in the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

Many characters in this literature would offer positive portrayals of wisdom and fidelity to the Most High God in the face of various trials posed by a social setting in which foreign peoples and gods dominated. These paradigmatic figures offered a response to their surroundings through righteous actions and words, thereby providing a clever, compelling literary device for conveying priestly teachings to listeners. However, not all of the characters were protagonists; there were also antagonists, who provided negative examples of corruption and wickedness, much as Nadin did in the Ahiqar story, or the liars and evildoers did in Darius' Bisitun inscription. We may think, for example, of the errant watchers and giants of Enoch's time, or the rival sages in the tales about Daniel and Bagasrav.

Our priests chose to write in a polished, literary Aramaic of a quality and register similar to that used for Ahiqar and the Bisitun edict, though adapted

37 As already noted in 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); Devorah Dimant, "Themes and Genres," 15–45; Tigchelaar, "Aramaic Texts from Qumran," 155–71.

slightly to its creative purpose by incorporating words and ideas from the Hebrew national literature where needed.³⁸ This choice of language was due, at least in part, to the fact that these writings would be aimed at a wide audience, perhaps not limited to Judeans only, but accessible to all from Israel who served the God Most High and claimed Jerusalem and its Aaronic priesthood as specially chosen by God.³⁹ In Aramaic, these writings could be read and understood in a house of worship overlooking the Nile, under the shade of Borsippa's ziggurat, in an agricultural town on the border of Samaria, and even in parts of Anatolia. Aramaic was also the international prestige language, not yet eclipsed by Greek in most of these areas. As such, the production of a national literature in Aramaic could only result in Judeans accruing intellectual prestige in the eyes of the ruling elite and other ethnic groups.⁴⁰ This is supported by the fact that foreign rulers in these texts tended to be cast in a favorable or neutral light.

Part Two: Connecting the Hypothetical Scenario and the Qumran Aramaic Texts

I find a historical scenario like that sketched above to explain most fully and compellingly the *raison d'être* and literary character of a large majority of the Aramaic writings that were kept, studied, and perhaps copied at Qumran. I realize, of course, that my scenario is hypothetical, but I have worked to ground it in the textual and archaeological data available to us, informed by the interpretive work of scholars whose focus is the Persian and Hellenistic eras. In the remainder of this article, I aim to pair some salient points of my hypothetical scenario with the relevant Qumran texts. I do so in hopes of illustrating how the texts, in fact, led me to the scenario, and how texts and scenario can be

38 For a general characterization of the Aramaic of the Qumran texts, see Edward M. Cook, "The Aramaic of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, ed. Peter Flint and James C. VanderKam (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1:359–78. On the Hebrew admixture exhibited in the texts, manifest mostly in the borrowing of isolated vocabulary, see Christian Stadel, "Hebrew Influences on the Language of the Aramaic Qumran Scrolls," *Meghillot* 8–9 (2010): 393–407 [in Hebrew].

39 This point has been made in the past, though not with specific reference to the corpus of Aramaic texts from Qumran, by Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age*, 51; Wacholder, "Ancient Judaeo-Aramaic Literature," 273; Michael O. Wise, *A Critical Study of the Temple Scroll from Cave 11*, SAOC 49 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1990), 84–86.

40 This point has been made recently by Reed ("Writing Jewish Astronomy," 36) with reference to the Astronomical Book of Enoch.

mutually illuminating. I will gather my remaining discussion under six points, touching upon ways in which the Aramaic texts kept at Qumran are interconnected by style and content.

2.1 *Many of the Qumran Aramaic Texts Were Written by Learned Priests, Who Actively Promoted the Pedigree of the Aaronic Priesthood*

A number of factors converge to suggest that priests composed most, if not all, of the Aramaic Qumran texts, a judgment that agrees with most scholarship on the topic. To begin, very few members of Judean society would have been trained in the scribal skills and intellectual traditions required to compose sophisticated, fairly lengthy literary works such as the Book of Giants, Aramaic Levi Document, or Tobit. Considerable research has been done on literacy rates during the Second Temple period and shortly thereafter, with suggested percentages of those who could read in this heavily agricultural society, with no public educational system, ranging between 3 and 10 percent.⁴¹ If this is the case, say, for the ability to read at a basic level and write one's own signature, we can assume that the percentage of the population who could write something like the Astronomical Book of Enoch or the New Jerusalem text was negligible, falling well under one percent. Consider, for example, that whoever wrote the Genesis Apocryphon had knowledge of the names of the Nile Delta branches, and intimate familiarity with the so-called Ionian map of the world, also known from Strabo and Dionysius Periegetes.⁴² The authors

