
“By Three Days, Live”: Messiahs, Resurrection, and Ascent to Heaven in *Hazon Gabriel**

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Ada Yardeni and Binyamin Elitzur have recently published a fascinating text of an apocalypse transmitted by the angel Gabriel, which they suggest calling *Hazon Gabriel* (the Vision of Gabriel).¹ Based on its linguistic features, they date the text, written in Hebrew on stone, to the late first century BCE. This suggestion is corroborated by the paleographic evidence, which points to the late first century BCE or the early first century CE.

I

Hazon Gabriel is written in two partially preserved columns. In the first column, we have a prophecy regarding the coming destruction of evil within three days:

לשלשת ימין תדע כי אמר ה' אלהים צבאות אלהי ישראל נשבר הרע מלפני הצדק
[By three days you shall know that, thus said the Lord of Hosts, the God of
Israel, the evil has been broken by righteousness.] (lines 19–21)

This announcement is followed by a promise that God will soon appear and that his revelation will cause the universe to tremble:

עוד מעט קיטוט היא ואני מרעיש את השמים ואת הארץ
[In just a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth.] (lines 24–26)

* I wish to express my gratitude to David Jeselsohn, who enabled me to see the original inscription. The authenticity of the inscription was recently checked and confirmed by Yuval Goren of Tel Aviv University. He will publish soon a detailed description of his research. All English translations from *Hazon Gabriel* are mine.

¹ Ada Yardeni and Binyamin Elitzur, “Document: A First-Century BCE Prophetic Text Written on a Stone; First Publication,” *Cathedra* 123 (2007): 155–66 (in Hebrew).

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Reflected in *Hazon Gabriel* is a war that led to bloodshed in Jerusalem and elsewhere. The text also contains a reference to the angel Michael and other angels who use chariots, probably to fight Israel's enemies:

אלה המרכבות שבע [ע]ל שער ירושלים ושערי יהודה ... למען ... מיכאל ולכל האחרין
[These are the seven chariots on the gate of Jerusalem and the gates of Judea
. . . for . . . Michael and all the others.] (lines 26–28)

Hazon Gabriel mentions a number of messianic figures. Line 16 states עבדי דוד בקש מן לפני אפרים, which may be read in two possible ways: (a) the Lord addresses his servant David, whom he asks to request something of Ephraim, or (b) God relates that his servant David has requested something of Ephraim. The continuation of the passage confirms the first possibility. The editors (Yardeni and Elitzur) read in the next line: []. שים האות אני מבקש מן לפניך. The first word should probably be reconstructed as שישים or וישים, thus giving the following coherent reading:

עבדי דוד בקש מן לפני אפרים [שי]שים האות, אני מבקש מן לפניך
[My servant David, ask of Ephraim (that he) place the sign; (this) I ask of you.]

The Lord addresses David, asking him to request of Ephraim that he place a sign. The nature of the sign is not specified.

Two biblical characters are mentioned in this text: David and Ephraim. The expression “My servant David” also appears in the Bible as a term for an eschatological leader (see Ezek. 34:23, 24, 37:24, 25). As for Ephraim, the biblical Ephraim is the son of Joseph; consequently, “My servant David” and “Ephraim” in *Hazon Gabriel* are apparently parallel to the “Messiah son of David” and the “Messiah son of Joseph” mentioned in the Talmud. As Yardeni and Elitzur observe, “Ephraim” is the name of the Messiah in *Pesikta Rabbati*, who suffers in order to atone for Israel.² In the Bible Ephraim refers to northern Israel. I do believe that some biblical references to Ephraim are the basis of the image of Ephraim as a suffering “Son of God” or a suffering messianic figure. In Jer. 31:18 we hear the words of Ephraim: “Thou hast chastend me, and I was chastend.” God answers Ephraim and says: “Truly, Ephraim is a dear son to Me. A child that is dandled!”³ As was noted by M. Fishbane, Ephraim is described in these verses as both the suffering

² See M. Ish-Shalom, ed., *Pesikta Rabbati* 36 (Tel Aviv: Friedmann, 1963), 162–63. While it is true that in the Dead Sea Scrolls “Ephraim” refers to the Pharisees, it does not seem to have this meaning in our text. The text has no typical Qumranic terminology, and there is no reference in this text to any sectarian polemic.

