

# Vision, Narrative, and Wisdom in the Aramaic Texts from Qumran

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## Abstracts

**Daniel Machiela (McMaster)**

### **“The Compositional Setting and Implied Origins of Some Aramaic Texts from Qumran: A Working Hypothesis”**

With the growing awareness of multiple themes and idioms shared among individual Aramaic texts from Qumran, and the related claim that some of these texts form a distinctive literary corpus, we may now begin to interrogate the historical and social background of a large part of the Aramaic corpus in a fuller, more integrated way. In this paper, I begin by putting forward a socio-historical backdrop for these texts, viewing them as didactic literature written by highly literate priests, for a broad Jewish audience during the late Persian and Hellenistic periods. I will then test points of my proposal through an investigation of the texts, in the light of previous scholarship.

**Torleif Elgvin (NLA University College, Oslo)**

### **“The Background of the Priestly Figure in 4Q541 9”**

The paper will trace the background of the image of the priestly figure in 4Q541 9, a priest who will see trials, bring forth atonement, and be a tool for universal renewal.

Zechariah 4 and 6 introduces the two anointed ones, the priest and the prince, earthly figures who also stand in God's presence.

Jer 30:20–22 (= 30:20–21, 38:1). LXX preserves the earlier recension from around 500, envisioning a future royal ruler and a renewal of the covenantal people.

TM-Jeremiah—Hebrew reworking from Egypt early 3rd century, at a time where the high priest is the leader of the Yehud community. TM 30:20–22 uses the present priestly ruler as *typos* for a future priestly messianic figure who (בְּאַהֲרֵי־הַיָּמִים) will risk his life in a sacrificial act before God. Other passages foresee a future son of David—23:5–6 (reworked from LXX Vorlage) and 33:14–22 (not in LXX)—who will execute righteousness in the land, for Judah and Israel. But it is the priestly messiah (TM 30:21–22) who will be the tool for the renewal of the covenantal people, when God by his wrath fulfils his will toward the nations.

Zech 13:7–9: Is the figure who sacrifices his life, leading to a covenantal renewal, a priestly or a royal messiah? *Sword, awake against my friend* (read: רֵיבִי), *the man who is my neighbour...*

4Q541 9 continues the line from Jer 30:20–22 (TM). Instead of God's wrath poured out on the nations, the end-time priest will be a tool for universal renewal.

**Hugo Antonissen (Leuven)**

**“The Symposium Culture in the *Letter of Aristeas* and in Aramaic *New Jerusalem*”**

In Aramaic *New Jerusalem* (1Q32 (?), 2Q24, Q554, 4Q554a, 4Q555, 5Q15, and 11Q18) specific architectural design and the mention of drinking and eating are in favour of the description of a pilgrimage city that was meant for a cult based on the concept of symposium on the level of the city. In addition, the specific term “couches” (עֲרֻשִׁין, *‘sryn*) refers to pieces of furniture meant for reclining in the context of a symposium (5Q15 1 II, 11//4Q554a 1:[7–8]). The phrase “banquet rooms”, בְּתֵי מִזְגָּא, *bty mzg’*, (cf. Targ. Prov. 23:3), is clearly related to the mixing of wine, an important component of a symposium (5Q15 1 II, 10//4Q554a 1:[7]). Comparison with the symposium context as reported in the *Letter of Aristeas* (§§181–294) and in other texts from Qumran, such as the *Rule of the Congregation* (1Q28 II 11–22), may throw some new light on the broader context of the very fragmentary data in Aramaic *New Jerusalem*.

**Andrew Perrin (Trinity Western)**

**“Remembering the Past, Cultivating a Character: Memory, Pseudepigraphy, and Paratextuality in the Pseudo-Daniel Texts (4Q243–244; 4Q245)”**

The texts collected under the Pseudo-Daniel rubric are an intriguing item in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls as they bridge two predominant foci observed for the broader Aramaic corpus. On the one hand, the texts are associated with life in the exilic diaspora by way of attribution to Daniel and mention of political figures and eras associated with prevailing empires. On the other hand, aspects of the fragmentary content are anchored in the antediluvian and ancestral past with nods to the flood, tower of Babel, exodus, references to patriarchs, and an apparent interest in priestly genealogies.

This paper will revisit the composition(s) represented in 4Q243–245 and explore the ways in which it (they) contributes to our understanding of two interrelated issues. First, how can a reading informed by insights from memory studies advance our understanding of the situation of the Pseudo-Daniel materials at an apparent nexus of the two predominant narrative settings of the Aramaic corpus? Second, how did this new narrative and thematic backdrop at once enhance the emerging persona of Daniel as a literary character as well as enable the creator of these writings to redeploy this redrawn Daniel to speak into a broader set of topics? In these ways, the paper will draw upon and challenge aspects of some current conceptual categorizations of the Aramaic corpus as well as underscore how the Danielic writings within it provide a fresh space for redescribing the rapid evolution of the Daniel traditions in the centuries leading up to the Common Era.

**Melissa Sayyad Bach (Copenhagen)**

**“4Q246 and Collective Messianism”**

This paper deals with the Aramaic Qumran fragment 4Q246 with particular focus on column II lines 4–9. In scholarly debates on 4Q246, “The Son of God” figure has played a central role. In contrast, the present paper aims to emphasize the role of “The People of God” instead of “The Son of God” figure. “God’s people” seems to be a common feature of 4Q246, the Book of Daniel (chapter 7), and 1QM. It is noteworthy how these texts refer to a collective entity as receiver of the eternal kingdom, while they do not reveal any explicit traces of an individual messiah-figure. The essential plot in 4Q246 involves the rising of the people of God when the world of tribulation in 4Q246 switches into a new era of salvation and peace. Accordingly, “The People of God” seems to be a substantial mediator of salvation between God and a world in turmoil.