41 Of course, many of those working on this topic have struggled with the difficulty of how to define "literacy," something that I do not presume to resolve here. Catherine Hezser (see reference below) discusses a more robust "literacy," including "the ability to read documents, letters, and 'simple' literary texts in at least one language, and to write more than one's signature oneself," and a more restricted "literacy," comprising "the ability to read a few words and sentences and to write one's own signature only." William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), proposed a 10 percent literacy rate in the ancient Greco-Roman world, generally speaking. Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 496, argued that this number may, in fact, be too high for Roman Palestine, based in part on the estimate of Meir Bar-Ilan, "Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.," in *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society*, ed. Simcha Fishbane, Jack N. Lightstone, and Victor Levin (New York: Ktav, 1992), 2:46–61 (55), that literacy was under 3 percent at that time and place. For discussion and further bibliography, see Chris Keith, *Jesus' Literacy: Scribal Culture and the Teacher from Galilee*, LNTS 413 (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 73–75.

42 Daniel A. Machiela, "Some Egyptian Elements in the Genesis Apocryphon: Evidence of a Ptolemaic Social Location?" *AS* 8 (2010): 47–69 (50–59); idem, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon (1Q20): A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13–17*, STDJ 79 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 105–30.

of the Astronomical Book could handle scientific descriptions derived from Mesopotamia, the authors of Tobit knew the Ahiqar story, those who wrote Dan 3 were acquainted with the names of Greek musical instruments, and the writers of Jews in the Persian Court drew from the language of Darius' Bisitun decree.⁴³ Many of these texts show close familiarity with the language and customs of the royal Persian or Hellenistic court, including the conventions of writing official decrees and correspondences (e.g., Book of Giants).⁴⁴ In addition, the authors of these texts had a very impressive command of late Achaemenid- or Hellenistic-period literary Aramaic, adeptly weaving language and concepts from the ancestral Hebrew texts into their work. Who would have had access to such knowledge and skills? It is true that we need not strictly limit this small group to priests. One might think, for example, of those non-priests who had scribal duties linked to civic administration, or others holding high positions of authority within governmental structures—people like Nehemiah, or those belonging to the Tobiad and Sanballat households in the Transjordan and Samaria. Nevertheless, the evidence points to priests comprising a large portion of those in Judean society during the Second Temple period who were able to compose a text like Visions of Amram or the tales of Daniel. An additional, even decisive, element suggesting that priests wrote much of this literature is its content. This is, perhaps, seen most readily in the three works that Hanna Tervanotko has called a “trilogy of testaments,” that is, the

43 See, respectively, Jonathan Ben-Dov, *Head of All Years: Astronomy and Calendars at Qumran in Their Ancient Context*, STDJ 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), esp. 245–87; Jonas C. Greenfield, “Ahiqar in the Book of Tobit,” in *De la Torah au Messie: Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes à Henri Cazelles*, ed. Maurice Carrez, Joseph Doré, and Pierre Grelot (Paris: Desclée, 1981), 329–36; Pierre Grelot, “L'orchestre de Daniel III 5, 7, 10, 15,” *VT* 29 (1979): 23–38; and Émile Puech, *Qumrân Grotte 4.XXVII: Textes araméens, deuxième partie, 4Q550–575a, 4Q580–4Q587 et appendices*, DJD 37 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 16–17.

44 On the use of a standard, official letter format by the giants (particularly the phrase “May it be known,” דִּיעַ לְהוּא, also found in other Qumran Aramaic texts), see Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginning of Christian Epistolography*, WUNT 298 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 170–74. A potentially useful model for thinking about how priests came to this knowledge is put forward by Rolf Strootman, “Babylonian, Macedonian, King of the World: The Antiochus Cylinder from Borsippa and Seleukid Imperial Integration,” in *Shifting Social Imaginaries in the Hellenistic Period: Narrations, Practices, and Images*, ed. Eftychia Stavrianopoulou, Mnemosyne Supplements 363 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 67–97, and further developed with respect to a Jewish context by Honigman, “Intercultural Exchanges in the Hellenistic East.” Strootman and Honigman discuss the royal “outer court” and local cults and temples as places of dynamic intellectual and cultural exchange among social elites.

