

11Q13 (Melch)
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I. Translation of 11Q13 2:2-25

(2:2) And concerning that which is said, “In [this] year of Jubilee [you shall return, every one of you, to your property” (Lev 25:13), and likewise what is said,] “And this **(2:3)** [is the manner of the remission:] Every creditor shall remit the claim that is held [against a neighbor, not exacting it of a neighbor who is a member of the community, because] God’s remission [has been proclaimed] (Deut 15:2). **(2:4)** [Its interpretation refers] to the End of Days and concerning the captives, just as [Isaiah said: “To proclaim the Jubilee to the captives” (Isa 61:1)...] just as [...] **(2:5)** and from the inheritance of Melchizedek who [...] **(2:6)** will return them to what is theirs. He will proclaim to them liberty, releasing them [from the debt] of all their iniquities. And this shall be **(2:7)** in the first week of the Jubilee following the ni[n]e Jubilees. The Da[y of Aton]ement will be the end of the tenth [Jubi]lee, **(2:8)** when he will atone for all the Sons [of Light] and the lot of Melchizedek [...] **(2:9)** This is the period for “the year of Melchizedek’s favor” (cf. Isa 61:2) and his hos[ts with] the holy ones of God for the administration of judgment, as it is written **(2:10)** concerning it in the Songs of David, “ELOHIM sits in the Divi[n]e Assembly], He will judge in the midst of the ELOHIM” (Psa 82:2). And concerning it, Scripture says, “Over it **(2:11)** be seated in the highest heaven. God will judge the peoples (Psa 7:7-8). Concerning which Scripture sa[ys], “How long will you judg[e unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Selah (Psa 82:2). **(2:12)** Its interpretation concerns Belial and the spirits of his lot [because they have re]belled against the laws of God to [...] **(2:13)** Melchizedek will execute the vengeance of God’s judg[ments in that day and de]liver [them from the hand] of Belial and the hand of the spi[rits of his lot]. **(2:14)** And with the aid of all the Oaks of [Righteousness] (Isa 61:3) [...] all the sons of God [...] **(2:15)** This is the Day of [Peace/Salvation] that [is spoken by I]saiah the prophet who said, “[How] beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings **(2:16)** [good] news, [who announces salva]tion, who [sa]ys to Zion, ‘Your ELOHIM [reigns]’” (Isa 52:7). **(2:17)** Its interpretation: “the mountains” [are] the prophets [...] **(2:18)** “And the messenger” is the anointed one of the spirit” about whom Dan[iel spoke, “To seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place” (Dan 9:24). The “messenger who brings] **(2:19)** good news, who annou[n]ces salvation” of whom it is written, “[to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, the day of vengeance of our God”] **(2:20)** to comfort those who [mourn” (Isa 61:2). Its interpretation:] He will instruct them in all the periods of the age [...] **(2:21)** in truth [...] **(2:23)** by the judgements of God, as it is written concerning him, “[who says to Zi]on, “Your ELOHIM reigns” (Isa 52:7). Zion is **(2:24)** [the Assembly of all the Sons of Righteousness,] who uphold the Covenant and turn away from walking in the way of the people. “Your ELOHIM is **(2:25)** [Melchizedek who will de]liver [them from the ha]nd of Belial about which it is said, “Then you shall have the trumpet [sounded loud; in] the seventh month’ (Lev 25:9).

II. Introduction

Among the finds from Cave 11 were fifteen parchment fragments belonging to three successive columns. On account of the unfortunate condition of the document, we do not know its original length or where the surviving columns appeared within the overall work. The composition is written in Hebrew with the full orthography common to other scrolls from the Qumran library. The paleographical style is indicative of late Hasmonean or early Herodian book

hand (50-25 BCE), although Milik ventured that the archaic form of some of the letters suggests it originated slightly earlier, perhaps 75-50 BCE.

III. Genre

The work reflects the sectarian penchant to divide history into periods with the fragments from our document describing the tenth and final Jubilee. The best-preserved text is column two, which presents an eschatological description of the end of days by means of a thematic pesher upon Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 15, Isaiah 52:7 and 61:1-3, Psalms 7:8-9 and 82:1-2. It describes a hoped-for redemption that will free the sons of light from the dominion of the sons of Belial. At the center of God's redemptive initiative is the figure of Melchizedek, who is described in a role similar to the Prince of Lights (1 QS 3:20; CD 5:18) and the archangel Michael (1QM 17:6-7). The narrative concludes with a description of the annihilation of Belial and his lot. Accordingly, the editors suggest that the presentation indicates our columns come near the conclusion of the composition.

