

AMRAM

According to the Bible Amram is a son of Qahat (Kohath) and father of Aaron, Moses and Miriam (Exod 6:18, 20, Num 26:58-59). His wife was Jochabed, his father's sister. His name appears frequently in genealogical lists.

Amram is prominent in a number of Second Temple writings. In Pseudo-Philo's Biblical Antiquities he is the hero of a significant incident before the birth of Moses (9:1-10). Josephus, Antiquities 1.210-216 knows of visions vouchsafed to Amram before the birth of Moses. This is particularly notable in view of 4QVisions of Amram. Amram, together with Qahat and Levi, figures in the chain of transmission of Sefer Harazim from Noah to Moses. Interestingly, he plays no major part in Jubilees, which is generally linked to Aramaic Levi and 4QTQahat ar.

Five copies of the work entitled "Visions of Amram" were found in Cave 4 at Qumran. Although, this number of copies suffices to show that it must have had some importance for the Qumran covenanters, no references to it occur in sectarian literature.

In 1972, J.T. Milik published a substantial fragment of 4QVisions of Amram^b ar and claimed that Origen alluded to it. Milik recognized five copies, 4Q543-4Q548. Puech thinks that the same scribe copied 4QTQahat ar and 4QVisions of Amram^a ar. Moreover, he notes that 4QTQahat ar starts on a piece of leather with a join on the

Stone, AMRAM, page 2

right and he even speculates that these two works might have formed part of the same manuscript. Details of the other manuscripts of 4QVisions of Amram are not yet known.

Milik dates 4QVisions of Amram^b ar to the second century B.C.E., and opines that it might come from the earlier part of that century. This has been challenged, however, and it is surest to say that the manuscript comes from the latter part of the century. The published text is written in Late Literary Aramaic of the type familiar from the Qumran Aramaic documents.

The beginning of the work has survived and it gives its superscription: "Copy of the Book of the Words of the Visions of Amram." The word "copy" may be compared with the term "copy" used in Ezra 4:11 while "Book of the Words of ... Amram" resembles the recently deciphered phrase "Book of the Words of Noah" in the Genesis Apocryphon (col. 5). The book is clearly a testament, being Amram's words to his children "on the day of his death, in the 136th year, the year of his death." Although the title "Testament of Amram" would fit its contents, in fact the work is known as "The Visions of Amram."

The full contents of the work remain unknown, although some substantial fragments have been published. Col i:10-15, as Milik (1977) reconstructed it from fragments of three manuscripts, tells of a dream vision in which Amram sees two angels. One is

Stone, AMRAM, page 3

like a serpent and his garment is multicolored and dark, while the other has a happy visage (*pace* Milik: see manuscript b). They rule over all humans. These two beings were struggling over Amram. In a second, fragmentary column, Amram is called upon to make a decision between these two beings. Milik thinks that this fragmentary second column is col. ii of the manuscript. It identifies one figure as Malki-resa' and associates him with darkness, while the speaker is the angel who rules over light. The name of the ruler of light has been lost from the manuscript, but it is often reconstructed as Malki-Şedeq. Other names found in the text are "ruler of light" and "ruler of darkness," cf. 1QS 3.20, CD 5.18, etc. In the next column, apparently, Amram asks him a question. Milik calculates that these three columns comprised something like one third of the book. The other manuscript material remains unpublished.

In the Bible, Malki Şedeq was the mysterious king of Salem encountered by Abraham (Gen 14:18); the type of a priest (Ps. 110:4); and a type of Christ (Heb 5:6). Malki Şedeq is a heavenly figure in 11QMelch, as well as in Gnostic texts, such as NHC ix.1. He was the object of much (chiefly heretical) speculation in early Christian circles where his priestly function is combined with the eschatological.

The dualism of light and darkness in 4QVisions of Amram is notable. It is, of course, very typical of the sectarian documents (Puech, 35). However, the dualism of the two spirits is already present in Aramaic Levi, which clearly antedates Visions of Amram

Stone, AMRAM, page 4

(and the Qumran sect). Thus, this feature alone does not necessarily demonstrate that the document was written by the Qumran sect, and a pre- or extra-Qumran origin is quite possible. It is generally accepted that the sectarian community did not compose Aramaic documents but this factor is not necessarily determinative.

The three sacerdotal writings, Aramaic Levi, 4QTQahat ar and 4QVisions of Amram form a series of priestly instructions. Aramaic Levi is the oldest and the other two works depend on it although the exact relationship between them cannot be determined. The Testament of Qahat and the Visions of Amram were added to the existing Aramaic Levi in order to legitimate the continuity of the priestly line and its teaching. This theme is stressed in Aramaic Levi and particularly in Testament of Qahat.

Milik has suggested that the conflict of angels over Abraham's soul, described in Origen, Homily 25 on Luke derives from Visions of Amram. That view is based on his emendation of Origen's text, which refers to Abraham, into Amram (Greek $\acute{\epsilon}\text{Abra}\acute{\alpha}\text{m}$ < $\acute{\epsilon}\text{Ambr}\acute{\alpha}\text{m}$) (Milik, 1977). A very similar conflict of Michael and the devil over Moses' body is mentioned in Jude 9, while the theme of two conflicting angels is found elsewhere, as for example in Hermas, Mandates 6.2.1 and Questions of Ezra. Thus, Origen's acquaintance with Visions of Amram is not definitely demonstrated.

Stone, AMRAM, page 5

Milik suggested, moreover, that the works of "the three patriarchs" mentioned in Apostolic Constitutions 6.16.3 connected with the biblical writings, are the Levi, Qahat and Amram writings. This view has not been widely accepted and, unless it is, there is no assured reference to the Testament of Qahat beyond the single manuscript from Qumran. Nonetheless, it seems quite correct to emphasize the relationship between Aramaic Levi, Testament of Qahat and Visions of Amram, works associated with the generations of Levi down to Aaron, the direct father of the priestly line of Israel.

Bibliography

Milik, J.T. "4Q Visions de 'Amram et une citation d'Origène," Revue Biblique 79

(1972) 77-97. Edition and translation of the published fragments.

Milik, J.T. "Ecrits préesséniens de Qumrân: de Hénoch à 'Amram," Qumrân: Sa piété,

sa théologie et son milieu, ed. M. Delcor (BETL, 46; Louvain: Leuven

University, 1978) 91-106. Puts the early literature at Qumran into context.

Jonge, M. de. "'The Testament of Levi and 'Aramaic Levi,'" Revue de Qumran 13

(1988): 376-385. Discusses textual and literary issues.

Puech, E. (1991). "Le testament de Qahat en araméen de la Grotte 4 (4QTQah),"

Revue de Qumran 15 (1988): 23-54. Discusses, inter alia, the relationship of

the Qahat and Amram documents.

Michael E. Stone