Aramaic Levi Document, the Testament of Qahat, and the Visions of Amram.⁴⁵ Ever since Milik's initial suggestion that these three texts comprise a trilogy, scholars have noted the many interconnections between them, and their central interest in the line of Levi leading to Aaron and Moses.⁴⁶ In Aramaic Levi, stress is placed on the divine gift of the priesthood to Levi's family, and all three texts highlight the importance of cultivating wisdom and truth, which will lead to proper conduct. These three texts employ first-person, didactic addresses from a father to his children, something that clearly links them with other Aramaic texts like the Enochic works, the Genesis Apocryphon, Tobit, 4Q537 (Testament of Jacob), and 4Q539 (Testament of Joseph).⁴⁷ This general didactic posture, reflected in so much of the Qumran Aramaic literature, may be yet another indicator of priestly authorship, for priests are repeatedly portrayed in earlier Hebrew writings as those who instruct Israel in God's commands.⁴⁸ Before moving onto my next point, I merely observe that decidedly priestly interests extend well beyond the three texts just discussed. For example, the New Jerusalem text, 4Q537, Genesis Apocryphon, and Tobit, are a few of the other Aramaic texts that show an interest in cultic matters and the centrality of Jerusalem and its temple.⁴⁹

2.2 *Many of the Qumran Aramaic Texts Were Most Likely Written in Judea during the Late Persian to Hellenistic Periods*

Until recently, there has been a tendency to treat Aramaic texts from Qumran in isolation from one another, or in small groupings, and this has led to a variety of conflicting suggestions as to their places of composition. For example,

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- 45 Hanna Tervanotko, "A Trilogy of Testaments? The Status of the Testament of Qahat versus Texts Attributed to Levi and Amram," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the Scriptures*, ed. Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, BETL 270 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 41–59.
- 46 Józef T. Milik, "4QVisions de 'Amram et une citation d'Origène," *RB* 79 (1972): 77–97 (96–97); Henryk Drawnel, "Priestly Education in the *Aramaic Levi Document* (*Visions of Levi*) and *Aramaic Astronomical Book*," *RevQ* 22 (2006): 547–74; idem, "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; idem, "The Initial Narratives of the *Visions of Amram* and Its Literary Characteristics," *RevQ* 24 (2010): 517–54 (522); Joseph L. Angel, *Otherworldly and Eschatological Priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 86 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 46–55.
- 47 Authorship by priests has often been argued for parts or all of 1 Enoch (see, e.g., the discussion in George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001], 67).
- 48 Fraade, "They Shall Teach Your Statutes to Jacob."
- 49 Robert E. Jones is currently working on a comprehensive study of this topic, as part of his doctoral dissertation at McMaster University.

composition of the Aramaic tales of Daniel and Tobit has fairly often been placed by scholars in the eastern diaspora, since their literary settings and social concerns are focused on that locale.⁵⁰ Contrast this with the Visions of Amram, 1 Enoch, or the Genesis Apocryphon, which have instead been situated by most scholars working on the texts in various parts of Palestine.⁵¹ I would propose, based on my prior judgment that much of the Aramaic Qumran corpus is the product of a coordinated literary effort, that we ought to test the hypothesis that these texts were written in a common social location, which probably (though not by necessity) implies a common geographic location.⁵² To my mind, the most likely place for this literary activity is Judah, and more specifically Jerusalem. At times, there has seemed to be a tacit assumption that the literary setting of a work must directly reflect its compositional setting, but I do not find it difficult to imagine a group of priests in Jerusalem, who were exceptionally well-educated and perhaps also well-travelled, writing about Israelites living in Egypt or Babylon. In fact, I would argue that it is precisely because these priests were striving to write *for* those associated with Israel, from Egypt to Babylon and at all places in between, that this diversity of settings occurs in these texts.

