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Melchizedek

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Further information: Pearlasia Gamboa (president of Melchizedek)

For other uses, see Melchizedek (disambiguation).

Melchizedek (from Hebrew מַלְכּבּ"יצֶּדֶק malk̄-i ṣédeq, literally "righteousness is my king") is an individual mentioned during the Abram narrative in the 14th chapter of the Book of Genesis. He is introduced as the king of Salem (meaning "King of Peace"), and priest of El Elyon ("God Most High"). He brings out bread and wine, blesses Abram, and receives tithes from him, Genesis 14:18-20 ₺. He is again referred to in Psalm 110:4 ₺, and is part of a key theme in the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

It has been suggested that the Zadokite priests of Jerusalem claimed to be descended from this Melchizedek or at least to have inherited his position.

Melchizedek is commemorated as one of the Holy Forefathers in the Calendar of Saints of the Armenian Apostolic Church on July 26. He is mentioned in the Roman Canon, the First Eucharistic Prayer of the Roman rite, and also figures in the current Roman Martyrology, or *Martyrologium Romanum* as a commemoration on August 26. [1]

There were one or more early Christian heresies called Melchisedechians. [2] These were often associated with a denial of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. [3]



Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek — by Dieric Bouts the ⊟der, 1464–67

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Name and description

[edit]

Christians associate $\textit{Mele\underline{k}i-sedeq}$ (מלכי־צדק) as a name and parallel it to the name Adoni-sedeq (אדני־צדק). Judaism teaches that $\textit{Mele\underline{k}i-sedeq}$ (מלכי־צדק) is a title and description associated with Noah's son Shem and not a name at all. [citation needed]

Sedeq ("righteousness") was probably the name (epithet) of a Canaanite god, so that the names Melchizedek and Adonizedek would be theophoric, translating to "Sedeq is my king/lord". Sedeq and El Elyon ("God most high") may have been two epithets of the same Jebusite god, identified as an astral deity, perhaps eponymous of ppSalem]] itself: Salim or Shalem (שלם) is attested as a god, presumably identified with the evening star, in Ugaritic mythology; URU Šalim in this case would be the city of Salim, the Jebusite astral deity. [4]

Parallel theophoric names, with Sedeq replaced by Yahu, are those of Malchijah and Adonijah, both biblical characters placed in the time of David, who conquered the Jebusite fortress Jerusalem and turned it into his capital.^[5]

In the Hebrew Bible [edit]

Melchizedek is mentioned twice in the Hebrew Bible. The first occurs at Genesis 14:18-20, part of the larger story of Genesis 14:17-24 which tells how Abram returns from defeating king Chedorlaomer and his associates and meets with the king of Sodom, at which point:

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.^[6]

The second is in Psalm 110:4 &, celebrating some victory or conquest of an unnamed king of the Davidic dynasty. The king is said to be a "priest forever" and a successor of Melchizedek, and the text is translated (KJV):

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Genesis 14 [edit]

In the Masoretic (Hebrew) biblical text the name is written as two words ("malki zedek") and pointed as מֵלְכִּי־יַצֶּדֶּס מַלְכִּיּיצֶּדֶּס מַלְכִּיּיצֶּדֶס מַלְכִּיּיצֶּדֶס מַלְכִּיּיצֶדֶס מַלְכִּיּיצֶדֶס מַלְכִּיּיצֶדֶס מַלְכִּיּיצֶדֶס מַלְכִּיּיצֶדֶס מַלְכִּיּיצֶדְס מַלְּלְבִּיּשְׁכִּיִי מְלְכִּיִּיִּצֶדְס מַלְּלְבִּיִּיְנֶדְס מַלְּלְבִּיִּיְנֶדְס מַלְּלְבִּיִּלְּבְּעָם מוּ (pronounced in standard Hebrew as Malki-zédeq or Malki-zédeq and in Tiberian vocalization as Malkî-zédeq or Malkî-zédeq). In the Septuagint and the New Testament he appears as Μελχισεδέκ, and in the Latin Vulgate as Melchisedech. In the Authorised King James Version of 1611 he appeared as Melchizedek in the Old Testament and Melchisedec in the New Testament.

