

From the Prophecy of Jacob to the Pool of Siloam: The Evolution of the Interpretation of the Term *šīlōh* (Gen 49:10)

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The term “Shiloh” (Hebrew *šīlōh*) appears in the prophetic blessing of the patriarch Jacob to his sons (Gen 49:1–28). In the section concerning Judah (Gen 49:8–12), the following statement occurs: *lō’ yāsūr šēbet mīhūdāh ūmēḥōqēq mibbēn raglāyw ‘ad kī yābō’ šīlōh wēlō yiqhat ‘am-mīm*. It is most often translated as follows: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him, and he receives the people’s obedience” (Gen 49:10).

This verse has long been the subject of intense exegetical and translational debate. Despite numerous studies published in recent decades, no scholarly consensus has emerged regarding the meaning of the term “Shiloh.” As Gordon Wenham notes, this expression is among the most difficult interpretive problems in the entire Old Testament. It constitutes a classic example of a *crux interpretum*, provoking sustained controversy among both philologists and biblical scholars. The aim of this study is to trace the development of the understanding of this term from its earliest interpretations in various Jewish contexts to patristic exegesis. The study is conducted using the canonical method and incorporates comparative Jewish and Christian exegesis, together with a philological and semantic analysis of key terms. It should be emphasized that the philological connection between the prophecy of Shiloh (Gen 49:10) and the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7) was already analyzed by Karlheinz Müller (1969), who pointed to the application of the Jewish midrashic principle of *al tiqrey* in this process. However, the issue still requires further refinement in light of early Christian writings. Whereas Müller focused

on the technical and midrashic foundations of these connections and limited his patristic analysis to Eusebius of Caesarea, the present article seeks to broaden this perspective by offering a more comprehensive analysis of the history of interpretation of this prophecy. To this end, the study provides a wider documentation of ancient Jewish traditions and early Christian writers. For the sake of clarity, the present study uses the term “Shiloh” as the consistent English equivalent of the Hebrew *šīlōh*.

1. Translations of the Term “Shiloh”

Before discussing the traditions associated with Shiloh, it is necessary to address problems related to the modern translation of this mysterious term. Over the centuries, a variety of translation proposals have been advanced. This diversity results from differing interpretations of the term “Shiloh.” To this day, scholars have not reached a consensus on how the word should be translated. Among the many proposed solutions, however, several basic renderings have gained the relative acceptance of a large number of scholars. They are as follows:

1.1. “Until he comes to Shiloh”

Proponents of this interpretation emphasize that the city of Shiloh was an important sanctuary during the period of the Judges (Lindblom, 1953, p. 86; Eissfeldt, 1957, pp. 138–147; Blum, 1984, pp. 261–264; Sabottka, 1970, pp. 225–229). It housed the Ark of the Covenant (Josh 18:1–19; 1 Sam 1–4). Some scholars believe that this name contains a prophecy addressed to the tribe of Judah, or more specifically to King David. It calls him to come to Shiloh and to regain power over all the tribes. This prophecy is sometimes linked either to the period of Israel’s expansion under Solomon or to the reign of Josiah. However, such an interpretation is difficult to accept. Shiloh never played a significant political role, nor was it a representative center for all the tribes (Łach, 1962, pp. 6–12). The sanctuary located there was associated primarily with the tribe of Ephraim, not with Judah.

Furthermore, one must take into account the various textual variants of the name—*šilōh*, *šilu*, and *šilō*—which differ from the form appearing in Genesis 49:10 (*šilōh* / *šilō*). In addition to the morphological difficulties, as Hermann Gunkel (1997) already noted, this name should refer to a person. This is confirmed by the adverb with the possessive pronoun *wēlō* (“to him”), which in this context can refer only to a person, not to a place. This view is shared by contemporary scholars as well (McKeown, 2008, p. 186).