³ Jer. 31:20, according to the Jewish Publication Society translation.

and beloved Son of God.⁴ A similar picture of Ephraim is found in Hosea 11:1–8.

The tradition of the “Messiah son of Joseph” and his death first appears in the Talmud (BT Sukkah 52a) and at length in “Sefer Zerubbabel.”⁵ In an article I published a few years ago, I have argued that the character of the Messiah son of Joseph and the tradition of his killing were created in the late first century BCE or the early first century CE.⁶ *Hazon Gabriel* confirms my assumption that this messianic character was already known at that time.

II

Along with the positive characters, “My servant David” and “Ephraim,” *Hazon Gabriel* also contains a negative character: as was mentioned above, in lines 19–21 we read about the destruction of evil:

לשלשת ימין תדע כי אמר ה' אלהים צבאות אלהי ישראל נשבר הרע מלפני הצדק
 [By three days you shall know that, thus said the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, the evil has been broken by righteousness.]

The phrase “the evil has been broken by righteousness” is based on the biblical prophecy of Gabriel against the wicked king: “but, by no human hand, he shall be broken” (Dan. 8:25). *Hazon Gabriel* then continues:

שאלני ואגיד לכה מה הצמח הרע הזה
 [Ask me, and I shall tell you what is this wicked branch *tzemah*.] (lines 21–22)

As Yardeni and Elitzur remark, *tzemah* is a clearly messianic name.⁷ Jeremiah prophesies: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch [*tzemah*], and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness. . . . And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness’” (Jer. 23:5). The righteous branch of Jeremiah is a distinguished king who is given the divine name “the Lord is our righteousness.” Thus, the “wicked branch” of *Hazon Gabriel* is a wicked

⁴ See Michael Fishbane, “Midrash and Messianism: Some Theologies of Suffering and Salvation,” in *Toward the Millennium*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Mark R. Cohen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 70–71.

⁵ See Martha Himmelfarb, “Sefer Zerubbabel,” in *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature*, ed. David Stern and Mark Jay Mirsky (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 67–90.

⁶ See Israel Knohl, “On ‘the Son of God,’ Armilus, and Messiah Son of Joseph,” *Tarbiz* 68 (1998): 13–38 (in Hebrew with an English abstract).

⁷ Yardeni and Elitzur, “Document,” 157.

messianic king, the opposite of the “righteous branch.”⁸ Something like that would be termed “Antichrist” in a later period.⁹

Characteristically, the Antichrist is duplicitous, presenting himself as Messiah and Redeemer while actually being the devil’s spawn who comes to corrupt and lead astray. Such a character is known to us from apocalyptic works similar to *Hazon Gabriel*.¹⁰

With this in the background, I wish to propose an interpretation for a difficult word in our text. The “wicked branch” is immediately followed (line 22) by a term that the editors had difficulty reading and interpreting. The possibilities they offer are לובנסר, ליבנסר, לובנסך, ליבנסך, לובנסד, ליבנסד, or ליבנסך. After checking the original inscription, I am sure that the first option is the correct reading: לובנסד, meaning possibly “white plaster” (לובן סיד) or “plastered white” (לובן סוד). This singular expression aptly describes the wicked branch as a false Messiah: he presents himself as pure and clean (whitewashed), but internally he is wicked and a sham. The New Testament uses such terms to depict the hypocrisy of the wicked: Paul compares the High Priest Ananias to a whitewashed wall because he claimed to judge him according to the Torah, yet he had ordered that Paul be beaten, contrary to the law (Acts 23:3). Jesus likens the two-faced Pharisees, who have the appearance of the righteous but are replete with hypocrisy, to whitewashed tombs full of uncleanness (Matt. 23:27). The spelling of לובנסד as a single word is exceptional but apparently reflects of a term common at the time. Semantically, it resembles the Greek κεκοιτωμένε, which appears in these traditions in the New Testament. This term probably draws upon similar popular expressions.¹¹