The Epistle to the Hebrews^[7], along with Philo^[8] and Josephus^{[9][10]}, interprets the name as meaning "the king of righteousness", all apparently based on the Hebrew words "melek", meaning "King",^[11] and "tzedek" (or tzadik), meaning "righteous(ness)".^[12] This interpretation is held also by some modern scholars because in the Dead Sea Scroll 4QAmram 2.3 is found the opposite name *Melchiresha* ("king of evil") for a chief angel of darkness.^[13]

While the interpretation "king of righteousness/righteous king" is not impossible, the word "malki" contains a possessive pronoun, and means "my king". The opinion of many modern scholars is that this interpretation is therefore unlikely, and that the original name was probably "[the god] Sedeq is my king", based on the attested Canaanite/Phoenician god "Suduk" or "Sudek", or, less likely, "My king is righteous(ness)".[14]

Genesis calls Melchizedek "king of Salem", traditionally taken to be an alternative name for Jerusalem.^[15] But William F. Albright has proposed that "king of Salem" is a corruption of an originally different reading which he reconstructed as: "And Melchizedek, a king allied to him (Albright reads *melek shelomo*, "of his peace", instead of *melek Salem*, "king of Jerusalem"), brought out bread and wine..."^[16] The *NewAmerican Bible* makes a similar note.^[17]

Even if the "king of Salem" reading is correct, the equation with Jerusalem co-existed with another tradition which identified "Salem" as a place at or near Shechem, an early capital of the ancient kingdom of Israel, on the slopes of Mount Gerizim. The tradition is associated with the Samaritans, for whom Gerizim (and not Jerusalem) is the site intended for the Temple, and thus serves an obvious sectarian purpose; yet it is not solely associated with the Samaritans, being found also in the 3rd or 2nd century BC Book of Jubilees and even in the Septuagint version of Genesis. [18]

Genesis also calls Melchizedek "Priest of El Elyon", which appears elsewhere as a title for YHWH. But it has long been suspected that this is a late development, and that Melchizedek was originally the priest of a god named Elyon, who appears in 8th-century Aramaic inscriptions paired with El in the common Levantine pantheon. When these verses were taken over by Jewish redactor(s), for whom El was already identified with YHWH, El-Elyon became an epithet for the God of Israel. [21]

For the last sentence of Genesis 14:20 to the KJV has And he gave him tithes of all. Kamal Salibi observes that Hebrew: מְעֵשֵׁשׁ, m'sr, which does indeed mean tenth, could perhaps also mean just portion and Hebrew: מְעֵשֵׁשׁ, m-kl, taken to mean from all, could certainly also mean food, so that the whole means simply He gave him a morsel of food. [22] Salibi also cites Arabic cognates to suggest that the words "malki zedek" at the beginning of Genesis 14:18 to, where the KJV has And Melchizedek king of Salem ..., can be interpreted as mouthful of offering, so that the verse begins And food the king of Salem brought out, bread and wine ... [22] The implication is to say that the king (whether of Sodom or of Salem) brought out food, then gave his blessing, then he and Abram broke bread together, or, if it is accepted that "Melchizedek" is an artefact of the text, that the whole interchange was with the King of Sodom.

Genesis 14 does not appear to be derived from any of the usual pentateuchal sources. [23] It is additionally possible that verses 18-20 (in which Melchizedek appears) are themselves an insertion into chapter 14, as they interrupt the account of the meeting of Abraham with the king of Sodom. [24]

Psalm 110 [edit]

Main article: Psalm 110

Psalm 110:4 in the Authorized King James Version reads *Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*, which has become traditional in English translations, but the Hebrew contains ambiguities. the New Jewish Publication Society of America Version, (1985 edition), for example, has *You are a priest forever, a rightful king by My decree*. Another alternative keeps Melchizedek as a personal name but changes the identity of the person addressed: "You are a priest forever by my order (or 'on my account'), O Melchizedek" - here it is Melchizedek who is being addressed throughout the psalm.^[25]

Jewish translations relate the term to King David who was a "righteous king" who, as king, had certain priestly-like sacrificial responsibilities. As a member of tribe of Judah King David was not a priest. Only members of the tribe of Levi who descended from Aaron, the brother of Moses, have an eternal priesthood in Judaism. As the respected Jewish sage Rashi wrote:

Because of the speech of Malchizedek, because of the command of Malchizedek. You are a priest, Heb. כהן. The word הם bears the connotation of priesthood and rulership, as (II Sam. 8:18): "and David's sons were chief officers.

Rashi is speaking of the Hebrew word "kohein" which Christian translators translate as "priest" in Psalm 110, but which is often translated as "ruler" in many places in Christian translations.

