## Where there is a scholar who is a bastard and a high priest who is an ignoramus, the bastard scholar takes precedence over the ignorant high priest[[1]](#footnote-1)

The question as to the relative hierarchical positions of the sages and the priests was on the agenda during the first generations following the destruction. The absence of the Temple took away from the priests the central role they had in serving the people, and the question as to their status absent this role was raised by their competitors for the leadership, viz., the the sages.[[2]](#footnote-2) The exegeses which we addressed in the second section which discuss Moses and Aaron from the perspective of hierarchy and equality express the issue in its different facets and also express the lack of uniformity amongst the sages’ positions. The exegeses emphasizing hierarchy and Moses’ precedence over Aaron in respect of Torah instruction seek to institutionalize an alternative leadership to that of the priests and to emphasize greatness in Torah as the factor determining the greatness of the leader. The sage is the authority responsible for bequeathing the Torah. The priest can be on the same level as the sage, not by virtue of his lineage but rather to the extent only that his greatness in Torah matches that of the sage. The fact that, parallel to the exegeses emphasizing hierarchy, there are also exegeses demonstrating equality between Moses’ and Aaron’s leadership, show that, against the approach that established the hierarchy by reference to greatness in Torah, there were also those who held that lineage continued to be a parameter for leadership and who fought for the priests to retain their status in respect of the spiritual leadership of the community.

1. m. Horayot, 3:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See n. 82 above [↑](#footnote-ref-2)