III

Line 80 of the text begins with the words לשלשת ימין (by three days), after which the editors read the letter *het* followed by three undecipherable letters and then the words אני גבריאל (I Gabriel). In my opinion, the word that the editors read only partially is completely legible

⁸ Note should also be taken of the wording עץ הרשע (the tree of evil) in a Qumran document that also mentions מלכות בשמן משוח (anointed [Messiah] with the oil of kingship); see E. Larson, “4Q Narrative A [4Q458],” in his *Qumran Cave 4, XXVI: Cryptic Texts and Miscellanea*, Discoveries in the Judean Desert 36 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pt. 1:355–60.

⁹ The description of this messianic figure as an evil person who claimed to be a Messiah is more than a standard reference to a false Messiah. A false Messiah is a person who wished to redeem Israel but could not achieve this goal. He is a not evil but a false redeemer.

¹⁰ See David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988), 207–13, 433–53; Knohl, “On ‘the Son of God.’”

¹¹ See Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Oxford: Basil & Blackwell, 1971), 638.

and can clearly be read as **האיה**.¹² The context implies that the angel Gabriel addresses someone and tells him: “by three days, **האיה**- live/be resurrected!” (cf. Ezek. 16:6: “In your blood, Live [היי].”). This spelling is well known to us from the Dead Sea Scrolls such as 1QIs^a (30:39), where we find the spelling **יאכה** instead of **יכה**.¹³

Since the text is not preserved in its entirety, we cannot definitively identify the person whom the angel Gabriel orders to come to life by three days (however, see the appendix). As we saw above, the text mentions Ephraim, the Messiah son of Joseph who, according to the Jewish tradition, was killed in battle and is resurrected by the Messiah son of David.¹⁴ In light of this, we may suggest that the resurrected character in *Hazon Gabriel* is a messianic figure as well.

There are many indications that *Hazon Gabriel* was composed on the background of a bloody confrontation: lines 13–14 read: **נהה כל הגאים . . . על ירושלם** (Behold, all the nations . . . against Jerusalem), a clear allusion to Zech. 14:2: “For I will gather all the nations [גוים] against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken.”¹⁵ The text in line 57: **סתום דם טבחי ירושלם** (seal up the blood of the slaughtered of Jerusalem) is reminiscent of Gabriel’s order to Daniel (Dan. 8:26): “but seal up the vision.” In our text, the recipient of the vision is commanded to “seal up” the blood of those who have been murdered in the city.¹⁶ Later (line 67) the text states: **בשר לו על דם זו המרכבה שלהן** (announce to him of the blood, this is their chariot). The recipient of the vision is now asked to herald, and to explain, that the blood of some victims becomes the “chariot” that will carry them to heaven. Elijah’s ascent

¹² The letter *alef* is completely clear; see also the shape of the *alef* of **אנכי** in line 77. The letter *yod* is written in diverse forms in the text. On the shape of the letter *heh* here, compare the shape of the *heh* in the word **אלהים** in line 11 and the shape of the *heh* at the beginning of the second word of line 17. The line underneath the letter *yod* was apparently caused by the ink dripping.

¹³ On the use of an *alef* as a vowel in 1QIs^a, see Yehezkel Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1QIs^a)* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 20–23; Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 21–23. This phenomenon is also known in the MT. See, e.g., **כאביר** (Isa. 10:13); **וקאם** (Hosea 10:14); **דאג** (Neh. 13:16). Evidence of this spelling also appears in the manuscripts of the Mishnah. See Jacob Nahum Epstein, *Introduction to the Mishnaic Text* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964), 1234–35 (in Hebrew). Compare the general discussion of Elisha Qimron, “Initial *Alef* as a Vowel in Hebrew and Aramaean Documents from Qumran Compared with Other Hebrew and Aramaean Sources,” *Lesonenu* 39 (1974–75): 133–46. As noted by Qimron (145), this initial *alef* is used mainly before or after the letters *yod* and *vav*.