The Hebrew word is kohen and while commonly translated as "priest" it has other meanings. It is also used to describe powerful people. Even the KJV often translates it for rulers (which David was). Here are examples of translating the word you say is "priest" in Psalm 110 as ruler:

2 Samuel 8:18 (KJV) - And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers (kohenim). 2 Samuel 20:26 (KJV) - And Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler (kohenim) about David. 1 Kings 4:5 (KJV) - And Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers: and Zabud the son of Nathan was principal officer (kohen) and the king's friend.

Christians use Psalm 110:4 as a proof text that Jesus had a right to a priesthood pre-dating the Jewish Aaronic priesthood. This "proof texting" centers on the translation of the word דֵבְבְתִי in verse 4. The KJV translation of עַל-דִבְּבְתִי as "after the order of," is fitting, when "order" is taken as the English word meaning, "an authoritative direction or instruction," has its root in אדר and is most plainly "utterance" or "speech," with an implication of authority or leadership. [26] Translations vary in how they interpret this. The New Living Translation gives the meaning as "in the line of," [27] the Amplified Bible gives, "after the manner and order of," [28] the Contemporary English Version prints it as, "just like," [29] and The Message Bible omits the word. [30]



In later literature [edit]

Dead Sea Scroll 11Q13 [edit]

11Q13 (11QMelch) is a fragment (that can be dated to the end of the 2nd or start of the 1st century BC) of a text about Melchizedek found in Cave 11 at Qumran in the Israeli Dead Sea area and which comprises part of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In this eschatological text, Melchizedek is seen as a divine being and Hebrew titles as Elohim are applied to him. According to this text Melchizedek will proclaim the "Day of Atonement" and he will atone for the people who are predestined to him. He also will judge the peoples. [31]

Second Book of Enoch [edit]

The Second Book of Enoch (also called "Slavonic Enoch") is apparently a Jewish sectarian work of the 1st century AD. [32] The last section of the work, the Exaltation of Melchizedek, tells how Melchizedek was born of a virgin, Sofonim (or Sopanima), the wife of Nir, a brother of Noah. The child came out from his mother after she had died and sat on the bed beside her corpse, already physically developed, clothed, speaking and blessing the Lord, and marked with the badge of priesthood. Forty days later, Melchizedek was taken by the archangel Gabriel (Michael in some manuscripts) to the Garden of Eden and was thus preserved from the Deluge without having to be in Noah's Ark. [33][34]

New Testament [edit]

Main article: Melchizedek priesthood

In the New Testament, references to Melchizedek appear only in the Epistle to the Hebrews (later 1st century AD), though these are extensive (*Hebrews* 5: 6, 10; 6: 20; 7: 1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21). Jesus Christ is there identified as a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek quoting from Ps. 110:4 [35]. and so Jesus assumes the role of High Priest once and for all. Abraham's transfer of goods to Melchizedek is seen to imply that Melchizedek is superior to Abraham, in that Abraham is tithing to him. Thus, Melchizedek's (Jesus') priesthood is superior to the Aaronic priesthood, and the Temple in Jerusalem is now unnecessary.

In Nag Hammadi Library

A collection of early Gnostic scripts found in 1945, known as the Nag Hammadi Library, contains a tractate pertaining to Melchizedek. Here it is proposed that Melchizedek *is* Jesus Christ^[36]. Melchizedek, as Jesus Christ, lives, preaches, dies and is resurrected, in a gnostic perspective. *The Coming of the Son of God Melchizedek* speaks of his return to bring peace, supported by the gods, and he is a priest-king who dispenses justice.^[37]



An image of Melchizedek painted onto the altar side near the Royal Doors at Libotin wooden church, Maramureş County, Romania

edit

The Urantia Book [edit]

In *The Urantia Book*, Melchizedek is not an individual *per se*, but an order of divine beings known as the Melchizedek Sons. The book states that the Father Melchizedek is that unique individual who collaborated with the Creator Son and the Creative Spirit to bring into existence the entire group of beings bearing that title.^[38]

The sage of Salem was the incarnation of Machiventa Melchizedek, who materialized as a human being 1,973 years before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, near what was to become the city of Salem, in Palestine. Melchizedek's mission on Earth was an emergency bestowal to keep revealed truth from becoming extinct, since the human races were slowly losing ground spiritually. The materialization of Machiventa Melchizedek was not witnessed by human eyes and was unspectacular. He was first seen by a Chaldean herder of Sumerian extraction by the name of Amdon. Melchizedek proclaimed his mission to this shepered by saying, "I am Melchizedek, priest of El Elyon, the Most High, the one and only God." [39]

