

מָשִׁיחַ

BH: 38 occurrences, not including 2Sm 1.21: EBH1 21; EBH2 13; LBH1 4.

Lev 4.3, 5, 16; 6.15; 1Sm 2.10,35; 12.3,5; 16.6; 24.7 (bis),11; 26.9,11,15,23, 2Sm 1.14,16,21; 19.22; 22.51; 23.1, Isa 45.1, Hb 3.13, Pss 2.2; 18.51; 20.7; 28.8; 84.10; 89.39,52; 105.15; 132.10,17, Lm 4.20, Dn 9.25,26, 1Ch 16.22, 2Ch 6.42.

Sir: 1 occurrence: Sir 46.19

No occs. Ep.

Qumran: 27 (?) occurrences:

4Qapoc.Mos.^{a-b?}: 4Q375 1 i 9; 4Q376 1 i 1; 4Q377 2 ii 5

Rule of the Community: 1QS 9.11; 1QSa/1Q28a 2.12; 2.14; 2.20–21

War Scroll: 1QM 11.7

Liturgical Text A?: 1Q30 1 2

4QP Bless: 1 1.3

Damascus Document CD 2.12–13; CD 6.1 = 4Q267(DamDoct^b) 2 6; CD 12.23; CD 14.19 = 4Q266(DamDoct^a) 10 I 12, Fragments of Damascus Document 3.4; CD 19.10; CD 20.1; 4Q270(DamDoct^e) 2 ii 14.

4QpapParaKings: 4Q382 16.2

11QMelch: 11Q13 II,18

4QMessianic Apocalypse: 4Q521 2 ii + 4, 1; 4Q521 9, 3; 4Q521 8,9

Non-canonical Pss^b: 4Q381 15 7 (but see Text doubtful)

4Q287 10 13

4Q252 5.3

4Q458 2 ii 6

Text doubtful:

A.1 2Sm 1.21: The form מָשִׁיחַ is unusual if used as a passive participle and applied to an inanimate object such as a shield. It has therefore been suggested that the reading

should be as the Qere, *מְשֻׁחָ, “anointed (with oil)”, or alternatively applied to Saul (cf. Peshitta) as the “anointed one”. However, in that case בְּלִי “without; not” must be explained, since Saul was undoubtedly anointed. Mettinger (1976:200–201) retains the Kethiv, and applies the ptc to the shield. He suggests that this text belongs “to a period prior to the semantic separation of *mašīḥ* and *mašūḥ*, which resulted in the former being used exclusively as a title.”

A.2 4Q381 15,7 מְשִׁיחַ be understood as “(I) your anointed (understand)” or “(I) from your discourse (understand)”, < שִׁיחַ (Schuller and Newsom 1998:104).

Introduction:

A.1 Form: Noun, masculine, *qāṭîl* < *qaṭîl* “an adjective used substantively with a passive meaning to denote duration in a state...[they are] parallel to the purely passive qatûl-forms” (GK§84 l).

1. Root and Comparative Philology

See entry on מְשִׁחַ.

2. Syntagmatics

A.1 Adjectival sense, following הַכֹּהֵן Lev 4.3,5,16; 6.15, 4Q375, 1,I,9, 4Q376,1,I,1

A.2 Nomen regens, followed by Divine Name: 1Sm 24.7 x2, 11; 26.9,11 x2,16,23, 2Sm 1.14,16; 19.22, Lam 4.20, cf. 2Sm 23.1 “of the God of Jacob”.

Nomen regens of Aaron 1QS 9.11, CD 12.23; 14.19; 19.10; 20.1; of Israel 1QSa 2.12, and possibly 4Q382papParaKings 16.2; הַקֹּדֶשׁ Liturgical texts 30.1,2, cf. Fragments of Damascus Document 3.4; הַצֶּדֶק 4Qpatr 3

A.3 When it occurs with a suffix, this suffix always refers to Yahweh: 1Sm 2.10,35; 12.3,5; 16.6, 2Sm 22.51, Isa 45.1, Hab 3.13, Ps 2.2; 20.7; 28.8; 18.51; 84.10; 89.39,52; 105.15//1Ch 16.22 (pl); 132.10,17, 2Ch 6.42 (pl), Sir 46.19.

A.4 Without article or suffix: Dan 9.25,26.

A.5 Rarely the subject of active verbs except for the adjectival occurrences in Lev, where the actions involved are to do with priestly rituals.

A.6 Subject of passive verbs in Dan 9.26, Lam 4.20, referring to the death of one and the capture of the other.

