

CHAPTER SIX

THE TRADITIONS ABOUT MELCHIZEDEK IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The references to the figure of Melchizedek in the Dead Sea Scrolls are as meagre as they are in the Hebrew Bible. Melchizedek appears, of course, in the *Genesis Apocryphon* from Cave 1 (1QapGen XXII 12–18), an Aramaic composition that rewrites the account in Gen 14. The origin of this composition is uncertain, but there is no element that allows it to be ascribed an origin in Qumran.¹ The only details that the Aramaic text provides in relation to the biblical text are the identification of “Salem” with Jerusalem and the “Valley of the King” with Beth ha-Kerem, as well as specifying that it is Abraham who pays the tithe to Melchizedek.² Probably the name Melchizedek occurs twice in a composition of which the Qumran origin seems certain to me, the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*,³ although in both cases the name is incomplete and occurs in such broken contexts that they prevent any definite identification. In this composition, Melchizedek (as in Ps 110) is portrayed as an angel; it is even possible that he is the only angel

¹ N. Avigad and Y. Yadin, *A Genesis Apocryphon. A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judaea* (Magnes: Jerusalem, 1956). For a summary of the discussion on the origin of the composition see G. Aranda Pérez, F. García Martínez, and M. Pérez Fernández, *Literatura judía intertestamentaria* (Introducción al Estudio de la Biblia 9; Estella: Verbo Divino, 1996), 128–31.

² See J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I. A Commentary* (2nd rev. ed.; BibOr 18A; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 172–78.

³ The manuscripts from Cave 4 (4Q400–407) and the copy found in Masada (MasShir) have been published by C. Newsom, DJD XI, 173–401, pls. XVI–XXXI; the manuscript from Cave 11 (11Q17) has appeared in DJD XXIII, 259–304, pls. XXX–XXXIV, LIII. In the preliminary edition of the manuscripts from Cave 4, Newsom considered the Qumran origin of the composition as more probable (see C. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* [HSS 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press 1985], 2), but later she changed her opinion and considers that the composition has an origin outside Qumran (see C. Newsom, “‘Sectually Explicit’ Literature from Qumran,” in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters* [ed. W.H. Propp, B. Halpern, and D.N. Freedman; Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 167–87. I think that I have proved that the Qumran origin of the work can be considered as certain; see Aranda Pérez, García Martínez, and Pérez Fernández, *Literatura judía intertestamentaria*, 205–10.

mentioned by name in the whole composition. In any case, Melchizedek (if the reading is certain) is presented in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* as a priest: “[Melchi]zedek, priest in the assemb[ly of God]” in Newsom’s reconstruction of 4Q401 11 3,⁴ and “[the chiefs of the princ[es] of the marv]ellous [priesthoods] of Melch[izedek]” in our reconstruction of 11Q17 II 7.⁵ Due to the chances of preservation, the name of Melchizedek has not been preserved in a series of manuscripts in which we would have expected his presence since they deal with his enemy, his angelic opponent, Melkiresha^c (4Q^cAmram, 4Q280 and 4Q286).⁶ However, we do have a text from Cave 11 (11Q13) in which Melchizedek is a central figure.⁷ I am quite certain that this text is a product of the Qumran Community.⁸ So we can use it confidently as representing the understanding of the traditions about Melchizedek in the Qumran Community and as an example of the interpretation of the Bible practised in that Community.

The text has been known since 1965, when A.S. van der Woude published a preliminary edition,⁹ and has been studied so intensively since then that it is practically impossible to say anything new about it.¹⁰ This note will present only two aspects of the text that have not yet

⁴ DJD XI, 205: מלכי צדק כהן בעדן אל.

⁵ DJD XXIII, 269: ראשי נשיאי כהונות פלא למלכי צדק.

⁶ Preliminary editions of 4Q^cAmram and 4Q280 are found in J.T. Milik, “4Q Visions de ‘Amram et une citation d’Origène,” *RB* 79 (1972): 77–97; *idem*, “Milki-sedeq et Milki-reša^c dans les anciens écrits juifs et chrétiens,” *JJS* 23 (1972): 95–144; É. Puech, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: Immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle? Histoire d’une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien* (2 vols.; Études Bibliques Nouvelle série 21–22; Paris: Gabalda, 1993), 2:531–44; and *DSSSE*, 2:636–37 (4Q280), 2:644–53 (4Q286–90), 2:1084–95 (4Q543–548).

⁷ DJD XXIII, 221–41, pl. XXVII.

⁸ The parallels with the exegetical method used in other Qumran texts, the use of the technical term *pesher*, the mention of “the sons of light” and the attribution of “lots” both to Belial and to Melchizedek leave absolutely no doubt about this. See Aranda Pérez, García Martínez, and Pérez Fernández, *Literatura judía intertestamentaria*, 84–85.

⁹ A.S. van der Woude, “Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumran Höhle XI,” *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 14 (1965): 354–73.

¹⁰ See F. Manzi, “La figura di Melchisedek: Saggio di bibliografia aggiornata,” *Ephe-merides Liturgicae* 109 (1995): 331–49. The most important works, in chronological order, are: A.S. van der Woude and M. de Jonge, “11QMelchizedek and the New Testament,” *NTS* 12 (1966): 301–26; J.A. Fitzmyer, “Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11,” *JBL* 86 (1967): 25–41, reprinted in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Sources for Biblical Study 5; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974), 245–67; J. Carmignac, “Le document de Qumrân sur Melki-sedeq,” *RevQ* 7/27 (1970): 343–78; Milik, “Milki-sedeq et Milki-reša^c dans les anciens écrits juifs et chrétiens,” 95–112; F.L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D.*