**Chapter 2**

**Verses 64-92**

**The Second Vision: A Vision of the End of Days**

**Synopsis of Chapter 2:**

Gad, in his vision, saw what would occur to the people of Israel and to the nations of the world at the end of days. The people of Israel would be gathered to their land, and neither curse nor impurity would be with them. All the nations would fulfill the Torah and ‘everyone would speak in the language of the Jews, the language of holiness.’ After the consolation would come the vengeance – the Lord would fight the wars of Israel. The Lord would first punish Edom, as well as those who claimed that He had expelled His people. Afterwards, the Lord would make an end of Spain, France, Ashkenaz and Germany. Michael, the great prince, would overcome Samael, the prince of the world, and the Lord would save Israel for having done ‘*all that I have commanded you in the law of Moses, My servant*’.

**Introduction to Chapter 2:**

Chapter 2 is a vision that describes what will happen at the end of days, that is, ‘end times’ and this is an eschatological vision,[[1]](#footnote-1) which, in terms of its genre, belongs simultaneously to both apocalyptic and prophetic literature. On the one hand, the seer opens with the words, ‘*The vision of the Lord was unto me, saying*’ and this seems to be a continuation of the vision from the previous chapter. On the other hand, the seer, as a prophet, is commanded by the Lord to perform acts of a symbolic nature, and, moreover, to address his assembled listeners with the words, ‘*Thus saith the Lord*.’ At the outset of his speech, the seer is to turn to ‘*the four corners of the earth*,’ a metaphorical phrase that does not necessarily call attention to the speaker’s audience. However, later on, the seer addresses his listeners in the present tense (72): ‘*Rejoice and be glad, remnant of Judah and banished of Israel,*’ and he goes on to address the people of Israel in the second person (73-77; 91-92), and from here we see that the seer spoke his words, as a prophet, to the people of Israel. It seems that this chapter supports the argument of scholars who see apocalyptic literature as stemming from prophetic literature.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In several ways, as a pair of chapters that complement each other, the second vision completes the vision in the first chapter. This phenomenon, according to which a certain idea appears in the form of a pair of chapters, is well known in apocalyptic literature, especially in the Book of Daniel.[[3]](#footnote-3) At the same time, the difference between the two visions is quite clear: the first vision symbolically describes a heavenly revelation of what will happen in the future. In contrast, the vision in the second chapter describes the end of days not symbolically, but in a real way, even though the language is symbolic. In addition, the second vision involves the attribute of divine justice, and deals with the punishment of the nations of the world in the future, and thus the second vision is similar to some of the prophetic Scriptures, and the use of biblical language reinforces this similarity.

The first matter to emerge in the end of days is to be the gathering of Israel to their land, an idea that is well established in Scripture. The seer describes the return of Israel with the help of two sets of metaphors. According to the first, God will bird-whistle and gather His people together like a bird that whistles and gathers its chicks. According to the second, Israel is like a seed of grain, and the Land of Israel is likened to a granary, and at the end of days, which according to the seer will be ‘*yet a little while*,’ God will gather His seed into His granary. The idea that Israel was likened to a seed appears already above (54: ‘*For they are a true seed’*), but now the matter is much more developed, and the metaphor clarifies the status of Israel. Israel is likened to wheat-seed (even if the word ‘wheat’ is not mentioned), while the other nations are likened to other seeds, which are of lower value than wheat, such as lentils, barley, etc. A similar idea also appears in the midrashic literature:

The wheat and the straw argued with each other. The wheat said: 'The field was sown for us,' and the straw said: 'The field was sown for me.' The wheat said to them: 'The hour will come and you will see.' When the time for [storing in] the granary arrived, the owner of the field took the straw and burned it and he scattered the hay; he gathered the wheat up in a pile, and all began to bestow kisses on it. Thus Israel and the nations of the world are judged; some say, ‘*The world was created for us*,’ while others say, ‘*For us* [the world was created].’ Israel says: ‘The hour will come, and you will see [in the future]; ‘*They shall be scattered, and the wind shall carry them away*' (Isaiah 41:16),’ but as for Israel, ‘*And you shall rejoice with the Lord, with the Holy One of Israel, shall you be your glory*’ (Isaiah 41:16).[[4]](#footnote-4)

The words of the midrash are very similar to those written in the Words of Gad the Seer, even if they differ in several details. In the Words of Gad the Seer, the different types of seeds are listed, but there is no mention of a dispute. Rather, it is a vision of consolation, meaning that the words of the vision were intended to encourage the people of Israel when they were suffering under the rule of a foreign people, and were scattered throughout the world: the Lord will gather His people to His *granary*, which is the Land of Israel.

In the second phase, all the nations will walk in the Torah of God, and this universal vision continues with the words: ‘All shall speak in the language of the Jews, the language of holiness.’ The seer does not specify how this will happen, and although precedents for this idea can be found in Scriptures (Isaiah 19:18), in the Qumran literature, and in the Midrash, here the words of the seer are unequivocal.[[5]](#footnote-5) The seer announces that at the end of days everyone will speak in the language of the Jews, the language in which the holy God created His world, now corrected and restored to its original state (prior to the Tower of Babel).

In the following phase, God will take revenge on Israel's enemies and make an end of them, and in this way, too, the seer continues a long-standing tradition. Not a few of the prophets of Israel proclaimed that vengeance would come upon the nations, and even the later seers, the authors of apocalyptic literature, held this view.[[6]](#footnote-6) The author of the Words of Gad the Seer foretold that the beginning of the vengeance would be wreaked on Edom, ‘*who dwells in the land of the Kittim*,’ and it is likely that the reference is to Rome, since, in antiquity, the Kittim were identified with the Romans and, furthermore, Rome is called *Edom* (in the midrashic literature). Against the background of the Roman conquest of the Land of Israel, and the destruction of the land and the Sanctuary, it is only natural that the Jews sought revenge against Rome for the harm it had done to them. Visions of vengeance of this kind were known to the Jews in antiquity, in the Middle Ages, and even later on, and they were generally kept concealed.[[7]](#footnote-7) The wording here is not known elsewhere, although, in principle, it is consistent with the vision of apocalyptic war that is known from other sources.[[8]](#footnote-8) Moreover, the term ‘Kittim’ has an apocalyptic dimension in Qumran literature,[[9]](#footnote-9) and this is also the case in this chapter, but the one-time appearance of the term in the vision makes it difficult to clarify the possible connection with other literary sources. In any event, after a brief theological digression (immediately below), the seer returns and continues and calls for an end to Edom, and to act accordingly to France [Ṣarafat], Spain [Sefarad], and Germany [Ashkenaz] (which are not necessarily the countries that bear these Hebrew names today); these are the other nations that collaborated with Edom (Rome), in the destruction of the Land of Israel.