A.7 Object of verbs denoting hostile or violent actions in 1Sm 24.7 1st; 26.9,23, 2Sm 1.14,16; 19.22, Ps 2.2; 89.39,52; 105.15 // 1Ch 16.22; 132.10, 2Ch 6.42.

Object or target of verbs and words denoting benign or protective actions, usually with Yahweh as subject: 1Sm 26.16 (failure of human protection), 2Sm 22.51 // Ps 18.51, Isa 45.1, Ps 20.7; 28.8; 84.10; 132.17, 1Sm 2.10.

A.8 The phrase “Yahweh and his anointed” occurs in 1Sm.12.3; 16.6, Ps 2.2, Sir 46.19, cf. 1Sm 12.5: “your people... your anointed” in Hab 3.13.

A.9 Nomen rectum of “footsteps” Ps 89.52: “horn” 1Sm 2.10.

A.10 Plural in 1Ch 16.22, 2Ch 6.42, Ps 105.15, 1QS 9.11, 1QM 11.7.

3. Lexical and semantic fields

The principal contexts in which the word appears are sacral and/or royal, and mostly connected closely with Yahweh.

Parallels:

“his king” // “his anointed” 1Sm 2.10, 2Sm 22.51 // Ps 18.51

“my/your lord” // “Yahweh’s anointed” 1Sm 2.7(1st); 26.16

“Yahweh” // “his anointed” 1Sm 12.3,5, Sir 46.19

“our shield” // “your anointed one” Ps 84.10

“David” // “my anointed one” Ps 132.17

“my anointed ones” // “my prophets” Ps 105.15 // 1Ch 16.22

“your people” // “your anointed one” Hab 3.13

“the breath of our nostrils” // “Yahweh’s anointed”

4. Versions

LXX:

A.1 Usually χρυστός, including Sir 46.19, except for (ὁ) κεχρισμένος Lv 4.3, ἐχρίσθη 2Sm 1.21.

B.1 The more notable exceptions are:

ὁ χριστος ὁ τετελειωμένος Lv 4.5

χρίσμα LXX and Th Dn 9.26.

At Hb 3.13, LXX has a plural for MT sg. At 2Ch 6.42 LXX has a sg for MT pl.

LXX Dn 9.25 omits.

Targum:

A.1 Usually *mšīhā*. 2Sm 1.21 has the the absolute, *da-mšīah* “that is anointed”.

B.1 Exceptions tend to be interpretative:

Lv 4.3,5 (Onk),16 (Onk, PJ) *rabbā*, “great” i.e. “high (priest)”

Lv 6.15 (Onk) *d-yitrabba* , Lv 4.3,5 (PJ, N), 16 (N) *d-mtrb’* “who is to be installed, anointed”, cf. one of the common translations of מָשַׁח in the Targumim.

2Sm 23.1 *l-malkū mšīah*, “to the kingdom of the messiah”

Lm 4.20 *mtrb’ bmsḥ rbwt’* “anointed with the oil of anointing”

1Ch 16.22 *qdyšy [drbytywn bšwm ṭb]* “my holy ones [whom I anointed with a good name]”

2Ch 6.42 has sg for Heb pl, cf. Pesh.

Peshitta:

A.1 Usually *mšīhā*, though the absolute is used in relative clauses, e.g. Lv 4.3,5,16, 2Sm 1.21

B.1 Exceptions:

Lv 6.15 *d-metmšah* “who is being anointed”

2Ch 6.42 translates the Heb pl. as sg.

Vulgate:

A.1 Almost always *christus*, “anointed”, except for *unctus* in Lv 4.3,5, 2Sm 1.21.

B.1 Lv 6.15 *qui patri jure successit* , a paraphrase of וְהִכְהֵן הַמָּשִׁיחַ תַּחְתִּי מִבְּנֵי.

2Ch 6.42 is treated as sg, as in some other Versions.

5. Exegesis

A.1 מָשַׁח in the Hebrew Bible is seldom used without either a possessive suffix referring to Yahweh or Yahweh’s name as *nomen rectum*: “the Lord’s/his anointed one”.

(הַמָּשִׁיחַ, “the Messiah”, does not in fact occur in BH, and the combination with the article is used only in an adjectival sense following a noun, as in Lv 4.3,15,16: the statements of Schibler [1995:88] and Selman [1995:283–84] are therefore somewhat misleading).

The majority of occurrences relate to Israelite kings, especially Saul as described by David (1Sm 12.3,5; 24.7 x2,11; 26.9,11 x2,16,23, 2Sm 1.14,16, cf. Sir 46.19) but also to David himself (2Sm 19.22; 22.51; 23.1), and to unspecified kings in the Psalms (Gillingham 1998:209–37). It is applied to Cyrus (Isa 45.1), no doubt deliberately to startle, but the point is that the Persian ruler has unwittingly been commissioned and empowered by God to aid his people (Williamson 1998:239).

