

Levi, Aramaic Document

The Aramaic Levi Document (ALD), sometimes called Aramaic Testament of Levi, was first discovered in the early part of the century in two fragments from the Cairo Geniza; one being Cambridge Geniza T-S 16.94 published in 1900 by H.L. Pass and J. Arendzen and the other, Bodleian Geniza Fragment, Ms Heb c 27 f 56 published in 1907 by R.H. Charles and A. Cowley. It was immediately recognized that ALD was related to the Greek work, the Testament of Levi included in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. In addition, a certain insertion in one of the Greek manuscripts of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Athos Koutloumous 39) turned out to be extracts from a Greek translation of Aramaic Levi Document (ALD). Among the Dead Sea Scrolls seven copies have been identified, one from Cave 1 and six more from Cave 4.

ALD seems to have been written originally in Aramaic, though some scholars, such as Grelot (1955), have maintained that the original was Hebrew and that it was translated into Aramaic in antiquity. This view has not met with general acceptance.

There is good reason to date ALD to the third century or very early second century B.C.E. ALD (or something very like it) seems to have served as a source for Jubilees, which is usually dated in the first third of the second century B.C.E., as well as for the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and it is cited by CD which is somewhat later than Jubilees (Greenfield, 1988). This date makes it one of the most ancient of the Pseudepigrapha.

ALD says nothing directly about its provenance, nor would such statements be expected in a pseudepigraphon. It employs a solar calendar resembling that promoted by 1 Enoch, Jubilees and the Qumran sectarian writings (Greenfield and Stone, 1979, 224). In contrast to 1 Enoch and Jubilees, in the surviving fragments no polemics surround the use of the solar calendar. In addition to its adoption of the solar calendar,

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ALD professes distinctive ideas about two spirits, apotropaic prayer and demonology (Stone and Greenfield, 1993, 252) well as a "opposition" views about the priesthood (Stone, 1988). The latter include the unusual idea of an exclusively Levitical messianism (Greenfield and Stone, 1979, 223-224). ALD does not bear distinctive marks of Qumran sectarian language, however, and should be attributed to the wing of Judaism in the third century from which the Qumran sectarians were one group of descendants.

It is possible to reconstruct the original order of the Oxford and Cambridge fragments. They are apparently parts of the two middle leaves of a quire. The Cambridge sheet preserves part of the recto of a right-hand column of a right-hand folio and of the verso of the same folio which is from the following left-hand column. The single Bodleian leaf was the right-hand leaf of the middle sheet of the quire. The left-hand leaf is lost, but its contents are preserved in the Greek fragment. Then the recto and verso of the Cambridge left hand leaf follow. Thus the structure of these fragments is:

*1r -*1v (Cambridge); *2r-*2v (Oxford); [*3r-*3v Greek]; *4r-*4v (Cambridge).

The sequence of the fragments is important because it fixes the order of events in part of the original document. It is, however, incomplete in two respects. We do not know what material came between the fragmentary quarter columns of *1r and *1v in the Cambridge fragment and between them and the first column of the Bodleian fragment. Moreover, the Geniza fragments preserve neither the beginning nor the end of the work. There is some further evidence that ALD was longer, perhaps substantially longer, than the Geniza-Athos material.

a. The Prayer of Levi which was preserved as an insertion in Greek Ms *e* at 3:2 of the Greek *Testament of Levi* also occurs in a fragment of 4QLevi^b, which manuscript contains other material from ALD. This confirms the position of the Prayer of Levi as part of ALD.

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b. Some of the other Qumran fragments overlap with the material known from the Geniza, but numerous fragments of Qumran Aramaic text have no parallel at all in the Geniza-Athos material. These must have come from parts of ALD which did not survive in the Geniza-Athos finds.

c. A citation attributed to Levi is given by Ammonas, a successor of St. Anthony. If this is from Aramaic Levi, is from some other part of ALD than those preserved in the surviving Greek and Aramaic fragments.

d. Puech has claimed that 4Q450-451, which show certain parallels with *Greek Testament of Levi* 18, also belong to ALD (Puech, 1992). This is not certain but if true would hint at the inclusion in the book of this eschatological material. We regard only those manuscripts with some textual overlap with the Geniza-Athos material as being certainly parts of ALD. Puech also refers to Milik's suggestion that 4Q458 contains the closing passage of ALD.