Between the call for revenge against Edom and the call for revenge against the other lands, the seer departs slightly from the path of revenge and engages in a religious polemic. The spiritual enemies of the seer claim that ‘*God has chosen them instead of His holy people*’ and that the people of Israel did not know ‘*the Lord and His Name*,’ while they, on the other hand, say: *‘We are wise and we are intelligent, we know God and His Torah... His Name and His Existence.'* In addition, the seer’s enemies claim – and perhaps these differ from the previous ones – that God rejected Israel and expelled them from His presence through a bill of divorce. The seer neither discloses the historical background nor the identity of those who make these claims against the people of Israel, and therefore it is difficult to establish any certainties regarding the identity of his spiritual foes. Among the various claims against Israel, we can identify two claims made by the early Christians: 1) we are the true Israel, and 2) God expelled the people of Israel.[[10]](#footnote-10) Additionally, it should be remembered that the claim of the expulsion of Israel by a bill of divorce was already heard by the prophet (Isaiah 50:1), that antedates Christianity by hundreds of years, and therefore it is difficult to determine clearly who the opponents of the author of the Words of Gad the Seer were, especially since the other claims attributed by the seer to his opponents are not recognized as a position held by the Christians. At the same time, the seer mocks his opponents and implores them – sarcastically – to show him the bill of divorce that God wrote for His people, and it is possible that this bill of divorce appears in the Vision of John (which has a significant affinity with the Words of Gad the Seer), a book written by a Jew who converted to Christianity at the end of the first century CE.[[11]](#footnote-11) John [Yochanan] the seer saw in his vision (5:1) a scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals, and although it is impossible to know clearly what is written on this scroll, it seems that John saw a bill of divorce, that was designated as a ‘tentative’ bill of divorce,[[12]](#footnote-12) that God gave to the people of Israel (and therefore the heavens and the earth, God's witnesses, trembled, and it was difficult to open the document).[[13]](#footnote-13) That the idea of a bill of divorce that God gave to His people is found in the Hebrew Scriptures makes it difficult to definitively identify the opponents of the author of the Words of Gad the Seer.

Everything on earth has a parallel on high, such as the heavenly altar (and Sanctuary) mentioned in the first vision, [[14]](#footnote-14)and in a similar way, war on Earth, between Israel and the other nations, is reflected on high. The seer writes, albeit briefly, in very clear language: ‘In those days, Michael, the greatest angelic supervisor, will stand against Samael, the angelic supervisor of the world, in war, and he will contend with him to subdue him by the spirit of the Lord, in order to remove him, for the Lord has spoken'. This description seems linked the symbolic struggle between Jacob and the angel (Genesis 32:25-33), and it continues the apocalyptic world of concepts as it is known from the Book of Daniel (12:1) on the one hand, as well as from ancient myth traditions and from the external literature, on the other.[[15]](#footnote-15) In the biblical text, there is no name for the angel who struggles against Jacob, and the angel has no defined role, but in a later period the exegetists explained the symbolic nature of the struggle against ‘Esau's angelic supervisor,’ and the Tannaim said in a language similar to that of the author of the Words of Gad the Seer: ‘*In the future, the Lord will not exact recompense from the kingdoms until He has first taken recompense from their angelic supervisors*.’[[16]](#footnote-16) A tradition similar to that brought here is brought in midrashic literature (Exodus Rabba, Vilna, 18:5):

Rabbi Yosi said: To what are Michael and Samael to be compared? The defense attorney and the prosecutor who stand in trial, each speaks in turn, each concludes his speech – the defense attorney won and began praising the judge who issued the verdict, yet the prosecutor requested to add something. The defense attorney told him: ‘Keep silent, hear from the judge!’ Thus Michael and Samael stand before the Shekhinah, and Satan accuses, and Michael presents the merits of Israel, and Satan starts his speech and Michael silences him.

Apparently, R. Yosi, the author of the story, is the Tanna who lived in the second century CE, but it is possible that it originated later with Rabbi Aḥa, who was an Amora. In any event, the difference between the rabbinic tradition and what is written in the Words of Gad the Seer is clear: in the Words of Gad the Seer, the angels in heaven do combat as is done in war on Earth, whereas in rabbinic literature the war is a war of words in the heavenly court (see more below, Chapter 14). Another rabbinic tradition involves Michael and Samael in another symbolic battle, as is evident in the discussion of the signs that Judah gave to Tamar (Genesis 38). In the Talmud the following is recorded (Sotah 10b): ‘*Rabbi Elazar said: After the signs were found, Samael came and took them away, Gabriel came and brought them back.*’ In other words, according to Rabbi Elazar (apparently the Amora of the third century CE), the angels on high take part in mundane affairs, like the contest of words between a defense attorney and a prosecutor. It is worth noting that Irenaeus, one of the Church Fathers in the second century CE, writes that: *'They (the Hebrews) pray in public in their synagogues: Do not mention the accusations of Samael, but remember the advocacy of Michael*.'[[17]](#footnote-17) In other words, there are several ideas from the symbolic struggle between Michael and Samael that have their parallel in the Words of Gad the Seer, and in any case this struggle should not be seen as completely new. In summation, Michael's status as ‘the angelic supervisor of Israel’ is a biblical-apocalyptic idea that continued on to the world of the Talmudic sages, and then on to succeeding periods,[[18]](#footnote-18) and the author of the Words of Gad the Seer came and made additional use of it.

The conclusion of the chapter leaves no doubt as to the author's commitment not only to the apocalyptic (or: mythical) world, but also to the world of prophecy and Torah observance, when he writes: ‘*For you shall observe to do all that I have commanded you in the Torah of Moses my servant*.’ This verse, which deals with the observance of the Torah and its rules, corresponds to similar requirements mentioned in the words of Gad the Seer (26:188, 66), a phenomenon that is not common in apocalyptic literature, a literature in which Torah observance has a small place, if any. In other words, Chapter 2 is a synthesis of biblical ideas in the world of apocalyptic thought, and these are mixed with later concepts of the seer’s contemporary times, including religious polemics against his spiritual opponents (without explicitly mentioning their names).[[19]](#footnote-19) However, the final message of the seer is clear: A vision of the ‘end times’, a vision of consolation, to be fulfilled only if Israel keeps the Torah.

**Commentary on Chapter 2:**

(64) **After these true things** – A sentence that connects in the dimension of time: the second chapter took place after what is described in the first chapter. This indicates a chronological sequence between the prophecies, a phenomenon that does not necessarily exist in the books of prophecy. The common biblical expression is ‘*after these things*,’[[20]](#footnote-20) and the writer adds the word ‘true’ under the influence of (II Chronicles 32:1): ‘after these things and the truth,’ and perhaps even under the influence of the conclusion of the previous chapter: ‘Which is true, and His word is true, and His seal is true.’

**I had a divine vision saying:** – usual formulation in the words of the prophets is (e.g., Ezekiel 29:17): ‘The word of the Lord came to me.’ In this way, the seer expresses the similarity between what happened to him [saw a vision; heard words] and the prophecy, but also the difference between them (if not the inferiority [of hearing to seeing?]). However, the expression ‘saying’ continues when he [Gad, the seer] hears a divine voice: ‘*Set your face*,’ etc., and not by seeing, as is brought in the first vision, and thus the seer clarifies his closeness to the prophecy even if he describes the ‘divine vision’.

