

## THE DATE OF THE WORDS OF GAD THE SEER

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss a "new" book by the name of *The Words of Gad the Seer*. This is an apocryphal Hebrew book known only from a unique manuscript that was copied at Cochin, India, in the middle of the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was purchased by the University of Cambridge, England, and since then it has been there.<sup>1</sup> The name of the book, together with other extrabiblical books that were in the possession of the Jews of Cochin, has appeared in print in German, Hebrew, and English during the last two centuries. Nevertheless, this book is almost unknown to the scholarly world.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this article is not only to draw attention to this book but also to demonstrate its significance by evaluating its date.

It was S. Z. Schechter who announced the existence of the manuscript at the Cambridge library toward the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> He devoted only one page to the manuscript, expressing his opinion that the book was written in the Middle Ages. Some thirty years later I. Abrahams devoted a whole paper (of five pages) to the same text, repeating Schechter's opinion concerning the date of the book.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, the present writer believes that the book under discussion is from the first centuries CE, and this question will be dealt with here.

<sup>1</sup> This is MS. 00.1.20. My sincere thanks are due to the syndics of Cambridge University Library and to Dr. Stefan C. Reif, for their kind permission to publish that manuscript. The microfilm in the Institute of Microfilms of Hebrew Manuscripts in the National Library in Jerusalem is 16265. On this occasion I wish to thank Professor I. Ta-Shema, the head of that institute, who followed my first steps in this research in 1981. From him I learned a great deal, and some of my comments are derived from him.

<sup>2</sup> See my forthcoming paper "The Discovery of The Words of Gad the Seer."

<sup>3</sup> S. Z. Schechter, "Notes on Hebrew MSS in the University Library at Cambridge," *JQR* 6 (1894) 136-45.

<sup>4</sup> I. Abrahams, "The Words of Gad the Seer," in *Livre d'Hommage à la mémoire du Dr Samuel Poznanski* (Warsaw: Édité par le comité de la grande synagogue à Varsovie, 1927; reprint, Jerusalem: n.p., 1969) 8-12.

### I. The Content of *The Words of Gad the Seer*

Before any attempt is made to analyze the book, a short description of its content is not superfluous.

*The Words of Gad the Seer* contains fourteen chapters dealing with King David and his prophet Gad.<sup>5</sup> Each of the chapters is different from the others, so reading the first chapter gives no clue to the content of any other chapter in the book. The style is biblical, in accordance with its heroes (some of whom are not mentioned in the Bible or elsewhere). Even when the author writes his own ideas, almost every word or phrase reflects a biblical verse. The following is a summary of the contents of the chapters:

I (vv. 1–63). God's revelation to Gad the Seer. The Seer sees animals, the sun, and the moon, and all that happens is interpreted by the voice of God. The lamb is sacrificed on the heavenly altar but not before he praises the Lord. Gad is instructed to tell David his revelation, and David blesses the Lord and congratulates Gad for the secret that God has told him.

II (vv. 64–92). A second revelation to Gad concerning the last days. There is a prophecy of devastation on Edom that "dwells in the land of Kittim" while quoting their anti-Jewish opinions. There will be a battle between Michael, the High Prince, and Samael, Prince of the World.

III (vv. 93–104). On Passover a Moabite shepherd asks King David to convert him. David does not know what to do, and he asks the Lord. Nathan the prophet answers in the name of God: "Moabite male, not Moabite female." The Moabite stays among David's shepherds and his daughter Şefira (צפירה) becomes a concubine to Solomon.

IV (vv. 105–20). A story that praises the nature of King David, the wise judge.

V (vv. 121–30). Before a battle between the Philistines and Israel, the Lord speaks to Gad to tell David not to be frightened. That night a fiery vehicle descends from heaven and smites the Philistines.

VI (vv. 131–41). God sends Gad to tell David not to boast of his strength. David admits that all of his strength comes from God. God is satisfied with David's answer, and for that reason God decides that he will help the House of David forever.

VII (vv. 142–77). David counts the children of Israel. This is a recension that combines 2 Sam 24:1–25 with 1 Chr 21:1–30. Both biblical texts, together with some "additions," appear to be integral to the chapter.

VIII (vv. 178–98). God reveals himself to David, telling him he should speak to his people. David gathers the people and preaches to them concerning the Lord's names and titles. David urges his people not only to listen to the Torah but to fulfill it as well.

<sup>5</sup> These chapters are divided into 375 verses with approximately 5,200 words, only very few of which are corrupted and illegible. The nature of the manuscript is a subject in itself.

IX (vv. 199–226). Hiram, King of Tyre, asks David to send him messengers to teach him Torah. David answers that Hiram ought to fear the Lord and to fulfill the commandments of the children of Noah. A list of God's attributes is given, and the children of Israel are described as sealed with Shaddai. Hiram and his servants believe in Israel's election and praise Israel. God hears Hiram and sends Gad to tell David that Hiram and his people will prepare his house.

X (vv. 227–49). A psalm of praise to the Lord. This is Psalm 145 with a superscription different from the MT, and it includes the missing *nun* verse (different from any known version).

XI (vv. 250–65). A psalm of praise to the Lord. This is Psalm 144 with a superscription different from the MT (and other minor differences).

XII (vv. 266–85). Before David dies he urges his people to adhere to God so that it will be well for them forever.

XIII (vv. 286–353). Except for the first four verses, which belong to the former chapter (King David is dead and Solomon becomes King), this is a long story in which Tamar, King David's daughter, plays the heroine. This is an addition to 2 Samuel 13. After Tamar is raped, she runs to Geshur, and later one of the king's servants tries to rape her. Tamar kills her attacker and comes back to Jerusalem, praised and blessed by King Solomon.

XIV (vv. 354–75). A revelation. Gad sees the Lord on his throne judging his people on the first day of the year. An angel brings forward three books in which everyone's deeds are written. The Satan wants to prosecute Israel, but he is silenced by one of the angels. The revelation contains all kinds of details, and the Seer does not understand all of them. The revelation and the book end with a blessing by the Seer while an angel answers "Amen, Amen."

