

Eschatology and Messianism in the *Gabriel Inscription*¹

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Introduction

The *Gabriel Inscription* (or *Vision of Gabriel*) is the only known text from the Dead Sea region written on stone. It was written with black ink on a roughly polished limestone that measures 96 by 37 centimeters. The text is written in Hebrew in two columns, and more or less fragmentary remains of 88 lines are preserved. The somewhat crude script can be dated to the second half of the first century B.C.E. Micromorphologic analysis of the stone and its coating suggests that it indeed is an ancient authentic text. The soil attached to the stone indicates it was found east of the Dead Sea, not far from the Lisan peninsula (Goren 2008). The stone was probably located 15 years ago, and was bought soon after by David Jemelsohn, Zürich, from the Jordanian antiquities dealer Ghassan Rihani, in Irbid, Jordan.

Hazon Gabriel (as the text is called in Hebrew) was published in Hebrew in March 2007 (Yardeni and Elizur 2007). Two months later I headed a symposium on this text in Oslo and made a tentative English translation of it, which subsequently was accessible on the internet for a few years. Ada Yardeni's initial deciphering and full-size drawing of the text provided the starting point for all subsequent interpreters. Subsequently, Elisha Qimron and Alexei Yuditsky suggested a number of new readings in a Hebrew article (Qimron and Yuditsky 2009). A collection of papers on this enigmatic text were published in a volume edited by Matthias Henze in 2011, which included English versions of Yardeni/Elizur 2007 and Qimron/Yuditsky 2009 (Henze 2011).

In a number of publications Israel Knohl has argued that the *Gabriel Inscription* refers to a dying and rising messiah named Ephraim. Already on April 19, 2007, he argued in *Haaretz* that the text said “In three days, live!” (l. 80). Even though he later conceded that this phrase should rather be read “On the third day—the sign” (first suggested by Hendel 2009), he still finds a pre-Christian suffering messiah in this text, perhaps modeled on Simon, one of the

¹ This paper combines and reworks three articles of mine: “Notes on the *Gabriel Inscription*,” *Semitica* 54 (2012): 221–32; “The *Gabriel Inscription*, b. Sukkah 52a, and Psalm 2,” *Semitica* 55 (2013): 137–42; “Gabriel, Vision of” (*Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, vol. 9: 877–78). I am indebted to Cana Werman and Årstein Justnes for critical reading and valuable suggestions.

leaders of the uprisings following the death of Herod in 4 B.C.E., who was killed by Herod's troops in Transjordan. The blood of this slain messianic leader would, for his followers, pave the way for the final salvation (as is said in later rabbinic texts on the messiah son of Joseph/Ephraim, who will pave the way for the victorious son of David). Knohl argues that such messianic texts were formative for the shaping of the Jesus tradition,² but remains relatively alone along this line of interpretation. The text is shaped as a long prophetic oracle, formed in dialogue between an anonymous Jewish prophet and the angel Gabriel. The mediating angel adopts the role of a human prophet, frequently repeating the formula "thus says the Lord." Both in orthography and style the text is somewhat vulgar, conveying the impression of an immediate prophetic experience, not a crafted literary text. The text includes liturgical responses (lines 23–24, 72–74). This element may reflect the background of the prophet (Levitic?) or demonstrate a secondary use of this text in a communal liturgical setting.³

The text describes a situation of crisis for a Jerusalem surrounded by enemy armies (ll. 13–14, 27, 32–36, 53–57). God promises to come to its aid with angelic armies and chariots, and the archangel Michael is particularly mentioned (ll. 26–28, 32–33, 65–67). A breakthrough is repeatedly promised "on the third day," as promised in Scripture. Lines 16–22 contain a divine oracle directed to a Davidic messiah, "my servant David . . . my son," who is promised "a new covenant" (or "a sacred covenant") and a sign on the third day. Three divine envoys, designated as prophets and shepherds, are sent by God to scrutinize the people of Israel and are subsequently recalled (ll. 69–72, 75–76, 79). The *Gabriel Inscription* may reflect both prophetic experience and exegetical interaction with a number of biblical traditions, in particular with the prophetic books (Ezek 1; 38–39; Zech 1–8; 14; Dan 8–12; Hag 2:6; Isa 7:10–17; 66:15; Jer 31:31–34).

In the following I will present some textual notes that interact with Yardeni/Elizur and Qimron/Yuditsky, along with a transcription of the legible lines of the text and a structured English translation.⁴ Thereafter I will discuss

² "The Christian myth of a Messiah who dies and is resurrected was shaped by a preexisting Jewish myth. From the 'Gabriel Revelation' we learn that the motif of the leader's resurrection on the third day existed in Judaism prior to the birth of Christianity": Knohl 2011b, 441.

³ According to David Hamidovic, the repetitions in lines 57–59 show that the inscription is no autograph, but copied from a *Vorlage*. He suggests that the stone could have been used as a liturgical object (2009, 149, 151–2). However, as it now stands, the text does not present itself as a liturgical document. For Yardeni and Elizur the "scroll style" with two columns suggests that the inscription was copied from a scroll (2011, 12). The incised vertical and horizontal guidelines have parallels in many scrolls from the Judean Desert.

⁴ Transcription, textual notes, and translation are indebted to Yardeni and Elizur 2007, and Qimron and Yuditsky 2011. Where I depart from these scholars and suggest alternative readings I have consulted Yardeni's 2007 drawing as well as photographs made by Bruce Zuckerman and his team in 2009, available on Inscriptifact (ISF: www.inscriptifact.com). In the translation italic font indicates tentative/uncertain readings and interpretations.

some main themes in the text, focusing on its prophetic-apocalyptic character, the nature of the divine envoys, the sign on the third day, and the characteristics of the messiah. Finally, I will compare the Gabriel text with a dialogue between God and the Davidic messiah in a talmudic text (*b. Sukkah* 52a) and with the medieval apocalypse *Sefer Zerubbabel*.