I will spend little time discussing the timeframe during which these texts were composed, in large part because the late Persian to Hellenistic periods have emerged as the consensus of scholars working on both individual texts and the corpus as a whole.⁵³ This consensus is based on a consideration of several factors, one being the contents of the scrolls. As already noted, a number of texts are focused on the situation of the Assyrian to Persian exiles, yet they

50 On Daniel, see John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 47–48. An up-to-date survey of the bibliography on Tobit can be found in Francis M. Macatangay, *The Wisdom Instructions in the Book of Tobit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 285–86; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011), 34. Recently, more scholars have opted for a compositional setting in Palestine (e.g., Fitzmyer, Dimant, Macatangay).

51 There are, of course, exceptions to this trend. See, for example, the defense of a Babylonian compositional setting for the Book of Watchers, and apparently also the Astronomical Book and Aramaic Levi Document, by Henryk Drawnel, “Knowledge Transmission in the Context of the Watchers’ Sexual Sin with Women in 1 Enoch 6–11,” *The Biblical Annals* 2 (2012): 123–51.

52 For some of my prior work along these lines, see Machiela and Perrin, “Tobit and the Genesis Apocryphon;” Machiela, “Aramaic Writings,” 113–34; idem, “Coherence and Context,” 243–58; idem, “Hellenistic Period Witnesses,” 147–56; idem, “Wisdom Motifs,” 223–47; idem, “Situating the Aramaic Texts,” 88–109.

53 As reflected, for example, in the assessment of Collins, “Aramaic Texts from Qumran,” 548–49.

betray in various details that they were written looking back at that period of Israel's history. Another factor is the guarded embrace of the foreign ruling authorities in a number of these texts, something that disappears or reverses during and after the late Seleucid period. Finally, we may add that the type of Aramaic used in our scrolls reflects a late Persian or Hellenistic milieu, though this criterion must be used with caution given the propensity of scribes to update certain linguistic traits during the process of transmission. It has often been noted that the historical-fictional character of these texts means they lack the internal historical references that we find, for example, in the Pesharim texts from Qumran. In the absence of such clear indicators, a generalized dating to the late Persian to Hellenistic periods is the best we can do.

2.3 *Many of the Qumran Aramaic Texts Were Written to a Wide Audience of Judeans and Others Identifying with Israel*

The question of the intended audience of the Aramaic scrolls is an important and fascinating one. On the one hand, scholars such as Elias Bickerman, Ben-Zion Wacholder, John Collins, and Devorah Dimant have observed that many of these texts seem to be addressed to a wide Judean audience.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Henryk Drawnel has argued that these texts were written by priests for priests, highlighting the priestly character and shared didactic features of the Aramaic Levi Document and Astronomical Book of Enoch.⁵⁵ According to Drawnel, these are works intended to educate young priests in basic astronomical and calendrical knowledge derived from Babylonian sources, with an eye towards teaching them how the calendar works. I fully agree with the priestly character and shared features of these two texts, features that, I might add, extend to many others among the Qumran Aramaic corpus. Yet I remain skeptical of the idea that some texts were written exclusively for internal, priestly study. For one thing, the repetitive, mathematical sections on which Drawnel focused account for only a portion of these works, both of which are framed as narratives with apocalyptic features. Aside from calendrical computation, Aramaic Levi includes entertaining, moralistic autobiographical tales, one or two apocalyptic visions, and a long wisdom poem delivered on the occasion of

54 Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age*, 51; Wacholder, "Ancient Judaeo-Aramaic Literature," 273; Dimant, "The Qumran Aramaic Texts and the Qumran Community," 198–99; Collins, "Aramaic Texts from Qumran," 553–54. A number of scholars make this point obliquely, by noting that the Aramaic texts lack the "sectarian" features marking some of the Hebrew literature from Qumran.