Needless to say, each of the stories, the revelations, and the subjects mentioned above deserves careful analysis as well as commentary, which I intend to produce in further studies. I cannot recall any other book whose structure or redaction resembles *The Words of Gad the Seer*. The nature of the work makes evaluation of the text even more problematic. Nevertheless, any given book has some indications of its author's date; the task is to reveal them.

## II. Dating the Text

From the very beginning it was evident that *The Words of Gad the Seer* could not have been written in the eighteenth century, since there is no record of such a book from Jewish circles of that period. Furthermore, the manuscript of the book was written in Cochin, where nothing like this was ever produced—either in that century or earlier.<sup>6</sup> The nature of the book

<sup>6</sup> See my paper "The Geographical Source of The Words of Gad the Seer," in *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1990) A, 119–26 (Hebrew).

does not provide even a slight suggestion of such a late date, and no one has suggested otherwise. There are three possibilities: (1) *The Words of Gad the Seer* was indeed written by David's prophet; therefore, it is a "biblical" text from the tenth century BCE. (2) The book was written hundreds of years later and the text is another example of the vast pseudepigrapha, some works of which became known to the scholarly world only relatively recently. (3) The book was written in medieval times but was not esteemed; it is nothing more than a late forgery and has nothing to do with antiquity. These hypotheses must be analyzed step by step.

### *The Biblical Period*

It never occurred to the scholars who previously dealt with the text that this book might be some kind of extrabiblical text of the biblical period (though it does contain biblical chapters and is related to the Bible). Some chapters are related to the apocalyptic genre, which is known only from the last centuries BCE and later, but not from the tenth century BCE. Moreover, the word *וזהו* in v. 57 reveals that the text was written in the language stratum of Mishnaic Hebrew, despite its initial biblical appearance. From the content of the book one may remark on its polemical nature in regard to Israel as the chosen people, an issue that appears a couple of times and in different forms. This seems to count against a historical connection of the book with the real Gad the Seer. Only two possibilities remain. Since both Schechter and Abrahams agreed on its medieval date, we shall examine their arguments for the late date of the book next.

### *The Medieval Period*

Schechter was sure that, although there was no direct evidence for the identity of the author or its date, the book had been written in the Middle Ages. He based his view on certain words and phrases in it: (1) *הבחירה* (v. 184), "the free choice"; (2) *המעשה הוא שורש* (v. 189), "the deed is (like) a root"; (3) *את הנשמי ואת הרוחני . . . את החושים* (v. 204), "the physical and the spiritual . . . the senses"; (4) *קום מלכות קום הוד* (v. 35), "rise up, wisdom; rise up, might; rise up, kingdom; rise up, glory and splendor." Finally, Schechter added that it "leaves no doubt as to the author's acquaintance with the Cabbalah."<sup>7</sup>

I do not know why the verse *קום כינה* (4 above) etc. should be related to Kabbalah more than to 1 Chr 29:11: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty." True, the word *bînâ* does not occur in Chronicles, but the other kabbalistic *sēfirôt* are missing in

<sup>7</sup> Schechter, "Notes," 140.

the text as well. Furthermore, this way of itemizing the biblical text as some kind of a poem is known elsewhere. In *p. Ber.* 1:7, 3d, there is a poem related to R. Aḥa (third-century Palestinian Amora): "Gratitude and Praise to Your Name, to You greatness, to You mightiness, to You beauty." One is not likely to derive any connection between this talmudic poem and the apocryphal work. Rather, one should observe how the biblical verse became a source for different writers who itemized the old text in a similar fashion: adding several times *qûm* or *lĕkā*. Not only that, but almost the same textual phenomenon is repeated in a poem in the book of Revelation, a mystical book that was composed, apparently, by a converted Jew in the late first century CE.<sup>8</sup> The book of Revelation is extremely important for our case, because of its similarities to *The Words of Gad the Seer*. However, in Revelation 4:11 it is written: "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power"; and in 5:12: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"<sup>9</sup> True, these verses are not identical to *The Words of Gad the Seer*, but neither do they reflect the Kabbalah. The verse that Schechter relied on as reflecting medieval texts only shows the way a biblical verse was used by different Jews in antiquity: the author of Revelation, R. Aḥa, and the author of *The Words of Gad the Seer*.

Schechter further states that בחירה (1 above) in the sense of "freedom of choice" is known only from medieval times. The word itself, however, was known earlier.<sup>10</sup> In talmudic literature it appears in the phrase בית הבחירה, the building that God had chosen. It seems, then, that relying on the word בחירה to reflect a relatively late period is rather weak.

The quotation המעשה הוא שורש (2 above) cannot be taken as proof for lateness either. In that particular case (v. 189), Schechter quoted too little, and the whole text goes as follows: "Show yourselves courageous and be mighty to observe (לעשות) the Torah . . . since the deed (המעשה) is the root, and hearing is the seed, and the tree is faith, and the fruit is justice (צדקה)." It can be seen that the text is a kind of homiletic exegesis of a simile in which the fulfillment of the Torah is compared to the different parts of a tree. Gad the Seer, or the author in his name, continues the symbolic way of thinking of the old times, and his apocalyptic visions could show that as well. There is nothing here—word or meaning—that was unknown in the Hebrew language in the first centuries CE.

It looks as if the best proof for Schechter's view of the lateness of the book is v. 204, where David tells Hiram that God created "the planets (גלגלים),

<sup>8</sup> See my paper "Major Trends in the Development of the Qedusha," *Da'at* 25 (1990) 5–20 (Hebrew).

<sup>9</sup> On these poems, see M. Bar-Ilan, *Sitrey Tefilah veHekhalot* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1987) 49–51 (Hebrew).