Text

Col. I

	[ל]בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל]	7
	[] דַּבֵּר יְהוָה	9
	[] שְׁאֵלָת דְּבָר	10
	יְהוָה אֵתָה שְׁאֵלְנִי כֹּו אִמַּר אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת	11
	[ר]חֲמֹתַי עֲלֶיךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִגְדָּה בְּגִדְלוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם	12
	כֹּו אִמַּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנֵּה כֹּוֹל הַגָּאִים	13
	צֹוֹבְאִים עַל יְרוּשָׁלַם [] ומתוכה [] ל []	14
	[א]חַת שְׁתֵּינ שְׁלוֹשׁ אַרְבַּע הִנְבִּיאִין וְהַשְּׁבִין	15
	[ו]הַחֲסִידִים עֲבָדֵי דוֹד בְּקֶשׁ מִן לִפְנֵי אִמַּרִים	16
	[הש]בְּנֵי הָאוֹת אֲנִי מִבְּקֶשׁ מִן לִפְנֵךְ כֵּן אִמַּר	17
	[י]הוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי בִיַּדֵי בְּרִית	18
	חֲדָשָׁה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְשִׁלְשֵׁת יָמִין תִּדַּע כֹּו אִמַּר	19
	יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נִשְׁבַּר הָרַע	20
	מִלִּפְנֵי הַצַּדִּיק שְׁאֵלְנִי וְאִגִּיד לְכָה מַה הַצְּמַח	21
	הָרַע הַזֶּה לוֹ בִּיסַד אֵתָה אֹמַד הַמִּלְאָךְ הוּא	22
	בְּסִמְכֶךְ אֵל תִּירָה בְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן	23
	מְקוֹמוֹ עוֹד מַעַט קִיטוּט הִיא וְאֲנִי מַרְעִישׁ אֵת	24
	חֵלֶל הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ הִנֵּה כְּבוֹד יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים	25
	צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵלֵהֶם מִרְכָּבוֹת שְׁמַע	26
	קוֹל שׁוֹד יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאֵת עֵרֵי יְהוּדָה יִנְחַם לְמַעַן	27
	צִבְּ[א]ת [ה]מִלְאָךְ מִיכָאֵל וְלְכוּל הָאֵהָבִין בְּקֶשׁוֹ	28
	מִלִּפְנֵי כֹּו אִמַּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי	29
	[ישר]אֵל אֶחָד שְׁנַיִן שְׁלוֹשָׁה אַרְבַּעָה חֲמִשָּׁה שְׁשָׁה	30
	[]שְׁאֵל מִלְאָכָה דְרִיתָהּ מַהוּ וְאִמַּרָה עַץ	31
	[] וְתַהֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם כִּימֹות עוֹלָם וְאִרְאָה שְׁנֵי	32
	[ו]שְׁמַר עֲלֶיךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם שְׁלוֹשָׁה בְּגִדְלוֹת	33
	[] שְׁלוֹשָׁה []	34
	[] אֱלֹהֵיךְ וְאִרְאָה אִישׁ אֶחָד עוֹמֵד	35
	שְׁהוּא [] שְׁסִמֵּן אֵת יְרוּשָׁלַם	36
	[ו]אֲנִי עַל [] אִמַּר זְאוֹת גְּלוֹת רִשְׁ[וֹנָה]	37

○○○○○○○○○○ []ל כל אתם 85
 ע[ו]לם 87

Textual Notes

L. 12. The beginning of this line is read by Yardeni/Elizur as []ל כל אתם ישראל []. Qimron/Yuditsky observe that there are two words before “house of Israel” and renders בית ישראל ○○○○טו○○. According to ISF 11423 the first word ends ותו- or תי-: The left leg and horizontal upper part of the first stroke of the *taw* is clear. Based on Yardeni’s full-sized drawing of the text (Yardeni/Elizur 2007) one could read this first word as [קנתי] or [ר]חמתי. On her drawing one sees the right edge and lower corner of a square letter, possibly *mem*, and before this two or three strokes which may be interpreted as the left leg and top of *khet*, enabling the reading [ר]חמתי. The next word perhaps opens with *bet*, *kap*, or *ayin* (cf. ISF 11423). The two opening words of line 12 would contain a verbal clause referring to God’s action for Israel. בָּכַם or בָּכָה may be the easiest material reading of the word before “house of Israel.” However, above the first two letters of this word a supralinear *lamed* can be discerned. Thus I tentatively suggest to read [ר]חמתי על־כָּה—“I will have pity on you, house of Israel,” (רחם takes direct object or object introduced by *על*).

L. 12. גדלות ירושלים may be interpreted not as “the greatness of Jerusalem” (as is commonly done), but as “great deeds (to be) done for Jerusalem,” referring to God’s deeds in the past or the close future, cf. 1 Chr 17:19–21. Acts of God are in focus in this text more than the glory of Zion.

Ll. 16–17. עבדי דוד בקש מן לפני אמרים [הש]יבני, האות אני מבקש מן לפניך. The last word of line 16 can materially be read אפרים (“Ephraim”) or אָמרים (“words”), as the second letter of this word equally can be read as *pe* or *mem*.⁵ Qimron/Yuditsky argue for the reading [הש]יבני אָמרים “Give me words [in re]sponse,” referring to this expression in Prov 22:21.

Since his first publication in 2007, the reading “Ephraim” has been essential for Knohl’s interpretation. Based on the physical evidence he argues that the first word of line 17 cannot be [הש]יבני, but is a word ending with final *mem* (2011a, 42, note 11). With Yardeni/Elizur he restores [וי]שים and interprets the crucial words: “My servant David, ask of Ephraim [that he] place the sign; (this) I ask of you.” Such a reading represents a stretched interpretation of these two lines. In this text it would be artificial to bring in a dialogue between two messiahs, one of David’s seed and one of Ephraim’s. All through the text the speakers of the dialogue are the anonymous prophet and Gabriel. And it is God or the angel who brings forward the sign (l. 80), not a human agent (cf. Kim 2011, 167). The close context supports the interpretation of Qimron/Yuditsky: In

⁵ Thus Yardeni/Elizur 2011, 13. “[O]ne can perhaps restore the name Ephraim[?]” (ibid.: 19). Hendel (2009, 8) and Qimron/Yuditsky read אמרים.

lines 10–11 the prophet asks the angel for a word from the Lord, and lines 17–21 provide the response to this request.⁶ David’s request is phrased as a synthetic parallism: “Give me words [in re]sponse, the sign I ask from you.” In ISF 11425 the last letters of the first word of line 17 are clearly גי. The third-to-last letter looks more like a *pe*, but *bet* is possible, so one should read יִבְנִי [לְפָנַי] or יִבְנִי [הַשָּׁמַיִם]. So far יִבְנִי [הַשָּׁמַיִם] is the best suggested restoration, which points to אַמְרִים and not אַפְרִים at the end of line 16.

