

Two Messiahs: The Evidence in the Late 2nd Temple Period
James D. Tabor
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Historical and literary/traditional precedents for the concept

Tradition concerning joint covenants with Levi/Aaron and David-Mal. 2:8; Num. 25:13- Priestly covenant, 2 Sam. 7:12; 22:51; Ezekiel 37:25; etc.- Davidic covenant, Jer 33:19-22-joint covenants; Deut. 33; blessing of Levi; Jub. 31- joint blessings.

Jub. 31 pronounces a perpetual blessing upon Levi as the progenitor of the priest, and Judah as the father of the prince who will rule over Israel and the nations.

Covenant with Levi- mentioned in Mal. 2:8; mentioned alongside the covenant with David in Jer. 33:19-22. Cf. also Neh. 13:29.

Two anointed figures in Ancient Israel-King and High Priest (Lev. 4:3, 5, 16 contains the expression **הַמְשִׁיחַ הַכֹּהֵן**: “The anointed priest.” Cf. also Ex. 28:41; 1 Chron. 29:22; etc.). David is taken as the archetype of the ideal king in the eschatological age. Zadok, the priest of David and high priest in Solomon’s Temple, scion of Aaron, is the archetype of the new Zadok, the messiah of Aaron. Cf. 1 Sam. 2:35-“I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed one forever.” Zechariah seeks to restore this form of government, which is seen here as the true polity of Israel.

Zechariah 4:14-“These are the two anointed ones (lit. ‘sons of fresh oil’) who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”

Zechariah 6:11-14- Zechariah told to make crowns (plural) for Zerubbabel (Davidic claimant) and Joshua (High priest). The original form of the text probably had both figures crowned. The present form of the text only mentions Joshua being crowned.

Dual Messianism

Evidence from Qumran- although several texts unambiguously speak of a messiah of Aaron and a messiah of Israel, there are some serious difficulties in trying to reconstruct a coherent and consistent messianic expectation from all the scrolls- copies of the same text often differ significantly from each other, multiple titles are used for the same figure and sometimes the same title can be used for different figures (cf. “Interpreter of the Law”). The scrolls also will interpret the same text in multiple ways (cf. Num. 24:17). There are also titles which may or may not refer to the same figure (cf. “Teacher of righteousness,” “one who shall teach righteousness at the end of days,” “the prophet”). Multiple messianic scenarios exist within the scrolls, yet the obviously sectarian manuscripts present a fairly consistent notion of two messiahs, one priestly, one Davidic.

CD A Col. VII 18-21-“And the star is the Interpreter of the Law who is coming to Damascus, as it is written: *A star moves out of Jacob, and a scepter arises out of Israel.* The scepter is the prince of the whole congregation and when he rises we will destroy all the sons of Seth...”

In CD VI, the Interpreter of the Law refers to a figure of the past, yet in the above text and in the Florilegium, he is a figure who will come with the Branch of David. The Community Rule requires that every group of ten should include a man who interprets the Law so the title could have more than one referent. Here the title likely refers to the messiah of Aaron.

CD A Col. XIV 18-19-“...And this is the exact interpretation of the regulations by which [they shall be ruled] [until there arises the messiah]h of Aaron and Israel. And their iniquity will be atoned [...]. (Martinez)

The phrase משיח אהרן וישראל, “messiah of Aaron and Israel,” has been taken by some scholars as collective, referring to one messiah of both Aaron and Israel. However, other scholars insist that the Hebrew cannot mean anything other than “the messiah of Aaron and the one of Israel.”¹ Further confusion has been created by the following phrase in CD XIV 19: ויכפר עונם. The verb is singular, but fits with the notion of two messiahs if taken as a passive pual (yekuppar), which the above translation follows. The phrase as it is found elsewhere in CD (Col. XX 1) reads: משיח מאהרן ומישראל, “the messiah *from* Aaron and *from* Israel,” which seems to confirm that two figures are being meant here.

CD B Col. XIX 10-11. “These shall escape in the age of the visitation; but those that remain shall be delivered up to the sword when there comes the messiah of Aaron and Israel...” (Martinez)

CD B Col. XX 1 “[...] of the unique teacher until there arises the messiah from Aaron and from Israel.”

