

## Models of Jewish Leadership in the Second Temple Period

Alex Jassen

Darchei Noam Lecture Series - March 10, 2012

### I. Kings

#### Historical Realities

Wisdom of Ben Sira (early 2<sup>nd</sup> cen BCE)

Ch. 50:15 "He [the high priest] reached out his hand to the cup and poured a libation of the blood of the grape; he poured it out at the foot of the altar, a pleasing odor to *the Most High, the King of all.*"

Ch. 10:3 An undisciplined king will ruin his people, but a city will grow through the understanding of its rulers. 4 The government of the earth is in the hands of the Lord, and over it he will raise up the right man for the time. 5 The success of a man is in the hands of the Lord, and he confers his honor upon the person of the scribe... 15 The Lord has cast down the thrones of rulers, and has seated the lowly in their place.

Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* (1<sup>st</sup> cen CE)

13:291: This man said, "Since thou (John Hyrcanus; reigned 134–104) desirest to know the truth, if thou wilt be righteous in earnest, lay down the high priesthood, and content thyself with the civil government of the people."

Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*

13:301: Now when their father Hyrcanus was dead, the eldest son Aristobulus (reigned 104–103), intending to change the government into a kingdom, for so he resolved to do, first of all put a diadem on his head, four hundred and eighty-one years and three months after the people had been delivered from the Babylonian captivity and were returned to their own country again



Coins minted by Alexander Janneus (reigned 103–76)  
L: "King Alexander" in Greek;  
R: "Yehonatan, the king" in Hebrew

#### End-time Expectations

Psalms of Solomon 17 (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE)

1 O Lord, you are our king forever and ever, For in you, O God, does our soul glory. 2 How long are the days of man's life upon the earth? As are his days, so is the hope (set) upon him. 3 But we hope in God, our deliverer; for the might of our God is forever with mercy, and the kingdom of our God is for ever over the nations in judgment. 4 **You, O Lord, chose David (to be) king over Israel, and swore to him concerning his descendents forever that never should his kingdom fail before you.** 5 But, for our sins, sinners rose up against us; they assailed us and thrust us out. What you had not promised to them, they took away (from us) with violence. They in no way glorified your honourable name. 6 They set a monarchy in place of (that which was) their excellency; they laid waste the throne of David in tumultuous arrogance. 7 But you, O God, cast them down and removed their descendents from the earth, **in that there rose up against them a man that was alien to our race.** 8 According to their sins did you

recompense them, O God; so that it befell them according to their deeds. 9 God showed them no pity; he sought out their seed and let not one of them go free. 10 Faithful is the Lord in all his judgments, which he makes upon the earth. 11 **The lawless one laid waste our land so that no one inhabited it;** they destroyed young and old and their children together. 12 In his blameless anger he sent them away to the west, and (he exposed) the rulers of the land unsparingly to derision. 13 Being an alien the enemy acted proudly, and his heart was alien from our God. 14 And all things whatsoever he did in Jerusalem, as also the gentiles (do) in the cities to their gods. 15 And the children of the covenant in the midst of the mingled peoples surpassed them in evil. There was not among them one that performed mercy and truth in the midst of Jerusalem. 16 They who loved the assemblies of the pious fled from them, as sparrows that fly from their nest. 17 They wandered in deserts in order that their lives might be saved from harm, and precious in the eyes of them who lived abroad was any that escaped alive from them. 18 Over the whole earth were they scattered by lawless men. 19 For the heavens withheld the rain from dropping upon the earth; springs were stopped (that sprang) perennially out of the deeps, (that ran down) from lofty mountains. For there was none among them who did righteousness and justice. 20 From the leader of them to the least (of them) all were sinful. The king was a transgressor, and the judge disobedient, and the people sinful. 21 **Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David, at the time known to you, O God, in order that he may reign over Israel your servant.** 22 And gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous rulers, and that he may purge Jerusalem from gentiles who trample (her) down to destruction. 23 Wisely, righteously he shall thrust out sinners from (the) inheritance; he shall destroy the arrogance of the sinner as a potter's jar. 24 With a rod of iron he shall shatter all their substance; he shall destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth. 25 At his rebuke nations shall flee before him, and he shall reprove sinners for the thoughts of their heart. 26 And he shall gather together a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness, and he shall judge the tribes of the people who has been made holy by the Lord his God. 27 And he shall not suffer unrighteousness to lodge any more in their midst, nor shall there dwell with them any man who knows wickedness, for he shall know them, that they are all sons of their God. 28 And he shall divide them according to their tribes upon the land, and neither sojourner nor alien shall dwell with them any more. 29 He shall judge peoples and nations in the wisdom of his righteousness. Selah. 30 **And he shall have the gentile nations to serve him under his yoke; and he shall glorify the Lord in a place prominent (above) all the earth. And he shall purge Jerusalem, making it holy as of old.** 31 So that nations shall come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, bringing as gifts her sons who had been driven out, and to see the glory of the Lord, wherewith God has glorified her. 32 And he will be a righteous king over them, taught of God. And there shall be no unrighteousness in his days in their midst, for all shall be holy and their king the Lord Messiah. 33 For he shall not put his trust in horse and rider and bow, nor shall he multiply for himself gold and silver for war, nor shall he gather confidence from a multitude for the day of battle. 34 The Lord Himself is his king, the hope of him who is mighty through (his) hope in God. He shall be compassionate to all nations who (shall be) in fear before him. 35 He will smite the earth with the word of his mouth for ever. He will bless the people of the Lord with wisdom and gladness, 36 and he himself (will be) pure from sin, so that he may rule a great people. He will rebuke rulers, and remove sinners by the might of his word; 37 and (relying) upon his God, throughout his days he will not stumble. For God will make him mighty by means of (His) holy spirit, and wise by means of the spirit of understanding, with strength and righteousness. 38 And the blessing of the Lord (will be) with him: he will be strong and stumble not; 39 his hope (will be) in the Lord: who then can prevail against him? (He will be) mighty in his works, and strong in the fear of God, 40 (He will be) shepherding the flock of the Lord faithfully and righteously, and will suffer none among them to stumble in their pasture. 41 He will lead them all in holiness, and there will be no pride among them that any among them should be oppressed. 42 This (will be) the majesty of the king of Israel whom God knows; he will raise him up over the house of Israel to discipline it. 43 His words (shall be) more refined than costly gold, the choicest; in the assemblies he will judge the peoples, the tribes of the sanctified. His words (shall be) like the words of the holy ones in the midst of sanctified peoples. 44 Blessed are they who shall be in those days, to see the good fortune of Israel that God shall bring to pass in the gathering together of the tribes. 45 May the Lord hasten his mercy upon Israel! May he deliver us from the uncleanness of unholy enemies! The Lord himself is our king for ever and ever.