¹⁴ See Himmelfarb, “Sefer Zerubbabel.”

¹⁵ On **גאים** in place of **גוים** for “nations,” see the editors’ comments, Yardeni and Elitzur, “Document,” 162.

¹⁶ The editors (*ibid.*, 157) were undecided as to whether to read **טבחי** as an allusion to the animals of sacrifices. In my opinion, the broad context of the text weighs against this possibility.

to heaven in a “chariot of fire and horses of fire” (2 Kings 2:11) is obviously in the background.

IV

In *Hazon Gabriel*, we find our earliest reference to “Ephraim” as a messianic figure. In the Hebrew Bible there is no evidence of “Ephraim” as a Messiah. However, as I have noted above, I think that the figure of “Ephraim” in *Hazon Gabriel* is based on biblical verses that describe him as the suffering Son of God. The atmosphere of *Hazon Gabriel* contains elements of mourning and exile, death, and bloodshed.¹⁷ It appears that “Ephraim” is a symbolic figure containing all these elements. Unlike the messianic figure of “David,” which traditionally represents bravery, military skill, and triumph, the figure of “Ephraim” symbolizes a very different, new type of messianism. “Ephraim” is a Messiah of suffering and death. It should also be noted in this context that some books written at approximately the same time as *Hazon Gabriel* also have the image of Ephraim’s father, Joseph, as a son of God and one who atones with his suffering for the sins of others:

In the book entitled *Joseph and Aseneth*, Joseph is described as the “son of God.”¹⁸ This book, probably written between 100 BC and 115 CE, also gives Joseph the title “God’s firstborn son.”¹⁹ While scholars are undecided whether these titles were originally intended to designate Joseph as a Messiah or redeemer,²⁰ readers of the book could obviously have gotten the impression that Joseph is a messianic figure.

In another work of the second temple period, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” we find a connection between Joseph and the figure of the “Suffering Servant.” In the *Testament of Benjamin* (5:8),²¹ Jacob

¹⁷ In the second half of line 37, the editors read the words אבר.אותגלות, which have no meaning. In my view the correct reading is אפר ואות גלות, which means “ash and a sign of exile” (for the shape of the פ of אפר, see the shape of the פ of the word מלפני in line 21).

¹⁸ Christof Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2:202–47, quote on 6:3, 5, 13:13.

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 187, quote on 18:11, 21:4, 23:10. Chesnutt holds a similar view; see Randall D. Chesnutt, *From Death to Life: Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995). Bohak, who argues that the book was written by the priests of Onias’s temple in Heliopolis, dates it to between 160 and 145 BC. See Gideon Bohak, “Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994), 208–15. However, see the review of Bohak’s argument in John Joseph Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 107–8.

²⁰ See Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth,” 191–92, and the literature in n. 74.

²¹ See Howard C. Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:826.

says to Joseph: “In you will be fulfilled the heavenly prophecy which says that the spotless one will be defiled by lawless men and the sinless one will die for the sake of impious men.”²²

The author of the testament had clearly identified Joseph with the suffering servant of Isaiah 52–53. He was probably led to this idea by the fact that Joseph had himself been a suffering slave.²³ At the same time, one could say of Joseph as of Isaiah’s servant: “Behold my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high” (Isa. 52:13).