(65) **‘Set thy face** – The seer is commanded to turn his face towards the audience in order to increase their hearing, but also to present the statement dramatically. The phrase ‘*set your face’* appears nine times in the book of Ezekiel (e.g., 6:2).

**eastward, northward, southward and westward** — turn your face toward the east, then toward the north, and so on. The order of the directions is not circular, and it is not precise.[[21]](#footnote-21)

(66) **And whistle with your mouth as a bird whistles to its chicks** – the call of the seer is similar to the call of the bird in in comparison to the verse (Isaiah 7:18): ‘*And it shall come to pass on that day that the Lord shall whistle to the 'fly' shall, etc.*’, but here the whistling is not by God, but by the seer. The parable of the bird and its chicks is not known from any other source, and it is highly doubtful whether the divine command relates to one particular bird.[[22]](#footnote-22) The parable is not interpreted, but the intention is that just as a bird whistles to its chicks and they follow after, so Israel will follow the seer to their land,[[23]](#footnote-23) as will be revealed later.

**and say: Four corners of the earth** – the four directions mentioned in the previous verse are well known from Scripture (e.g., Genesis 13:14), but the number four does not accompany them. Four is a number with a universal cosmic significance, and the reading, of course, is not directed specifically to the four corners of the world, but to the ends of the whole world (by indicating the principle directions of the world).[[24]](#footnote-24) Similarly, the prophet said (Isaiah 11:12): ‘*And He shall present miracles unto the nations, and gather the outcasts of Israel, and He shall gather Judah from the four corners of the earth*.’[[25]](#footnote-25)

**listen to the word of the Lord** – The prophets made a similar address to the people as a declaration before prophecy (e.g., Isaiah 1:10). In contrast, here the seer is commanded to speak to the land, and this command is similar to what the prophet was commanded (Ezekiel6:3; 36:1; 36:4): ‘*And the mountains of Israel shall say, 'Hear the word of the Lord*.'’ The humanization of the land is an ancient idea that has echoes in the Bible. According to it, the Earth has a head, a face, an eye, and so on, and it can hear and even fulfill the commandments of the Creator.[[26]](#footnote-26)

(67) **Thus** **saith the Lord** –the seer informs his listeners, whether orally or in writing, that he is quoting what he has heard from God, and hence his authority. This language is prevalent in the words of the prophets (above, verse 2), and so too, did Nathan, the prophet speak (II Samuel 7:8).[[27]](#footnote-27) The term ‘Lord of hosts’ appears eight times in the Words of Gad the Seer.

**who sits and dwells over the cherubs** – The Lord’s appellation as He ‘Who sits on the Cherubs’ appears in I Chronicles 13:6, and its meaning is that God sits on the Cherubs; they are the angels who are near Him (whose ancient description likened them to an ox with a human head and with eagle wings). In Deuteronomy 33:26, God is referred to as ‘Who rides in the heavens,’ meaning that God dwells in the heavens. The appellation ‘Who rides on the Cherubs’ is an alternative version of the expression ‘Who sits on the Cherubs,’ for ‘rider’ also connotes sitting (Leviticus 15, 9).

**Give, give, give, take out, take out, take out –** The seer intensifies his declaration by tripling each command, as well as doubling it: both ‘give’ and ‘take out,’ [[28]](#footnote-28) for rhetorical effect (enhancing the impression among the listeners). The seer begins with ‘hear,’ referring to his audience, and continues with ‘give,’ referring to the land and continues ‘in you,’ referring to the four corners of the earth.

**my seed that I have sown in you** – Israel is likened to the seed (wheat) that God sowed throughout the world (they are ‘the four corners of the earth’), and now God commands the land to bring forth and give the seed that is sown in it, Israel. The parable of the seed is based on the fact that human beings in general are called ‘seed’ (e.g., I Samuel 1:11), and Israel is also called ‘holy seed’ (Isaiah 6:13; Ezra 9:2).

**for the time for the seed has come** – the reason for the command: the time of gathering the seed has arrived (and not: ‘the time for seeding,’ i.e., sowing).

(68) **For yet a little while** (above, 55).

**I shall collect my seed on my threshing-floor** – it reads: 'And I gathered my seed in my granary’. Israel is the seed, and the Land of Israel is the granary, the gathering place of the grain.

(69) **And the threshing-floor will be holy** – it reads: ‘And the granary shall be holy,’ meaning the Land of Israel shall be holy, since –

**an impure seed will not be found in it –** the Lord shall bring into His granary, into the Land of Israel, only the holy-seed; they are Israel (above 67, below 312).

(70) **For before those days** – a phrase describing a time-period found in Zechariah 8:10, in contrast to ‘end of days’ that appears in the following verse (71), that is, in the end of days it will be so and so, but before that, ‘before those days’

**my seed was mixed with lentils and barley, and spelt, beans, and gourd** – Israel, likened to wheat (good), were mixed with seeds of lesser consequence. Until the end of days, wheat will be mixed with other seeds (above 8), referring by analogy to Israel among the nations of the world.[[29]](#footnote-29) The seer names the seeds, apparently, in descending rank (although the order is not absolute). A similar list is found in the verse (Ezekiel 4:9): ‘And you, take for yourself wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and spelt,’ and (II Samuel 17:28): ‘And wheat, and barley, and flour, and roasted barley, and beans, and lentils, and roasted beans,’ and these seeds were on the daily menu.[[30]](#footnote-30)

(71) **And in the end of days, the sower shall be truth** – at the end of the present age, (in keeping with the analogy of ‘seeds’) the Lord will be the Sower, and His name, ‘Truth.’[[31]](#footnote-31)

**and the seed shall be truth** – Israel is likened to the ‘seed of truth,’ which is the true seed (of God), according to Jeremiah 2:21 (and above 54).

**and from the seed all the land will be blessed** – the ‘land’ here is the entire world (as mentioned above, 66), and the people of Israel will bring blessing to the entire world.[[32]](#footnote-32)

(72) **Be joyful and glad remnant of Judah and rejected of Israel** – the seer calls upon the remnant of Israel, those who endured the exile to rejoice (imperative mood) as an expression of trust in God, that, in the future, God will gather His people to His land. This accords with Isaiah 35:10: *‘And the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with rejoicing and eternal happiness upon their heads; they shall attain joy and gladness even as sorrow and sighing disappear'*. The seer establishes a parallel between ‘the remnant of Judah’ (a phrase found in Jeremiah 40:15) and ‘the rejected of Israel,’ (Isaiah 11:12): ‘*And He shall raise a flag unto the nations, and He shall gather the rejected of Israel, and He shall gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth*.’ From here and onwards, the seer turns to his audience: Judah and Israel.

**for salvation is with the Lord –** (be joyful and glad) since in the future, God will save Israel and gather them to their land. In this work, God’s role in Israel's salvation is mentioned or alluded to a number of times.[[33]](#footnote-33)

(73) **As ye shall be** – words that promise a future that (ultimately) matches the days of King David.