## II. Priests

### Historical Realities

#### Zechariah 6:9–15

9 The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>10</sup>Collect silver and gold\* from the exiles—from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah—who have arrived from Babylon; and go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. <sup>11</sup>**Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak;** <sup>12</sup>say to him: Thus says the Lord of hosts: Here is a man whose name is Branch: for he shall branch out in his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. <sup>13</sup>It is he that shall build the temple of the Lord; he shall bear royal honour, and shall sit and rule on his throne. There shall be a priest by his throne, with peaceful understanding between the two of them. <sup>14</sup>And the crown\* shall be in the care of Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Josiah son of Zephaniah, as a memorial in the temple of the Lord.

#### Malachi 1

6 O priests, who despise my name. You say, ‘How have we despised your name?’ ... 10 O that someone among you would shut the temple\* doors, so that you would not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hands.

#### Hecataeus of Abdera (Greek Chronographer; late 4<sup>th</sup> cen BCE)

Bibliotheca Historica 40.3: He [Moses] picked out the men of most refinement and with the greatest ability to head the entire nation, and appointed them priests; and he ordained that they should occupy themselves with the temple and the honors and sacrifices offered to their God. These same men he appointed to be judges in all major disputes, and entrusted to them the guardianship of the laws and customs. **For this reason the Jews never have a king, and authority over the people is regularly vested in whichever priest is regarded as superior to his colleagues in wisdom and virtue.** They call this man the high priest, and believe that he acts as a messenger to them of God’s commandments. It is he, we are told, who in their assemblies and other gatherings announces what is ordained, and the Jews are so docile in such matters that straightway they fall to the ground and do reverence to the high priest when he expounds the commandments to them. And at the end of their laws there is even appended the statement: “These are the words that Moses heard from God and declares unto the Jews.”

#### Widsom of Ben Sira 50

The leader of his brethren and the pride of his people was Simon the high priest, son of Onias, who in his life repaired the house, and in his time fortified the temple. 2 He laid the foundations for the high double walls, the high retaining walls for the temple enclosure. 3 In his days a cistern for water was quarried out, a reservoir like the sea in circumference. 4 He considered how to save his people from ruin, and fortified the city to withstand a siege. 5 How glorious he was when the people gathered round him as he came out of the inner sanctuary!...

### Idealized Expectations

#### Aramaic Levi Document (3<sup>rd</sup> cen BCE)

66-77: [And I cal]led his name **Qa[hat]**. And] I [sa]w that to him [would] be an **assembly of all [the people]** and th[at] he would have the high priesthood for [all ls]rael

**See Gen 49:10** The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and the homage (**yiqqehat**) of the peoples is his.