Thus, it seems that the designation of the suffering Messiah as the “son of Joseph” extends back to sources from the second temple period, including *Joseph and Aseneth*, the *Testament of Benjamin*, and now *Hazon Gabriel*.²⁴ In light of these, we should also understand the tra-

²² The words quoted here appear both in the Greek version and the Armenian version of the *Testament of Benjamin*. However, in the Greek version there are additional words that have clear christological connotations. Following Charles and Becker, I tend to see the Armenian version as the original Jewish text of the testament, which was later interpolated by a Christian editor; see Robert Henry Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1913), 356; Jürgen Becker, *Die Testament der Zwölf Patriarchen (JSHRZ III 1)* [The testaments of the twelve patriarchs] (Gutersloh, 1980), 132ff. There are other views among scholars: according to de Jonge and Hollander, who see the testaments as a Christian composition, the Greek version is the original text that was later abbreviated by the Armenian translator. See Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Leiden, 1975), 209; Harm W. Hollander, *Joseph as the Ethical Model in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Leiden, 1981), 128–29; Harm W. Hollander and Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Leiden, 1985), 419–20. However, I find their view difficult to accept. Why should the Armenian translator omit the clearly christological elements? However, because of these elements it is difficult to accept the view of those scholars who claim that the Greek version is a product of a Jewish author: see J. C. O’Neill, “The Lamb of God in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 2 (1979): 2–30; Marc Philonenko, *Les interpolations chrétiennes des testaments des douze patriarches et les manuscrits de Qumran* [The Christian interpolations of the testaments of the twelve patriarchs and the manuscripts of Qumran], *Cahiers de la revue d’histoire et de philosophie* [Notebooks of the review of history and philosophy] 35 (Paris, 1960), 47–49. For an understanding of Joseph as a prototype for Jesus in patristic writings, see Aubrey W. Argyle, “Joseph the Patriarch in Patristic Teachings,” *Expository Times* 67 (1995–96): 199–201.

²³ See Gen. 39:20; Ps. 81:7.

²⁴ In 4Q541 we find a description of an interesting figure who combines wisdom and suffering. It is said further that this figure will atone for the people of his generation (4Q541 frag. 9I, line 2). See Emile Puech, “Fragments d’un apocryphe de Levi et le personnage eschatologique” [Fragments of an apocalypse of Levi and an eschatological personage], in *The Madrid Qumran Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. J. Trebolle Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner (Leiden, 1992), 466. In one of the fragments of this document (frag. 4 II, line 2, 460), there are the letters $\text{ן} \text{לבר} \text{ן}$ J. Since the remains of the letter after the ן suggest the letter ס , Puech proposes the restoration $\text{ן} \text{לבר} \text{ן} \text{י} \text{וס}$. Is it possible that the figure described in this document is not a priestly figure but rather the Messiah, son of Joseph? The wisdom of this figure might be based on the wisdom of Joseph in the genesis story. The possible connection between the *Testament of Benjamin* and the Messiah son of Joseph was already

dition about Ephraim or the Messiah son of Joseph as the slain Messiah.

v

Thus, *Hazon Gabriel* attests that the character of “Ephraim” as the “Messiah son of Joseph” was already known in the late first century BCE. From it we also learn of the contemporaneous fashioning of a belief in resurrection “after three days” and in the ascent to heaven of some people who were slaughtered. These conclusions are of decisive importance for understanding the messianic consciousness of “Jesus son of Joseph,” who was born around the time when this text was composed.

In this context, I wish to compare the account of Ephraim in this apocalyptic text with the depiction of Jesus in Matt. 24:29–30: “Immediately after the suffering of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see ‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven’ with power and great glory.”

We are acquainted with the motif of the darkening of the sun and the eclipse of the celestial luminaries from various biblical verses.²⁵ The portrayal of the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven is based on Dan. 7:13. The first part of verse 30 in this passage from Matthew is especially relevant for our discussion: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn.” The wording “then all the tribes of the earth will mourn” is based on Zech. 12:12: “The land shall mourn, each family by itself,” which the rabbis applied to the eulogy for the Messiah son of Joseph who is killed.²⁶

The “sign of the Son of Man” that will appear in heaven prior to the redemption is reminiscent of *Hazon Gabriel*’s depiction of “Ephraim.”²⁷ According to our reconstruction, in lines 16–17 God addresses David and asks him to request Ephraim to place the sign. This placing of the sign is followed by a description of the breaking of evil and the ap-

noted by G. D. Dix, “The Messiah Ben Joseph,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1926): 135–36; and Philonenko, *Les Interpolations Chrétiennes*, 25.