R. Kugler (1996) has proposed an overall history and structure of ALD which is of considerable interest, though debatable at some points. The surviving substantial fragments of ALD deal with the following topics.

a. Levi's prayer and vision (Prayer of Levi). A separate piece but perhaps to be regarded as originally preceding the Geniza-Athos material (4QLevi^b ar frags. 1-2), though not directly. It has been suggested that 1QLevi ar frag. 1 might have occurred in the material preceding §4 of the Geniza text.

b. Levi's investiture and recognition of his priesthood by Jacob, Isaac and Abraham:

4-10 = Geniza ;

4-6 = 1QLevi ar frag. 3

7-9 = 4QLevi^c ar

9 = 1QLevi ar frag. 4

c. Isaac's exhortation and cultic instructions delivered to Levi

14-61 = Geniza

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20-23 = 4QLevi^d ar frag. 1

22-27 = 4QLevi^f ar frags. 2-6

24-25 = 4QLevi^e ar frag.

25-30 = 4QLevi^d ar frag. 2

26-27 = 1QLevi ar frag. 45

d. The birth of his children and chief events of his life

62-81 = Geniza

69-72 resembles 4QLevi^e ar frags. 2-3 col. 1

e. His ante-mortem address to his children, which is a wisdom poem

82-95 = Geniza

4QLevi^a ar frags. 1 and 2 overlap with this and have further text

4QLevi^e ar, frags. 2-3 = 95 and text from 4QLevi^a ar

4QLevi^f ar frag. 8 overlaps with the preceding.

This was not the end of the work, as is clear from 4QLevi^a ar frag 1, col. 2 and frag. 2 which overlap with the end of the poem and in which an eschatological exhortation follows it.

The following substantial fragments cannot be placed by reference to the continuous text mentioned in paragraph b-e above.

f. 4QLevi^a ar frag 4 has a piece of hortatory text.

g. 4QLevi^b ar frags. 3-4 seem to refer to the Dinah incident and also contain some eschatological words.

h. There is a considerable number of other fragments of the Qumran manuscripts which do not parallel any of the material noted above. There seems to be no sure way of fixing their sequence in ALD.

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Relations with other Dead Sea Scrolls

We have already mentioned the citation of ALD in CD and Puech's proposal that 4Q450 and 451 are part of ALD. In addition, it seems likely that ALD formed the inspiration for two other works found at Qumran, 4QTestament of Qahat and 4QVisions of Amram (CR to relevant articles). Thus a series of three writings existed attributed to the fathers of the priestly line.

Manuscript copies

Milik published one manuscript in DJD 1 (1Q21). He published a further fragment from Cave 4 in 1955. This fragment, entitled by scholars "The Prayer of Levi" was not in the Geniza Aramaic material, but was found in Greek interpolated into the Athos ms *e* of the Greek text of Testament of Levi at 2:3. Milik published further fragments in 1976 (Milik, 1976, 23-25). The fragments from Cave 4, among which Milik recognized three manuscripts, have been discerned by Greenfield and Stone to stem from six manuscripts. Therefore Milik's numbering of the manuscripts has been abandoned and they are renumbered here. All the manuscripts are in scripts that resemble those typical of late Hasmonean, or in one or two instances early Herodian writing. It is quite striking that all the Qumran copies come from the same period of time.

One further significant point emerges from the study of the Qumran manuscripts. At least in parts of the work, two of the manuscripts (d and e) present variant, shorter texts than the Geniza Aramaic manuscript.

ALD is an important document of early, post-biblical Judaism. It reflects attitudes to the priesthood which differ strongly from those of another more or less contemporary work, The Wisdom of Ben Sira, the orientation of which is different. For ALD the hortatory and wisdom dimensions of the Levi figure are particularly significant. Its stress on the transmission of the cultic commandments from Noah to

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Abraham and from him to Levi is striking. The status and authority of the Levitical priesthood are thus anchored in the actions of Noah who founded post-diluvian humanity, and relate already to his first sacrifice offered on exiting the Ark. The actual cultic instructions are unparalleled in detail and are one of the very earliest examples of post-biblical Jewish law. They are legitimated by an appeal to ancient tradition, perhaps, one might maintain, because the Mosaic revelation had not taken place at the time assumed by the pseudepigraphic framework of the book. Yet the stress laid upon literacy and teaching, as on the transmission of this teaching (particularly strongly in the Qahat document), raises the question whether more is not at stake here than providing a legitimacy for priestly teaching before the revelation at Sinai.

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