82-98: And in the [hundred and ei]ghteenth ye[ar] of my life, that is the ye[ar] in which my brother Joseph died, I called my chil[ren and] their children and I began to instruct them concerning all that was on my mind. I spoke up and said to my chil[dren: List]en to the word of your father Levi and pay attention to the instructions of God’s friend I instruct you, my sons, and reveal the truth to you, my beloved. May truth be the essence of all your acts and it will be with you forever. If you s[o]w righteousness and truth, you will bring in a blessed and good harvest . . . And now, my sons, teach reading and writing and teaching of wisdom to your children and may wisdom be eternal glory for you For he who learns wisdom will (attain) glory through it, but he who despises wisdom will become an object of disdain and scorn. Observe, my

children, my brother Joseph [who] taught reading and writing and the teaching of wisdom, for glory and for majesty; and kings he advised; . . . do not be lax in the study of wisdom . . . a man who studies wisdom, all [h]is days are [long] and hi[s reputa]tion grows great . . . And now, my sons, reading and writing and the teaching of wi[sdo]m which I lea[r]ned

78-79: I [Levi] was eighteen when I killed Shechem and destroyed the workers of violence ... I was nineteen when I became a priest.

### The Book of Jubilees (2<sup>nd</sup> cen BCE)

30:18: Levi's descendants were chosen for the priesthood and as Levites to serve before the Lord as we (do) for all time. Levi and his sons will be blessed forever because he was eager to carry out justice, punishment, and revenge on all who rise against Israel.

## III. Prophets

### Historical

#### Psalm 74:9

We do not see our emblems; there is no longer any prophet, and there is no one among us who knows how long.

#### 1 Maccabees 9:27 (late 2<sup>nd</sup> cen BCE)

Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been **since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.**"

#### Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*

13.300: He [John Hyrcanus] was esteemed by God worthy of three of the greatest privileges, - the government of his nation, the dignity of the high priesthood, and prophecy; for God was with him, and enabled him to know futurities

#### Ezra 7

7:1 After these events, during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, Ezra son of Seraiah son of Azariah son of Hilkiah... 6 this Ezra went up from Babylonia. **He was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord the God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was upon him** 7 Some of the Israelites, the priests and Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants set out for Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, 8 arriving in Jerusalem in the fifth month in the seventh year of the king. 9 On the first day of the first month the journey up from Babylon was started, and on the first day of the fifth month he arrived in Jerusalem, thanks to the benevolent care of his God for him. 10 For Ezra had dedicated himself to study the Teaching of the Lord so as to observe it, and to teach laws and rules to Israel.

#### Commentary (Peshar) on Habakkuk (1<sup>st</sup> cen BCE)

Col. 2: (5) And likewise vacat(?) the interpretation of the passage [concerns the trai]tors at the end of (6) days. They are the violator[s of the cove]nant who will not believe (7) when they hear all that is going to c[ome up]on the last generation from the mouth of (8) the priest, to whom God placed into [his heart discernme]nt to interpret all (9) the words of his servants the prophets [whom] through them God enumerated (10) all that is going to come upon his people and up[on ]

Col. 7: (1) And God told Habakkuk to write down the things that are going to come upon (2) the last generation, but when that period would be complete he did not make known to him (i.e., Habakkuk). (3) vacat And when it says, "So that he can run who reads it" (Habakkuk 2:2), (4) its interpretation concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known (5) all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets.

## Qumran Psalms Scroll – “David’s Compositions”

**[I]** (2) And David, the son of Jesse, was wise, and a light like the light of the sun, and literate, (3) and discerning (*we-navōn*) and perfect in all his ways before God and men.

**[II]** And the Lord gave (*wa-yittēn*) (4) him a discerning (*nevōna*) and enlightened spirit.

**[III]** And he wrote (5) 3,600 psalms; and songs to sing before the altar over the whole-burnt (6) perpetual offering every day, for all the days of the year, 364; (7) and for the offering of the Sabbath, 52 songs; and for the offering of the New (8) Moons and for all the Solemn Assemblies and for the Day of Atonement, 30 songs. (9) And all the songs that he spoke were 446, and songs (10) for making the music over the stricken, 4. And the total was 4,050.

**[IV]** (11) All these he composed through prophecy (*binvu’ah*) which was given (*nitān*) to him from before the Most High.

## End-time Expectations

### 1 Maccabees 4:42-46

He chose blameless priests devoted to the law, and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place. They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned. And they thought it best to tear it down, lest it bring reproach upon them, for the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill **until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them.**

- Deut 12:2-3: all altars in Israel that had been used for idolatry must be destroyed.
- Deut 12:4: seemingly prohibits destroying the altar of the Lord.