²⁵ See esp. Isa. 13:10–11, 34:4; Joel 1:4.

²⁶ See BT Sukkah 52a; PT Sukkah 5:1 (55b).

²⁷ For a survey of the scholarly interpretations of the essence of this sign, see David C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge, 1996), 104–5; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew, International Critical Commentary* 3 (Cambridge, 1997), 359–60.

pearance of God and the angels. *Hazon Gabriel* is the only work known to us in which the Messiah son of Joseph places a sign heralding the advent of the salvation. The tradition of the “sign of the Son of Man” would therefore seem to be founded on the depiction of the sign of “Ephraim” in *Hazon Gabriel*. What, then, is the nature of this sign?

According to *Hazon Gabriel*, the blood of the slain is transformed into a chariot that ascends to heaven. I would therefore suggest that the sign that Ephraim is to place is that of the spilled blood, which is now revealed in heaven. The depiction of blood as a “sign” could be based on a verse in Exodus (12:13): “The blood shall be a sign for you.” In light of this possibility, the “sign of the Son of Man” that is seen in heaven could well be the spilled blood of the “Son of Man.” Thus, when the “sign of the Son of Man” is seen in heaven, all the tribes of the earth will mourn for the slain Messiah. It is possible that Matt. 24: 29–30 is based on the tradition that is attested in *Hazon Gabriel*.

Appendix

Whom Did the Angel Gabriel Resurrect “by Three Days”?

I will now attempt to identify the person who was resurrected after three days. Since this identification entails the reconstruction of letters and words in the text, it will remain in the realm of conjecture. It should be stressed that the acceptance or rejection of the following proposals should not affect the validity of my arguments in the body of the article.

The first part of line 80 states: “By three days, live. I Gabriel.” This is then followed by the remnants of two words. The letters cannot easily be deciphered, but the two fragmentary letters that begin the first word could possibly be read as remnants of the letters *gimel* and *vav*.²⁸ The letters of the second word are similarly indistinct: a *lamed* can be read clearly; I identify the letter preceding it as *ayin*.²⁹ The entire line therefore reads as follows. Doubtful letters are underlined, and undecipherable letters are marked by a period:

לשלושת ימין חאיה, אני גבריאל, גוּ. על..

I propose completing and reconstructing the line as follows:

לשלושת ימין חאיה, אני גבריאל, גוּ[זר] על[יד]

[By three days, live, I Gabriel command you.]

Gabriel addresses some individual and commands him to arise after three days.

In the beginning of following line (81), we read the words שר השרין (prince of the princes). Taken together, our reconstruction then reads:

לשלושת ימין חאיה, אני גבריאל, גוּ[זר] על[יד] שר השרין

[By three days, live, I Gabriel, command you, prince of the princes.]

²⁸ See the shape of the letter *gimel* in line 78.

²⁹ See the shape of the letter *ayin* in the word הרע in line 22.

Thus, the “prince of the princes” is probably the one who is commanded here by Gabriel to arise from the dead.

But who is this “prince of the princes”? The main biblical source for *Hazon Gabriel* is the angel’s words to Daniel in his first revelation to the prophet, described in Dan. 8:15–26. In this passage, Gabriel describes a king “of bold countenance” (vv. 24–25): “and [he shall] destroy mighty men and the people of the saints . . . and he shall even rise up against the prince of princes.” We should then ask: who is the “prince of princes” of the book of Daniel?