1.2. “Until the ruler comes”

Another proposal points to a word with a very similar spelling in hypothesized Akkadian, *šēlu* / *šilu* (Nötscher, 1929, pp. 323–325; Driver, 1967, p. 50; Mowinckel, 2005), understood to mean “ruler,” “king,” or “prince.” This interpretation of the text does not seem implausible. However, it must be emphasized that the aforementioned term does not actually occur in Akkadian literature (Hoop, 1999, pp. 124–125; Macchi, 1999, p. 102; Łach, 1980, p. 610; Szwarc, 2000, p. 87). Those who interpret this name as a designation for a ruler assume that the text was corrupted at some stage. This would have resulted in the loss of the letter *mēm*, which should be added in order to form a noun or participle. In such a reading, the word would be connected with a rare possessive pronoun: *mošēlōh*, meaning “his ruler” (Westermann, 1986, p. 231; Łach, 1962, p. 10). Support for this emendation can be found in a passage from the Book of Micah, where the word occurs. It contains a messianic prophecy concerning the coming of a ruler (*mōšēl*) from the tribe of Judah: “But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, least among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times” (Mic 5:1). Unlike the previous interpretation, this one has a distinctly messianic character.

1.3. “Until tribute comes to him”

It is important to emphasize that this interpretation is not a modern innovation, but rather a long-standing scholarly proposal. Scholars such as

Arnold B. Ehrlich (1908, p. 246) and William L. Moran (1958, pp. 405–406) made particularly significant contributions to this reading (Hoop, 1999, p. 129). According to this hypothesis, the Masoretic term *šīlōh* is the result of *scriptio continua* (continuous writing), in which two originally distinct words were mistakenly joined during the transmission of the text. Proponents suggest that the original wording should be read as *šay* (meaning “tribute,” “gift,” or “offering”) and the particle *lō* (“to him”), thus yielding the phrase *bō’ šay lō*—“until tribute comes to him”.

Those who support this reading argue that it is consistent with the historical context and internal logic of the passage. Within the framework of an ancient Near Eastern royal blessing, one would expect a sovereign ruler to receive tribute from subject nations as a visible sign of his authority (Hoop, 1999, p. 130). Proponents also maintain that this translation creates a seamless parallel with the second half of the verse, which refers to the “obedience of the peoples.”

However, some scholars maintain a critical distance from this interpretation. They acknowledge that the reading is coherent and attractive, but they also point to a fundamental problem: the proposal depends on an emendation—that is, a deliberate alteration of the Masoretic text—rather than on an analysis of the text as it has been preserved. According to de Hoop (1999, pp. 129–130), it attempts to resolve a lexical ambiguity by imposing a historically and politically motivated interpretation. He emphasizes that, although the “tribute” theory is an intellectually compelling hypothesis, it should not be mistaken for the original form of the text; rather, modern biblical scholars should regard it as a creative reconstruction.

2. Shiloh—Jewish Traditions

2.1. The Septuagint

The Septuagint translation indicates that some Jewish circles in Egypt read the name Shiloh in a messianic sense at a very early stage: *ouk ekleípsei archōn ex Iouda kai hēgoumenos ek tōn mērōn autoū, hēōs an élthē tà*

apokeímena autoî, kai autòs prosdokía ethnôn (“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler from between his thighs, until the things reserved for him come; and he shall be the expectation of the nations”; Gen 49:10 LXX). Although the text does not directly use the word “Messiah,” it clearly has a messianic character (Monsengwo-Pasinya, 1980, pp. 357–367). It points to a specific person who is to come and assume the authority assigned to the Messiah. His coming will be universal in scope, extending to all humanity. Not only Jews, but also the nations (*ethnôn*), will await him.

2.2. Qumran

The evidence of manuscript 4Q252 confirms that the Qumran community explicitly linked the term “Shiloh” with the Messiah. He is designated there as the “Messiah of Righteousness” and the “Branch of David.” Karlheinz Müller shows that this development was not merely the result of a mechanical scribal error or an isolated theological intuition. Rather, it was a process deeply rooted in the phonetics of Palestinian dialects during the Second Temple period.

Müller (1969, p. 252) argues that the articulation of guttural consonants weakened during this period. Consequently, the difference between the final *-oh* (in *šilōh*) and *-ah* (in *šilōah*) became almost imperceptible in ordinary speech. For a Judean contemporary of Jesus, both terms would have sounded nearly identical. This encouraged their exegetical identification. It enabled the Qumran community to apply a technique similar to the midrashic principle *al-tiqrey* (“Do not read [X], but [Y]”). In this way, the archaic and difficult concept from Jacob’s blessing was “updated” and read through the lens of Jerusalem’s topography and Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa 8:6; Müller, 1969, p. 253).