IV. Melchizedek

Belief in the return of Melchizedek is also heard outside of the Qumran library. According to a Jewish legend preserved in 2 Enoch, his priestly father—the apocryphal Nir—is told that the child is to be taken to Paradise to escape the coming flood in the generation of Noah, “For the time is now very near when I shall let loose all the waters over the earth, and all that is on the earth shall perish; and I will give him a place of honor in *another* (Ver. J: *last*) generation, and Melchizedek shall be chief priest in that generation (2 Enoch 23:34).”

The events surrounding the advent of Melchizedek closely resemble the day of deliverance and vindication expected at the coming of the Messiah(s) of Aaron and Israel in the Damascus Covenant. The appearance of Melchizedek occurs in the tenth Jubilee inaugurated on the Day of Atonement, “And this thing will [occur] in the first week of the Jubilee that follows the nine Jubilees. And the Day of Atonement is the e[nd of the] tenth [Ju]bilee, when all the sons of [Light] and men of the lot of Mel[chi]zedek *will be atoned*” (11Q13 2:8). In a similar collocation, the advent of the priestly Messiah is accompanied by atonement in CD 14:19: “Until the appearance of the Messiah of Aaron and Israel and their (i.e. the Congregation's) *iniquity will be atoned*.” This combination is repeated on several occasions in the Dead Sea Scrolls where *redemption* occurs with *atonement*. “Then God will make *atonement* for them, and they will experience His *deliverance* because they have trusted in His holy name” (CD 20:34; cf. CD 4:10).

V. Jubilee Redemption

Melchizedek's return in 11Q13 coincides with the dawning of the redemptive era in the final Jubilee. Column two opens with a combined citation of Leviticus 25:13 and Deuteronomy 15:2, both of which concern the Jubilee year. The significance of the Jubilee for the author is two-fold. According to Leviticus 25:10, it is in that year that the people of God, "shall proclaim liberty in the land." The time of redemption is also related to the fact that this year will be a time of "the Lord's remission" (Deut. 15:2). While the biblical verse speaks of a remission of debts, the sectarian spiritual interpretation of "remission" is shaped by the fact that redemption will be inaugurated on "the Day of Atonement (Lev 25:9) at the end of the tenth Jubilee" (11Q13 2:7). Thus, the tenth Jubilee begins with atonement for past iniquities, and culminates in redemption with divine vengeance upon Belial and his lot.

The two themes of deliverance and atonement and their coincidence during the tenth Jubilee in 11Q13 belong to a larger complex of eschatological ideas built upon a chronological determinism that is not unique to Qumran. Central to it is the expectation that the Day of Redemption and judgment will occur in the final Jubilee. Periodization and the belief in a Jubilee redemption can be seen in other Qumran works (e.g. 4Q390), as well as literature belonging to broader streams of thought that resemble the thinking at Qumran (e.g. Jubilees 50:4, 1 Enoch 10:11-12; 91:11-19; 93:3-10).

The beginnings of a Jubilee redemptive chronology are already visible in the Chronicler's reinterpretation (2 Chron. 36:21) of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 25:11-12) in light of the sabbatical years of Leviticus 26:34-35. Even closer to our present document, the periodic Jubilee structure together with atonement for iniquity is heard together in Daniel 9:24: "*Seventy weeks of years*...to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, and *to atone for iniquity*, to bring an everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet" (cf. 11Q 2:18).

Finally, employing the same periodic Jubilee scheme, the Greek Testament of Levi 16-18 portrays a priestly redeemer coming during the final Jubilee. The Testament's periodic structure has been corrupted and doubtless has felt the influence of a later Christian hand. However, Milik is correct in his assessment that behind the Greek Testament is a pre-Christian periodic structure that is derived from a Jubilee chronological complex similar to that witnessed in 4Q180-181. In the Greek Testament of Levi we hear elements that also resemble closely the Qumran presentation of Melchizedek: "You have heard concerning the *seventy weeks* (i.e. 10 Jubilees), hear also concerning the priesthood...For in each *jubilee* there shall be a priesthood...then (i.e. in the final Jubilee) shall the Lord raise up a new priest...He shall execute a *righteous judgment* upon the earth...his star shall rise (cf. Num. 24:17; 4Q175) in heaven like a *king*...In his

priesthood *shall sin come to an end*...And *Beliar* shall be bound by him” (Test. Levi 17:1-2; 18:1, 3, 9, 12; cp. 11Q13 2:25; Test. Moses 10:1; Jub 50:5).