1QS Col. IX 10-11-“...but instead shall be ruled by the first directives which the men of the Community began to be taught until the prophet comes, and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel.” 4Q259 omits this reference.

Several scholars have speculated that the entrance of the prophet into the scheme is a reaction against John Hyrcanus, who alone among the Hasmoneans was considered king, priest, and prophet (according to Josephus). Thus this text is insisting that the offices should be separated. This view however, has been criticized because our only source for this information is Josephus. Others suggest that the coming of the prophet was fulfilled in the role of the Teacher of the community, and dropped out of the scheme after his death. However, the expectation of “one who will teach righteousness at the end of days” (assuming this figure is the same as ‘the prophet’) (cf. Hos. 10:12) is retained in CD VI, even though the career of the Teacher is past, possibly indicating a restorative aspect to the eschatology, involving the fulfillment and perfection of past institutions. It could, on the other hand, have been written anachronistically.

4Q175 (Testimonia)-Deut. 18:18-19 (Prophet like Moses); Num. 24:15-17 (Balaam oracle, here apparently used only with reference to Davidic Messiah); Deut. 33:8-11 (Blessings of Levi); quotation from Psalms of Joshua (two wicked rulers/brothers).

1QSa-Priest Messiah takes precedence over Messiah of Israel. Clearly two figures here. We find the same theme of priestly superiority in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.

4Q174 (Florilegium)-in an exposition of 2 Sam 7:14 the Branch of David is predicted to arise with the Interpreter of the Law.

War Scroll (1QM): mentions the High Priest, most likely the messiah of Aaron, and the Prince of the congregation, identified as the Branch of David in 4Q285 fr. 5.

4Q161 frs. 8-10-Branch of David instructed by priests.

4Q254 fr.4 references Zech. 4:14-[...] to them [...] [...] “These are] the two anointed sons who [stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” ...] [...] those who keep the commandments of God [...] [...] for the men of the Yahad [...]. (WAC) Perhaps cited in reference to the blessing on Judah (Gen 49:8-12).

¹So argues Cross, following Ginzberg, in F.M. Cross, "Notes on the Doctrine of the Two Messiahs at Qumran and the Extracanonical Daniel Apocalypse (4Q246)," *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Conference on the Texts from the Judean Desert. Jerusalem, 30 April 1995*, eds. D.W. Parry, and S. D. Ricks. (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 20; (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) 1-13.

Some other messianic texts in the scrolls

Aramaic Levi (4Q541)-has Priestly messiah, but no mention of Davidic Messiah. In the similar T. Levi 18:2-5, language from a classic royal messianic text, Isaiah 11, is applied to an eschatological priest. 1QTLevi 1 reads “the kingdom of the priesthood is greater than the kingdom...” The Greek Mt. Athos manuscript says of Kohath (second son of Levi) that “he and his seed will be the beginning of kings, a priesthood for Israel,” and thus applies the blessing of Judah to Kohath. The “beginning of kings” phrase is not in the Aramaic.

4Q246 (Daniel Apocalypse)-speaks of Davidic Messiah, no mention of Priestly messiah.

4Q521 mentions a messiah using the language of Isaiah 61, similar to the herald in 11Q13.

DSS Malachi 3:1-2-reads the messenger of the covenant and the Lord (Adon) as two separate figures.

11Q13 seems to refer to two figures-an anointed herald (Is. 52:7; 61) and Melchizedek, an eschatological priestly figure who is given divine epithets, likely the heavenly opponent of Melchiresha (cf. 4Q544).

In both the Qumran version of Mal 3 and 11Q13, there is a messenger/herald figure and an eschatological priestly figure who cannot be easily distinguished from YHWH.

Evidence from NT as presented in *The Jesus Dynasty*

John the baptizer identifies himself as the messenger who was to prepare the way from Malachi 3. Seems to expect another figure to come after him (Q 3:16-17; 7:18-20). He may have been familiar with the plural pronouns attested in the Qumran version.