Thus, the identification of *Shiloh* with *Siloam* became a philological bridge enabling the transfer of the ancient promise of Genesis 49:10 to a concrete locus of the manifestation of messianic power. According to Müller’s approach (1969, pp. 253, 255–256), this phonetic and graphic convergence was not regarded by ancient exegetes as accidental; rather, it formed part of a shared hermeneutical heritage in which similarity of sound was treated as a legitimate interpretive clue.

2.3. Rabbinic Tradition

Later rabbinic interpretations also attribute a distinctly messianic character to Gen 49:10 (Kuśmirek, 2019, p. 182).

1. *Targum Onkelos* (Gen 49:10): “A ruler will never depart from the house of Judah, nor a teacher from his children’s children forever—until the Messiah comes—for the kingdom is his and the nations will obey him” (Translation after: I. Drazin & S. M. Wagner, 2006).
2. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (Gen 49:10): “Kings and rulers shall not cease from the house of Judah, nor scribes teaching the law from his seed, until the time that the King Messiah shall come, the youngest of his sons, and on account of him shall the peoples flow together” (Translation after: J. W. Etheridge, 1862).
3. *Targum Neofiti* (Gen 49:10): “Kings shall not cease from the house of Judah, nor scribes from the sons of his sons, until the time that the King Messiah comes, to whom the kingship belongs, and all the kingdoms shall be subject to him” (Translation after: M. McNamara, 1992).
4. *The Fragmentary Targum* (Jerusalem II) (Gen 49:10): “Kings and rulers shall not cease from the house of Judah, nor scribes teaching the Law from the offspring of his children, until the time when the King Messiah comes, to whom the kingdom belongs, and all the kingdoms of the earth shall serve Him” (Translation after: M. L. Klein, 1980).
5. *The Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin* 98b: “Rav said: ‘The world was created only for David.’ Samuel said: ‘For Moses.’ And Rabbi Yoḥanan said: ‘For the Messiah.’ What is his name? The school of Rabbi Sheila said: ‘Shiloh is his name, as it is stated: Until Shiloh comes’ (Genesis 49:10)” (Translation after: I. Epstein, 1935).
6. *Midrash Rabbah* (Genesis Rabbah 97:8): “Furthermore, the Messiah will descend from the tribe of Judah. From the tribe of Judah came Solomon, who built the First Temple, and [from him shall come] the King Messiah, who will rebuild the Temple. Concerning the Messiah it is said (Gen 49:9): ‘Judah is a lion’s whelp.’ Rabbi Hamnuna and Rabbi Hanina said: This refers to

the Messiah, the son of David, who descended from two tribes: his father from Judah and his mother from Dan—hence the term ‘lion’ (cf. Deut 33:22). The scepter refers to the Messiah, the son of David, who will chastise the nations with a rod (cf. Ps 2:9). ‘Until Shiloh comes’ indicates that all the nations of the world will bring gifts to the Messiah, the son of David (cf. Is 18:7)” (Translation after: H. Freedman & M. Simon, 1939).

These Jewish traditions show that the term “Shiloh” was interpreted differently in different periods and milieux. In Judaism, however, it was consistently understood as a prophetic term with a messianic character. In light of these findings, the question arises whether early Christian interpretation followed the same trajectory as the Jewish traditions or developed a distinct approach of its own.

3. Shiloh—Early Christian Interpretations

The Church Fathers, as in Jewish tradition, also attributed a messianic character to this term. This was expressed primarily in the ways in which it was translated. This is evident both in the Coptic version and in the writings of the Church Fathers. For example, Ambrose of Milan writes: “until [he] comes for whom [it] has been laid up” (*De Patriarchis*, 4, 21). Rufinus of Aquileia similarly states: “[until] he comes for whom [it] has been laid up, and he himself shall be the expectation of the nations” (*De benedictionibus patriarcharum*, 1, 5–11) (Józwiak, 2025, pp. 348–351). A similar understanding was adopted by the translators of the *Vetus Latina*. In that version, Gen 49:10 was rendered as follows: *Non deficiet princeps ex Iuda, et dux de femoribus eius, donec veniant quae reposita sunt ei, et ipse expectatio gentium* (“A prince shall not be lacking from Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until those things come which have been laid up for him, and he himself is the expectation of the nations”). Of particular importance, however, are the translations and commentaries of Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Jerome. Their analyses significantly shaped the Christological reading of Gen 49:10 in both the Latin and the Greek traditions.