Chapter 8 of Daniel tells how the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel to explain the vision the latter had seen in Susa. In this vision Daniel had seen a horn of which it is said: “It grew great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them. It magnified itself, even up to the prince of the host; and the continual burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown” (vv. 10–11). Gabriel explains to Daniel that the horn that will cast down and trample some of the host of stars is the king “of bold countenance” (Dan. 8:23), who “shall make deceit prosper under his hand” (Dan. 8:25). The heavenly host cast down and trampled by the horn is “the people of the saints” (Dan. 8:24), that is, Israel. Gabriel explains the words of the vision, “it magnified itself, even up to the prince of the host” (Dan. 10:11), by stating, “and he shall even rise up against the prince of princes” (Dan. 8:25). Thus, the “prince of princes,” who would be defeated by the deceitful king “of bold countenance,” is the “prince of the host” seen by Daniel in his vision.

Traditional commentators and modern scholars differ regarding the identity of this “prince of the host.” Since the “host of heaven” seen by Daniel is “the people of the saints,” that is, the people of Israel, then we may argue that this “prince” is the earthly leader of this people, that is, the leader of the Israelites. Some authorities accordingly regard this as a reference to the High Priest Onias III, who was murdered in Antiochia.³⁰ This interpretation is supported by the phrase “an anointed one shall be cut off” in Gabriel’s second revelation to Daniel (Dan. 9:26), a statement that most likely relates to the assassination of Onias III.³¹ However, after the reference to the “prince of the host,” the biblical text continues: “and the continual burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown,” which would indicate that the prince is God himself. Some commentators adopt an intermediate position, wherein the “prince of the host” is identified with the angel Michael, who, according to the book of Daniel, is Israel’s prince.³² If we are right in assuming that in *Hazon Gabriel* the “prince of the princes” is the one who was resurrected by Gabriel, it seems that the author of this text understood the “prince of princes” to be the earthly leader of the Israelites.

The author of *Hazon Gabriel* apparently interpreted the declaration by Gabriel in Daniel 8 as follows: the king “of bold countenance,” who “shall make deceit prosper under his hand,” is the “whitewashed wicked branch” (lines

³⁰ On the murder of Onias, see 2 Macc. 4:33–36. This interpretation was first offered by Ephrem Syrus. We could cite scriptural verses that speak of the priests as *sarim* (e.g., שָׂרֵי קֹדֶשׁ וּשְׂרֵי הָאֱלֹהִים in 1 Chron. 24:5) in support of this interpretive possibility. See J. A. Montgomery, *Daniel*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1927), 335.

³¹ See John Joseph Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 356.

³² See *ibid.*, 333; Dan. 10:21 (this interpretation was suggested by Ibn Ezra).

21–22). He will destroy “the people of the saints” (i.e., Israel) and attack, and even kill, their leader, the “prince of the princes” (line 81). *Hazon Gabriel* asserts that the angel Gabriel will resurrect the executed prince of the princes “by three days” (line 80).

The mention of the “prince of the princes” in line 81 is followed by four letters. Only the first and last letters are legible, thus hindering a reconstruction of this word (a proposed reconstruction will be offered below). This is immediately followed by the words אַרְבוֹת צְרִים. In biblical or rabbinic language, אַרְבוֹה means an opening or a niche. I believe that the second word in this expression is the deficient spelling of צְרִים (rocks). אַרְבוֹת צְרִים would therefore mean openings or depressions in the rocks, that is, crevices. Consequently, the death and resurrection of the “prince of the princes” were somehow related to “rocky crevices.”

The words “prince of princes” (שַׂר הַשְּׂרִיף) and “rocky crevices” (אַרְבוֹת צְרִים) in line 81 are separated by a word of four letters. The editors propose *dalet* for the first letter and a final *nun* for the last and make no effort to reconstruct the middle two letters. I maintain that what remains of the second letter could be the top of the letter *vav*, and the remains of the third letter can be identified as the left part of the letter *mem*,³³ thus producing the word דוֹמֵן (*domen*, or dung). According to this reconstruction, Gabriel addresses the prince of princes, and tells him:

לְשׁוֹשֵׁת יָמִין הָאֵיחָהּ, אֲנִי גַבְרִיאֵל, גִּן [זֶר] עַל [יָד] שַׂר הַשְּׂרִיף, דוֹמֵן אַרְבוֹת צְרִים.