What is the relation between “my servant David” and the author of this revelatory text? Kim (2011, 158) sees this “David” as the recipient of the revelation. He argues that the text was addressed to the leader of a militant group in a time of crisis for Jerusalem, a group who had the warrior-king David as hero. Kim does not specify if this “David” was the one who received this revelation, or if another prophet was mediating it. Since the text includes different scenes and visions (ll. 25–26, 31–35, 38, 41, 83), and David is referred to in the third person in line 72 (cf. Collins 2011, 111), a more probable scenario would be the prophet listening to a dialogue between God and the Davidic messiah.

Ll. 18–19. בְּרִיֶּתָּ הַדְּשָׁה. Qimron/Yuditsky notes that the reading is doubtful, and annotates the first word בְּרִיֶּתָּ. However, on ISF 11424 the first three letters are clearly drawn, although the first letter equally can be read as *bet* or *kap*. The final *taw* is materially more doubtful, but it is difficult to come up with a better reading that fits with the next word, הַדְּשָׁה. I concur with Qimron/Yuditsky that the digital photo favors the reading קְדִשָׁה for הַדְּשָׁה (thus Yardeni/Elizur).

In a text from the first century B.C.E., the use of either term (“new covenant” or “holy covenant”) for an eschatological breakthrough would be significant. For “holy covenant,” cf. Dan 11:28, 30; for “new covenant,” cf. Jer 31:31; CD 6:19; 8:21; 19:33; 20:12; Luke 22:20par; Heb 9:15; 12:24.

Ll. 22. Read לוֹ בִּיָּסֵד אֶתָּה עוֹמֵד. “You do not stand on firm ground.” The “evil plant” of lines 20–22 may well be an anti-type to the Davidic messiah—צַמַּח is a Davidic/messianic designation from the Bible (Isa 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Ezek 29:21; Zech 3:8; 6:12; Ps 132:17, cf. Knohl 2011b, 444–45).

Ll. 24–25. In the beginning of line 25 there is space for a short word before הַשָּׁמַיִם, and a few traces of ink are preserved. I suggest to read חָלַל הַשָּׁמַיִם: “I will shake the powers of heaven and the earth.” Such a quotation or allusion to Hag 2:6 is also found in Heb 12:26.

Ll. 31–32. Based on ISF 11432 read וַיִּשְׁאַל מַלְאָכָה דְרִיתָּהּ מֵהוּ וְאָמְרָהּ עַץ וְיָשָׁל—“The angel asked, ‘The thing you saw, what was it?’ – I answered: ‘A mighty tree.’” Our author is influenced by Aramaic, and could use both ש (ll. 36, 67, 71) and ד as relative pronoun (דָּמֵן, l. 81). A scribal error or irregular defective spelling of הַיָּתֵר should not be ruled out (cf. the spelling תִּירָא for תִּירָא in line 23), even if

⁶ The parallels between Ps 2 and the *Gabriel Inscription* demonstrated below support reading אַמְרִים and not אַפְרִים: in this psalm God instructs the Davidide to ask him for intervention.

possible reading of this line שר השרין דמון קרובי הוצרים “the prince of princes, of those who are close to the courts”—referring to the angels approaching God in the courts of the heavenly sanctuary. *Qop* for *ʾalep* is only a tentative option, as no descender is visible. But the letters of the line below are worn, and the same could be the case for the descender of a *qop*.

Ll. 80–82. Yardeni’s 2007 drawing of the text may suggest reading, at the end of line 80, אגני גבריאל מלך מלכין, and at the end of line 82, הנה אהבי מלך, (for the latter, cf. ISF 1143), leading to the following self-presentation of Gabriel: “I am Gabriel, the king of the angels,⁷ the prince of princes, of those who are close to the courts.” A similar self-presentation is found in Luke 1:19, “I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and proclaim to you these good news.” If my reading of line 80 is correct, the title שר השרין (l. 81), used more probably for Michael than for God in Dan 8:25 (cf. 8:11), is here applied to Gabriel. Elizur lists later Jewish usage of the term “prince of princes” (Yardeni/Elizur 2011, 20–21): In hekhalot literature it designates Metatron or the angelic Youth alongside the Lord, and Gabriel is positioned as the head of the princes (בראש השרים). The hekhalot usage would support my reading of lines 80–81. In later *piyyutim* “prince of princes” is a designation for Michael. A Babylonian incantation text names the two angels who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah as Gabriel and Michael (Hamidovic 2009, 157). The role of two chief angels, Michael as leader of the heavenly host (l. 28) and Gabriel as *angelus interpres*, is probably inspired by Daniel 8–11.

Translation

⁷ [to]the sons of Israel[⁹]word from the Lor[d ¹⁰]you asked for a word from¹¹ the Lord, you asked me. – Thus says the Lord of Hosts: ¹² I will *have pity on you*, house of Israel, I will shout about great deeds to be done for Jerusalem. ¹³ Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: See, all peoples ¹⁴ will make war against Jerusalem, and *deport* from it ¹⁵ [o]ne, two, three, four of the prophets and the elders ¹⁶ [and] the pious men.

My servant David, ask me: ¹⁷ “Give me words [in re]sponse, the sign I ask from you!” Thus says ¹⁸ the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel: My son, in my hands I have ¹⁹ a new covenant for Israel, on the third day you will know it. Thus says ²⁰ the Lord God of Hosts, the God of Israel: Evil will be broken before ²¹ righteousness. Ask me, and I will tell you what this ²² evil plant is. You do not stand on firm ground, but the angel ²³ is your support, do not fear!

– Blessed be the glory of the Lord from ²⁴ his dwelling! – In a little

⁷ Although מלאך elsewhere in the text is spelled with *ʾalep*, the phrase מלך מלכין should be interpreted as “king of the angels,” rather than “king of kings”—a phrase appearing in Ezek 26:7; Ezr 7:12; Dan 2:37 (on human kings); 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14; 19:16 (on Christ). If my tentative reading מלך at the end of line 82 is correct (“those who love the king”), מלך could here refer to Gabriel or more likely to God.

while I will shake ²⁵ *the powers of heaven and the earth.*

– See the glory of the Lord God ²⁶ of Hosts, the God of Israel! The God of the chariots will listen to ²⁷ the cry of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and bring consolation for the sake of ²⁸ the hos[t]s of [the] angel Michael, and for the sake of those who have loved ²⁹ and asked him.