3.1. Origen

Origen links the word “Shiloh” with the name *Siloam*. In his *In Evangelium Ioannis* (Book II, 37 and 167–170), he develops the idea that Christ, as the *Logos*, is the only true Messenger who brings the light of knowledge to humanity. He also refers to the concept of Shiloh, treating it as the Messiah’s proper name. Origen makes the same morphological substitution as the Qumran authors in text 4Q252. He replaces the consonant *hē*’ in *šīlōh* with *hēt*. Like the Qumran text, he identifies “Shiloh” with the waters of Shiloah (cf. Isa 8:6).

He complements this exegesis with an interpretation of the passage concerning the Pool of Siloam in the Gospel of John 9:7. He suggests that what remained hidden from the Jews becomes clear and accessible to all believers in Christ (*In Evangelium Ioannis*, Book XIX, XVII, 104). Jesus is the Messiah—the “Sent One”—symbolized by the Pool of Siloam. It is in him that Jacob’s prophecy expressed in the word “Shiloh” is fulfilled (*In Evangelium Ioannis*, Book XXXII, 65–69).

3.2. Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius of Caesarea also devotes considerable attention to this issue in his monumental apologetic work, *Demonstratio Evangelica*. The key passages are found in Book VII, chapter 1, paragraphs 115–121. There Eusebius refers both to Jacob’s prophecy (Gen 49:10) and to Isaiah (Isa 8:6), connecting them with the Johannine account of the healing of the blind man at the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7; Boulluec, 2013, p. 64).

Like Origen, Eusebius establishes an exegetical connection between the name *Siloam* and the mysterious term “Shiloh.” However, as Karlheinz Müller notes, this procedure was not merely a free intuition but a precise hermeneutical operation reminiscent of the rabbinic principle of *Gezerah Shavah*. Eusebius creates a specific “exegetical bracket” (*Verklammerung*), making use of the convergence of the Hebrew root *šlh* (“to send”) present in the name of the pool and the messianic term *šīlōh* from Gen 49:10. This suggests that the author of *Demonstratio Evangelica* drew on a tradition rooted in Palestinian Judaism, in which

biblical texts could be interpreted mutually on the basis of verbal analogy (Müller, 1969, p. 252).

Although the Hebrew “Shiloh” was rendered in the LXX in a descriptive manner (“until those [events] which are destined for him come to him”), Eusebius interprets it as a messianic title meaning “the Sent One.” Müller emphasizes, however, that Eusebius, despite using technical Semitic methods, ultimately gives them the character of Christian allegory (Müller, 1969, p. 254). Siloam, as the place where the blind man regains his sight, symbolizes Christ as the “Light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5), who removes the spiritual blindness of humanity. At the same time, the pool itself—supplied by water flowing from a living source—evokes the image of Isa 8:6 (“the waters of Shiloah that flow gently”) and becomes, in Eusebius’s interpretation, a figure of the *Logos*, who descends in a quiet and gentle manner in order to cleanse and heal humanity. In this way, the Pool of Siloam is elevated to the status of a place of symbolic proclamation that Jesus is the promised Shiloh of Gen 49:10.

3.3. Saint Jerome

Saint Jerome follows the same line of interpretation, linking *Shiloh* with *Siloam*. His translation of Gen 49:10 is more a paraphrase than a literal rendering. It was clearly made through the lens of Jesus as the “Sent One” *par excellence*: *non auferetur sceptrum de Iuda et dux de femoribus eius donec veniat qui mittendus est et ipse erit expectatio gentium* (“The scepter shall not be taken away from Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until He comes who is to be sent, and He will be the expectation of the nations”). The Neo-Vulgate renders this sentence in an entirely different way: *Non auferetur sceptrum de Iuda et baculus ducis de pedibus eius, donec veniat ille, cuius est, et cui erit oboedientia gentium* (“The scepter shall not be taken away from Judah, nor the commander’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs, and to whom the obedience of the nations shall be”).

The root of the term “Shiloh” is difficult, if not impossible, to define unequivocally. It certainly does not derive from the root *šlh* (“to send”).

