Central to the conduct of a system of sacrificial worship is a defined and organized priesthood. In the case of the religion of Israel, this priesthood was defined early on as being limited to descendants of Aaron, Moses's brother. While biblical texts do testify to competing groups who sought priestly prerogatives, and to non-Aaronide local priesthoods, the reforms of First Temple times which took place under the Judean kings Hezekiah and Josiah left the priesthood entirely in the hands of the Aaronides. Tendencies toward further limitation to the Zadokites alone are found in Ezekiel, and it is fair to state that these tendencies are reflected in the Zadokite high priesthood of much of the Second Temple period, and in the ideology of various groups including the Dead Sea sect.

The limitation of the priesthood to some specific family is accompanied in many cultures with initiation rites for priestly accession. The Torah described such an investiture in connection with the Aaronide priests in the desert period. While ordination of the high priests who would come after Aaron is expected in the Torah’s legislation (Exod 29:29–30, Lev 16:32), biblical literature knows of no continued priestly appointment rituals for the members of the ordinary clergy.

Such a lack was clearly felt by the author of the sacrificial calendar source which is preserved in the Temple Scroll and, certainly, by the author/redactor who included it. The sacrificial calendar source used

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the Pentateuchal material relating to the ordination ceremony (Mal'akis).

This rite is described twice in the Torah. Exod 29 sets forth the ritual in prescriptive manner, indicating how it is to be performed. Lev 8 is a report of the performance of these rituals in connection with the erection of the Tabernacle. The text of the Temple Scroll draws on these texts to set forth an ordination ceremony which results from its method of harmonizing the two passages from the Torah and which fits well with its particular approach to the sanctity of the priesthood and the sacrificial system. The most striking characteristic of this ceremony is its annual nature. It is to the detailed investigation of this exegesis and the resulting ceremony that this study is dedicated.

I. The Rams and Baskets

The first part of the scroll’s legislation for the ordination rites sets forth the basic offerings in 11Q Tem 15:3–4:

And for the (priestly) ordination: one ram for each [and every day], <[and] baskets of bread for all the rams of ordination, one basket for each]> individual [ram.] And they shall divide a [1] the rams and the baskets for the seven days of the ordination (ceremony), for each and every day, according to [their] divisions.

This initial command appears in the sacrificial calendar directly after the prescriptions for the spring new year, Nisan 1, described in 11Q Tem.