<sup>10</sup> See M. T. Kadari, *MiYerushat Leshon Yemei haBinaim* (Tel Aviv: Devir 1969) 11 (Hebrew).

and כִּסִּיל and כִּימָה, the sun and the moon, the physical and the spiritual (הַרוּחַנִי), the planets and the senses (הַחֲוִישִׁים), and everything.” Here the problem is complicated: the vocabulary and the content include seemingly philosophic words that are unknown before medieval times. It is usually believed that Greek philosophy penetrated the Jewish scholarly world only in the Middle Ages, as part of the interconnections between Islam and the Jewish world. Apart from Philo, who left no impression on the whole rabbinic mind, it seems that Greek philosophy came to the attention of Jews through the Arabic translations of Greek philosophy. Thus some philosophical terms entered Hebrew through the mediation of Arabic—by the Tibbon family, among others. For this reason, whenever a philosophical term is to be found in a Hebrew text, it is believed that the text is medieval.

But this assumption is not justified. First, the sages of the Talmud themselves, Tannaim and Amoraim, knew Greek or Hellenistic philosophers, and even had arguments with some of them, as is evident in *m. ‘Abod. Zar.* 3:4 and other cases.<sup>11</sup> After it has been proved that the Hellenistic culture, in its broad sense, was known to the rabbis, as S. Lieberman, A. A. Halevi, and others have emphasized, it is not hard to believe that at least a few of the sages knew some Greek philosophy. As a matter of fact, quite a few scholars have pointed out some talmudic parallels to Greek philosophy. However, because such parallels appear sporadically in talmudic literature and because of the nature of the talmudic arguments of the sages, this cultural loan is not immediately striking.<sup>12</sup> Though identical terms could have been created by different peoples without any real connection, a specific Greek philosophical term that penetrated rabbinic literature can be seen as evidence of the influence of the philosophers on the rabbis. In an almost lost version of *Midrash Tehilim* 1 it is said: “These are the heretics that say that the world is automatic.” In this particular case, it is clear that the “heretics” are none other than the Epicurean philosophers, since “automatic” was a special Epicurean term, as has already been noted by M. Stein.<sup>13</sup> We shall return to other such terms below.

Finally, we turn to Schechter’s argument of the lateness of *The Words of Gad the Seer* from the words חֲוִישִׁים, רוּחַנִי, גִּשְׁמִי. The word חֲוִישִׁים in the

<sup>11</sup> See A. Wasserstein, “Rabban Gamliel and Proclus the Philosopher (mishnah Aboda Zara 3,4),” *Zion* 45 (1980) 257–67 (Hebrew); M. Bar-Ilan, “The Occurrences and the Significance of ‘Yotser ha’Adam’ Benediction,” *HUCA* 56 (1985) 9–27, esp. 25 n. 56 (Hebrew); M. Luz, “Abnimos, Nimos, and Oenomaus: A Note,” *JQR* 77 (1986–87) 191–95; J. Geiger, “Athens in Syria: Greek Intellectuals of Gadara,” *Cathedra* 35 (1985) 3–16 (Hebrew).

<sup>12</sup> E. Kaminka, *Mehkarim BaMikra uvaSifrut haRabbanit ha’Atika* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1965) 55, 62, 80 (Hebrew); J. Goldin, “Mashehu miBet Midrasho Shel Rabban Yohanan ben Zakai,” *Sefer haYovel liKhevod Tsvi Wolfson*, Hebrew volume (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965) 69–92 (Hebrew); see also Henry A. Fischel, ed., *Essays in Greco-Roman and Related Talmudic Literature* (New York: Ktav, 1977).

<sup>13</sup> M. Stein, *Bein Tarbut Israel veTarbut Yavan veRoma* (Givataim/Ramat-Gan: Masada, 1970) 122–24 (Hebrew).

meaning "senses" is not known before the Middle Ages, although the idea of "the senses" existed millennia earlier. The verb חש is known from the Bible in three meanings: (1) to make haste, (2) to sense (Eccl 2:25), (3) a personal name (Gen 46:23). In Mishnaic Hebrew the verb remained in the second meaning only, although the noun derived from it, חוש, does not appear there.<sup>14</sup> The case of the terms גשמי and רוחני is not dissimilar. Once again, here are words that are known from the Hebrew philosophical terms in the Middle Ages (or possibly earlier in *Numbers Rabbah*). It should be noted that גשמיות appears in Dan 3:27–28, and in the Aramaic translations the word גשמיות appears as a translation of "bodies." There is not a long distance from the noun גשם to the adjective גשמי. Thus, in the case of these three words, חוש, חושם, גשמי, רוחני, the main point is that they are new words, seemingly part of philosophical discourse, though based on words that are well attested in more ancient times.<sup>15</sup>

In discussing the date of *The Words of Gad the Seer*, Schechter did not delve deeply into the subject, probably because he was confident in his judgment and because of the limited space for the subject in his paper. Had he looked more closely, he might have both more evidence for the lateness of the text and other proofs to the contrary.

Abrahams, Schechter's successor at Cambridge, claimed that Schechter was right in attributing *The Words of Gad the Seer* to the Middle Ages. He believed that the philosophical terms and the use of words from the Kabbalah reflected the late date of the work. He hypothesized: "Such books were written late as well as early, in times of trouble such as the era of the first Crusades." Toward the end of his analysis he stated: "the whole style points to the thirteenth century." Though Abrahams sensed the special connection of this text with the book of Revelation, the philosophical terms led him to his conclusion as to its relative lateness.

