**Even a *mamzer* Torah scholar and an ignoramus High Priest, a *mamzer* Torah scholar precedes an ignoramus High Priest.**

The issue of the hierarchal status of Torah scholars vis-à-vis priests was a pressing one in the first generations after the Destruction of the Temple. The lack of a Temple took away from the priests their primary function in serving the nation, and the question of their status without this role was raised by their competitors for leadership: the Sages. The homilies about Moses and Aaron concerning hierarchy and equality which we dealt with in the second unit display the broad perspective of the topic, as well as the diverse views of the Sages. Those homilies which stress the hierarchy and Moses’ precedence in teaching Torah seek to institutionalize an alternative leadership to the priesthood, pointing to greatness in Torah as the determinative factor for a leader’s superiority. The sage is thus the authority for instilling Torah. The priest may have equivalent status to the sage, but not due to his genealogy; rather, only if his Torah knowledge is equivalent to that of the sage. The fact that these homilies of hierarchy are paralleled by homilies which establish equivalence between the leadership of Moses and the leadership of Aaron indicates that in opposition this approach, which determines the hierarchy based on greatness in Torah, there were those who believed that lineage was still a parameter for leadership, and they fought for the priests to retain their status as spiritual leaders of the people.