Thus says the Lord God of Hosts, the God of ³⁰ [Isr]ael: One, two, three, four, five, six. ³¹ And the angel asked: “The thing you saw, what was it?” – I answered: “A mighty tree.” ³² – “Yes, [J]erusalem[shall be]as in former days.” – And I saw a second one ³³ [who was] guarding you, Jerusalem, and three, yes, three who perform mighty deeds. ³⁴ . . . three . . . ³⁵ []to them. See: a man standing and . . . [on the wall] ³⁶ and he . . . who will give a sign for Jerusalem. ³⁷ [And] I stand over . . . and he said: This is the fi[rst] revelation, ³⁸ [and t]his is the second revelation, [and] these are the poor ones. And I saw ³⁹ [. . .

I will take pity on] Jerusalem, says the Lord of ⁴⁰ Hosts . . . ⁴¹ . . . his glory, and I shall see wonders ⁴³ . . . walls . . . ⁵⁰ [The Lord your God] ⁵¹ is with you, your Shepherd[is with you . . . providing help] ⁵² from the angels and from *on high*.

[The enemy shall make war] ⁵³ against his people, and the next day . . . [a sign will be given to them, ⁵⁴ on] the third day it will be, as [*the prophet*] said. He ⁵⁵ . . . ⁵⁶ Yea, see . . . [it shall be] ⁵⁷ an end to the blood of the slaughtering in Jerusalem.

Thus says the Lord of Hos[ts,] ⁵⁸ the God of Israel. Yes, thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of ⁵⁹ Israel, from . . . says the Lord: [*I will pour out* ⁶⁰ over Jeru]salem the spirit of the awesome ones. He will give . . . ⁶¹ . . . Blessed are you *where you walk* . . .

[*These are the*] ⁶⁵ three holy ones from days of old, from the *begin[ning]* . . .] ⁶⁶ [Jer]usalem, say: “We trust in you, not [in] ⁶⁷ flesh and blood.” This is their chariot, that of the great ones[*of heaven.*] ⁶⁸ There are many who love the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel . . . ⁶⁹

Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel . . . ⁷⁰ Prophets I did send to my people, three of them. But I said ⁷¹ when I looked on its ways that were not . . . , I talked *to them calling them back to* ⁷² the place for the sake of David, the servant of the Lord.

– [Se]e, y[ou created] ⁷³ the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched ⁷⁴ arm. You show mercy toward thousands from generation [to generation.]

⁷⁵ Three shepherds came to Israel [*to search for*] pious ones, {to see} ⁷⁶ if there were among them, if there were among them holy ones and *pure on[es.]*

⁷⁷ “Who are you?” – “I am Gabriel, the angel *sent [by the Lord . . . and]* ⁷⁸ you shall rescue them. A prophet and a shepherd shall rescue you.” – [“Then I] ask ⁷⁹ you for three shepherds, for three prophets.”

⁸⁰ On the third day: the sign! I am Gabriel, king of the angels, ⁸¹ the prince of princes, of *those who are close to the courts* . . . ⁸² The sign is for him. See, they[ask] you. See those who love *the king!* ⁸³ On the third day, the small one that I took, I Gabriel. ⁸⁴ The Lord of Hosts, the God of . . . ⁸⁵ Then you will stand

firm for all[⁸⁷ . . . for e[v]er

Angelic Prophecy and Divine Envoys

In the late Second Temple period we find prophets who foretell the future or actualize God's will for their audience. Some of them share an apocalyptic worldview and produce apocalypses or apocalyptically inspired texts. While modern interpreters might discern between the phenomenon of prophecy and apocalyptic seers, such a distinction was hardly made in "prophetic-charismatic" or apocalyptic milieus in the centuries around the turn of the era.⁸

The *Gabriel Inscription* opens a window into the actual sayings of a prophet and/or apocalyptic seer more than a century after the shaping of the books of *1 Enoch* and a century before this phenomenon would unfold also in the Jesus movement, as evidenced in the New Testament texts, *Didache*, and the *Ascension of Isaiah*. The relation between the heavenly realms and angels on one side and the fate of earthly Jerusalem on the other seems to locate this text with apocalyptic "relatives" such as the Revelation of John and the *War Scroll*.

In *Hazon Gabriel* the mediating angel adopts the role and terminology of a human prophet, frequently repeating the formula "thus says the Lord." This is different from the interpreting angels we encounter in Dan 10–12, *Jubilees* or *1 Enoch*, but similar to Zech 1–3. This feature may reflect the theology and angelology of our author, who perhaps needed a mediator less awesome than God himself.

In lines 70–72, 75–76, and 79 we encounter three divine envoys, designated as prophets and shepherds, sent by God and then recalled to heaven. In Zech 11 the image of three shepherds designates human rulers with poor conduct. Elizur lists a number of rabbinic references to "three prophets," identified as biblical prophets such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, Qohelet, Elijah, Micah, Moses, Zephaniah, and Hulda (Yardeni/Elizur 2011, 18–19).

According to lines 75–76, the shepherds are sent to scrutinize the people of Israel to see if there are faithful ones among them. Rather than pointing to human rulers or prophets, such an assignment brings to mind angelic envoys with similar tasks, cf. Gen 18–19; Ezek 9; Zech 1:10–11; Rev 7:1–4.⁹ The three shepherds should be interpreted as angelic shepherds commissioned by

⁸ The apocalyptic Book of Revelation presents itself as a "prophetic book," Rev 22:18, and the *Yahad* text *4QFlorilegium* refers to biblical Daniel as "Daniel the prophet." On Josephus' understanding of prophecy (primarily foretelling the future), see Gray 1993, in particular pp. 6–34, 164–67. For Paul, prophecy is empowered speaking "in the spirit," conveying "upbuilding, encouragement and consolation," i.e. actualizing scriptures or the will of God for the community (1 Cor 14:3).

⁹ Cf. the "shepherds" of the *Animal Apocalypse* (*1 En* 89–90). These shepherds should be understood as angels of wrath interfering in the history of Israel, cf. the role of the "angels of Mastema" in 4QapocrJer C and *Jubilees* (4Q387 2 iii 4; 4Q390 1 11; 2 i 7; *Jub.* 48:2.12; 49:2).

God to test the ways of men, and may be identical with the three holy ones of line 65.¹⁰ A reference to three biblical prophets would not easily fit the setting of the Gabriel text, which points either to a historic situation of crisis in the first century B.C.E. or to an eschatological war.