Abrahams did not explain what he meant by "the whole style," except that he again paid attention to the word בחירה. Furthermore, he claimed that in chap. 9 "the language is particularly medieval . . . the sentiment like the language being Maimonist." The paragraph that Abrahams dealt with is

<sup>14</sup> Kadari, *MiYerushat Leshon Yemei haBinaim*, 35–38. See also *b. B. Bat.* 143b, where the noun appears meaning "parts of reeds." In our text the verb appears as well, though in another sense (v. 191): "Because of that, hurry up, hasten (חוש) and fulfill, hear and fulfill" (and then there is a scribal mark, perhaps to draw attention to the double phrase). It should be noted that in the midrashic compilation known as *Ma'ase Torah* (Jerusalem: Lewin Epstein, 1954) 50, there appears a quotation from Midrash *Numbers Rabbah* in a version that is not extant. It is said there: "There are ten senses (חושם) in a man: five are physical . . . five are spiritual (גשמיים, רוחניים)." It is true that Midrash *Numbers Rabbah* is considered to be one of the latest midrashim (see below), and for this reason nothing can be deduced from that text. However, if *Numbers Rabbah* is not so late, then the whole proof from these words—postulating the lateness of *The Words of Gad the Seer*—is groundless.

<sup>15</sup> It should not be overlooked that Paul used similar terms, e.g., 1 Cor 15:44: "It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body."

probably the most problematic from the chronological point of view. In v. 203 David praises the Lord and says:

You should fear the Lord, creator of heaven and earth, the sea and the continents, wet and dry, warm and cold, the inorganic, the organic, the living and the speaking, the planets . . . the physical and the spiritual. . . .

The terms "wet, dry, warm, cold" (לח, יבש, חום, קור) are unquestionably derived from Greek philosophy, but they appear already in Hebrew in the *Book of Assaf* the physician. Z. Muntner, who dealt with the Assaf material—its language, sources, healing prescriptions, and so forth—came to the conclusion that Assaf could not have lived later than the sixth century, and probably in the Land of Israel.<sup>16</sup> That is, of course, the Middle Ages, though it was still under the shadow of the former era. At any event, Assaf wrote as follows:

And we found in the books of the ancestors, and in the book of Shem, son of Noah, that his father gave him: the elements of the body structure are four, those that are basic, and those that are combinations (of the former), according to their divisions and weight: fire, air, earth and water, and the mixture of the four: warm, cold, wet and dry.

The books of Shem and his father lie beyond our present field of study.<sup>17</sup> It is more important to draw attention to the phrases in David's words in *The Words of Gad the Seer* which are similar to the *Book of Assaf*, though with a slight change of order. It becomes evident that קור, חום, etc. are not the basic elements, although they are derived from them. These elements of the entire creation were known to the ancient Jewish mystics. J. Levy showed that in *Hekhalot Rabbati* (chap. 18), one of the main mystical works from antiquity, while the mystics argued about the name of one of the great angels, they said (Greek in corrupted Hebrew letters) ῥῆγ ὑδρ [ῥῆγ].<sup>18</sup> The *Book of Assaf* assumes that one who knew these elements also knew their combinations: "cold, warm, wet and dry." Consequently, the issue of whether the knowledge of the four elements is evidence, *ipso facto*, of a medieval date depends on the date of the Hekhalot literature. Elsewhere I have supported an early date for these writings, from the second century to the

<sup>16</sup> Z. Muntner, *Mavo leSefer Assaf haRofo* (Jerusalem: Geniza, 1958) 33 (Hebrew). The following text is from p. 156, and see p. 154.

<sup>17</sup> See James H. Charlesworth, "Treatise of Shem," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983, 1985) 1. 473–86; "Sefer Noah," in A. Jellinek, *Beit haMidrash* (2d ed.; Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann, 1938) 3. 155–60. (The book begins "This is the medical book that the early wise men copied from the book of Shem son of Noah," the same text as in the *Book of Assaf*.) Raziel the angel gave that book to Adam, and later Enoch found the place where the book was hidden." Compare the beginning of M. Margaliot, ed., *Sefer haRazim* (Jerusalem: Yediot Aharonot, 1966) 66: "This book out of the mystery books that Noah son of . . . was given from the mouth of Raziel the angel."

<sup>18</sup> J. Levy, *Olamot Nifgashim* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1960) 259–65 (Hebrew).



fourth CE.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the philosophical division that appears in *The Words of Gad the Seer* is already attested in Hebrew in the *Book of Assaf* and reflects the four elements known to the ancient mystics who compiled *Hekhalot Rabbati*. Consequently, these terms do not demonstrate the lateness of the text under study. It should be noted that the elements of the world appear once also in *Numbers Rabbah* 14:12:

Opposed to the four natures out of which God, blessed be He, created the world, there are upper ones, each above the other, and the fourth is lower, the heaviest of them all. And these are: the earth . . . the water . . . the air . . . and the fire.

There is a similar text in *Exodus Rabbah* 15:22:

Three creations preceded the world: water, wind and fire. The Water became pregnant and gave birth to darkness, the fire became pregnant and gave birth to light, the wind became pregnant and gave birth to wisdom, etc.

Once again we have the creation of the world, its "natures" or "elements," those four out of which come the other four known to Assaf and Gad—"wet, dry, warm, cold." These four elements and the other four that are produced by them were known to Alexander Polyhistor, in the first century BCE as Pythagorean beliefs (derived from Parmenides), and they were well known in the Hellenistic world.<sup>20</sup> If the sage knew at least one term of Pythagorean philosophy, the other terms could have been known to the author of Gad and there is no need to assume its lateness from these words (especially when there was nothing new in their denotation).<sup>21</sup>

The words in *The Words of Gad the Seer* assumed to be late are known from the *Book of Assaf*, *Numbers Rabbah*, and *Exodus Rabbah*. L. Zunz and others have argued that these midrashim are late, from the eleventh–twelfth centuries,<sup>22</sup> but S. Lieberman has refuted this view and proved that they should be dated several centuries earlier, going back to the time when the Babylonian Talmud became well known in the Land of Israel.<sup>23</sup> If one sees in the four elements, as well as חושמים, נשמי, and רוחני, late Hebrew terms, then one considers the text under study to be late. If these terms are not so late

<sup>19</sup> Bar-Ilan, *Sitrey Tefilah veHekhalot*.

<sup>20</sup> Eduard Schweizer, "Slaves of the Elements and Worshipers of Angels: Gal 4:3, 9 and Col 2:8, 18, 20," *JBL* 107 (1988) 455–68.

