

HAZON GABRIEL

NEW READINGS OF THE GABRIEL REVELATION

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Edited by
Matthias Henze

Society of Biblical Literature
Atlanta

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In memory of

ז"ל, Hanan Eshel,

July 25, 1958 – April 8, 2010

ח' באב תשי"ח – כ"ד בניסן תש"ע

Gifted scholar, revered teacher, dear friend

איש חמודות שלום לך

Dan 10:19

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta biblica
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
CEJL	Commentaries in Early Jewish Literature
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DDD	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> . Edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. 2nd ed. 1999.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
DSSEL	<i>Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library</i>
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by K. Kautzsch. Translated by A. E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910.
HAR	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JAAC	<i>Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism</i>
JANES	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
Josephus	
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquities</i>
<i>J.W.</i>	<i>Jewish War</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>

<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OLA	Orientalia Iovaniensia analecta
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i>
OTP	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983, 1985.
OTS	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PTL	<i>PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RHPR	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SHR	Studies in the History of Religion
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
STDJ	Studies in the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraphica
Tacitus	
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Historiae</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76.
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–.
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

PREFACE

In the spring of 2009, the Houston Museum of Natural Science hosted an exhibit on late Second Temple Judaism and Christian origins titled “The Birth of Christianity: A Jewish Story.” One of the objects on display was a gray limestone, presumably an ancient stele, bearing a Hebrew inscription. The stele, which measures about one by three feet, is owned by Dr. David Jeselsohn, a private antiquities collector from Zurich, Switzerland, who had acquired the stone a decade earlier from an antiquities dealer in Jordan. A little over two years prior to the Houston exhibit, two Israeli epigraphers, Ada Yardeni and Binyamin Elizur, had published the text for the first time and named it *Hazon Gabriel*, or *The Gabriel Revelation*. By the time the Houston exhibit opened its doors on December 12, 2008, the text was already well known beyond the scholarly community and quickly became a favorite with the visitors.

The text’s popularity was in part due to a front-page article in the *New York Times*, published on July 6, 2008, that featured the stone and its owner. It also reported about Professor Israel Knohl of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who was among the first to write on the inscription. Professor Knohl asserted that the *Hazon Gabriel* is a Jewish text from the late first century B.C.E. that speaks about a Messiah who dies a violent death and rises again from the dead on the third day. Since the *Hazon Gabriel* dates from pre-Christian times, Knohl went on to argue that this text changes our understanding of the origins of Christianity (note, however, that in his essay for this volume, “The Apocalyptic and Messianic Dimensions of the *Gabriel Revelation* in Their Historical Context,” Knohl disclaims his earlier thesis regarding the resurrection and now no longer maintains that the *Hazon Gabriel* mentions the resurrection of a Messiah on the third day). In February 2009, while the stone was on display at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, Professor Knohl came to Houston, gave a public lecture at the museum, and participated in a small conference on the *Hazon Gabriel* hosted by the Program in Jewish Studies at Rice University. The articles in this volume comprise the papers of the Rice conference plus several important additional essays.

Any modern exegete working on the *Hazon Gabriel* is confronted with two obstacles. The first is that the Jordanian antiquities dealer, who has since passed away, was unable to provide exact information about the provenance of the stele. For some scholars this is reason enough not to consider the inscription at all, an understandable objection. And yet, over the last three and a half years, a number of scholars from different academic disciplines have worked on the stone and its

inscription. None of the experts who have examined the text has concluded that the stone is a forgery. In their opinion, the *Hazon Gabriel* is authentic and dates from the late first century B.C.E. or the early first century C.E. The second obstacle is the poor state of the inscription's preservation. The text is only partially legible (about eighty-seven lines, arranged in two columns, are preserved), and in several important places the interpretation of the text depends on how the interpreter reconstructs individual letters or words. Since the publication of the *editio princeps* by Ada Yardeni and Binyamin Elizur in April 2007, Elisha Qimron and Alexey (Eliyahu) Yuditsky have published a new, partial edition of the *Hazon Gabriel*. Their edition includes numerous improved readings that have since been widely accepted. Finally, Israel Knohl has partially modified his own reading in light of these two editions. In most cases, he follows either the edition of Yardeni and Elizur or that of Qimron and Yuditsky, though in some cases he proposes his own independent reading.

The purpose of the present volume is to make accessible in one book all existing editions of the *Hazon Gabriel* together with annotated English translations and to offer some initial interpretations of the text as a whole, its language and most prominent motifs. The first essay is by David Jeselsohn, the owner of the stone, who relates the story of its purchase and of the earliest attempts to decipher it. The next two essays are both co-authored, the first by Ada Yardeni and Binyamin Elizur and the next by Elisha Qimron and Alexey (Eliyahu) Yuditsky. Their essays are abbreviated English versions of the original Hebrew editions of the inscription, together with ample notes on their readings. Israel Knohl's contribution focuses on some central passages that support his messianic interpretation of the *Hazon Gabriel*. In an appendix to his essay, Knohl provides his own edition of the inscription. The next essay, by Gary Rendsburg, gives a comprehensive lexicon of the language of the *Hazon Gabriel*. The essays that follow, by Adela Yarbro Collins, John Collins, Matthias Henze, Kelley Coblenz Bautch, Daewoong Kim, and David Capes, all offer their own interpretations of the composition or examine a distinct aspect thereof. The volume closes with a bibliography of articles and books that have appeared on the *Hazon Gabriel* to date (August 2010).

Several individuals have helped with the production of this volume and deserve recognition. I wish to thank Joel Bartsch and Barbara Hawthorn from the Houston Museum of Natural Science, as well as Glen Rosenbaum, for putting together the exhibit and for bringing the stele to Houston for its first public viewing. David Jeselsohn generously made the stone available to scholars and laypeople alike; he attended the Rice conference; and he kindly agreed to write an essay for this book. Israel Knohl has done much to bring the *Hazon Gabriel* to our attention, and he has been an important motor behind this book, too, for which I am very grateful to him. I would like to thank West Semitic Research for allowing me to reproduce the photos in the back of this volume of a few selected text passages. I am indebted to Judith Newman, editor of the *Early Judaism and*

Its Literature series, for accepting this volume into the series and for her very prompt and professional editorial help with the manuscript. Leigh Andersen and Bob Buller at the SBL have been prompt and extraordinarily helpful with the practical aspects involved in the production of this volume.

I did most of my work on this book while I was a fellow in residence at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS) in Wassenaar, The Netherlands. With its tranquil setting and intellectually stimulating atmosphere, NIAS is the envy of every scholar. I am particularly indebted to the formidable library staff at NIAS, Dindy van Maanen and Erwin Nolet.

It is with immense sadness and fond memories that we dedicate this volume to the memory of Hanan Eshel, extraordinary scholar and dear friend. During my visits to Jerusalem to prepare the Houston exhibit, Esti and Hanan always welcomed me to their home and discussed with me the contours of the exhibit and the objects that would be on display, objects Hanan knew so well. His mastery of early Judaism, of its history, literature, and archaeology, was rather exceptional, both in scope and in detail, and his willingness to share his expertise with others was truly generous. With his untimely death we have lost a great mind, a formidable teacher, and a powerful and vocal advocate for the study of early Judaism. Perhaps most importantly, we have lost a wonderful human being.

ברוך דיין האמת

Matthias Henze
Rice University
February 2011