What we witness in all of these works is a hope that through the hands of a divinely appointed human figure—most often portrayed as an exalted priest—the nation will experience atonement and deliverance. The introduction of the notion of atonement into a discussion about the Day of Redemption, of course, stems from the fact that the Jubilee is inaugurated by the blowing of the trumpet on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 25:9). Thus, the Qumran sectarians looked to the day when iniquity would be atoned, resulting in deliverance and vindication for the Congregation before their adversaries. That is precisely what is intended in the last line of 11Q13 column 2 where we hear again both of the deliverance brought by Melchizedek and the blowing of the trumpet of the Jubilee (11Q13 2:25) “[Melchizedek, who will del]iv[er them from the po]wer of Belial (cp. Test. Levi 18:12; Test. Moses 10:1). Concerning what scripture says, “Then you shall have the trumpet [sounded loud; in] the [seventh m]o[nth ...” (Leviticus 25:9).].

The proclamation of liberty in Leviticus 25:10 allowed the author to introduce Isaiah 61:1 where liberty is also proclaimed. This period of redemption is called “the year of Melchizedek’s favor,” alluding to Isaiah 61:2, “the year of the Lord’s favor and the vengeance of our God,” and anticipates Melchizedek’s role in executing divine vengeance. He arises to accomplish the *vengeance of God’s judgments* in a fashion very similar to the priestly redeemer of the *Assumption of Moses* 10:2-3.

VI. Angelic Redeemer?

Throughout 11Q13 the author utilizes words and phrases from Isaiah 61:1-3 that are then combined with other verbally connected Old Testament verses. Psalm 82:1 is cited in 11Q13 2:10 to take advantage of the parallel occurrence of ELOHIM:

ELOHIM stands in the Divine Assembly;
He will judge in the midst of the ELOHIM.

In biblical and post-biblical Hebrew the term ELOHIM may be used to signify a human figure in their role as judge, without any suggestion that they are divine beings (e.g. Exod 18:9; 22:7, 8 [E 22:8,9], 28; 1 Sam 2:25; cf. LXX, Targ. Onkelos and Mek. R. Ish. on Exod 21.6).

Contrary to Van der Woude’s suggestion, which was based upon a late medieval Jewish text, Psalm 82:1 is not intended to identify Melchizedek as a celestial being (i.e. the archangel Michael). Unfortunately, scholarship has not fully recognized the implications of Yadin’s correction of Van der Woude’s earlier mistaken reading of the lacuna at the beginning of line 9: hw^ʔh [...]. According to Van der Woude’s proposed reconstruction (hw^ʔh [hwqq]: He is the

Rod”; cf. CD 6:9), the metaphor is to be identified with Melchizedek, who thus becomes the subject of line 9 and serves as the *nomen regens* of the construct chain. Since Yadin, however, there has been scholarly consensus that the lacuna should read, “hw’h [hqs]: It is the (final) period. The significance of this change was recognized by Horton, who observed that grammatically Psalm 82:1 in line 10 must be understood to describe to the *nomen regens* of the construct chain and the subject of line 9.

The purpose of the citation of Psalm 82:1 is therefore not to identify Melchizedek as a heavenly being at all, but to define the nature of the final period, i.e. “Concerning the final period the Song of David says...” This period has just been described as a time for “the administration of judgment” in which the eschatological Priest will play a role. Nothing in the thematic pesher indicates that Melchizedek signifies anyone other than the historical figure of Genesis 14:18-20. Instead, Psalm 82:1 serves simply as a literary device for introducing the *dramatis personae* that belong to the Congregation’s hope for imminent redemption and revenge against its enemies.

According to the collective sectarian thought at Qumran, Melchizedek would not be the only instrument of divine judgment. Instead, he sits among the “Divine Assembly”, an epithet for the Congregation that appears elsewhere in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QM 1:10; 1QHa 5:25). In the War Scroll (1QM 4:9) the title is inscribed on the ensign of the Qumran Congregation in preparation for the eschatological battle. Because of the structural parallelism of Psalm 82:1 in which the Divine Assembly is also called ELOHIM, the title’s singular appearance in the Hebrew Scriptures provided the author of 11Q13 with an opportunity to describe both Melchizedek and the Qumran Congregation in their future role as ELOHIM.

The author has ingeniously fused the structural parallelism inherent in both Isaiah 61:2 and Psalm 82:1 to create a bi-focal presentation in which Melchizedek and the Congregation will be executors of divine judgment on the Day of Vengeance.