55 Drawnel, "Priestly Education." See also Henryk Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text from Qumran: A New Interpretation of the Aramaic Levi Document*, JSJSup 86 (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

Joseph's death, listing the benefits of imitating his conduct among foreigners and praising the incomparable value of wisdom in language strongly reminiscent of parts of Proverbs and Job 28. We must also keep in mind the interconnections of Aramaic Levi with the Testament of Qahat, Visions of Amram, and other texts like Tobit and the Genesis Apocryphon, none of which seem as obviously aimed at priests-in-training. All of these factors suggest that the scientific and mathematical material in Jewish Aramaic literature was framed in such a way as to appeal to non-specialist, even popular audiences.⁵⁶ Such material is presented as specially revealed divine knowledge given to heroes of the past and eventually guarded by priests, and I wonder if sections like those highlighted by Drawnel serve a purpose akin to the lists of angels or the cosmic tour in the Book of Watchers, the long geographic descriptions of the Genesis Apocryphon, or the tedious architectural reports of the New Jerusalem text. These parts of the stories lend an awe-inspiring, numinous quality to the texts in which they are found, and give wide-eyed listeners a glimpse into the realm of revealed wisdom.⁵⁷

Perhaps it has been noticed that I vacillate in this paper between speaking of a Judean audience and an Israelite one. My hesitancy on this score is due to a palpable blend of Judeo-centrism and what I take as a broader call to Israel among the texts when viewed as a corpus. On the one hand, Jerusalem and its temple feature prominently in Tobit, Dan 6, 4Q537, and the New Jerusalem text, suggesting a form of Judeo-centrism. Judeans are also the central characters in Daniel, Jews in the Persian Court, and the Prayer of Nabonidus. On the other hand, Tobit is focused on a family of Naphtalites, and texts concentrated on the patriarchs and matriarchs betray no sustained interest in Judah, while displaying a fair bit of interest in the wider borders of the land granted to Abram. Indeed, these texts are full of characters that could stimulate veneration and emulation by anyone associated with Israel, and worshipping the God Most High. I see two basic ways of explaining this perceived tension. The first is that we find here a point of incoherence in the Aramaic literature, speaking against

56 This point receives some support from the studies of Katharina Volk (*Manilius and His Intellectual Background* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 25–27) in the Greek tradition, discussed by Reed, “Writing Jewish Astronomy,” 26. The basic interest of this material for a non-priestly audience is also suggested by the Astronomical Book's reception history in 1 Enoch.

57 This can be coordinated with the “lists of revealed things” discussed at length by Michael E. Stone in his influential article, “Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature,” in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God. Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 414–52. See also Reed, “Writing Jewish Astronomy,” 31–33.

the common background advocated in this paper. According to this view, some of the Aramaic Qumran literature is exclusively Judean in its origin or intended audience, and the rest is not. The implied difference in audience might then suggest an equivalent disparity in the geographic or social locations in which various texts were composed. A second explanation is that the priests writing this literature were Judeans who considered that province to be the center of worship and governance for the people of Israel, but who wished to reach a wider audience that was not exclusively Judean. This attitude towards Judah and Jerusalem is reflected regularly in Persian- and Hellenistic-period writings, such as in Nehemiah's and Daniel's prayers in Neh 1 and Dan 6.⁵⁸ I favor this explanation, and find compelling evidence for its acceptance in a number of places among the Aramaic Qumran texts. This is most clearly seen in the book of Tobit, which is focused on a family of Naphtalites living under Assyrian rule, yet at the same time accords a special place to Jerusalem, with its temple and priests.⁵⁹ A supporting factor is the many demonstrable literary interconnections between a group of texts like Tobit, the Genesis Apocryphon, and the Aramaic Levi Document, a topic addressed recently by Devorah Dimant and Andrew Perrin.⁶⁰ Despite their many undeniable literary affinities, one of these texts—Tobit—shows a clear interest in Jerusalem and its sacrificial cult, while the others do not, at least not in what remains for us to analyze.

In the final evaluation, I remain skeptical of the argument that some of the Qumran Aramaic texts were intended for priests only, while others were meant for a wider audience of both Judeans and those associating themselves with the people of Israel. If this scenario were the case, the texts could be said to bear affinities suggesting a related compositional background, but also reflecting a diversity of intended audiences. However, I suspect that all of this literature was meant to be dispersed as widely as possible among those of Israelite descent, which surely included many moderately-educated priests and Levites helping to oversee and teach communities in the diaspora.⁶¹

58 Note that, as in Neh 1:8–9, this Judeo-centrism is sometimes combined with an acknowledgement that God's people are scattered across a wide geographical domain.