In the plural מְשִׁיחִים is used of the patriarchs (Ps 105.15 // 1Ch 16.22), and possibly of the whole people in Ps 89.39, 52; 84.10, though see Klausner 1956:7–8, and Becker (1977:ET 76-78) would extend this important collective sense to the occurrences in Pss 28.8-9; 84.10, 1Sm 2.10, Hb 3.13.

A.2 Where the term “Yahweh’s/his anointed” refers to an individual, it suggests a sacrosanct, chosen, untouchable figure in close relation to the Divinity. There are marked similarities to the use of the term בְּחִיר, which is also always used in relation to Yahweh, “Yahweh’s/his chosen”. However, בְּחִיר is normally used of the chosen people of Israel or the Servant rather than a specific individual (Isa 42.1; 43.20; 45.4; 65.9,15,22, Pss 105.6,43; 106.5, 1Ch 16.13), but at Ps 106.23 it is employed of Moses and at Ps 89.4 probably of David (2Sm 21.6 requires emendation).

A.3 The term מְשִׁיחַ י' has a marked symbolic value, referring to the sacred status of the anointed, who in this role has no individual personality traits or actions and is more of a figurehead. David is portrayed as referring nine times to Saul’s sacred status before the Lord as a reason for not killing him: to do so would be to incur guilt (1Sm 26.9). Selman’s comment (1995:284) that מְשִׁיחַ in BH is “a neutral term applicable to a range of individuals and contexts and is not limited to a single fixed ideology” is true in the sense that it has no eschatological reference in the Hebrew Bible, but when used of kings it is often in the context of a belief in the sacred status of the anointed and his enjoyment of divine favour, and probably that he had a divinely-appointed mission.

A.4 Some (e.g. de Jonge *ABD* IV:777-88) have pointed out that the term can have a metaphorical sense: no actual anointing is necessary or takes place, but there is a vouchsafing of the Spirit and the giving of a divine commission. This would certainly be

the case in Isa 45.1. A development of this principle leads to the situation at Qumran, where the verb is only twice used, in a context that refers back to the Bible (in Ps 151), yet the noun מָשִׁיחַ is used frequently of figures who have not received a human anointing. (However, it is explicitly stated in 4Q375,1,I,9 that the anointed priest has had the oil of anointing poured on his head.) See A.7 and A.10 below.

A.5 מָשִׁיחַ can also be used of anointed priests (Lev 4.3,5,16; 6.15), and probably Dan 9.25,26. מְשִׁיחַ is also used of the prophets of Israel in CD 2.12; 6.1; 1QM 11.7 (Collins 1997:71).

It has sometimes been said that the absolute term המְשִׁיחַ is an abbreviation for מְשִׁיחַ יְיָ (e.g. Gressmann 1929:4 n.3; Hesse 1972: ET 502; Fohrer 1968: ET 349), but van der Woude (1957:246) believes that it is taken from הכהן המְשִׁיחַ.

A.6 Relationship of מָשִׁיחַ to מְלֶכֶךְ, מְלֶכֶךְ, מְלֶכֶךְ:

It is possible, and even required, for a king to be anointed, and thus to be a מָשִׁיחַ. מְלֶכֶךְ in the pre- and early monarchic sense could be anointed, and if it is the case that מְלֶכֶךְ in its many occurrences in Chronicles refers to priests or Levites with special Temple responsibilities, then these too may have received an anointing, though they are not termed מָשִׁיחַ. Of course in Dan 9.25,26 the two terms מְלֶכֶךְ and מָשִׁיחַ appear together: Mason (1998:358–59) thinks that this implies a priestly prince, part of the theocracy hoped for by the Priestly writers, the Chronicler, and the books of Haggai and Zechariah 1-8. מְלֶכֶךְ alone can have purely secular connotations since it is used frequently of non-Israelite kings and ungodly Israelite rulers, but מְלֶכֶךְ often, and מָשִׁיחַ always, have some kind of reference to Yahweh and/or the sacred realm.