<sup>21</sup> It seems that the notion that water becomes pregnant and gives birth, as well as other anthropomorphic behavior, is derived from non-Jewish philosophy.

<sup>22</sup> L. Zunz, *HaDerashot beIsrael* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1947) 124–27 (Hebrew). His opinion is grounded partly on some of the texts dealt with here; see p. 399 n. 81.

<sup>23</sup> S. Lieberman, ed., *Midrash Devarim Rabbah* (3d ed.; Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1974) foreword, pp. XXI–XXIII.

as has been thought, then they do not prove the lateness of *Numbers Rabbah* or *The Words of Gad the Seer*.

The situation is similar in the dating of midrash *Shelosha veArba'ah* in relation to *Ma'ase Torah*.<sup>24</sup> It says there: "(There are) four divisions in opposition to the four elements: warm, wet, cold, dry." As has already been noted, these are not the elements, but rather the four derivatives that emerge from them as mixtures, as the *Book of Assaf* stated. Here is a midrash with the same terminology as *The Words of Gad the Seer*. Alas, S. Abrahamson regarded this midrash as late,<sup>25</sup> so it seems that the same problem as in the case of midrash *Numbers Rabbah* appears again. If the terms "warm, wet" and so forth are considered late, then, of course, any text, midrash, or apocalyptic book that uses them must be regarded as late.

To sum up the data thus far, the four elements and the four interwoven divisions are derived from Greek philosophy, though in the Hebrew language. Despite this, one cannot be sure that these words are from the ninth century or later. It is extremely likely that this influence on Judaism is from the time of the Talmud, since the Tannaim and Amoraim knew at least some Greek philosophy. The words that have been discussed cannot be taken as certain proof of the lateness of *The Words of Gad the Seer*.<sup>26</sup> The most problematic words in our text are those mentioned above: "the inorganic, the organic, animate, speaking" (in Hebrew, *דומם, צומח, חי, מדבר*). These terms, though very close in their structure and meaning to Biblical or Mishnaic Hebrew, are not known in rabbinic sources and are usually regarded as having been invented under the influence of medieval philosophy. The four facets of the universe, like the four elements and the four derivatives, may be related to Pythagorean (or earlier) beliefs. Therefore, these philosophical terms could have reached Hebrew not in the Middle Ages but rather in the first centuries CE, although they do not appear in rabbinic documents (perhaps because the rabbis did not discuss philosophical issues systematically).

The last word that might be taken as proof for the lateness of our text is *גלגלים*, the heavenly spheres, which seems to be a philosophical, astronomical term. But already in the Talmud this word appears in its astronomical sense (*b. Pesah* 94b):

<sup>24</sup> S. A. Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot* (Jerusalem: Ketav ve Sefer, 1980) 2. 45–73. The text is from p. 73; see also there in *Midrash Temura* (p. 191). See G. Sarfatti, "Three comments regarding some Tannaitic sources," *Tarbiz* 32 (1963) 136–42 (Hebrew).

<sup>25</sup> S. Abrahamson, "MeSiḥatan Shel Benei Erets Israel," *Sinai* 63 (1968) 20–31, esp. 24 n. 10 (Hebrew). Abrahamson states that though midrash *Shelosha veArba'ah* preceded Mishnat R. Eliezer "both midrashim are late."

<sup>26</sup> Josephus described the construction of the tabernacle in the desert, saying: "The veils, too, which were composed of four things declared the four elements, for the fine linen was proper to signify the earth" (*Ant.* 3.7.7 §183). On the creation of Adam from the four elements according to Philo and other sources, see L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947) 5. 72; R. Patai, *Adam veAdama* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Press, 1942) 1. 159 (Hebrew).

Tanu Rabanan: the sages of Israel say גלגל is steady and מזלוח [= zodiac] rotate, and the sages of the nations of the world say גלגל rotates and מזלוח are steady.

The Talmud continues with another argument between the sages of Israel and the sages of אומות העולם (the nations of the world), in regard to other cosmological questions, but the argument is remarkable for our purpose. It shows connections between Jewish and non-Jewish sages—astronomers in this case. In antiquity astronomy was not separate from philosophy, and this demonstrates how ancient philosophy influenced Jewish sages (and even the Hebrew language, by giving a new meaning to the word גלגל). Therefore, from the use of the word גלגל, one cannot conclude the lateness of a text.

Although for Schechter and Abrahams it was obvious that *The Words of Gad the Seer* is a medieval text, our analysis of the relevant material shows that this is far from obvious. The philosophical terms alone cannot prove the lateness of the Hebrew language of the text, especially because the only Hebrew known is that from rabbinic documents and was not the only Hebrew at that time.<sup>27</sup> This is quite clear from *Sefer haRazim*, or Hekhalot literature, for example, and from our book as well. The scribe who wrote it, whenever he lived, preferred Biblical Hebrew (at least, what he considered Biblical Hebrew), instead of the vernacular.

One of the things that makes this book so unique is its language. Its range of interest, which includes biblical, apocalyptic, and philosophical themes, might have led the writer to know, or even to invent, another stratum of the Hebrew language, which penetrated other Hebrew books only later. At any event, from the words that were considered to be medieval, a few remain that could be obstacles to an early dating of *The Words of Gad the Seer*. These words, in order of decreasing importance, are חושים, מדבר, חי, צומה, דומם and לח, יבש, חום, קור. Even these cannot be assumed to be medieval words, and other considerations must be taken into account.