These divine envoys may be compared with the two witnesses of Rev 11, who testify to the truth before they are killed by the beast, and after three and a half days resurrected and taken to heaven. David Flusser and Cana Werman have argued persuasively that Rev 11–13 reinterprets the *Oracle of Hystaspes*, an anti-Roman Jewish apocalyptic text from the first century.¹¹ In the *Oracle* (known through Lactantius, a third-century Christian writer), there is *one* prophet who is sent by God to preach and bring the people to repentance. He is subsequently killed by the antichrist, and then called back to heaven *on the third day*. The Gabriel text may reflect an earlier version of traditions later incorporated into the *Oracle* and Rev 11–13. *Apoc. Elijah* 4 reflects the same tradition, with three witnesses who preach against the antichrist. All three, the virgin Tabitha, Elijah, and Enoch, are killed and resurrected. *The Apocalypse of Elijah* contains both Jewish and Christian layers. The evidence of the *Gabriel Inscription* suggests that the core of *Apoc. Elijah* 4 is Jewish in origin (*pace* Wintermute 1983, 724–25, 746–49).

A Crisis Oracle?

The Gabriel text repeatedly promises a sign of redemption on the third day (lines 17–19, 54, 80). “The third day” could mean the third day after the actual time of revelation to this prophet (in the case of a real military threat to Zion), or refer to the third day after the beginning of the future siege of Jerusalem. If the first option was originally intended, these “three days” would be reinterpreted by later transmitters or interpreters who would have to interact with the delay of the eschatological breakthrough (some kind of *Parusieverzögerung*).

In either case the *Gabriel Inscription* shows that an eschatological hope

¹⁰ In the Bible “holy ones” refers to angels (Collins 1993, 313–17; Collins 2011, 105). In literature from Qumran and later periods this designation may be extended to human servants of God, as in line 76.

¹¹ Flusser’s (1988) hypothesis was accepted by Aune in his commentary on Revelation (1998, 588–93, 726–8, 771). According to Werman (2009), the motif of the woman giving birth to the messiah (Rev 11) was also present in the *Oracle*; in a Christian text like Revelation it is strange that the messianic baby is taken to heaven after his birth, if this was not already an element in John’s source. Schäfer has recently discussed the Jewish traditions about a mother giving birth to the messiah, who is taken to heaven as a baby (*y. Berakhot* 2,4/12–14; *Lam. Rabba* 1,16 § 51; cf. also *Sefer Zerubbabel*), and concluded that they represent anti-Christian polemic: Schäfer 2010, 1–31; Schäfer 2012, 264–71. Schäfer does not mention Werman’s article. If Werman indeed is right (and I tend to agree with her), the later texts may represent anti-Christian polemic added to a tradition originating in the Second Temple period.

could be connected with a breakthrough on “the third day” already before Jesus. Our text thus parallels the foresayings referring to the third day in the gospels (Matt 12:40; Luke 24:46; John 2:19; cf. 1 Cor 15:4). The hope for redemption with dawn or on the third day would find support in scriptures such as Hos 6:3; Ps 46:5; Exod 8:19; 19:11, 15; and Gen 22:4 (on the third day Abraham sees the place of offering and symbolically receives “his son back from the dead,” cf. Heb 11:17–19). As in Luke 24:46 and 1 Cor 15:4, the breakthrough on the third day is promised in the scriptures: “on] the third day it will be, as [the prophet] said” (l. 54), which could refer to Hos 6:3 as proof text.

Is there a specific historic situation of crisis behind this revelatory text, as argued by Israel Knohl and Daewoong Kim (Kim 2011)? Knohl has suggested the upheavals after the death of Herod. Other options would be Pompey’s invasion of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E., the Parthian incursions into Judea in 40–39 B.C.E., or the civil war between Herod and the Hasmoneans in 39–37 B.C.E. that culminated in the siege and conquest of Jerusalem.¹²

But the author of the Gabriel text could engage in prophetic dialogue with biblical texts on wars about Jerusalem and the end-time fate of Zion (such as 2 Kg 19; Ezek 38–39; Zech 14; Ps 46; cf. Rev 20:9) without an acute situation of military crisis, similar to the setting of the Revelation of John. Our author is simultaneously prophet and exegete, as Christopher Fletcher-Louis has argued about John of Patmos.¹³ Similar to the men of the *Yahad* and John of Patmos, our prophet sees himself as part of revelation history, he is given “new information” on the end-time war soon to come.

The eschatological scenario presented in this text—with angels, chariots, a Davidic messiah, and his anti-type “the evil branch”—would make sense as revelation about the end-time battle given to a group characterized by eschatological fervor. A “crisis oracle” given to the leaders of a Jerusalem under siege seems less probable. As a third alternative, this detailed revelation on the end-time could have been prompted by the author’s experience of a military crisis in Judea. Such a recipient group as suggested here is easily perceived in the upheavals of Judea in the first century B.C.E.

With the setting I suggest it is easy to understand why the text was “recycled,” received liturgical responsae, and was inscribed in stone, a stone

¹² David Hamidovic (2012) departs from mainstream interpretation. He dates the script after 50 C.E., suggests Titus’ siege of Jerusalem as its historic setting, and Vespasian as an anti-type for the Davidic messiah—for which cf. the evil branch of lines 20–22.

¹³ “What John encounters in his visionary experience is made sense of through the framework of understanding already present in his cognition. The interpretation of Ezek 1 . . . involved seeing again what Ezekiel had seen. It may well have involved the resort to cross-referencing, but this contributed to a dynamic imaginative activity in which the details of Ezekiel’s vision were understood by a complex interweaving of vision and textual networking”: Fletcher-Louis 2006, 45, 48; cf. Fletcher-Louis 2008.

perhaps intended to be raised as a memorial stela.¹⁴ The well preserved state of the inscription could suggest that the stela was found still standing upright in a cave east of the Dead Sea, a region under Jewish rule in the first century B.C.E. Following biblical tradition, the desert could be conceived as a place of divine revelation and eschatological preparation.

The Davidic Messiah

What does the *Vision of Gabriel* teach us about the Davidic messiah? He is connected with a war scenario with enemies surrounding Jerusalem (cf. Pss 2; 110), has angelic hosts coming to his help, is addressed by God in the context of a dialogue, and is promised a sign—a breakthrough on the third day that is connected to “a new covenant” (or “holy covenant”). He is called by the biblical term עבדי דוד—“my servant David” (2 Sam 3:18; 7:5, 8; 1 Kgs 11:13, 32, 34, 36, 38; 14:8; 19:34; 20:6; Isa 37:35; Jer 33:21, 26; 1 Chr 17:4, 7; Ps 89:3, 20; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24).