A.7 Relationship of מְשִׁיחַ to “messianism”:

In the last few decades scholars writing about messianism have been careful to point out that the word מְשִׁיחַ in BH never has the sense of a saviour for the end times and refers either to specific historical figures or to unnamed individuals in the present: as Becker (1977:33 = ET 38) states, “a pre-exilic messianism is almost a contradiction in terms, since the savior king is in fact present.” (See also Bentzen ²1970:34–38, García Martínez 1996:19, Collins 1997:72-76). It is often argued that the eschatological saviour מְשִׁיחַ is actually found much later, in texts such as TestXII and Jubilees, and for the corpus of AH exclusively in Qumran literature: this is the minimalist position of some (e.g. Hesse 1972: ET 502–3; Becker 1977:74, ET 76–87; de Jonge ABD IV:777–88; Hofius 1993:103–104). But others would

understand the notion of “messiah” to be represented by a whole range of terms and concepts in the Hebrew Bible: van Groningen (1980) would be an extreme example of this tendency in modern times.

A.8 Old Testament scholars have sought the origins of the eschatological messiah in supposed ancient Near Eastern notions of the last times (Gressmann 1929: a position no longer accepted), in the picture of the ideal Davidic king found for instance in Ps 2.2 (Collins 1995:11–12), the king as God’s representative at the New Year Festival enacting the defeat of the forces of chaos (Mowinckel 1959:168; Ringgren 1956:21–22), or in a combination of three types: the champion and First Man of the royal Psalms, the Moses Redivivus/Innocent Sufferer figure of exilic prophecy, and the heavenly Son of Man of Daniel (Bentzen ²1970:77). However, the search has often been carried out by working backwards from the christology of the NT and the single, suffering Messiah there. In contrast, evidence from intertestamental literature (cf. Klausner 1956), Qumran messianism (see below) and early rabbinic sources presents a different picture, usually involving two separate figures, one a royal “messiah” and the other a priestly “messiah”, for which the prototypes may be Zerubbabel and Joshua in Zc 4.14 (שְׁנֵי בְנֵי־הַיָּצִיקָהּ) and 6.11–15. That such an ideology of “bicephalic leadership” existed in the post-exilic period is argued by Talmon (1989:273–300) on the basis of Zc 6.12–14; 4.2–3,11–14; 8.9–17, Hg 1.12–14. It is denied by VanderKam (1988:365), who points out that neither Jubilees nor Qumran cite Haggai or Zechariah in this context. However, Schniedewind (1994:71–78) observes that the king-priest duality is found strongly in Chronicles too, which evaluates Israelite history in these very terms of shared leadership. It was the frustration of such expectations in the postexilic period that led to the dual messianism witnessed at Qumran and elsewhere. Against this it could be argued that Haggai, Zechariah and Chronicles are not well represented among the biblical texts found at Qumran, but perhaps the basic thinking on the virtues of dual leadership had become taken for granted long before the community’s heyday.

A.9 “Messianism” at Qumran:

This subject is one that has generated much interest since the first discoveries in the Judean Desert. Further, and arguably better-informed, studies have resulted from the publication of new texts and the opening up of the field of Qumran studies since 1991. The original impetus for studying messianism at Qumran was the desire to find possible links

with, or marked differences from, the New Testament, but the more recent work tends to be part of the growing interest in apocalyptic literature and eschatology generally, possibly sparked by the end of the second millennium.

A.10 The term “messiah” in discussions of beliefs at Qumran refers to one or more eschatological saviour figures, and is not confined to those places where the Hebrew משיח appears. In fact, in the sectarian literature משיח has become virtually synonymous with other titles referring to divinely appointed figures of the end times. (It should be noted that de Jonge (1992:777-78) believes that the translation “messiah” should be avoided even where משיח is employed, and that the word should be rendered as “anointed one”, but this is an exceptional view.)

A.11 There has been considerable discussion over whether the community expected one, two, or even three messiahs, and also how many stages of development of the doctrine the documents found at Qumran reflect (four stages [Starcky 1963], three stages [Brooke 1991:215–30, Stegemann 1996:479–505], two stages [apparently Brooke 1998:451, following the work of Oegema 1994, Pomykala 1995, Knibb 1999:389–400], no development [Brown 1966:51-57; van der Woude *TDNT* IX:520]). One problem is the interpretation of the phrase משיח אהרן וישראל in CD, which some understand as a single individual, in line with messianism outside Qumran (e.g. Laurin 1963:39–52, VanderKam). However, it is generally accepted that the phrase means “the messiah of Aaron and *the one of Israel*”, referring to two messiahs as in 1QS 9.11 (Cross 1996:3 and n.7): one is a royal redeemer descended from David, known as the messiah of Israel (largely on the basis of Nm 24.15–17), and the other a high priest descended from Aaron, the messiah of Aaron (cf. Deut 33.8–11) (e.g. Cross 1996:1–13, García Martínez 1996:14-40, Knibb 1999:384–89). The idea of two messianic figures probably derives from the book of Zechariah (see above), where the priest Joshua and Zerubbabel are portrayed as having equal, divinely granted authority: when this prophecy was not fulfilled in the time of Zerubbabel, some looked for its realisation in the eschatological future (Talmon 1989:273–300). Another factor in the development of the doctrine of the two messiahs was Nm 24.17, the star and the sceptre representing two individuals. It may also have represented a reaction to the combining of royal and priestly offices under the Hasmoneans (Cross 1996:1–13; Collins 1997:77–79).