### *Late Antiquity*

*The Words of Gad the Seer* incorporates three chapters from the Bible as if they were part of the whole work. Chapter 10 is Psalm 145; chapter 11 is Psalm 144, and chapter 7 is a kind of compilation of 2 Sam 24:1–21 and 1 Chr 21:1–30, a chapter that deals with the deeds of Gad the Seer. The biblical text in Gad's book is slightly different from the MT, with some minor changes that might be regarded as scribal errors and some important variants. This phenomenon of inserting whole chapters from the Bible into one's treatise is known only from the Bible itself. For example, David's song in 2 Sam 22:2–51

<sup>27</sup> See Sarfatti, "Three comments"; I. Efrat, *HaPhilosophia ha'Ivrit ha'Atika* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965) 54 n. 12, 81 (Hebrew); S. Pines and Z. Harvie, "LiReot HaKokhavim VebaMazalot," *Mehkarei Jerusalem BeMahshevet Israel* 3/4 (1984) 507–11 (Hebrew).

appears also in Ps 18:2–50—not to speak of other parallels in biblical literature.<sup>28</sup> Only one who lived in the “days of the Bible,” or thought so, could have included a biblical text in his own work in this way. As a matter of fact, our book might help modern research enter the “editorial laboratory” of biblical composition and narrative, but that is out of place here.

In chapter 7, the scribe or editor was aware of the differences in 2 Sam 24:1–21 and 1 Chr 21:1–30, and he combined them into one. For example, v. 173:

So David paid Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight and the oxen  
for fifty shekels according to the weights current among the merchants.

This verse is a combination of two parallel texts with a phrase from Gen 23:16.

**2 Sam 24:24**

So David bought the threshing floor  
and the oxen  
for fifty shekels of silver

**1 Chr 21:25**

So David paid Ornan six hundred  
shekels of gold by weight  
for the site

The “new” text created by the editor is based on the Bible, but it has been rearranged. This phenomenon is known from the Bible itself, the Samaritan Torah, and the *Temple Scroll*. Moreover, a similar text is known from Qumran (4QSam<sup>a</sup>), where the scribe rewrote Samuel together with Chronicles, and there are some parallels to *The Words of Gad the Seer*.<sup>29</sup> A writer who did not feel free to rewrite the biblical text would not have dared to do such editing. The Tannaim recognized the discrepancies between the parallel texts, just as our author did, but they did not try to rewrite the Bible. They rather posed questions and tried to solve them in regard to these differences between the sources (as Hivi haBalkhi later did).<sup>30</sup> The way that the biblical text is treated in *The Words of Gad the Seer* is far from the rabbinic or normative handling of a biblical text, nor can it be related to any medieval editor. This way of rewriting the biblical narrative from older sources could be done only at a time when there was no such notion as canon—and that might explain part of the pseudepigraphical attribution of the book to an old prophet.

The rewriting of the Bible that is found in *The Words of Gad the Seer* has another aspect. The text provides a different superscription to an already known chapter in the Psalms and includes the missing *nun* verse in Psalm 145. Psalm 144 begins “A Psalm of David” (*lēdāwid*). Verse 250 of *The Words of Gad the Seer* begins: “These are prayers of David praising the Lord on the

<sup>28</sup> A. BenDavid, *Parallels in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Carta, 1972).

<sup>29</sup> F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (2d ed.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961) 188–92; E. C. Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus* (HSM 19; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978) 156–59.

<sup>30</sup> See H. S. Horowitz, ed., *Siphre d'be Rab - Numbers* (Leipzig: Libraria Gustav Fock, 1917; reprint, Jerusalem: Wahrmann Books, 1966) 48.

day Elhanan son of Ya'ir smote Lehum, brother of Goliath of Gat, and (when) Jehonatan son of Shim'a (smote) the man of Middah and he said."<sup>31</sup> Scholars have long been aware of the relative lateness of the superscriptions of the Psalms because of the variations of these superscriptions in the Bible itself and later in the translations.

Chapter 10, which is Psalm 145, begins with the following superscription: "At that time David said this praise, saying." Then the whole chapter appears, written correctly. That is, since the verses are in alphabetical order, each verse begins a new line, and the first letter of it is bold, dotted, and enlarged (*Ot Rabbati*).<sup>32</sup> When the author arrived at the *nun* verse, which is missing from the MT, he inserted the verse, though he begins it with a reversed *nun*, probably to indicate that he is quoting from another manuscript.<sup>33</sup> The unknown verse is as follows: נפלו כל אויביך יהוה וכל גבורתם בלעו, "All your enemies fell down, O Lord, and all of their might was swallowed up." The style and content of the verse give good reason to believe that it is authentic.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, even if the verse were characterized as the innovation of the editor of our book, it still would be interesting, since the sages of the Talmud did not know it, and the invention of fictitious biblical verses is not known in the Middle Ages either.

*The Words of Gad the Seer* consists of more than one literary genre, and in addition to the biblical chapters it includes all kind of stories, folktales that were given a literary style, a homily, and other texts that should be sorted out. Probably the most original part of the book is its three apocalyptic visions, one that reflects a combination of some biblical motifs and two others that might ensure our author a prize for outstanding visionary narrative creativity. These visions connect our book with ancient Judaism. This genre is known

<sup>31</sup> Compare this superscription to that of Syr. Psalm 151, where Goliath is mentioned; see J. H. Charlesworth and J. A. Sanders, "More Psalms of David," in *OTP* 2. 609–24.

<sup>32</sup> The superscription of this psalm in the Qumran texts begins with "Prayer of David," which differs from the MT. These three different superscriptions might be taken as evidence for the relative lateness of the superscriptions, but they show also that superscriptions were added before the canonization process took place. The superscription in *The Words of Gad the Seer* should be understood as also being very old. For more evidence of the additional Psalms, see A. M. Haberman, *Ketav Lashon vaSefer* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1973) 111–25. For more Davidic Hymns, see below.

<sup>33</sup> See Sid Z. Leiman, "The Inverted Nuns at Numbers 10:35–36 and the Book of Eldad and Medad," *JBL* 93 (1974) 348–55; Baruch A. Levine, "Critical Note," *JBL* 95 (1976) 122–24. (These two works, together with MacNamara's [see n. 35], and a discussion in the Talmud should be consulted to revise *OTP* 2. 463–65.)