The angelic envoys are recalled to heaven “for the sake of David, the servant of the Lord” (ll. 71–72). This could be a reference to the historic king of Israel. But the parallel with “my servant David” (l.16) rather suggests that the text also here refers to the eschatological Son of David, who has an important role in eschatological history.

If I am right in two assumptions—1) the text refers to a futuristic end-time battle, not a present situation of war; and 2) the prophet listens to a dialogue between God and the Davidic messiah (the easiest reading of ll. 16–22)—I see two possible settings for such a dialogue:

- a) the prophet listens to what God will say to the Davidide in this future war situation;
- b) a heavenly dialogue between God and the messiah could suggest that the messiah is situated in heaven until he is sent to fulfill his task on earth. Such a scenario could explain why the three heavenly envoys are recalled for his sake.

The idea of a messiah in heaven recurs in later talmudic texts such as *b. Sanh.* 98a (where he sits waiting at the gates of Rome until he is called for).¹⁵ But already some Second Temple texts may testify to this idea. The Son of Man in Dan 7:13–14 may be understood as a heavenly figure with functions similar to a Davidic messiah, perhaps in conjunction with a Davidide on earth (see Elgvin 2015). In the first century B.C.E., the Enochic *Similitudes* see the Son of Man as a messiah in heaven, and the latest addition to the *Similitudes* in chapter 71 reveals that Enoch himself is this enthroned Son of Man (i.e. an earthly sage

¹⁴ Knohl suggests that the lower part of the stone was left empty because it was intended to be set down in solid earth, and this part is indeed darker brown than the rest (2011b, 443).

¹⁵ Moshe Idel notes that in some rabbinic texts the messiah transcends earthly dimensions. He can be preexistent and belong to the heavenly realms where we find the *merkavah*, the heavenly temple, and the souls of the righteous (1998, 42–47).

transformed to heavenly messiah, not a messiah residing in heaven before being sent to earth). Further, 4Q521 (*4QMessianic Apocalypse*) 1 i 1–2 (“Heaven and earth will obey his messiah”) may reflect an early interpretation of the Son of Man as a cosmic messiah residing in heaven (Elgvin 2015). Cf. further Werman’s suggestion that in the first century C.E. the *Oracle of Hystaspes* described a messianic child taken to heaven after his birth to be sent to earth in the end-time (see note 11).

Towards the end of the text we find the following dialogue between Gabriel and the prophet:

⁷⁷ “Who are you?” – “I am Gabriel, the angel sent [by the Lord . . . and] ⁷⁸ you shall rescue them. A prophet and a shepherd shall rescue you.” – [“Then I] ask ⁷⁹ you for three shepherds, for three prophets.” ⁸⁰ On the third day: the sign! I am Gabriel, king of the angels, ⁸¹ the prince of princes, of those who are close to the courts . . . ⁸² The sign is for him. See, they[a]sk you.

The “you” addressed in line 78 and given the task of rescuing the people is either the prophet himself or the Davidic messiah, who could have been introduced in the end of line 77. The promise that “the sign is for him” (l. 82) probably refers to the messiah, so that lines 16–23 and 80–83 refer to the same sign promised on the third day.

The promise that “Jerusalem shall be as in former days” (l. 32), and the expectation of a Davidic messiah whose only hope to save Jerusalem is angelic intervention, show that the author was no supporter of the military might of Herod or the Roman/Hasmonean alliance that preceded him, and hint that the present leadership is illegitimate.

God’s Dialogue with the Son of David in *b. Sukkah* 52a

A text in *b. Sukkah* 52a contains close parallels to some crucial lines in the *Gabriel Inscription*. Both texts represent a rereading of the dialogue between the Lord and the Davidic king in Ps 2:7–8. The conflict between enemy peoples and the elect Davidide in Zion, God’s dialogue with the son of David and intervention for his anointed—these elements in Ps 2 were read both by this talmudic text and *Hazon Gabriel* as prophetic information about the end-time battle.

Lines 16–19 in the *Gabriel Inscription* should probably be read as follows (cf. Qimron and Yuditsky 2011, 31–34).

עבדי דוד בקש מן לפני, אַמְרִים [הש]יבני, האות אני מבקש מן לפניך.
 כה אמר [י]הוה צבאות אלהי ישראל, בני ב[י]די ברית חדשה לישראל,
 לשלשת ימין תדע. כו אמר יהוה אלהים צבאות אלהי ישראל, נשבר
 הרע מלפני הצדק. שאלני ואגיד לכה מה הצמח הרע הזה. לו ביסד
 אתה עומד, המלאך הוא בסמך, אל תירא.

My servant David, ask me: ¹⁷ “Give me words [in re]sponse, the sign I ask from you!” Thus says ¹⁸ the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel: “My son, in my hands I have ¹⁹ a new covenant for Israel, on the third day you will know it. Thus says ²⁰ the Lord God of Hosts, the God of Israel: Evil will be broken before ²¹ righteousness. Ask me, and I will tell you what this ²² evil plant is. You do not stand on firm ground, but the angel ²³ is your support, do not fear!”

Both Israel Knohl and John Collins have in their discussion on *Hazon Gabriel* referred to a text in *b. Sukkah* 52a that deals with messiah son of David and messiah son of Joseph/Ephraim, without noting the close terminological parallels between this text and the *Gabriel inscription* (Knohl 2011a, 49; Collins 2011, 109).¹⁶ A closer study of text from the Bavli will sharpen our understanding of the *Gabriel Inscription*. The talmudic text runs as follows:

תנו רבנן, משיח בן דוד (שעתיד להגלות במהרה בימינו), אומר לו הקב"ה "שאל ממני דבר ואתן לך," שנאמר 'אספרה אל חק יהוה, אמר אלי, בני אתה אני היום ילדתך. שאל ממני ואתנה גוים נחלתך' וכיון שראה משיח בן יוסף נהרג, אומר לפניו, "רבש"ע איני מבקש ממך אלא חיים." אומר לו, "חיים עד שלא אמרת כבר התנבא עליך דוד אביך," שנאמר 'חיים שאל ממך, נתתה לו ארך ימים עולם ועד'.

Our Rabbis taught, The Holy One, blessed be He, will say to the messiah son of David (May he reveal himself speedily in our days), “Ask of me anything, and I will give it to you,” as it is said, *I will tell of the decree of the Lord. The Lord said to me, you are my son, today have I begotten you. Ask of me and I will give the nations for your inheritance* (Ps 2:7–8). But when he will see that the messiah son of Joseph is slain, he will say to Him, “Lord of the Universe, I ask You for nothing but life.” “As to life,” He would answer him, “Your father David has already prophesied this concerning you,” as it is said, *He asked life of You, You gave it to him, even length of days for ever and ever* (Ps 21:5).