59 Tob 1:3–9; 13:7–17; 14:3–9. There is clear evidence that the final chapters of Tobit, along with their praise of Jerusalem, are present in our earliest copies of the book, i.e. those found at Qumran.

60 Andrew B. Perrin, "Tobit's Context and Contacts in the Qumran Aramaic Anthology," *JSP* 25 (2015): 23–51; Devorah Dimant, "Tobit and the Qumran Aramaic Texts," in *Is There a Text in This Cave? Studies in the Textuality of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of George J. Brooke*, ed. Ariel Feldman, Maria Cioată, and Charlotte Hempel, *STDJ* 119 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 371–84.

61 The fact that scientific and mathematical material can be viewed as part of a broad education finds some support in the recent study of Annette Y. Reed, who proposed the

2.4 *Many Qumran Aramaic Texts Adopted and Promoted an Accommodationist Attitude toward Foreigners and Ruling Powers*

Another trait of this literature hinting at an orientation toward a wide audience is its guarded openness towards foreign peoples and social contexts. The most blatant evidence of this openness is found in the court tales, which, with the Qumran discoveries, we can now see became incredibly popular on the Judean literary scene during the late Persian and Hellenistic periods. The Aramaic tales of Daniel, the so-called pseudo-Daniel texts, Jews in the Persian Court, Prayer of Nabonidus, Four Kingdoms, Tobit, Genesis Apocryphon, and the Aramaic Levi Document all adapt a similar literary model depicting virtuous Judeans, Israelites, or proto-Israelites who find success in the court of a foreign king.⁶² Some of these texts are very fragmentary, but a theme evident in most of the better-preserved examples is the adherence of the courtier to ancestral principles in the face of pressure to abandon them. The result, quite surprisingly, is inevitably that faithfulness leads to the foreign king recognizing and placing himself under the power of the God of Israel. God, however, is never called by such an ethnocentric title in the Aramaic texts (e.g., the Tetragrammaton is not once used in the entire corpus), but is instead referred to with more generalized designations like Most High (עליון) or Lord of heaven and earth (מרה שמיא וארעא).⁶³ A slightly subtler approach to foreigners is found in the Aramaic Levi Document and the Testament of Qahat, both of which have the patriarchs address the topic of foreigners in discourses to their children. In the wisdom poem at the end of the Aramaic Levi Document, Levi informs his children that following the wise example of his brother Joseph will result in the accrual of honour, friends, well-wishers, and the recognition of kings in a foreign land. At the same time, Levi repeatedly stresses that his children should not be like a “foreigner” or “one who is mixed” (ולא דמ[ה] בה ל[נכרי] ולא דמה בה)

analogy of Greek *paideia* to the Jewish Aramaic literature of the Hellenistic period, using the specific example of the Astronomical Book of Enoch. She writes that “[j]ust as the curriculum of *enkyklios paideia* (i.e., common education) encompassed Greek grammar and literature but also astronomy and mathematics, so Jewish scribes writing in Aramaic in the early Hellenistic age recast Israel’s past in the image of an educational ideal that includes both scribal literacy and detailed technical knowledge about the structure and workings of the cosmos” (“Writing Jewish Astronomy,” 37). I am not convinced that this didactic posture would exclude non-priests.

62 Some motifs of this model were clearly picked up in Jewish-Greek texts like the Letter of Aristeas, which is quite possibly contemporary with some of our Aramaic literature. In my opinion, the interconnections between these groups of Jewish texts (Aramaic and Greek) may prove fruitful in future research.

63 See Daniel A. Machiela, “Lord or God? Tobit and the Tetragrammaton,” *CBQ* 75 (2013): 463–72.

לכילי).⁶⁴ This very theme, using the identical pair of terms, is repeated by Qahat in an address to his children (he was apparently listening!), nicely demonstrating the tension present in the court tales between integration, on the one hand, and fidelity to God and ancestral tradition, on the other.⁶⁵ The theme of accommodation in so many of the Aramaic texts makes me wonder if, in addition to my suggestions about an Israelite audience above, these texts may have been written with the intention that they could be “overheard,” and even appreciated, by those outside of Israel, such as high-level foreign officials in the royal service. Far from poorly-written literature, these texts could no doubt compete on a literary level with internationally-regarded works like Ahiqar. They were composed in polished Aramaic of the late Achaemenid style (much like Ahiqar), and were often highly entertaining.⁶⁶