<sup>34</sup> These phenomena should not be ignored: (a) In both parts of the verse there is כל, just as in the previous and the following verses. (b) The second stanza begins with conjunctive וואו, just as in the adjoining verses. (c) In the adjoining verses there is שרשור, a chain structure, in which one word in a verse is repeated in the next verse. This structure is evident from the words גבורתך, מלכותך, which appear in the *kaf* and *lamed* verses. Now, the structure recurs with the word נפלו, which anticipates the *Nofelim* in the following verse. It should be kept in mind that the sages in *b. Ber.* 4b did connect the missing verse with falling down.

from the Middle Ages as well as from late antiquity; however, Gad's power of expression is far beyond what is known from late visions and other early Jewish apocalyptic documents. This judgment on the text is relatively subjective, but the resemblance of our book to another visionary work brings us to the next proof of the early date of *The Words of Gad the Seer*.

It is argued that the visionary parts of *The Words of Gad the Seer* are very close to the book of Revelation, the only apocalypse in the NT, which is derived from Jewish mystical circles.<sup>35</sup> The similarities include the following: (1) In both visions the lamb plays a major role as symbolizing the Jewish nation (though in Revelation, by being converted into Christianity, the lamb became a symbol for the Messiah only). Not only that, but the lamb in *The Words of Gad the Seer* praises the Lord with some biblical verses (the same as in *Perek Shirah*) and other poems very similar to the praise of the Lord by the lamb in Revelation. (2) In both revelations, there is a detailed description of God sitting on his throne. (3) The literary style is very much the same in both books, since both are influenced by the Bible even when they do not quote a biblical verse. (4) There are some expressions that occur in both texts. For example, in *The Words of Gad the Seer* a chain of attributions to God appears, and God is characterized as *וְיֵהוּה, הוּה, הִיּה, "He who was, is, will be"* (v. 183). In the manuscript the first word (*הִיּה*) is written with *waw*, not with *yod*, which is apparently a slight scribal error (as is well attested in biblical texts). This description of God is known from the Targumim, from *Sefer haRazim* (7:30, with the same scribal error), and, above all, the book of Revelation (1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5). Another parallel is "and the man clothed in linen called like (= as loud as) a trumpet" (v. 18; cf. v. 367). This verse reminds one of Rev 1:10 and other biblical verses. (5) In both books there is a symbolic battle between Good and Evil, a well-known myth that penetrated other pseudepigraphic literature as well. In *The Words of Gad the Seer* (v. 89) "Michael, the high prince, fights against Samael, minister of the world." In the book of Revelation (12:7) there is a struggle: "Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon." (6) Both books pay special attention to Satan. (7) Finally, the hymn in *Gad* that was used by Schechter to determine its date is another echo of Revelation (or vice versa). There are more affinities between these books, but for the time being, these suffice.

I know of no book that is closer to *The Words of Gad the Seer* than the book of Revelation, though what that implies is still to be considered. Both books were written by Jews, but one of them had converted to Christianity and the

<sup>35</sup> On the relationship between the book of Revelation and Jewish sources, see M. MacNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1966) 209–17; E. E. Urbach, "Yerushalayim Shel Mata veYerushalayim Shel Ma'ala," *Yerushalayim LeDoroteha* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1969) 156–71 (Hebrew). See also my paper mentioned above in n. 8 (only in regard to the Qedusha, the Trishagion).

other had not. The writer of *Gad* is arguing about the chosen people, the true firstborn of God, and other issues. Although he did not explicitly name his opponents, it is likely that they were Christians. The book's editor directed his book against people who thought as Paul did, on the one hand, and had had mystical experiences as had John of Revelation (and Paul), on the other hand. On the whole, the affinities between these books suggest that they are not only alike in style and content, but in date as well; that is to say, they date from the end of the first century or slightly later.

Some of the expressions found in *The Words of Gad the Seer* are known from the Pseudepigrapha as well. For example, the first vision of Gad took place near the stream of Kidron, as did the vision of 2 *Baruch* (5:5; 21:1). The stream of Kidron appears also at the beginning of the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch* (3 *Baruch*), and Samael appears in both books. There are other similarities that should be discussed separately.

In *The Words of Gad the Seer*, v. 78 reads: "Woe to you, O Edom, that sits in the land of Kittim in the north of the day" (כִּי־, but it might be יָם, denoting the northern sea). This verse reflects Num 21:29 together with 24:23 and other verses in Balaam's prophecy. Consequently, this use of Kittim, identified with Edom, apparently Rome,<sup>36</sup> puts our text close to Qumran, where the Kittim appear several times. Yet it is true that the word appears in *Sefer Josippon* from the tenth century (though this fact is also problematic). At any event, "Kittim" is not used elsewhere in rabbinic sources either in the talmudic era or in the Middle Ages.

In *The Words of Gad the Seer* (v. 217) it is said:

And Hiram took up his discourse, and said:  
I have seen him, but not now;  
I have looked at him but not nigh;  
the sun shall come forth out of David,  
and the moon rise out of the house of Jehudah,  
it shall crush all the sons of Ham,  
and break down all the sons of Yephet,  
and he shall have all the kingdoms on the earth.

Hiram's prophecy, echoing Balaam's speech in Num 24:17, is not surprisingly different from the original, since he addressed here not the biblical enemies of Israel but rather his contemporary enemies, (Ham and) the sons of Yephet, the Hellenistic and Roman conquerors. The theme of "the star of David" appears in other writings, for example, the *Damascus Covenant* (8:19) and *Testament of Levi* (18:3); however, this verse shows literary and ideological similarities to the literature composed toward the end of the Second Commonwealth and evidently reflects that time.

There are two peripheral subjects that might be considered as evidence

<sup>36</sup> This equation Edom = Rome appears in talmudic literature and in *Apocalypse of Ezra* and 4 *Ezra*.