**Årstein Justnes (University of Agder)**

**“The Story about Nine Fake Dead Sea Scrolls Fragments Written in Aramaic”**

In this paper, I will argue that all the nine Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls fragments that have surfaced on the antiquities market the last 15 years most likely are modern forgeries. I will also analyse the stories that dealers and scholars tell about these fragments, focusing on issues like provenance and previous owners.

**Peter Brylov Christensen (Copenhagen)**

**“Aborted Stories: The Flood Narrative in the Hebrew Book of Genesis as ‘Rewritten Enoch’ or Vice Versa?”**

In this paper, I will examine the question of dependency between the flood narratives found in the Hebrew Book of Genesis and the Qumran Aramaic fragments pertaining to the Enoch traditions. In addition to the latter, I will also include the Ethiopic version of *I Enoch* for comparison – as well as the parallel ancient Near Eastern narratives consisting of the Sumerian flood story, *Atra-Hasis* and tablet XI from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

**George J. Brooke (Manchester)**

**“Aramaic Traditions from the Qumran Caves and the Palestinian Sources for Luke’s Special Material”**

This short paper will suggest that some of the special Lukan material (L) is derived from a range of Palestinian Aramaic sources. Such sources seem to reflect traditions now discernible notably in some of the Aramaic compositions found in the caves at and near Qumran. Several of the connections have been noted before by scholars such as Fitzmyer, Bauckham, and Machiela. This paper will attempt to bring several of their suggestions together, notably concerning the Son of God text and Luke 1:32–35 and the Enoch corpus and the Lukan genealogy, to see if there is a distinctive profile to the parallels.

**Mika Pajunen (Helsinki)**

**“Patriarchal Voices and the Transmission and Status of Traditions”**

Scholars have for a long time explored the question how exactly were traditions transmitted in Judaism during the Second Temple period. These theories of transmission are then used as foundations for methodological decisions made on individual cases. The Aramaic corpus from the Qumran caves, and especially the traditions connected with patriarchal figures, highlight the process of transmission as one central element stressed in most of them.

It will be investigated in this paper who passes down a tradition in the literary setting and who are the likely tradents in the historical setting, how is the transmission done, and where does the tradition allegedly derive from. This analysis can reveal something about the basic mechanisms of transmission in the society underlying the sources as the process itself is not argued for, i.e., the standard models of transmission are a given in the works. Looking at the whole Aramaic corpus from this perspective may also show any shared motives given for transmitting specific traditions. Moreover, the investigation of such passages may give further partial clues as to why the works are in patriarchal rather than Mosaic voices and in Aramaic rather than Hebrew.

**Søren Holst (Copenhagen)**

**“Fragments and Forefathers: Reconstructing *Visions of Amram*”**

The magisterial edition of 4Q543–47 by Émile Puech in DJD XXXVII, as well as work done by Robert Duke, Klaus Beyer and others, provide us with much information both about the individual manuscripts and the work of which they are presumably discrete copies. But can more be said, both about peculiarities of separate manuscripts in the passages where they overlap and about the placement of fragments that give us no direct evidence of their relation to the other extant parts of *Visions of Amram*?

**Liora Goldman (University of Haifa and Oranim Academic College)**

**“The *Visions of Amram* between Aaron and Moses”**

The *Visions of Amram* addresses two of the primary themes of the Rewritten-Bible genre found at Qumran: narratives relating to the patriarchs and their Testaments (usually in Aramaic) and that of the Exodus and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai (usually in Hebrew). In this paper, I shall examine the roles played by Moses and Aaron in the visions revealed to their father Amram and in his Testament in order to determine which son constitutes the protagonist of the composition, the identity of the “angel of God”, and the principal theme of the composition – the Levitical line and establishment of the high priesthood or the national narrative of the Exodus.

**Kasper Siegismund (Copenhagen)**

**“4Q543 2 1–2 and the Verb ‘to Give’ in Qumran Aramaic”**

In 4Q543 2 1–2 (*Visions of Amram*), the verbal form נתן occurs twice. Interpreting these forms as first person plural prefix conjugation seems like an obvious choice since the root NTN is not usually employed in the suffix conjugation (the root YHB is used instead). However, Robert Duke, in the comments on the text in his recent edition, understands the forms as third singular suffix conjugation, arguing that there are many examples of this root in the suffix conjugation in Aramaic. In this paper, I explore the verb “to give” in the various Aramaic dialects as well as all the occurrences of the roots NTN and YHB in the Aramaic Qumran texts. Furthermore, I discuss the consequences of the different ways of interpreting the verbal form for the interpretation of the wider context.

**Jesper Høgenhaven (Copenhagen)**

**“Geography in the *Visions of Amram* Texts”**

Why do Amram’s dying words recount a journey he once made to Canaan with the purpose of building the tombs of his ancestors? In *Visions of Amram* (4Q543–547) the geographical perspective is rather complex. The scene at Amram’s deathbed is set in Egypt and forms the framework in which the narrative takes place. The Israelites are in exile, and VA clearly predicts elements of the exodus story, which is to happen in the generation of Amram’s children (Moses, Aaron, and Miriam). Amram recounts the contents of his dream vision, and the vision is closely associated with his journey. It is not entirely clear whether Amram actually experienced the vision while he was in Canaan, on his way back, or after his return to Egypt. Taking the geographical hints in the text as my focal point, I try in this paper to reexamine the structure and meaning of VA.