However, as Brooke points out (1998:443–44), it is important to note that the term משיח is used at Qumran for a variety of different figures in the past and future, not just to the royal-priestly pair. Brooke defines these as prophets (1QM 11.7, 4Q521 8 9; CD 2.12; 6.1, 11QMelch, 4Q287 10 13, possibly 4Q521 2+4 1), Moses (4Q377 2 ii 5), a king (4Q381 15 7, 4Q458 2 ii 6), an unspecified holy figure (1Q30 1 2), but never an angel.

A.12 The messiah of Israel had wide-reaching authority but was subordinate to the messiah of Aaron. This kingly “messiah of righteousness” is explicitly identified with the מֶלֶךְ of Gen 49.10, with צֶמַח דָּוִד the Shoot of David (4Q285 line 3 = 4Qpatr 3, also 4QFlor), and implicitly with נְשִׂיא הָעֵדָה (1QM 5.1; 1QSb 5.20ff; CD 7.20) and the נִצְרָה of Is 11.1 (4Q285 7.1f) (Betz 1996:61–75). 1QSa : “when God begets the Messiah with them” or “when God sends...” or “when the Messiah shall assemble with them”. 4QpIsa^a fr D describes a military messianic figure who will receive a throne of glory, a holy crown and garments of variegated stuff” (see entries on כִּסֵּא and נִצְרָה). Despite such royal terminology, however, the messiah of Israel is never called “king”, מֶלֶךְ at Qumran (contrast Targum), only נְשִׂיא, as in Ezekiel and P (van der Woude *TDNT* IX:520). This is probably due to the strong theocratic ideas of the Qumran sect: see Exegesis in entry on מֶלֶךְ.

A.13 The figure of the priestly messiah was probably influenced by הכוהן המשיח in Leviticus (cf. 4Q375,1,I,9; 4Q376, 1,I,1) as well as by Joshua in the book of Zechariah. The notion also appears in Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (Levi), Aramaic Levi and Jubilees (Collins 1995:83). He may or may not be identified with the figure known as the Interpreter of the Law (Collins 1997:77–79, contra García Martínez 1996:30–32). See Allegro 1956:174–77.

A.14 4Q521 2+4 1 presents a very clear picture of the scope of messianic power: heaven and earth will obey. However, Puech (1998: 10–12) stresses that the reading could be “his/their messiah(s)”, and in the next line similar authority is attributed to the “holy ones”, קְדוּשִׁים. Others have also debated the identity of the messiah(s) of 4Q521: for instance, Collins believes him to be an eschatological prophet (1997:87–88, see also Brooke 1998:443), whereas Puech assumes he is the royal messiah (1992:475–519). Brooke (1998:451–52) comments on the rather passive role of the Davidic messiah: while the eschatological priest atones for the people and teaches them, the royal messiah is limited by the regulations of the Temple Scroll and dependent on the Interpreter of the Law for his religious teaching, with God as true King of Israel.

A.15 It is possible that a prophet and a heavenly messiah were also expected at Qumran, though the evidence is uncertain (Collins 1997:72, Knibb 1999:384–400). For instance, it is argued that in 11QMelch the “anointed of the Spirit, of whom Daniel spoke” is identified with the messenger of Isa 52.7, a prophet expected at the time of Melchizedek, and a precursor to the heavenly messiah. Furthermore, 4QTest cites Ex 20.21b in the Samaritan version before using the proof texts for the messiah of Israel, the messiah of Aaron and the man of wickedness (García Martínez 1996:30–32). However, some heavenly or superhuman figures in the Qumran literature such as Melchizedek and Michael are not termed משיח.

Conclusion

משיח in the Hebrew Bible does not imply an eschatological saviour or king but an actual, present figure, appointed by God and anointed with oil by a prophet or priest. It occasionally has a collective sense as in some psalms. The extension of the word to a hoped-for eschatological saviour from God is a postbiblical development which is not limited to Hebrew sources, though it is seen most clearly at Qumran. משיח in Qumran Hebrew refers either to past archetypes of divinely appointed deliverers of God’s people or to future figures connected with the end times who will govern Israel according to the laws of God, who is the true king.

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(More general bibliography has been included, as well as works specifically cited in the above article.)

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