*The Words of Gad the Seer* is written in a codex, and, as in scrolls of biblical books, guiding lines were drawn. The letters are an enlarged form of an eastern cursive script, which may mean that the codex was intended for use by a public reader, as if it had been copied from a holy scroll. In addition, *The Words of Gad the Seer* has its own Masora: there is a summary of the total number of the verses and chapters; the words of the verse that occur in the middle of the book are noted, *qērē'* and *kētib* are used; there are dots over some words, indicating that they were written by mistake. There is a final *mem* in the middle position, *Otiot Rabbati* (big letters), a "hung" letter, a reversed *nun*, some special letters with *taqim*, "crowns," and others. Though there are some relatively late books, other than biblical, that have some Masora, this treatment of the text probably suggests that the scribes judged the book they were copying to be an old (biblical) text. That is to say, the attitude of the writer toward the text reveals its ancient nature.<sup>37</sup>

Taken together, these considerations prove that *The Words of Gad the Seer* derived from late antiquity. Its closeness to biblical literature, Qumran, pseudepigrapha, and the book of Revelation points to its relatively early date. Against these proofs there are some words that are considered to be medieval philosophical terms—דומם, צומח, חי, מדבר, חושים, and לח, יבש, חום, קור, גשמי, and רוחני. But these arguments are all dependent on the Hebrew lexicon, or even on its semantics. These words do not reflect any specific time, as the modern word “radar” might, for example. These words are not exclusively related to the medieval period, as in the case of words that are definitely known to be the invention of the Tibbon family. The words reflect the Middle Ages only *ex silentio*, and a number of scholars have already

<sup>37</sup> In regard to this phenomenon, one should consult the testimony of R. Saadya Gaon, *Sefer haGalut* (ed. A. A. Harkavi; Petersburg: Meqitsai Nirdamim, 1892; reprint, Jerusalem: n.p., 1969) 150–52, 176–81. Saadya mentions “outer” books that were known to the sages of the Talmud and his contemporaries as well. Among these books were Ben Sira, Elazar ben Irai, and the book of the sons of the Hashmonaim. According to him, these books resemble biblical books not only in the narrative and language (Proverbs, Qoheleth, and Daniel), but in their annotation as well. Those books were “(arranged as in the Bible) in chapters and verses, and (they were) marked and cantillated.” R. Saadya mentioned an outer book that he thought was composed in his lifetime by the people of Kairouan, who had in their possession “a Hebrew book, from Saadi [or: Elshunri haNotsri] . . . divided into verses and canticles in it.” See E. Fleischer, “‘Iyun beSifrut haMeshalim haQedeumah,” *Bikoret uFarshanut* 11–12 (1978) 19–54 (Hebrew), for the books of Ben Tighla and Ben La’anah; see also J. Faur, “Concerning the Term ‘kore be-iggeret,’” *‘Ale! Sefer* 15 (1989) 21–30 (Hebrew).



warned that nothing can be learned from the silence of the sources.<sup>38</sup> It is likely that the evidence that suggests antiquity—literary style, similarities in themes, and more—outweighs the evidence that suggests the Middle Ages. In other words, *The Words of Gad the Seer* was composed by a Jew influenced by apocalyptic and mystic circles at the end of the first century CE or a little bit later.

Before ending, a methodological note should be added. It seems that the question at hand is very much the same as dating other documents of unknown origin. For example, the reader should be reminded that when the *Damascus Covenant* was found by Schechter in the Genizah and was attributed by him to a Zadokite sect, some scholars believed that this text was medieval in nature and even that its Hebrew was medieval. Furthermore, it was hard to believe that there were nonrabbinic Jews who might have handed this non-normative book down so many years after it had been composed.<sup>39</sup> This argument was settled only after some sections of this book were found in Qumran literature. Now it is not so difficult to believe that a nonrabbinic text could have survived rabbinic culture and been transmitted many centuries later, especially in such a remote and odd community as Cochin.

This peculiar preservation of texts seems to have occurred a few more times, as can be seen from *Apocryphal Hymns of David*. This text was found in the Genizah by Harkavi, who thought it had been composed in the Middle Ages. Eight decades later, after the discovery of the Qumran writings, this book was recognized as ancient.<sup>40</sup> One may add that this problem of dating a noncanonical book, regardless of the ephemeral argument about Qumran, seems to be intrinsic to pseudepigrapha. Thus, *Testament of Solomon* was considered to be late, and only in the course of time and scholarship was it related to antiquity. In other words, the case of *The Words of Gad the Seer* looks very much like the dating of other pseudepigraphic writings: at first they were ignored and considered to be late (and without importance); only later was their value recognized.

### III. Conclusion

*The Words of Gad the Seer* treated here is not the book that was in existence in biblical times and was apparently lost. The book discussed here was composed in one of the early centuries of this era, but was noticed only at the end of the eighteenth century. When the book was discovered, it was

<sup>38</sup> To demonstrate the argument of the lacuna of Hebrew language, it should be kept in mind that only relatively recently has the Hekhalot literature been related to talmudic times (second–fifth centuries CE). However, to date there has not been even one paper concerning the linguistic problem raised by that understanding. Even without thorough familiarity one can see that there is a gap between the Mishnaic or “rabbinic” Hebrew and the Hekhalot Hebrew.

<sup>39</sup> Philip R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983) 14.

<sup>40</sup> D. Flusser and S. Safrai, “Shirei David’ HaHisonyim,” *Teuda* 2 (1982) 83–109 (Hebrew).

thought to be a medieval work and was assumed to be of little value. Contemplating the different proofs of its date of composition shows that the arguments for its lateness are outweighed by evidence of its early date. Nevertheless, even if one believes that the book is late, its importance is unquestionable. Its value lies in showing the modern scholar some of the techniques of the editors of the biblical narrative. It presents apocalyptic visions and perhaps supplies the missing verse in Psalm 145. Of further importance is the contribution of this book to the knowledge of the Hebrew language in the first centuries of this era: Biblical Hebrew on the one hand and philosophical Hebrew on the other. Above all, this book might enhance our understanding of the book of Revelation and the literature of that period in general; and the history of the Jews of Cochin would not be the lesser for it.<sup>41</sup>

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