However, in his *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, Jerome explains that the name of the pool *Siloam* in John 9:7 means exactly the same as the Shiloh announced in Jacob's prophecy—namely, “the Sent One” (*apestalmenos / missus*). Like the Qumran writers, Origen, and Eusebius, Jerome replaces the letter *hē* with *hēt*. This allows him to identify Jesus with the “Sent One”—Siloam. In his translation, Jacob's prophecy ceases to be merely a dynastic prediction and becomes an explicit reference to Jesus Christ as God's ultimate Messenger.

In his prophetic commentaries, such as *Commentariorum in Ezechielem*, Jerome develops the symbolism of waters and messianic gifts. Referring to the vision of waters flowing from the Temple (Ezek 47:1–2), he identifies them with Christ as the source of salvation. In this context, Christ as the “Sent One” (*Shiloh / Shiloah*) brings “living water” and spiritual purification.

In *Hebraicae quaestiones in Genesim*, Jerome defends his decision to depart from the Septuagint in favor of the “Hebrew truth” (*hebraica veritas*). He points out that Jewish traditions—known to him through conversations with rabbis and through the study of the Targums—understood “Shiloh” as the Messiah's proper name. Jerome Christianizes this tradition. He shows that being “sent” is an essential dimension of the nature of the Son of God, who is sent by the Father. By these means, he combines philology with theology. For Jerome, “Shiloh” is a functional title of Christ. The Pool of Siloam is no longer merely the site of a miracle; it becomes proof of Jesus's identity as the one for whom the nations have waited since the time of Jacob. Consequently, despite differences in method, both Jewish and Christian traditions agree in seeing the enigmatic term “Shiloh” as an announcement of the promised Messiah. Since both traditions link the name Shiloh with *Siloam*, it is reasonable to ask whether such connections are justified.¹

1 It must be admitted that many contemporary commentaries suggest that the prophecy concerning Shiloh is fulfilled in the name Siloam; however, the authors almost invariably confine themselves to a brief statement without offering a more extensive explanation (Brown, 1966, pp. 372–373; Stachowiak, 1975, p. 253; Schnackenburg, 1977, p. 412; Barrett, 1978, p. 359; Beasley-Murray, 1987, p. 156; Wilckens, 2002, p. 205; Fabris, 2003,

4. Siloam as the Christological Fulfillment of the Shiloh Prophecy

The name *Siloam* (Gr. *silōám*, Heb. *šiloah*) appears only a few times in Holy Scripture (Isa 8:6; Luke 13:4; John 9:7, 11). An exception is Neh 3:15, where the BHS contains the term *haššelah* and the Septuagint has *kolymbēthra* (“pool,” “reservoir”). This passage is nevertheless invoked because, in Codex Sinaiticus (LXX), the name *Siloam* (*silōám*) appears in this verse. The same form also occurs in Theodotion’s translation. In both of these Old Testament passages—that is, Isa 8:6 and Neh 3:15—the Clementine Vulgate uses the form *Siloë*, whereas the Nova Vulgata uses *Siloae*. Even if one assumes, as seems reasonable, that Neh 3:15 contains the name *Siloam*, it carries a geographical rather than a symbolic meaning; therefore, it will be omitted from the present analysis. Similarly, in Luke 13:4, the name refers to a tower located within the district of that name or forming part of the city wall near the Pool of Siloam (Rossé, 2006, p. 536).

The author of the Fourth Gospel, in addition to providing the name of the pool—Siloam—also explains its meaning: “and said to him, ‘Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam’ (which means Sent)” (John 9:7).² It should be noted that in the expression *Silōam, ho hermēneuetai apestalmenos*, the author does not provide a literal translation of the name, but rather an interpretation of it. The term *apestalmenos* (“sent”) is a passive participle, which in Hebrew corresponds to the form *šālūah*. Meanwhile, the name *Siloam* (*šiloah*) derives from the active participle *šōlēah* (“sending”) and originally referred to the waters sent from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam.³

pp. 429–430; Köstenberger, 2004, p. 284; Michaels, 2010, p. 547; Infante, 2015, p. 235; Beutler, 2016, pp. 316–317).