¹⁶ This talmudic text is discussed in Himmelfarb 2011. Knohl discusses the parallel between the *Gabriel Inscription* and *Sefer Zerubbabel* (see my discussion below), but does not note the same terminology in *b. Sukkah* 52a, which he also refers to: “To the best of my knowledge the only (other) place in ancient Jewish literature where terms of this sort (‘ask me, and I will tell you’) appears is in the Apocalypse of Zerubabel” (Knohl 2011b, 440–41).

This talmudic discussion opens with a reference to Zech 12:12, *And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart*. Rav (= R. Abba, Babylon, d. 247 C.E.) asks for the cause of this mourning, and explains that Rabbi Dosa (Galilee, late second century) and the Rabbis differ on the issue. For Rabbi Dosa, Zechariah prophesied on the slaying of the messiah son of Joseph in the end-time battle.

Joseph Heinemann attributes the development of the idea of a fighting messiah from Joseph/Ephraim who is killed by Israel's enemies, to rabbinic reflection after Bar Kokhba's catastrophic defeat (Heinemann 1975). And Rabbi Dosa is indeed dated to two generations after this revolt. Three targumic texts contain contrasting traditions on this messianic figure (Fishbane 1998; Reeves 2005: 49–50; Schäfer 2010: 133–5). The “full story” of this messiah as a precursor to the Davidic messiah is preserved in the seventh-century *Sefer Zerubbabel* and the seventh- or eighth-century *Secrets of R. Shimon bar Yohai* (Reeves 2005: 40–66, 76–89), but seems to be presupposed in *Bereshit Rabbah* (fifth century, *Ber. R.* 73.7, 75.5, 99.2), *b. Sukkah* 52a (sixth century), and in some later texts—a targumic *tosefet* to Zech 12:10, *Midrash Tanhuma*, and *Midrash Tehillim*.

Israel Yuval (2006, 35–38) suggests that the messiah son of Joseph is a Jewish internalization of the figure of Jesus as messiah (also he a son of Joseph, a northerner, and destined to die). Peter Schäfer finds such an internalization in the seventh century *Pesikta Rabbati*, the only Jewish text with a preexistent and suffering messiah who atones for mankind (2010, 135–178; idem 2012, 264–71). In a recent article Martha Himmelfarb (2013) surveys the various theories about the messiah of Ephraim, and concludes that there is no clear evidence for a messiah descended from Joseph in literature from the Second Temple period. And there are good reasons to see elements of this tradition, which has roots in the tannaitic period, as echoes and responses to Christian tradition.¹⁷

In the talmudic text Rav concludes that the Rabbis voted down Rabbi Dosa and decided that the mourning of Zech 12:12 is related to the end-time annihilation of the evil inclination. But Rav admits that Rabbi Dosa had a good cause since his interpretation would accord well with the preceding verse, “They shall look unto me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son” (Zech 12:10).

The rabbis of the Bavli (third to seventh centuries) knew that Zech 12:10–12 could be read on the piercing of the messiah son of Joseph and the subsequent mourning for him. Not surprisingly they read Ps 2 as a dialogue between God and the messiah son of David. Somewhat more surprising to a modern reader, they found the cause of the dialogue in the slaying of the messiah

¹⁷ Cana Werman suggests (in personal communication) that the features of the messiah of Ephraim represent a recast of Second Temple traditions of Elijah: According to Rev 11 and *Hystaspes*, Elijah is sent from heaven to earth to preach, be killed, resurrected, and return to heaven. Both this Elijah and messiah of Ephraim are northerners sent on an unsuccessful mission on earth, killed, and taken up to heaven.

son of Joseph in the battle against the enemies of Israel.

– What did the Davidide ask his God for, . . . שאל ממני ואתנה . . . (Ps 2:7)?

– They answer by referring to another royal psalm (Ps 21), easily connected with a Davidic messiah, where they find the same words on David asking and God giving in response (שאל ממך, נתתה לו: נתן, שאל). According to the Bavli, the Davidide asks God with the words חיים ממך אלא חיים “I ask You for nothing but life” (i.e. to not die as did the messiah son of Joseph). In response God grants him life everlasting, i.e. victory over the enemies and a portion in the world to come.

The words the Bavli attributes to the Davidic messiah are surprisingly close to God’s instructions to “David” in *Hazon Gabriel*: עבדי דוד בקש מן לפני, שאלני ואניד לכה “אֲמַרִים [הש]יבני, האות אני מבקש מן לפניך” . . . שאלני ואניד לכה. Both the talmudic text and *Hazon Gabriel* read Ps 2 as a dialogue between God and the Davidic messiah within the context of the end-time battle with Israel’s enemies, and present a new “recension” for their own times. In both texts the Davidide asks God for divine grace or intervention, and God responds to the benefit of his anointed and his people.¹⁸ Bavli uses the term בקש where Ps 2 has שאל, while *Hazon Gabriel* uses both בקש and שאל. The text of the Bavli is formed as a midrash of Ps 2 that interacts with Ps 21, while *Hazon Gabriel* integrates a dialogue inspired by Ps 2 into a larger oracle.

It seems difficult to postulate a literary or traditio-historical line between these two texts from respectively the first century B.C.E. and the sixth century C.E. More probably *Hazon Gabriel* and *b. Sukkah* 52a represent similar interpretations of royal biblical psalms that are reread on the role of the messiah in the end-times.

The seventh century apocalypse *Sefer Zerubbabel* presents a comparable dialogue between the Davidide Zerubbabel and the archangel Michael/Metatron, where Michael addresses Zerubbabel four times with the words שאל (לי) ואניד לך “Ask (me), and I will tell you.” This terminology in *Sefer Zerubbabel* is likely indebted to *b. Sukkah* 52a, since both texts relate to the end-time war and the two messiahs, and Zerubbabel is a Davidide himself.¹⁹

Ps 2 deals with enemy peoples conspiring against the Davidide—the same setting that is presupposed in *Hazon Gabriel*. The promise נשבר הרע מלפני הצדק “evil will be broken before righteousness” (*Hazon Gabriel* lines 20–21),

¹⁸ Werman suggests (in personal communication) that *b. Sukkah* is more pacifistic in style: the Davidide only asks God to stay alive. In contrast, *Hazon Gabriel* looks forward to a full-fledged battle, although conducted by heavenly powers. The *Yahad* combined a pacifistic ethos with a violent hope for the end-time—with heavenly figures interacting to support the earthly forces in the *Milhamah* texts: Justnes 2013.