**a curse and a blasphemy** – derogatory words, the same idea is repeated in different words, two-as-one: you, Israel, will be an example of the curse, and also of desolation; ‘desolation’ is the intent of ‘the curse’ and describes it precisely. As in (Deuteronomy 28:37): ‘And you will become a desolation and for an example and reproach among all the nations…'; or (II Kings 22:19): ‘To become a desolation and for a curse.’

**to all the families of the earth** – they are the nations of the world, as in (Genesis 28:14): ‘And all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you.’

**so shall you be a blessing** – the two-fold repetition of ‘you shall be’ expresses the certainty that both it and its opposite will occur: a standard example for ‘curse’ as well as standard example for ‘blessing’, meaning that for the nations of the world, Israel will serve as an example of ‘blessed’, just as, in the past, Israel had served as an example of ‘cursed’. The entire verse is in accordance with (Zechariah 8:13): ‘And just as you were a curse among the nations, O House of Judah and the House of Israel, so I shall set you free, and you shall become a blessing.’

**and grace forever** – in the end times, the people of Israel will find favor in the eyes of the nations of the world, so that all the families of the earth will think well of Israel. The blessing and the grace will exist ‘forever,’ meaning for eternity.

(74) **At that time** – in the future, as well as hereinafter 93; Coordinator.[[34]](#footnote-34)

**no cursed or unholy people will be found among you**—in other words, in the future – it is established for certain – there will be no accursed or impure nation mixed together with the people of Israel, for these nations are destined to be effaced from the world (27, 87). A cursed people, such as Canaan (Genesis 9:25), and an unclean people, such as a nation that worships idols and becomes defiled by them.[[35]](#footnote-35)

(75) **For everybody** **will join you in the covenant** – an explanation and clarification of just how there will be no cursed or unholy people in the world. The word ‘everybody’ refers to all nations; now the seer’s vision is universal: all nations will ‘join in the covenant,’ that is, to enter into the covenant with the Lord, and then they will be ‘with you’ – like you; all the nations will make a covenant with God as have the people of Israel.

**In the law, testimonies, statutes and ordinances –** the phrase ‘join in the covenant’ is now elaborated upon; it is an expression whose intention is to fulfill the law of the Lord, His instructions, which include testimonies, statutes and ordinances (Deuteronomy 4:55), that is, commandments of various types. This vision is a universal vision, similar to the words of the prophet (Zechariah 14:8-9): ‘*And it shall be on that day...And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day, the Lord shall be one and His name shall be one*’. There are other universal visions to be found the Scriptures (such as: Isaiah 45:22-23; Psalms 22:28-30; and more), but they differ from the vision described here in that the nations of the world are seen as Torah observant. Moreover, in the Rosh Hashanah prayers one can find ideas that are close to what is presented here, such as ‘*And so, grant that Your awe, Lord, be upon all Your works…and may they all be united as one to do Your will with a perfect heart*,' and more.[[36]](#footnote-36)

(76**) And you and they shall have** – in the future, at the end of days, it shall be for you: Israel, and for them: the nations of the world.

**one God** – The current situation is (Deuteronomy 6:4; below, 183, 277): ‘*Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God; the Lord is one*,' meaning that only for Israel is there one God; however, in the end times, the nations of the world will also have 'one God' (and not many gods); He is the Lord.[[37]](#footnote-37)

**one covenant** – that is, there will not be different covenants between God and the nations

**one law** – the law of Israel (and not many laws, neither a god and his law nor a nation and its law)

**one language** – all the nations will speak one language, and these words reflect (or are supported by) the verse (Zephaniah 3:9): ‘*For then I will transform the peoples’ speech to a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord*.’ The four-fold repetition of ‘one’ in the verse emphasizes the unity of them all, and this repetition of ‘one’ is similar to the repetition of ‘true’ (above 47, 63).

**for all shall speak the Jews’ language, the holy language** – in the end times, after all the nations return to the Lord, the partitioning of languages (caused by the transgression of the Tower of Babel) will be removed, and all the inhabitants of the world will speak Hebrew, which in Scriptures is called ‘Jewish.’[[38]](#footnote-38) The term ‘the language of the Jews’ is not recorded in antiquity; it may be that this is an influence attributable to Zechariah 8:23. The ‘language of the Jews’ is also known as the ‘holy language’ or ‘the language of the holy’: the language in which God (the holy) created the world, in which God spoke to His prophets, and in which one prays to the Holy God.[[39]](#footnote-39)

(77) **Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee? A people saved by the Lord** – this is a blessing: Israel is happy; they are blessed, for there is no nation like Israel whose savior is the Lord.

**for He shall go before you to fight your wars with your enemies** – Israel is blessed that God will fight for Israel against their enemies (see below, introduction to chapter 5). The verse begins with a quotation from Scripture (Deuteronomy 33:29) and there it continues: ‘And He is your glorious sword, and He shall weaken your enemies for you and you shall overwhelm them.’ The words are further clarified by the verse (Deuteronomy 1: 30): ‘The Lord, your God, Who goes before you, He shall fight for you.’

(78) **Woe to you, O Edom** – a curse upon Edom, in contrast to a blessing for Israel (in the previous verse). ‘Edom’ is a term for Rome, a term often found in midrashic literature.[[40]](#footnote-40)

**that sits in the land of Kittim** – Kittim is mentioned in Scripture as the son of Javan (Genesis 10:4), and the ‘land of Kittim’ is mentioned in Isaiah 23:1. The land of Kittim is Kition (Citium/Larnaca), in Cyprus. In antiquity, some Jews spoke of ‘Kittim’ as a general name for the nations that lived far to the West, and there were those who saw it as the name for a specific people: Macedonians or Romans. Beginning with the Septuagint, and passing on to the Qumran and Talmudic literature, as well as during the Middle Ages, the Jews identified the Kittim with the Romans,[[41]](#footnote-41) and the translation attributed to Jonathan on Ezekiel 27:6 translated ‘from the islands of Kittim’ as ‘from the country of Apulia’ (in southern Italy). The Amoraim, interpreted the verse (Genesis 10:4): ‘*And the sons of Javan, Elisha, and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim,’* by: ‘*Els, and Tarsus, Italia, and Dodania*.’[[42]](#footnote-42)

**in the north of the sea** – read ‘in the north is the sea’; this does not mean ‘in the northern sea,’ but rather to the sea in the north of the Land of Israel. Rome is located west of the Land of Israel, and a little to the north, but Greek speakers also lived in Asia Minor, which is located north of the Land of Israel.

(79) **For your destroyers will emerge from a terrible nation** – the reason for Edom's lament is that the enemy will destroy and kill its inhabitants. ‘A terrible nation’ is mentioned in Isaiah 18:2 (18:7), and it is a nation that everyone fears that is destined to destroy Edom. Compare Deuteronomy 28:50-51.