Jesus says in Q 7:28-“Among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John.” This statement exists unqualified in Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew. Such a statement could be taken to imply that Jesus thought John was someone of unparalleled significance, such as the “messiah of Aaron.” It is said in 4Q541 that the priest messiah would “atone for the sons of his generation.” John may have attempted to fulfill this type of expectation with his “baptism for the forgiveness of sins.”

John 3:22-23- John (of priestly descent) and Jesus (Davidic claimant) conduct a joint baptizing campaign in the north and the south, respectively.

Evidence from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

The author of the work as we have it was a Christian. Thus, the lines of Levi and Judah are assimilated to Jesus. However, most scholars believe that the author was using Jewish source material and this repetition and pairing of Levi and Judah throughout the work likely comes from those sources.

Testament of Simon 7:2- “For the Lord will raise up from Levi someone as high priest and from Judah someone as king.”

Testament of Judah 21:1-2- “For to me [Judah] the Lord gave the kingship and to him the priesthood, and he set the kingship under the priesthood.”

Testament of Reuben: speaks of the coming of an anointed high priest, more prominent than Davidic ruler. Davidic line mentioned as dying in wars on the people’s behalf.

Testament of Levi: Ch.18-priesthood will fail after corrupt priests in the seventh week, “then the Lord will raise up a new priest, to whom all the words of the Lord will be revealed; and he will execute true judgment on earth for many days. And his star will arise in heaven, as a king, lighting up the light of knowledge as the sun the day, and he will rank as great in the world until he is taken up. This text resembles the eschatological priestly figure in the DSS Levi fragment, 4Q541.

Evidence from the Second Jewish Revolt

Coinage preserves the institution of a diarchy, bearing the names and titles of Simon (bar Koseba), prince of Israel, and Eleazar, the Priest.

Bibliography for Dual Messianism research

- M. de Jonge, "Hippolytus' "Benedictions of Isaac, Jacob and Moses" and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs", *Bijdragen* 46 (1985) 245-260
- F.M. Cross, "Notes on the Doctrine of the Two Messiahs at Qumran and the Extracanonical Daniel Apocalypse (4Q246)," *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Conference on the Texts from the Judean Desert. Jerusalem, 30 April 1995*, eds. D.W. Parry, and S. D. Ricks. (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 20; (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) 1-13.
- J.D.G. Dunn, "Review of J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, *Dead Sea Discoveries* 3.3 (1996) 335-336
- J. A. Fitzmyer, "Review of: J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star. The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, *Theological Studies* 57 (1996) 339-341
- M.G. Abegg, Jr., "The Messiah at Qumran: Are We Still Seeing Double?", *Dead Sea Discoveries* 2 (1995) 124-144
- Collins, John J., *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).
- Allegro, J.M., "Further Messianic References in Qumran literature," *JBL* 75(1956) 174-87.
- Stone, M.E., and J.C. Greenfield, "The Prayer of Levi," *JBL* 112(1993) 247-66.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A., "Further light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," *JBL* 86(1967) 25-41.
- Talmon, Shemaryahu, "Waiting for the Messiah: The Spiritual Universe of the Qumran Covenanters," in Neusner et al., eds., *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the turn of the Christian era*, 111-37.
- Talmon, Shemaryahu, "Types of Messianic Expectation at the Turn of the Era," in Talmon, ed., *King, Cult and Calendar in Ancient Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986) 202-24.
- Tabor, James D., *The Jesus Dynasty* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).
- de Jonge, Marinus, "Two Messiahs in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs?" in M. de Jonge, *Jewish Eschatology*, 191-203.
- Kuhn, K.G., "The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel," in K. Stendahl, ed. *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (New York: Harper, 1957) 54-64.
- Liver, J., "The Doctrine of the Two Messiahs in Sectarian Literature in the Time of the Second Commonwealth," *HTR* 52(1959) 149-85.
- Smith, Morton, "What is implied by the Variety of Messianic Figures?" *JBL* 78(1959) 66-72.
- Vanderkam, J.C., "Jubilees and the Priestly Messiah of Qumran," *Revue de Qumran* 13(1988) 353-65.
- Wieder, N., "The Doctrine of the Two Messiahs among the Karaites," *Journal of Jewish*

Studies 6(1955) 14-23.