¹⁹ The dialogue between Zerubbabel and Michael in *Sefer Zerubbabel* can be compared with that between the anonymous prophet and Gabriel in *Hazon Gabriel*. Both “prophets” have a heavenly encounter with the messiah son of David.

terminologically close to 1Q27 (*IQMysteries*) 1 i 5–7,²⁰ may be an actualization of Davidic texts such as Ps 2:8–9; 110:5–6; and Isa 11:4–5.

Thus, not only biblical prophets, but also royal psalms in the Psalter (and in particular Ps 2) were formative for the prophetic rereading of biblical texts in the *Gabriel Inscription*.

Other texts from roughly the same period, such as 1 Macc 3:3–9; 14:4–15 and *Ps. Sol.* 17, represent messianic readings of royal psalms including Ps 2. Texts of the *Yahad* present the same picture: The term used in the *Rule of the Congregation* for God’s sending the Davidic messiah, אַם יוֹלִיד [אַל] אֱלֹהִים הַמְשִׁיחַ אֹתָם, “when [God] begets the Messiah among them” (1QSa II 11–12),²¹ refers to Ps 2:7. And Ps 2 belongs to the reference texts of *4QFlorilegium* in its reading of the end-time assault against God’s people and his messiah (4Q174 I 11, 18–19). The Isaiah peshet contains similar tradition on the Davidic messiah (“the prince of the congregation,” “the Shoot of David”) in the end-time wars (4Q161 frgs. 5–6 and 8–10).²² So *Hazon Gabriel* is concurrent with contemporary exegetical tradition when it conflates an actualizing reading of Ps 2 into a larger apocalyptic or eschatological text. A century later John of Patmos would do the same (cf. Rev 19:11–21).

Messianic texts from the last two centuries B.C.E. can have a quite different flavor. 1 Maccabees (cf. e.g. 3:3–9 and 14:4–15) represents a restorative messianism within the context of Hasmonean state ideology: The priestly rulers Judah and Simon have brought messianic and eschatological promises to a

²⁰ The text runs וזה לכם האות כי יהיה, בהסגר מולדי עולה וגלה הרשע מפני הצדק כגלות [ה]ושך מפני אור, “This shall be to you the sign that it shall come to pass: When the begotten of unrighteousness are delivered up, and wickedness is removed from before righteousness, as darkness is removed from before light and as smoke wholly ceases and is no more, so shall wickedness cease forever, and righteousness shall be revealed as the sun (throughout) the full measure of the world.” Cf. *4QTime of Righteousness* (4Q215a) 1 ii 3–4 [עבון] וכול עולה ת[עבון] קצ הרשע וכול עולה ת[עבון] “for the period of wickedness has been completed and all injustice will ha[ve and en]d” (translations mine). On the text from *IQMysteries* and a parallel in the Amidah, see Flusser 1994.

²¹ Qimron’s reading יעֲדֵי must be discarded (Qimron 2010, 237). Josef Milik has no doubt about יוֹלִיד, but suggests the scribe misread a יוֹלִיד in his *Vorlage* (*DJD* 1, 117). IAA’s recent infrared photo B–284824 confirms Milik’s reading יוֹלִיד (<http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/manuscript/1Q-28-1> [accessed January 23, 2014]). *Yod* is awkwardly drawn, but there is no other material option. Stephen Pfann reads the perhaps parallel text preserved in 4Qpap cryptA Sai? [ת]ועד העדה והמשיח אֹתָם (*DJD* 36: 572–3). Texts such as Isa 7:14 (𐤓 and 𐤔); 9:6–7; and Mic 5:2 may have also influenced the tradition of the begetting and presentation of the messiah.

²² On *Ps. Sol.* 17 and these sectarian texts, see Collins 2010, 52–78. 1 Maccabees was written around 100 B.C.E., *Ps. Sol.* 17 around 50 B.C.E. 1QSa is probably a text from the second century (but copied c.75–50 B.C.E., according to a recent dating by Michael Langlois [personal communication]), while *4QFlorilegium* and 4QpIsa belong to the first half of the first century B.C.E.

preliminary fulfillment (Elgvin 2013, 55–56). Other texts expect a Davidide in the end-times, but with different connotations. *Ps. Sol.* 17 expects a Davidic ruler who does not excel in military power as did the Hasmoneans and Romans, but has his strength in God. In 4QpIsa the Shoot of David appears as a military leader in the war against the nations, angelic intervention is not mentioned. The more utopian *War Scroll* expects decisive angelic action that helps the warriors on earth—priests and pious ones, not trained men of war.

The preserved parts of *Hazon Gabriel* do not describe precisely how the enemy will be defeated, but angelic powers clearly play a major role (ll. 22–23, 25–28, 52, 65–68, 80–85), even more so than in the *War Scroll*. The importance of the heavenly hosts in *Hazon Gabriel* may be reflected in the repeated use of the appellation “YHWH of Hosts,” recurring ten times. Angelic chariots are mentioned twice (ll. 26, 67). The hope of Jerusalem is in God alone, not in human strength: “We trust in you, [not in] flesh and blood!” (ll. 66–67).

Again, does the *Gabriel Inscription* presuppose a specific historical situation of crisis, as Heinemann (1975) suggested for the idea of a slain messiah of Ephraim? *Sefer Zerubbabel* reflects the experience of wars between Persia, Byzantium, and the new Muslim empire in 614–638 C.E. (Reeves 2005, 47; Schäfer 2010, 134–5, 174–7). In contrast, the text from the Bavli hardly presupposes such a crisis. Thus, the Bavli adds weight to the possibility that *Hazon Gabriel* represents prophetic-eschatological exegesis of biblical texts disentangled from any acute situation of military crisis.

If the *Vision of Gabriel* is an apocalyptic vision of the end-time, what can we know about the intended audience and function of this text? Similar to the setting of the Revelation of John and *Yahad* texts on the end-time, the aim of such a text would be to strengthen and edify the community of the author, perhaps in a time of trials. The circle(s) of the author would have a strong sense of communion with the heavenly realms, similar to the *Yahad* and John of Patmos. We are probably dealing with a sectarian group in Judea of the first century B.C.E., different from the *Yahad* and at a distance from the ruling circles and the temple establishment.

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