**not leaving you a remnant** – not one will be saved, and all of them will be killed. Compare Numbers 21:35: ‘Until no remnant remained of him.’ Similar statements are brought in the Testament of the Twelves Tribes (Testament of Simon 6:3) and in the War Scroll of Qumran.[[43]](#footnote-43)

(80) **For you said: On high is my seat** – that you trusted in your strength, according to the prophecy concerning Edom (Obadiah 1:3): '...From his seat on high, he said in his heart: who can take me down?' The intent is regarding the haughtiness of Edom, that is, of the Romans, the conquerors of the land of Israel, whose conceit stemmed from their success in conquering ‘the whole world.’

**and I have knowledge of the god of gods** –Balaam said of himself (Numbers 24:16): ‘*And he had knowledge of the Most High*,’ and the seer cites his enemies as saying that they have the knowledge of the god of gods. The seer conflates two different enemies here, since the Romans saw themselves as the world’s ultimate superiors, yet they did not connect this conceit to a religious intention to know God. In other words, the seer moves from a description of one enemy to a description of another. Confirmation that the words of the seer are directed at two different enemies is found later in David's blessing to his people (280): ‘To defeat your enemies, enemies of spirit and enemies of flesh, beneath your feet.’ That is to say, the same prophecy is made twice in this work, albeit expressed in two forms. The Romans were ‘enemies of flesh,’ meaning that they made war against the Israel’s physical existence, while the men of the separate sects were ‘enemies of spirit,’ meaning that they battled against Israel on a spiritual level, saying the following to Israel.

**for the Lord chose me instead of His holy people** – the seer continues to quote His enemies, the enemies of Israel, who are not named individually and instead they are considered as one collective, because in their opinion God chose them instead of His holy people, instead of Israel. The title ‘His holy people’ is in accordance with (Deuteronomy 26:19): ‘*…and you shall be a holy people unto the Lord your God…*.’ God's election of Israel is an ancient idea found in Scripture. Its holds an important place in the religious views of the seer (47, 207-209, 214), an idea that continues in Jewish prayer.[[44]](#footnote-44) The Christians claimed that God chose them in place of the people of Israel; however, it is possible that this claim was also voiced by others (such as the men of the separate sects).

**For He loathed them –** The enemies of Israel justify God's choice of them in place of Israel, since God became disgusted with Israel and is no longer interested in them. The idea of God’s disgust with Israel is found in Scriptures,[[45]](#footnote-45) and at the same time there is a divine promise that God will not reject Israel (above 58).

(81) **And His former people, despised and rejected** – The seer continues by quoting his enemies’ words, who describe the people of Israel as ‘his former people,’ and they, having been of a secondary status, have taken their place. Above the people of Israel were described (13) as a lamb ‘rejected and despised’ and now, they are described (without use of a metaphor) as ‘despised and rejected.’ In other words, the people of Israel have forsaken God and are considered as despised among the nations of the world. The national disgrace proves, according to the Edomites, that God has rejected His people Israel and Edom now takes the place at the head. The struggle between Jacob and Esau (Edom), over the birthright, regarding who is the firstborn, is found in Scripture (Genesis 27).[[46]](#footnote-46)

**did not know the Lord or His image** – Their enemies claim that the people of Israel did not know the Lord, that is, they did not recognize God. Lack of knowledge of God was considered a sure indicator of someone who holds heretical notions and believes in other gods.[[47]](#footnote-47) In a later period, knowledge of God was considered to be knowledge attained through thinking about God (philosophy, theology, or mysticism). Moreover, Israel did not even know God's ‘image,’ a term that should be understood as a concept with a Gnostic and mystical meaning (see the next verse) or from the words of the Sages about the emulation of God’s traits.[[48]](#footnote-48)

(82) **Verily,** **we are wise and clever** – the seer disputes his spiritual enemies’ claims that say that Israel does not know God and vehemently denies it. The word ‘Verily’ that opens a sentence, is meant to establish the reality by rejecting the accusations against the people of Israel. The view that Israel is wise and clever is in accordance with (Jeremiah 4:22): ‘*For My people is foolish, they did not know Me; they are dull children, and they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, and they did not know to do good*.’ From the words of the prophet we can learn that those who know God are clever and wise.

**we know the Lord and His law** – the seer continues to deny the words of his enemies while contending with them. Knowing God is to recognize Him and an expression of complete faith in Him (above 81). The seer adds, in opposition to the enemies' claim, that not only do Israel know God, but they also know the law, that is, they fulfill its commandments (and hence prove that they know God).

**we know His image and presence** – the word ‘we,’ which relates to the enemies of the seer, is repeated four times and the words ‘we know’ are repeated twice; these repetitions suggest refrains expressed in the course of an oral presentation (cf. above: 47, 63, 76). The description of God is mentioned below (358): ‘*And the appearance of the glory of the Lord is like the appearance of the rainbow, His covenant*'. God's ‘presence’ is nothing but His ‘image,’ and the seer here again expresses that two-is-one.

(83) **Therefore,** **thus saith the Lord** – The enemies have falsely blamed Israel for misdeeds, and therefore they will be punished. This phrase is often found in the words of the prophets, such as: II Kings 19:32 (and above, 67).

**because you rose so high** **to talk about god of gods** – to speak of the Lord, who is the God of gods (above, 80).

**you shall know that you shall perish in your cleverness** – The seer promises his enemies that they will perish, that is, they will die, even though they see themselves as wise.

(84) **For why would you put your confidence in man** – The question is: Why do you trust in man (or: believe in him), who is not to be trusted – rather trust only God! This is a rhetorical question. The seer argues with his opponents and addresses them in the second person: ‘you,’ while rebuking them and contradicting their words. The use of the second person is also done for rhetorical reasons, since this is how the seer makes the enemy present for the purpose of announcing the expected punishment.

**in whose nostrils is his breath** – a person has a soul, and therefore he is destined to quickly pass away. According to (Isaiah 2:22): ‘Take ye leave of the man whose soul is in his nose, for of what account is he?’

**which came up in a night** – a man’s days are short, and ‘overnight’ is a measure of time that passes quickly and to which a person's life is likened. A person's life is likened to night (because of his troubles), in accordance with (Yona 4:10): ‘It came to be and was lost during the night.’

**like a day-shadow that passes by** – man is likened to a shadow that is found only by day, and it is clear that it quickly passes, in accordance with (Psalm 144:4): ‘A man is like a breath; his days, a passing shadow’ (below, 254). For more on the shadow and its use as a parable, see above: 22-23, 50. God is not mentioned in the rebuke of the seer, but the contrast to God clarifies his meaning: one must trust in God alone, for He has no breathing soul, and He is eternal.

**sitting him to sit beside God** – those who trust in man, that is, those who believe in him, see man as a kind of god, or an actual god, a faith that was shared by many nations. The idea that man sits on the a divine throne or is at the side of God, and is therefore similar to Him is an ancient idea,[[49]](#footnote-49) that still remained in the first century C.E., as is evident in the Vision of John 4:3, where twenty-four elders are described as sitting at God’s side.[[50]](#footnote-50) In contrast, the seer argues that just as a man, whose life is fleeting, cannot be likened to God, likewise, it is impossible to think that he is able to sit with God.