2 The same explanation is also found in the apocryphal *Vitae Prophetarum* (1st century BC), where the author explains the name *Siloam* as “sent,” using exactly the same words as in the Gospel of John (*Silōam, ho hermēneuetai apestalmenos*). This remarkable similarity has led most scholars to conclude that the cited passage bears traces of later Christian interpolations (Torrey, 1945, p. 34; Schnackenburg, 1977, p. 411). There are, however, scholars who hold a different view and maintain that this work has survived to the present in its original form (Devillers, 2002, pp. 441–456).

3 It is worth noting that the pool was discovered only partially in 2004; see Reich, 2011. Furthermore, recent archaeological and chronological studies confirm the monumental

Thus, John gives the name *Siloam* a personal dimension, pointing to the One who, by virtue of his divine prerogatives, is the Sent One. In the Gospel of John, this figure is undoubtedly Jesus himself, who is repeatedly described as the one sent by the Father (John 3:17; 4:34; 5:23–24, 30, 36–38; 6:29, 38–39, 44, 57; 7:16, 18, 28–29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4, 7; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44–45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21). The only person sent, besides Jesus, is John the Baptist, with reference to whom the verbs *pempein* and *apostellein* are also used (John 1:33–34; 3:28). The apostles, too, are sent to preach the Gospel by the risen Jesus (John 21:21). It must be emphasized that the theme of mission is not peripheral, but constitutes one of the fundamental themes of this Gospel (The theme of Jesus’ mission is discussed extensively by Kuśmirek, 2003). This is expressed primarily through the verbs *pempein* and *apostellein*, which are applied to the person of Jesus. It may therefore be said that the Christology of the Fourth Gospel is, above all, a Christology of mission (Gnilka, 1992, p. 147). Jesus is sent so that, through the signs (*sēmeia*) he performs, he may awaken faith in human hearts and thus lead people to salvation (Ledwoń, 2017, pp. 64, 100; Kuśmirek, 2003, pp. 132, 161).

Accordingly, the name *Siloam* (“Sent”) may be understood as having a prophetic character and as constituting a metaphor that points to Jesus—the expected Messiah. Moreover, he is the Messiah-King whose power remains hidden beneath the unassuming garment of humanity.⁴ This form of power, expressed not through violence but through gentleness, is mentioned in the Book of Isaiah: “Because this people has rejected the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melts with fear at the display of Rezin and Remaliah’s son” (Isa 8:6).⁵ These words il-

character of these structures as early as the eighth century BC, which further supports the historicity of the biblical references to Jerusalem’s water systems and their later reinterpretation; see Regev, 2025

4 The coming of Jesus as Siloam simultaneously introduces judgment upon the world: the blind man regains his sight as an image of spiritual illumination, whereas the Pharisees, trusting in their own knowledge, fall into spiritual blindness and unbelief.

5 The name *Siloam* originally referred not to the reservoir itself, but to the canal connecting the Gihon Spring with the pool at the southeastern edge of the city; hence the reference to the waters of Siloam that “flow gently” (Isa 8:6). Only after the construction

illustrate God's mode of acting through gentleness (Waszkowiak, 2020, p. 98). They also define the type of authority that belongs to Shiloh, symbolized by the "scepter" and the "mace."⁶ Identifying *Shiloh* with *Siloam* makes it possible to see that true messianic kingship is realized precisely through such "gentleness," which remains incomprehensible to those who seek earthly power. In this way, Isaiah's prophecy becomes a key interpretive bridge: the tragedy of the unbelief of the prophet's contemporaries, who sought exclusively military and political strength, finds its continuation in the rejection of Jesus as the "Sent One" (*Siloam*) by the religious authorities in Jerusalem (Müller, 1969, pp. 255–256).