Melchizedek taught the concept of one God, a universal Deity; the Father of all. He presented teachings about the conduct and organization of the local universe, while to some of his most advanced disciples, he taught about the superuniverse. Melchizedek taught that another Son of God would come in the flesh, but that he would be born of a woman. This is why many subsequent teachers held that Jesus was a priest, or minister, "forever after the order of Melchizedek." [40]

Melchizedek made a covenant with Abraham at Salem. Abraham decided to conquest all of Canaan, but became worried that he had no son to succeed him as a ruler of this proposed kingdom. Melchizedek persuaded Abraham to abandon his scheme of material conquest in favor of the kingdom of heaven. He said to Abraham: "Look now up to the heavens and number the stars if you are able; so numerous shall your seed be." Abraham believed him, and not long after, his son Isaac was born. [41]

Machiventa Melchizedek did not experience death, instead he decided to end his emergency bestowal on Earth. After saying good night to his human companions, he retired to his tent at Salem, and when he was called in the morning, he was no longer there, for he was taken by his fellows.^[42]

The Midrash and classical rabbinical interpretation

[edit]

Melchizedek presents a problem for traditional Jewish teachings: he is not a descendant of Aaron, from whom all priests must be descended - in fact he pre-dates both Aaron and Levi - yet he is described as a priest. Several explanations were offered. In the Midrash, the Rabbis identified Melchizedek with Shem son of Noah, who, although also not a descendant of Aaron, was believed to have officiated as a priest. (E.g., Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32b; Genesis Rabbah 46:7; Genesis Rabbah 56:10; Leviticus Rabbah 25:6; Numbers Rabbah 4:8.) Rabbi Isaac the Babylonian said that Melchizedek was born circumcised. (Genesis Rabbah 43:6.) Melchizedek called Jerusalem "Salem." (Genesis Rabbah 56:10.) The Rabbis said that Melchizedek instructed Abram in the Torah. (Genesis Rabbah 43:6.) Rabbi Eleazar said that Melchizedek's school was one of three places where the Holy Spirit manifested Himself. (Babylonian Talmud Makkot 23b.) The Rabbis taught that Melchizedek acted as a priest and handed down Adam's robes to Abram. (Numbers Rabbah 4:8.) Rabbi Zechariah said on Rabbi Ishmael's authority that God intended to bring forth the priesthood through Melchizedek's descendants, but because Melchizedek blessed Abram before he blessed God (in Gen. 14:19-20 🖟), God brought the priesthood forth from Abram's descendants. (Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32b; see also Leviticus Rabbah 25:6 (crediting Rabbi Ishamel).)

Rabbi Judah said in Rabbi Nehorai's name that Melchizedek's blessing yielded prosperity for Abram, Isaac, and Jacob. (Genesis Rabbah

43:8.) Ephraim Miksha'ah the disciple of Rabbi Meir said in the latter's name that Tamar descended from Melchizedek. (Genesis Rabbah 85:10.)

Rabbi Hana bar Bizna citing Rabbi Simeon Hasida identified Melchizedek as one of the four craftsmen of whom Zechariah wrote in Zechariah 2:3. (Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 52b; see also Song of Songs Rabbah 2:33 (crediting Rabbi Berekiah in the name of Rabbi Isaac).) The Talmud teaches that David wrote the Book of Psalms, including in it the work of the elders, including Melchizedek (in Psalm 110). (Babylonian Talmud Baba Batra 14b-15a.)

The Zohar finds in "Melchizedek king of Salem" a reference to "the King Who rules with complete sovereignty," or according to another explanation, that "Melchizedek" alludes to the lower world and "king of Salem" to the upper world. (Zohar 1:86b-87a.)

The famed medieval French rabbi, Shlomo Yitzhaki (February 22, 1040 – July 13, 1105), better known by the acronym Rashi (RAbbi SHlomo Itzhaki), was the author of the first comprehensive commentary on the Talmud, as well as a comprehensive commentary on the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), and is considered the "father" of all commentaries that followed on the Talmud. Rashi explains that the High Priest known as "Melchizedek" who received tithes from Abraham after he defeated the four kings in battle, was Shem, the righteous son of Noah (according to the Midrash Aggada). Abraham was a descendant of Shem. Therefore, from a Jewish perspective from the Torah, if one were to say that the Melchizedek (Shem) was a progenitor of the Jewish Priesthood (Kehuna), that would also be correct, as was Adam and Noah, although Abraham won the Priesthood through his merit and not through inheritance. Thus, the Sages tell us that God stripped Melchizedek of the priesthood and gave it to Abraham because the former blessed the later first before blessing God. However, although Shem had assumed the role of High Priest in that he taught Torah to the Patriarchs well before it was physically brought into the world at Mount Sinai, the official title of High Priest was conferred upon Aaron after the construction and erection of the Tabernacle. The confusion over Melchizedek being both King and Priest is solved by knowing that Shem was also a progenitor of the Davidic Monarchy, which descended from Judah by his union with Tamara, who was the daughter of Shem (or granddaughter by some opinions).