(85) **For it is not you whom I knew formerly** – the seer speaks in the name of the Lord (above, 83) and arguing from the negative, that He did not ‘know’ you – it is not them, who engage in disputations with him, that the Lord loved and cherished from ancient times (rather it is Israel); in accordance with (Amos 3:2): ‘*Of all the families of the earth, I have known only you*.’

**and where is the bill of divorce of My people** the seer raises an additional argument against his spiritual enemies by quoting their words that God wrote a bill of divorce,[[51]](#footnote-51) a ‘get’, for the people of Israel. According to (Isaiah 50:1): ‘Thus says the Lord, *'Where is this bill of divorce of your mother that I sent her away?*’ The idea of divorce is predicated on another idea, according to which the mutual connection between God and Israel is like that of a husband and wife. These two ideas are well established in Scripture. As in the days of prophet and so, also, many centuries later the same claim was argued: the Christians argued against Israel that God had sent them away, based on the words of the prophet.[[52]](#footnote-52) The seer asks rhetorically: Where is the bill of divorce? He knows that there is none.

**that ye said would be a prey** – In other words, Israel's enemies believed that Israel was given to be plundered (to be killed and humiliated), and this is proof that God expelled them. According to (Numbers 14:31): ‘*And your offspring, which you said would be prey*.’

**show it to me!** – show me the bill of divorce! The seer uses sarcastic language that mocks those who make this claim (due to his trust that God did not expel the people of Israel).

(86)**Your corpses will fall among My people**—In the end of days, the spiritual opponents of the seer, those who claim to be people of the Lord, even though they are not, will die. The corpses ‘among My people’ will show, in contrast, who is God's true people, and who is not (see Ezekiel 9:4-11).

(87) **O Jealous Lord** – The seer addresses God in accordance with one of His attributes, ‘Jealous’ (as above, 30(. The attribution of jealousy to God is in accordance with the text, (Exodus 34:14): ‘For the Lord, whose name is Jealous is a jealous God.’

**come out, come out of your place** – the seer calls out to God, in words of exhortation, that He go out from His place in heaven. The call is similar to the call above (35): ‘Rise up, Intelligence, Rise up, Power.’ The purpose of the appeal is to ‘awaken’ God, similar to the verses (Numbers 10:35): ‘*Rise up, O Lord, and your enemies will be scattered, and they that hate Thee will flee from before you*.’ and (Isaiah 26:21): ‘For behold, the Lord shall come out of His place…’

**and thrash Edom –** to beat Edom with force like one who separates wheat from the chaff.

**consume them** – The purpose of threshing Edom is not to remove the husk from the grain, but to destroy them,[[53]](#footnote-53) and Edom (described above 78 as dwelling in the land of Kittim) was identified in antiquity with Rome. The request for punishment seems to stem from a desire for vengeance.

(88) **Come to Zerephath** –The seer ‘awakens’ the Lord’s jealousy for His people, so that He will come to the place where the enemies of Israel dwell and make an end of them. The seer mentions the names of several places of the nations. The origin of the names ‘Sepharad’ and ‘Zerephath’ is in Obadiah 20, where the prophet foresees the fall of Edom: ‘*And this exile began for the children of Israel, who were among the Canaanites, as far as France (Zerephath), and the exile of Jerusalem, who were in Spain (Sepharad) inherited the cities of the Negev*'. In other words, while Obadiah characterized these places as a place where Jews lived, the author of the words of Gad the seer believed that these places were inhabited by Israel's enemies. In the first centuries CE, there were Jews in ‘Zerephath’, that is Sarepta, located in Lebanon, between Tyre and Sidon.[[54]](#footnote-54) However, with the dwindling of the Jewish settlement, Jewish tradition in this area disappeared. Rashi (in the 11th century) was the first to call Francia, the land of the Franks, by the name ‘Zerephath’ and Rabbi Moshe ben Ezra (c. 1055-1140) wrote: ‘And we have a tradition that Zerephath is Francia, and Sepharad is Spania.’[[55]](#footnote-55)

**come to Sepharad –** the seer calls to the Lord to come to places outside of the Land of Israel (perhaps in the order by name as being further and further away from the Land of Israel ). In Peshitta, the word ‘Sepharad’ is translated as ‘Ispamia,’ and we may surmise that this was its denotation in Babylonia. This is also the opinion of the author of the Book of Josippon, composed in southern Italy in the tenth century, while the land of the Franks is named ‘Francus’ and the name ‘Zerephath’ does not appear in the book.[[56]](#footnote-56) In modern research, the Sepharad mentioned in Scripture has been identified with Sardis, the capital of Lydia (in Turkey).[[57]](#footnote-57)

**come to Ashkenaz** – Ashkenaz, Torgamah's brother, was the son of Gomer son of Japhet son of Noach (Genesis 10:3; I Chronicles 1:6). While Torgamah was identified with a place in central Turkey, Ashkenaz's location remained uncertain. Despite attempts to identify Ashkenaz's location with the land of the Khazars (on the northern and western shores of the Black Sea),[[58]](#footnote-58) it became clear that Ashkenaz was located in eastern Turkey.[[59]](#footnote-59) The author of the Book of Josippon was the first to identify Ashkenaz with Germany; [[60]](#footnote-60) however, from ‘come to Garmania' that follows, it seems that the author Words of Gad the Seer thought that we are speaking of two different places.

**come to Garmania** – There are two possibilities for the geographical identification of Germany; the first interpretation is that the word for ‘native of Germany’ (Germani) is mentioned in Mishnah Negaim2:1 (twice) and is mentioned again in the Talmudic literature as a contrast to ‘Kushi’ (African) meaning that a German has light skin. Therefore, it seems that the description of Germany, as a place where Israel's enemies live, refers to the homeland of light-skinned soldiers of the Roman army. Drusus, the younger nephew of Emperor Tiberius, who later became emperor himself, was called Germanicus because he subdued the Germanic tribes (between the Rhine and Elbe rivers) between 8 - 12 BCE. Among Herod's bodyguards were Germans, and there were probably Germans among the Roman legions that were stationed in the Land of Israel.[[61]](#footnote-61) According to this interpretation, we are dealing with a part of Northern Europe (‘Alemania,’ which in the Middle Ages, the Jews called ‘Ashkenaz’). It is possible that the expositor in the Gemara (Megillah 6a-b) referred to this place: ‘*Do not grant his evil wish*’ – this refers to Garmania of Edom, for should they but go forth they would destroy the whole world. Tacitus, in the first century CE, noted that the word 'Garmania' had come into usage not a long time before him. The second explanation: The name Garmania is brought in the words of the Amoraim, as a commentary on the text dealing with the children of Japheth (Genesis 10:3): *‘And the sons of Gomar, Ashkenaz, and Rifat and Torgamah*,’ names identified with ‘Asia, Ḥadyev (Adiabene), and Garmania; Rabbi Berachya said: 'Garmonkia.’[[62]](#footnote-62) In the Targum attributed to Jonathan (Genesis 10:3: ‘The sons of Japheth, Gomar, and Magog, and Mede and Javan’), the name Magog is associated with Garmania. This 'Garmania' is a region of Karmania (Καρμανία) in the Achaemenid and Sassanid Persian empires (and today one of the 31 provinces of Iran).[[63]](#footnote-63)

**They came and fell in the nethermost pit** – the seer expresses his desire for the future in the past tense as an expression of finality as well as of faith that so shall it transpire.[[64]](#footnote-64) The seer calls upon God that ‘at the end of days,’ after the Lord comes to the nations mentioned here, they will be found as already come and fallen into the nethermost pit, that is, a deep place which destroys those who fall therein and there they die. According to (Psalms 55:24): ‘And You, God, shall bring them down to the nethermost pit.’ The Tannaim believed that this place was one of the names of Hell[[65]](#footnote-65).