Numerous points of contact thus emerge between the prophecy concerning *Shiloh* and the name *Siloam*. It is precisely the name *Siloam* that enables the inspired author to portray the Messiah as the One sent by God, whose reign is manifested not through earthly power but in a gentle and unobtrusive manner. The figure of the Messiah contained in the mysterious term *Shiloh* thus finds fuller expression in the name *Siloam*, which in the Gospel of John clearly points to Jesus Christ (John 9:1–41). Although the strict etymology of these names remains a matter of scholarly debate, from the perspective of Johannine hermeneutics their

of Hezekiah's Tunnel did this name begin to designate the pool itself (John 9:7), as well as the surrounding area (Luke 13:4). In the secondary literature, however, some voices broaden this definition. R. Reich (2011, p. 229) expressed the view that, in the Second Temple period, the name *Siloam* referred to the entire water system—Warren's Shaft, the Siloam Channel, and Hezekiah's Tunnel. Although Reich and Shukron (2004, pp. 137–140) identified the Pool of Siloam as a monumental complex that also included *Birkat al-Hamra*, more recent studies challenge this topographical unity. N. Szanton and J. Uziel (2016, pp. 182–193) argue that the actual first-century AD pool was an autonomous stepped structure, functionally distinct from the *Birkat al-Hamra* reservoir to the south.

6 The words *šēbet* and *mēhōqēq* are usually translated as "scepter" and "ruler's staff". However, the term *šēbet* originally means a stick or a rod, but in the Blessing of Jacob, it takes on the meaning of a scepter—a symbol of royal power and sovereignty. The promise that the scepter "shall not depart from Judah" emphasizes the permanence of this authority in God's plan. The name *mēhōqēq* comes from a root meaning to establish law and refers to a lawgiver or an insignia of power—a staff. The image of the staff "between his feet" alludes to the iconography of the ancient Near East, where the ruler holds a staff vertically as a sign of his rule. Together, both terms show the fullness of power: legal, political, and symbolic.

semantic convergence can hardly be regarded as accidental; rather, it points toward the revelation of the messianic identity of Jesus as the “Sent One.” In this way, the expectations of the Old Testament, read within Jewish tradition through the term “Shiloh,” find their fulfillment in the Johannine account of the miraculous healing. Jesus Christ himself is revealed as the “Sent One”—Messiah, a meaning that becomes fully explicit in patristic exegesis.

Conclusion

The analysis presented above shows that the term “Shiloh” (Gen 49:10) became a key messianic motif of interpretation in both Jewish and Christian traditions. As noted in the introduction, this paper draws upon the study of Karlheinz Müller, who identified, above all, a phonetic and midrashic bridge linking the patriarchal promise of “Shiloh” (Gen 49:10) with the “Waters of Shiloah” (Isa 8:6). However, the present study expands this trajectory by offering a much broader and more detailed analysis of early Christian writers. Müller limited his attention to Eusebius of Caesarea. By contrast, early Christian writers, especially figures such as Origen and Jerome, contributed significantly to a deeper understanding of this prophecy. This extensive patristic interpretation demonstrates that early Christianity systematically read the name of Siloam (John 9:7) as a fulfillment of the ancient prophecy of Shiloh (Gen 49:10). Indeed, as early Christian writers suggested, the Johannine account of the healing at the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7) may be interpreted as a moment of historical proclamation that Jesus is the promised Shiloh of whom the patriarch Jacob spoke. In the Gospel of John, Jesus appears as the Sent One par excellence and as the King to whom belongs the obedience of the peoples, as announced in the prophecy concerning Shiloh (Gen 49:10). Yet the manner in which this authority is exercised differs entirely from the rule of the kings of this world. It resembles the waters of Shiloah (Isa 8:6), which flow gently. Jesus is thus presented as a king characterized by humility and universal love.

Abstract

From the Prophecy of Jacob to the Pool of Siloam: The Evolution of the Interpretation of the Term *šīlōh* (Gen 49:10)

The article analyzes the term “Shiloh” (Heb. *šīlōh*) in Gen 49:10—one of the most widely debated interpretive problems in the Old Testament. The first part presents contemporary proposals for its translation, as well as the philological and semantic difficulties associated with the expression. It then discusses interpretations of the term in ancient Jewish contexts—the Septuagint, the Qumran tradition, and rabbinic literature—in which it acquires a messianic meaning. Particular attention is given to the connection between the motif of Shiloh and the symbolism of the “waters of Siloah” (Isa 8:6). The final part analyzes patristic interpretations (Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome), showing that the prophecy concerning Shiloh in Gen 49:10 finds its fulfillment in the name Siloam (John 9:7), which symbolically points to Jesus himself—the promised Messiah.

Keywords: Shiloh, Siloam, Genesis 49:10, messianic prophecy, exegesis, Church Fathers, Jesus Christ

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