


Józef T. Milik (†), *Livres des Patriarches. Edition des textes, traduction et commentaire. I. Testament de Lévi* (ed. H. Drawnel) (Études bibliques NS 95; Leuven: Peeters 2022). Pp. XXIII+485. ISBN 978-90-429-4932-4

Antoni Tronina

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

ajtronina@gmail.com

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3976-8271>

An important book by a pioneering researcher of the Qumran scrolls, Józef T. Milik (1922–2006) is appearing in print as late as the centenary of his birth. This “redemptive” delay was caused by a variety of complications which were not uncommon in the life of this remarkable researcher of Qumran literature. Fr Henryk Drawnel, after Milik the next Polish scholar who devoted his life to studying Aramaic texts from the Dead Sea caves with equal passion to his Predecessor, writes about this in the introduction (pp. XV–XVIII). Owing to the endeavours of Zdzisław J. Kapera, PhD, the typescript of Milik’s work found its way into the hands of Drawnel who undertook to publish it.

This book is the very fulfilment of that commitment. Since Milik did not write an introduction to this monograph, Drawnel has preceded it with an extensive introduction (pp. 1–88), which constitutes the first chapter of the book presented here. He divided it into four sections, in which Drawnel presents Milik’s monograph against the background of later studies of the Aramaic *Testament of Levi*. He, therefore, first presents the history of the publication of this document, which today is customarily called the Aramaic Levi Document (abbreviated ALD). This is the longest part of the introduction (pp. 1–50). It is followed by a detailed presentation of all the manuscripts of that document known to Milik (pp. 50–75). The third part of the introduction discusses the literary structure of the “Visions of Levi,” as Milik called them (pp. 75–83). In the fourth part of his introduction, Drawnel makes a general plan for a more extensive edition of the “Books of the Patriarchs” planned by Milik. It was to include critical editions of the texts also of other Aramaic “testaments” from Qumran (of Judah, Naphtali, Joseph) and the “Vision of Jacob.”

Only after this general introduction does Drawnel present the content of Milik’s typescript with the Author’s handwritten notes. The second chapter of the work presented here is entitled “Text Editing, Translation and Commentary” (pp. 89–384). This comprehensive chapter covers the philological commentary on the original text of the *Testament of Levi* together with its French translation. In addition to the prologue (vv. 1–8) and epilogue (vv. 505–510), the “Testament” includes a narrative section (vv. 9–365) and

the poetic “exhortations of Levi” (vv. 366–504). Milik distinguished eight smaller thematic units in the narrative part of the apocryphal text, and a further four units in the poetic part. It should be explained at this point that Milik’s “textus receptus” contains more than 500 verses of the work, while other critical editions (e.g. by Drawnel) contain only a hundred. The reason for this discrepancy is that Milik supplements the missing Aramaic text with its later versions (especially the Greek text of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*).

For the reader’s convenience, the Rev. Professor Drawnel has included two appendices to this basic chapter of J.T. Milik’s book. The first (pp. 340–367) is a French translation of the entire *Testament of Levi*. Published by Z.J. Kaperka shortly after Milik’s death, “Preliminary Information about Józef T. Milik’s Unpublished Manuscript of the Testament of Levi” (*The Polish Journal of Biblical Research* 6/1 [2007] 109–112) explains this method of reproducing the original text. The second appendix (pp. 368–384) addresses the question of the age of the patriarchs in comparison with the tradition of the *Book of Jubilees*.

The final chapter of Milik’s posthumous book (pp. 385–425) is entitled: “A Diplomatic Edition of the Fragments and Extracts from the Testament of Levi, and a Codicological Description of the Manuscripts Containing Them.” In palaeography, the name “diplomatic” is used to describe such an edition of the original manuscript that attempts to render all its essential features as accurately as possible. In the following sections of this chapter, Milik discusses all the known Aramaic manuscripts of the Testament of Levi from Qumran: four from Cave 4 (according to today’s designations, these are 4Q213, 4Q214, 4Q540 and 4Q548) and one from Cave 1 (1Q21). He carries out a detailed critique of their text and attempts to determine the size of each scroll. He also intended to include photographs of individual manuscripts (the present edition omits them, as newer ones are widely available, in the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert series and in monographs, e.g. by Drawnel). He also includes later manuscripts: the Aramaic manuscript from the Cairo Genizah from the old synagogue, two extracts from the Greek version kept on Mount Athos, and one extract in a Syriac manuscript (British Mus., Add. 17193). Overall, this combines into a solid source base for the reconstruction of the original text.

It is to Professor Drawnel’s great credit that the difficult text of Milik’s work completed 40 years ago has been published. The concluding bibliography (pp. 427–452) unsurprisingly also takes into account more recent studies of this ancient apocryphal text. Milik did not manage to prepare a theological commentary on the Testament of Levi (which today is more accurately referred to as the Aramaic Levi Document). However, a commentary on this subject can easily be found in monographic studies, especially the third chapter of Fr Henryk Drawnel’s doctoral thesis (*An Aramaic Wisdom Text from Qumran. A New Interpretation of the Levi Document*, [Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 86; Leiden: Brill 2004] 205–351). The posthumous edition of Milik’s book is also accompanied by two extensive indexes: of cited ancient literature (pp. 453–481) and of contemporary authors (pp. 483–485).

A separate acknowledgement should be made to Peeters Publishers (Leuven, Belgium). The book has been published with such care that the reader can enjoy studying both

the French text and the originals preserved in Aramaic and Greek (other ancient translations are provided in transcription so as not to overload the reader). All that remains, then, is to turn to the book and savour the experience of an ancient textbook serving for centuries to prepare for the Levitical and priestly service in the Jerusalem temple. I believe that contemporary seminarians and priests of the Church could also learn much from it.