A different, more oblique sort of openness to foreign knowledge is detected in the incorporation of many “foreign” elements into the Aramaic literature. Gilgamesh and Humbaba make appearances in the Book of Giants, a Greek world map is adopted in the Genesis Apocryphon, Ahiqar and Nadin are transformed into Naphtalites in Tobit (Nadin being renamed the more appropriate Nadav), and so on. The authors of this literature, it would seem, have no problem with a foreign admixture in their compositions. On the contrary, they take these traditions and reshape them so that they are domesticated and re-ascribed to the God Most High, in a way that reminds us of what Philo of Alexandria did some time later when he placed the Greek philosophical tradition within the purview of Mosaic revelation at Sinai.

Incidentally, it is difficult to imagine literature like this being written in the waning, deteriorating years of Seleucid rule, or during the Hasmonean period, a factor that again recommends its having been written largely before that time. These events of the first half of the second century BCE likely explain the demise of this type of literature in Aramaic, at which time we see a rise in more

64 For the text and commentary, see Jonas C. Greenfield, Michael E. Stone, and Esther Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary*, SVTP 19 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 104–105, 211–12. For the correct understanding of the word כילי in this text, see Edward M. Cook, “Remarks on the Testament of Kohath from Cave 4,” *JJS* 44 (1993): 205–19 (209).

65 4Q542 i 5–6: אל תתנו ירתתכון לנכראין ואחנסותכון לכילאין: “Do not give your inheritance to foreigners, or your rightful possession to those who are mixed.”

66 In thinking about the possible early audiences of this literature, I have found the work of James C. Scott on “hidden transcripts” and resistance literature to be quite generative. Scott envisions a scenario in which literature can be aimed simultaneously at those outside and inside of a community, but with the intention of different messages being received by each group. See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

internally-focused Hebrew literature, an example of this being the sectarian Essene writings, also found at Qumran.

2.5 *Many of the Qumran Aramaic Texts Are Hortatory, Providing Messages of Encouragement and Hope*

One of the most pervasive characteristics of the Qumran Aramaic texts is their intense interest in apocalyptic revelation. When I say apocalyptic, I am not referring only to works adhering to the genre “apocalypse,” as laid out in *Semeia* 14 and subsequently adjusted by John Collins and others, though a handful of our Aramaic texts do fit such a definition.⁶⁷ Rather, I refer to a broad impulse to present the reader with divine knowledge normally inaccessible to humans. This knowledge, we discover, was revealed to only the wisest, most upright individuals, featuring prominently Enoch, Noah, and Daniel. The knowledge is derived primarily from dream-visions bestowed on these worthy individuals, and is in some cases written down in books for posterity.⁶⁸ These books, too, we learn were carefully guarded by those in a line of worthy successors. Time and time again, we encounter such knowledge in the Qumran Aramaic texts, and, as Perrin has shown, there are several categories to which this knowledge can be assigned.⁶⁹ One such category is revelation tied to the divine election of the Aaronic priesthood and its cultic duties. This is seen, for example, in the Aramaic Levi Document and strongly supports the idea of priestly authorship discussed above. I would like to highlight, however, another strand of apocalyptic revelation that for the purposes of this paper I describe as hortatory. This is the sort of revelation found in the so-called ‘historical’ and ‘otherworldly journey’ apocalypses of John Collins, which show that the Most High God is in absolute, unassailable control of the cosmos and all of human history, both of these realms being ordered according to his mysterious purposes. We find such revelation in the Enochic Book of Watchers, Book of Dreams, Apocalypse of Weeks, Animal Apocalypse, Birth of Noah, Book of Giants, Words of Michael, Genesis Apocryphon, New Jerusalem, Apocryphon of Levi, Dan 2, 5, and 7, Pseudo-Daniel, the Son of God text, Four Kingdoms, and several other, more fragmentary texts (4Q556, 556a, 557, 558). The striking similarity of the apocalyptic material spread across these texts suggests both a shared compositional milieu, and the great importance of this theme

67 I have dealt more extensively with this topic in “Aramaic Writings,” and “Hellenistic Period Witnesses.”

68 See Andrew B. Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls*, JAJSup 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