**in destruction and in the shadow of death** – repetition for emphasis, and here they do not have two different meanings, but two-as-one.[[66]](#footnote-66) ‘Destruction’ denotes loss and destruction (e.g., Proverbs 15:11), and ‘shadow of death’ that is, Sheol (compare Psalm 107:10).

**for your mouth failed you** – because your mouth has betrayed you[[67]](#footnote-67). The seer accuses Israel's enemies of arrogance saying (above 80): ‘*For you said: On high is my seat*,’ etc.

**and no one helps you** – none will be found who will be able to help you.

(89) **At the end of days** – in the end times (above 55, 71).

**Michael the great prince** –in accordance with Daniel 12:1: ‘*And at that time Michael, the great prince, will rise, who is appointed on your people.*’ The angel Michael is described as ‘one of the first [celestial] princes,’ as well as ‘their prince’ (Daniel 10:13; 10:21), who is the heavenly prince who represents (or is responsible for) Israel. The name Michael also appears in Numbers 13:13: ‘*Mi-ca’el*’ – Who is like God? – a rhetorical question meaning that there is nothing like God. The origin of the name is the idea that the person so named praises God, an idea that corresponds to the song of praise that the people of Israel sang to God, as well as the lamb that represents Israel (above 40): ‘Who is like unto Thee O Lord?’ The title ‘Great Prince’ refers to one of the most senior celestial ministers in the implementation of the divine supervision. In other apocalyptic books (The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness 27,6; Vision of Baruch 2:11), Michael is described as the minister of Israel who fights their wars .[[68]](#footnote-68)

**against Samael** – In the Book of Daniel, only Michael's name is mentioned. The name Samael is not found in Scriptures, but it is known from external literature and is common in Midrashic literature.[[69]](#footnote-69)The name Samael means ‘Sam-El’ – God’s Potion – one who fulfills God's mission by slaying his victims with the potion of death, and for this reason Samael was identified with the angel of death.[[70]](#footnote-70)

**the prince** **of the world** – the seer created a contrast between two angels, Michael and Samael, as well as a contrast between their titles ‘the Great Prince’ as opposed to the ‘Prince of the World.’ The title ‘Prince of the World’ was added in order to create a comprehensive parallel, in name and title, between Michael, who is mentioned in Scriptures, and Samael, who is not. It is also possible that the title ‘Prince of the World’ as an addition to the the name ‘Samael,’ since ‘Samael’ by itself, does not express the role of the angel; in the present context he does not act as the angel of death, albeit, generally, the names of the angels signify their ‘attributes.’[[71]](#footnote-71) Rashi interpreted this title as that of ‘an angel whose authority is over the whole world.’[[72]](#footnote-72) However, in light of the conflict described here between the two angels, the ‘Prince of the World’ is understood as the angel appointed over all the nations of the world,[[73]](#footnote-73) except for the people of Israel. In the midrashic literature, Samael is referred to as ‘the angel of death,’ ‘the prince of Rome,’ ‘the prince of Esau,’ and ‘a great prince of heaven.’

**shall stand up in war and like a whirlwind** , Michael’s attack on Samael will be swift and forceful (in the manner of a warrior). The war between the angels in heaven symbolizes the conflict between the people of Israel and the nations of the world on earth. In other words, what happens on earth is reflected in heaven, and the conflict is similar to that mentioned above (30).

**to put him under his feet** – to subdue him, in accordance with the ancient custom according to which the victor would step on the defeated in order to express his superiority. Solomon said to Hiram (I Kings 5:17): ‘*You knew David my father...until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet*’ (and see below, 288).

**In the wind of the Lord** – by the word of the Lord, and the word of the Lord is heard by the spirit; according to the Scriptures.[[74]](#footnote-74)

**and it shall be eaten up** – ‘Prince of the World’, the ‘representative’ of the nations of the world, he shall be destroyed and obliterated from the world;[[75]](#footnote-75) (compare Isaiah 5:5).

**for the Lord hath spoken it –** the seer clarifies the truth of his words by mentioning their source (it is not I, but the Lord, who speaks). This phrase concludes several prophecies found in Scripture.[[76]](#footnote-76)

(90) **At the end of days** – the writer repeated the description of the time that appears in the previous verse, either for needed emphasis, or because this verse was written as an addition (that this too will take place at that time).[[77]](#footnote-77)

**the robbed will overcome the robber** – one who submits his enemies, that, the one who was ‘robbed’ will overcome the strong. In accordance with (Amos 5:9): ‘He strengthens the robbed over the mighty’ (see below 310).

**and the weak over the strong** – The intention is that the weak people of Israel will overcome the strong nations. The description of the people of Israel as weak and its enemies as strong appears in the prayer ‘For the miracles’ (Al Ha-Nisim): ‘*You have delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak*.’[[78]](#footnote-78)

**truly and in righteousness** – the writer comments that the vision will truly, in truth, be fulfilled as in his emphasis on the truth at the end of Chapter 1 (63). The addition of ‘in righteousness’ (as used in Scripture, in the sense of justice) is nothing more than a synonym for ‘in truth’, similar to the blessing at the conclusion of the reading of the Torah: ‘All His words are truth and justice.’[[79]](#footnote-79)

(91) **Your** **God is your savior, O Israel, with Him you will be saved**, the God of Israel, who will help Israel (above, 77), and in the future, He will save him.[[80]](#footnote-80) The seer addresses the people of Israel as ‘you’ to indicate closeness; it is an expression of consolation and encouragement, and apparently the announcement was made to his live audience.

**For He is a merciful God; He will not abandon you**—a statement that makes it clear that God's salvation stems from God's compassion toward His people, in accordance with (Deuteronomy 4:31): ‘*For the Lord, your God, is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor let you perish*,’ words that are from the chapter on repentance (Deuteronomy 30:1-20) that deals with the ‘end of days.’ The continuation of the words in the second person is consistent with the addresses in Deuteronomy: a speaker addressing his audience.

