

The Heavenly Prince Melchizedek

(11Q13)

A striking first-century BCE document, composed of thirteen fragments from Cave 11 and centred on the mysterious figure of Melchizedek, was first published by A. S. van der Woude in 1965. It takes the form of an eschatological midrash in which the proclamation of liberty to the captives at the end of days (Isa. lxi, 1) is understood as being part of the general restoration of property during the year of Jubilee (Lev. xxv, 13), seen in the Bible (Deut. xv, 2) as a remission of debts.

The heavenly deliverer is Melchizedek. Identical with the archangel Michael, he is the head of the 'sons of Heaven' or 'gods of Justice' and is referred to as *elohim* and *el*. The same terminology occurs in the Songs for the Holocaust of the Sabbath. These Hebrew words normally mean 'God', but in certain specific contexts Jewish tradition also explains *elohim* as primarily designating a 'judge'. Here Melchizedek is portrayed as presiding over the final Judgement and condemnation of his demonic counterpart, Belial/Satan, the Prince of Darkness, elsewhere also called Melkresha' (cf. pp. 380, 534). The great act of deliverance is expected to occur on the Day of Atonement at the end of the tenth Jubilee cycle.

This manuscript sheds valuable light not only on the Melchizedek figure in the Epistle to the Hebrews vii, but also on the development of the messianic concept in the New Testament and early Christianity.

For the text see A. S. van der Woude, 'Melchizedek als himmlische Erlöser-gestalt . . .', *Quaestiones biblicae Studien*, Leiden, 1965, 354-73; M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, '11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament', *NTS* 12 (1966), 301-26; J. T. Milik, *JFS* 23 (1972), 96-109; F. Puech, 'Notes sur le manuscrit de 11Q Melkisédek', *RQ* 12 (1987), 483-513.

... And concerning that which He said, *In [this] year of Jubilee [each of you shall return to his property (Lev. xxv, 13); and likewise, And this is the manner of release:] every creditor shall release that which he has lent [to his neighbour*

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He shall not exact it of his neighbour and his brother, for God's release [has been proclaimed] (Deut. xv, 2). [And it will be proclaimed at] the end of days concerning the captives as [He said, *To proclaim liberty to the captives* (Isa. lxi, 1). Its interpretation is that He] will assign them to the Sons of Heaven and to the inheritance of Melchizedek; [for He will cast] their [lot] amid the portions of Melchizedek, who will return them there and will proclaim to them liberty, forgiving them [the wrong-doings] of all their iniquities.

And this thing will [occur] in the first week of the Jubilee that follows the nine Jubilees. And the Day of Atonement is the [end of the] tenth [Jubilee, when all the Sons of [Light] and the men of the lot of Melchizedek will be atoned for. [And] a statute concerns them [to provide them with their rewards. For this is the moment of the Year of Grace for Melchizedek. [And he will, by his strength, judge the holy ones of God, executing judgement as it is written concerning him in the

Songs of David, who said, *Elonim has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgement* (Psalms lxxxii, 1). And it was concerning him that he said, (Let the assembly of the peoples) *return to the height above them; El (god) will judge the peoples* (Psalms vii, 7-8). As for that which he said, *How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah* (Psalms lxxxii, 2), its interpretation concerns Belial and the spirits of his lot [who] rebelled by turning away from the precepts of God to ... And Melchizedek will avenge the vengeance of the judgments of God ... and he will drag [them from the hand of] Belial and from the hand of all the spirits of] his [lot]. And all the 'gods [of Justice] will come to his aid [to] attend to the destruction] of Belial. And *the height*

is ... all the sons of God ... this ... This is the day of [Peace/Salvation] concerning which [God] spoke [through Isaiah the prophet, who said, [How] beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who proclaims peace, who brings good news, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion: Your Elonim [reigns] (Isa. lii, 7). Its interpretation; the mountains are the prophets ... and the messenger is the Anointed one of the spirit, concerning whom Daniel said, [Until an anointed one, a prince (Dan. ix, 25)] ... [And he who brings] good [news], who proclaims [salvation]: it is concerning him that it is written ... [To comfort all who mourn, to grant to those who mourn in Zion] (Isa. lxi, 2-3). To comfort [those who mourn: its interpretation], to make them understand all the ages of [time] ... In truth ... will turn away from Belial ... by the judgement[s] of God, as it is written concerning him, [who says to Zion]; your Elonim reigns. Zion is ... , those

25 who uphold the Covenant, who turn from walking [in] the way of the people. And *your* *elohim* is [Melchizedek, who will save them from] the hand of Belial.

As for that which He said, *Then you shall send abroad the trumpet [et in] all the land* (Lev. xxv, 9) . . .

Consolations or Tanhumim

(4Q176)

A large number of small fragments from a Cave 4 manuscript (4Q176), edited by J. M. Allegro in 1968 (*DJD*, V, 60–67), represent a scriptural anthology centered on the theme of divine consolation. Originally, each citation was accompanied by a sectarian exegesis, but only a few examples of the latter survive. The majority of the extant remains belong to Isaiah xl–lv (Ps. lxxix, 2–3; Isa. xl, 1–5; xli, 8–9; xlix, 13–17; xliii, 1–2, 4–6; li, 22–3; lii, 1–3; liv, 4–10; lii, 1–2; Zech. xiii, 9). The translated passage is based on Psalm lxxix, 2–3, and is followed by a new title – From the Book of Isaiah: Consolations – and the quotation of the opening verses of Isa. xl. The four asterisks symbolize the Tetragram indicated in the manuscript simply by dots.

I And he shall accomplish Thy miracles and Thy righteousness among Thy people. And they shall . . . Thy sanctuary, and shall dispute with the kingdoms over the blood of . . . Jerusalem and shall see the bodies of Thy priests . . . *and none to bury them* (Ps. lxxix, 3). From the Book of Isaiah: Consolations [*Comfort, comfort, my people*] – *says your God – speak to the heart of Jerusalem and cry to her that her [bondage is completed], that her punishment is accepted, that she has received from the hand of **** double for all her sins . . .* (Isa. xl, 1–3).