[By three days, live, I Gabriel command you, prince of princes, the dung of the rocky crevices.]

All the occurrences of *domen* in the Bible are connected with people who were killed but not buried and whose blood becomes “as dung” upon the earth.³⁴ It is in this context that we should understand the depiction of the “prince of the princes,” as killed in the depressions in the rocks and left unburied, as “dung of the rocky crevices.”³⁵

On linguistic grounds, *Hazon Gabriel* should properly be dated to the late first century BCE, a dating supported by the paleographic evidence. The circumstances of the discovery of the stone on which the *Hazon* is written are unknown, and the editors state only that the stone might have come to light in Transjordan. There are indications that *Hazon Gabriel* was written with a military conflict in the background. The mention of “the slaughtered of Jerusalem” and of “the nations,” in the context of Jerusalem, might suggest an event in the course of which blood was shed in Jerusalem by Gentiles. There is, in fact, a significant occurrence that took place in the late first century BCE (when *Hazon Gabriel* was composed) in which much blood was shed by a gentile army, both in Jerusalem and elsewhere. This was the rebellion that erupted in 4 BCE, upon the death of King Herod the Great. The insurgents sought to

³³ See, e.g., the shape of the letter *mem* in the word מֶן in line 83.

³⁴ See 2 Kings 9:37; Jer. 8:2, 9:21, 16:4, 25:33; Ps. 83:11.

³⁵ The unburied dead is a common motif in works close to *Hazon Gabriel*. See Flusser (*Judaism*, 426–27), who maintains that this is a legendary motif based on Zech. 12:10; I, however, believe that this reflects the reality in which the burial of dead rebels was prohibited, as was prevalent in the ancient world.

free themselves from the yoke of the Roman-supported Herodian line.³⁶ The insurrection began in Jerusalem and spread throughout the land of Israel. The Jewish and Roman sources tell us about Simon, one of the three leaders of the revolt, who was active in Transjordan.³⁷ He proclaimed himself king and was seen as such by his supporters, who undoubtedly viewed him as the fulfillment of their messianic hopes. The historian Josephus describes Simon's death after being defeated on the battlefield: "Simon himself, endeavouring to escape up a steep ravine, was intercepted by Gratus [Herod's military commander], who struck the fugitive from the side a blow on the neck, which severed his head from his body."³⁸ According to the account in *Hazon Gabriel*, the "prince of the princes" became as "dung of the rocky crevices" after his death. Thus, the mention of the "rocky crevices," close to that of the death of the "prince of princes," could allude to the killing, in the rocky crevices of Transjordan, of Simon, the leader of the revolt who had assumed the mantle of royalty.

It should be noted that our suggestion that the man resurrected by Gabriel is the "prince of princes" and the identification of the latter (who became as "dung of the rocky crevices") with Simon remain in the realm of conjecture. Despite this, the main conclusions to be drawn from *Hazon Gabriel* remain valid without reference to any specific historical identification.

³⁶ See Flavius Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 2:1–5, and *Antiquities* 17:10 (250–98).

³⁷ Simon's prominent role among the leaders of the rebellion is attested by the fact that he is the only one mentioned by the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (*The Histories* 5:9:2), who also states that Simon crowned himself as king. On the leaders of the revolt, see William R. Farmer, "Judas, Simon, and Athrogenes," *New Testament Studies* 4 (1958): 147–55; Richard A. Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs* (Harrisburg, PA, 1999), 111–17; Nikos Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty*, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 30 (Sheffield, 1998), 207 n. 79.

³⁸ Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 2:4:2, trans. Henry St. John Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 345.