Evangelical Christian beliefs

[edit]

Many Evangelical Christan denominations teach that Melchizedek was actually a pre-incamate Christophany, meaning a premonition or earlier manifestation before the virgin birth. Others teach that he was an Angel sent by God as a representative. Both viewpoints emphasize that Melchizedek was a type and shadow of Christ, who is referred to throughout scripture as "King of Righteousness", the "Prince of Peace" and as the "High Priest" and emphasize the teachings on the matter from Hebrews Ch5 - Ch8 [1] .

Latter-Day Saint beliefs

edit

The Book of Mormon of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints describes the work of Melchizedek in Salem in Alma 13:17-19 . According to Alma, Melchizedek was King over the wicked people of Salem, but because of his righteousness, his people repented of their wickedness and became a peaceful city in accordance with the meaning of that name. With respect to Old Testament prophets, Alma declares that "there were many before [Melchizedek], and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater."

Also, in Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible, Melchizedek is described as "a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions." Because he was a righteous and God fearing man, Melchizedek was "ordained a high priest." The Translation also describes Melchizedek as establishing peace in his city and being called "the king of heaven" and "the King of peace" (JST Bible Gen 14:25-40), that he and his people sought to be translated, like Enoch (ancestor of Noah)'s people were. Finally, the Joseph Smith Translation notes that, in Hebrews, when Paul speaks of Melchizedek, the order of the priesthood named for him is without father and mother, etc., and not Melchizedek himself. (JST Bible Heb 7:3)

Other Latter-day Saint views on Melchizedek closely match the King James Bible. The Melchizedek Priesthood is named after him, so as not to over-use the name of Christ, after whom it was originally named Section 107:3-4 .

According to the Doctrine and Covenants, Melchizedek is a descendant of Noah (LDS Church Section 84:14 &; Community of Christ Section 83:2e). There remains controversy whether he was Shem, or a descendant. John Taylor taught the former — perhaps due to Jasher 16:11, which says *Adoni*zedek [43]; Bruce McConkie the latter.

Purported immortality

[edit]

See also: List of people claimed to be immortal

Hebrews 7:3 degreed confusion between denominations regarding Melchizedek's nature and background. This is how it stands in the KJV, describing Melchizedek as "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."

Different denominations interpret this in vastly different ways. Some say that Melchizedek is literally like the Son of God (or even *is* the Son of God) in that he has no father or mother. Others say that he has been adopted into Christ's lineage through the Lord's suffering, [44] still others claim that the verse has been mistranslated, and that Melchizedek's priesthood is without lineage, not Melchizedek himself. [45] Others claim that the verse merely represents Melchizedek's not being a priesthood holder *because* of lineage (in other words, "without descent" meaning not a descendant of Levi as required by Mosaic Law.)[46]

The Book of the Bee, a Syriac text, also offers insights contrary to Melchizedek's purported immortal nature:

NEITHER the fathers nor mother of this Melchizedek were written down in the genealogies; not that he had no natural parents, but that they were not written down. The greater number of the doctors say that he was of the seed of Canaan, whom Noah cursed. In the book of Chronography, however, (the author) affirms and says that he was of the seed of Shem the son of Noah. Shem begat Arphaxar, Arphaxar begat Cainan, and Cainan begat Shâlâh and Mâlâh, Shâlâh was written down in the genealogies; but Mâlâh was not, because his affairs were not sufficiently important to be written down in the genealogies. When Noah died, he commanded Shem concerning the bones of Adam, for they were with them in the ark, and were removed from the land of Eden to this earth. Then Shem entered the ark, and sealed it with his father's seal, and said to his brethren, 'My father commanded me to go and see the sources of the rivers and the seas and the structure of the earth, and to return.' And he said to Mâlâh the father of Melchizedek, and to Yôzâdâk his mother...." [47]

See also [edit



- Amraphel
- Arioch
- Lech-Lecha
- Zadok

Notes

The Urantia Book



[edit]

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- 43. ^ Melchizedek means "my king is righteous," Adonizedek "my lord is righteous"
- 44. $^{\rm A}$ Hebrews 7:3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of $^{\rm L}$
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