69 Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation*.

for their authors. In the context of the late Persian and Hellenistic periods, the message of such revelation is not difficult to grasp: Despite what must have seemed like a helpless situation for God's people, with impossibly powerful foreign kingdoms apparently in control of Israel's destiny, such control was just that—apparent. Our texts reveal the “true situation,” as seen from a divine perspective usually reserved for God and his angels. Israel's God has created everything, including those foreign kingdoms, which do only what he allows them to do. The heavens and earth run perfectly according to his plan, as does all of human history, which will culminate in the administration of justice that at present seems to be absent. At its core, this is a strong message of comfort and hope for those belonging to Israel and worshipping the Most High God. As noted above, I understand this broad message to be one function of the “scientific” material restricted by Drawnel to priestly education.

2.6 *Many of the Qumran Aramaic Texts Are Didactic, Addressing Areas of Social and Religious Concern for Their Authors*

The hortatory facet of the Aramaic literature just described fits into its broader didactic posture. This posture is seen clearly in the literary mode adopted by nearly all of the Jewish Aramaic compositions mentioned above. It is truly remarkable how many of these texts use the first-person voice for extended narration in a way that reaches out to the reader or listener, though it is not uncommon for third-person narration occasionally to break this pattern within a text, or to frame the first-person narration. This technique is used in Dan 4 and 7, the Book of Watchers, Book of Giants, Birth of Noah, Aramaic Levi, Apocryphon of Levi, Words of Michael, Genesis Apocryphon, Tobit, and many more. It is important to recognize that these narrative features are not widespread in preceding or subsequent Hebrew literature, such as the books of the Hebrew Bible or the Qumran sectarian texts, and as a result serve both to unite the Aramaic texts from a literary perspective, and to mark them off from surrounding Jewish textual corpora. I should note again, however, the similarity with other Persian-period writings like Ahiqar and the Bisitun inscription.

The characters speaking in these texts take listeners to remote times and places, offering glimpses of death-bed discourses, fantastic cosmic journeys, discussions between angels, marriage feasts, bedrooms, and the inaccessible courts of royal palaces. They are occasionally sensational, suspenseful, humorous, and even risqué. Many of the texts are also exegetical, providing information that further explains or resolves tensions in the Hebrew texts on which they were based. Amidst all of this, the characters in these texts teach listeners what it looks like to be wise and upright, especially as those who live amidst foreigners. One way in which this happens is through following proper religious

practice, or halakah, as stressed recently by Devorah Dimant with regard to Tobit.⁷⁰ To take only the case of Tobit, we may cite that book's fervent promotion of proper marriage, proper burial, prayer, tithing, almsgiving, and the observance of Israelite food laws, all traits exemplified in the book's winsome characters, and shared with a varying assortment of other Aramaic Qumran texts. Dimant and Esther Eshel have stressed, for example, that a deep concern over endogamous marriage extending even to specific Aramaic idioms characterizes not only Tobit, but also the Aramaic Levi Document, Visions of Amram, Testament of Qahat, Genesis Apocryphon, and 1 Enoch.⁷¹ Those reading and hearing these texts would undoubtedly have come away with a strong sense of how they should live through the repeated use of key themes like marriage, care for ancestors after death, and where to draw the lines on interactions with foreigners. Follow the example of Noah, Amram, or Daniel, and prosperity and blessing would be the result. Choose to ignore the divinely revealed teachings of Enoch, Levi, and Qahat about not mixing with foreigners, and one was siding with Melkiresha and the children of darkness. I would submit that these were themes that spoke directly to the Persian- and Hellenistic-period social setting in which many associated with Israel found themselves, a setting consistent with those reflected, for example, in the Hellenistic Idumean ostraca from the archaeological side, or Ezra-Nehemiah from the textual side.

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70 Devorah Dimant, "The Book of Tobit and the Qumran Halakha," in *From Enoch to Tobit: Collected Studies in Ancient Jewish Literature*, FAT 114 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 193–212.

71 Dimant, "Tobit and the Qumran Aramaic Texts"; Esther Eshel, "The Proper Marriage According to the *Genesis Apocryphon* and Related Texts," *Meghillot* 8–9 (2010): 29–51 (in Hebrew).

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