	11Q13 2:9	Isaiah 61:2	Psalm 82:1
Melchizedek:	(A) The year of Melchizedek’s favor	(A) The year of the Lord’s favor	(A) ELOHIM stands in the Divine Assembly
Congregation:	(B) The day of vengeance of the Saints of God	(B) The day of vengeance of our ELOHIM	(B) He will judge in the midst of ELOHIM.

Mention of the Divine Assembly from Psalm 82:1 led to the introduction of Psalm 7:8-9 [E 7:7-8] which includes the appellation for the Congregation's adversaries—the Assembly of the Nations—and the motif of divine judgment. The author presents Melchizedek enthroned over them: “Over (the Assembly of the Nations) be seated on high...” (1Q13 2:6-7: Ps 7:8), but once again this does not mean that the King of Salem is a celestial being. Similar enthronement depictions of historical figures are witnessed in ancient Jewish literature (e.g. Ezek. the Tragedian 67-76; Ant. 2:233-234; Exod. Rab. 1:26; 3 Enoch 12:1-5). Instead, the priestly figure is seated above the Assembly of the Nations to execute divine judgment.

The whole episode resembles Psalm 110 where we hear reference both to Melchizedek and to one seated in judgment, “The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool’” (Ps 110:1). The notion that Melchizedek himself would be the eschatological judge seems to be the fruit of a creative exegesis of the consonantal text of Psalm 110. Similarly to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Qumran Congregation read Psalm 110 to concern Melchizedek himself: “You are a priest forever, *according to my words* (*l-dbrty*), O Melchizedek!” (Ps 110:4; cp. Heb 7:3). Consequently, in the next verse the Dead Sea Sect and other early Jewish interpreters understood the consonantal reading of *ʾdny* to signify not the Lord (i.e. *Adonai*) as vocalized by the Massoretes, but the human figure (i.e. *adoni*) already mentioned in the opening verse: “My lord (*adoni*) is at Your (i.e. the Lord's) right hand...” (Ps 110:5).

This ancient, non-Massoretic reading of Psalm 110:5 presents the identical seated description to that of Psalm 110:1: “The Lord (YHWH) said to my lord (*adoni*), ‘Sit at my right hand...’” It is not the Lord who is seated at the right hand to execute judgment in the following verse (110:6) but the appointed human redeemer (*adoni*), or as he is identified in the non-Massoretic reading of Psalm 110:1-5 and 11Q13—Melchizedek: “He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth” (Ps 110:6). So we hear in 11Q13 2:13 that Melchizedek will “render the vengeance of God's judgment.” In effect, through Melchizedek *God will judge the nations*, a description which closely resembles the intermediary role of the redeemer figure in Psalm 110:6, who likewise *will judge the nations*.

VII. 11Q13 and the New Testament

11Q13 presents poignant areas of interest for readers of the New Testament. Most obvious is the figure of Melchizedek and his role in the redemptive expectations of the Qumran Congregation. We have noted that undergirding the presentation of Melchizedek in the Dead Sea document is a creative reading of Psalm 110. Only through such a non-Massoretic reading, “You

are *a priest forever*, according to my words, O Melchizedek!” could the New Testament author describe the King of Salem, “He is *a priest forever*” (Heb 7:3). Additionally, Flusser noted that only in 11Q13 and the New Testament epistle do we find together Melchizedek, the Messiah and the Son of Man/Judge of the End of Days.

The Qumran periodization of redemptive history, particularly its expression of a hoped-for Jubilee redemption may likewise be reflected in the New Testament. Both the wording of John the Baptist’s preaching (i.e. “a baptism for *remission* of sins”) and Jesus’ reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the Nazareth synagogue may echo these contemporary expectations. Milik suggested that a ten Jubilee structure may even be witnessed in the genealogy of Jesus with its seventy-six names in Luke 4:23-38. “If one deducts the first six patriarchs, one finds again in the era of the patriarch Enoch the beginning of a computation of seventy generations—exactly the same, therefore, as 1 Enoch 10:12” (Milik *Enoch* 257).

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the role of Melchizedek in 11Q13 compare to the expectations for a priestly or royal redeemer found elsewhere in the Dead Sea Scrolls?
2. How does the figure of Melchizedek in 11Q13 shed light on Melchizedek as he appears in the Epistle to the Hebrews?
3. What can 11Q13 inform us on the way that the Hebrew Bible was interpreted in the Second Temple Period?
4. How does the utilization of biblical texts in 11Q13 compare with other sectarian texts like the *Pesharim*?

Beginning Reading

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Intermediate/Advanced Reading

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