(92) **For thou shalt keep on doing all that I have commanded you in the law of Moses My servant** – a literary ending that emulates one of the verses that conclude the Book of Malachi (3:22): ‘*Remember the law of Moses my servant, whom I commanded at Horeb for all Israel, statutes and judgments*.’ The remembrance of this verse is shared with the memory of another verse (I Chronicles 22:13), David's word to his son Solomon: ‘Then you will succeed, if you take heed to do the statutes and the judgments which the Lord commanded Moses for Israel.’ A similar verse is brought below in 186: ‘*Remember and obey the law of Moses, man of God, that it may be well with thee all the days.*’

The seer stresses that the vision of the end of days will be fulfilled on condition that Israel keep the Torah, that is, fulfill the commandments, as opposed to those who believed that there was no need to observe them, whether because they saw them as only symbolic expressions, or because they refused to fulfill them for other reasons (such as in order to bring the end closer, as is known from a later period).[[81]](#footnote-81) In particular, this is in light of an approach, which also exists in the literature of the sages, according to which the commandments are destined to be cancelled in the future,[[82]](#footnote-82) and the seer comes and announces that their observance is a condition for the redemption of Israel. The demand to fulfill the commandments of the Torah is repeated several times in the Words of Gad the Seer (26, 82, 188, 206); it may be seen as a literary way to connect the end of the chapter and one of the verses above (75) – they present a polemical religious position that is a firm demand to observe the commandments.

**B.1 4 Ezra (The Vision of Ezra)**

Among all the books called "external literature," the book that reveals similarity to *The Words of Gad the Seer* more than any other book is the Vision of Ezra, also called 4 Ezra, a book that can be seen as a significant component in ancient apocalyptic literature. This literature was written by Jews who were not interested in practical halakhot like the Sages, and was held by Jews until at a later stage they converted their Jewish faith to Christianity, and among Christians this literature was preserved. There is general agreement that the Vision of Ezra was written in the Land of Israel at the end of the first century CE, and that it was written in biblical-like Hebrew or Aramaic, but its original version was lost, and its translations remained in Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, Arabic, Coptic, and Georgian, until its retranslation into Hebrew in the 20th century. Below are lines of similarity, or "parallels," between the two books:

| **Feature** | **4 Ezra** | **The Words of Gad the Seer** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Book attributed to prophet or seer-scribe | Opening | 1 |
| 2. Places mentioned: Jerusalem | 8:47-48 | 1, 105, 108, 150, 161, 162, 182, 281, 299, 327, 328 |
| 3. Names mentioned: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob | 1:13-16; 1:30; 4:8-9; 5:106 | (56), 372 |
| Moses | 5:106; 5:129 | 92, 177, 186 |
| Samuel | 5:107 | 143, 278 |
| Solomon | 5:108 | 102, 103, 279, 291, 292, 296-298, 328, 331-332, 334, 336, 338, 341, 343, 345-346, 348, 349, 351-354 |
| David | 1:23; 5:108 | 1, 45, 57, 60, 61, 93, 94, 97-100, 102, 105, 106, 116, 118-120, 122-124, 127, and more |
| 4. Lament over destruction | 8:21-22 | 15, 24 (?), 49-50 |
| 5. Command to stand for vision | 3:15; 4:13; 5:2; 8:33 | 2 |
| 6. God revealed his secret to the seer | 8:38 | 62, 282 |
| 7. Election of Israel | 1:16; 3:27; 4:54 | 95, 209, 214, 223 |
| 8. Israel the firstborn son | 4:58 | 47 |
| 9. Seer commanded to write the vision | 10:37; 12:26 | 54 |
| 10. Ingathering of exiles | 11:40 | 66-69 |
| 11. Expression: "seal of truth" | 5:104 | 54 |
| 12. Rebuke for not keeping Torah | 7:32; 11:42 | 49 |
| 13. End of days | 5:73; 12:5 | 55, 71, 217 |
| 14. Jerusalem hidden/city now concealed will be revealed | 5:26; 7:26 | 281 |
| 15. Heavenly books | 4:20 | 360, 363 |
| 16. Opening sermon with "Hear, O Israel" | 12:28 | 183 |
| 17. Prayer through mediator | 5:106-111 | 308-309 |

These examples speak for themselves, and even if it is difficult to determine the nature and weight of each parallel separately, their combination together teaches of kinship between the two books. It is important to remember that both compared books belong to the same genre, apocalyptic literature, and this ideological kinship gives additional validity to these parallels.

**B.2 2 Baruch (First Vision of Baruch)**

Another book that reveals similarity to *The Words of Gad the Seer* is the First Vision of Baruch (Syriac Baruch, or: 2 Baruch). This book is apocalyptic in character, and describes visions, angels, prayers, and additional phenomena characteristic of apocalyptic literature. The First Vision of Baruch was originally composed in Hebrew but survived in Syriac. There is consensus among scholars that this book was written either at the end of the first century CE or at the beginning of the second century CE, and it seems likely that it was written by an observant Jew.

The First Vision of Baruch and *The Words of Gad the Seer* share the following phenomena:

| **Feature** | **2 Baruch** | **The Words of Gad the Seer** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Book attributed to prophet or seer-scribe | 1:1 | 1 |
| 2. Places mentioned: Brook Kidron | 5:5; 21:1; 31:2; 66:4 | 1; 5 |
| Jerusalem | 5:3; 31:4; 35:3; 63:9; 67:6 | 1, 105, 108, 150, 161, 162, 182, 281, 299, 327, 328 |
| 3. Names mentioned: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob | 21:24; 57:1 | 372 |
| Moses | 17:4 | 92, 177, 186 |
| 4. Lament over destruction and exile of tribes | 1:2; 10:5-12:5; 35 | 15, 24 (?), 49-50 |
| 5. Standing for vision | 13:2 | 2 |
| 6. Vision of God's throne | 21:6; 51:11 | 356-357 |
| 7. Heavens opening | 22:1 | 355 |
| 8. Revelation of angels | 6:4; 7:1; 8:1; 51:5-12; 55:3 | 16, 18, 54, 60, 360, 362, 367, 369, 371, 375, and more |
| 9. Seer commanded to write | 50:1; 77:12-22; 82:1; 87:1 | 54 |
| 10. Demand for observance of commandments | 44:3; 48:26; 84:1 | 92, 188-189 |
| 11. Heavenly books with sins | 24:1 | 363 |
| 12. Speech before death | 44:1-15 | 266-285 |
| 13. Use of symbols: Vine | 29; 37:3-39:8 | 16 |
| Shepherd | 77:9 | 20, 26, 52 |
| 14. Hiding of understanding | 48:39 | 25 |
| 15. Future ingathering of exiles | 78:7 | 66-69 |

**Summary of Chapter 2:**

This chapter, like its predecessor, is a vision of the end of days, an eschatological vision. The main message of the chapter is that God will gather the people of Israel together, that all the nations will walk in God's Torah, and that they will even speak in the holy language –in Hebrew. The seer expects God to exact vengeance on other nations, and in addition, the future vision includes the victory of Michael, the celestial minister of Israel, over Samael, the minister of the nations of the world. In this symbolism, the second vision corresponds to the first vision, according to which the lamb was crowned over all the animals. Although Chapter 2 can be seen as a continuation and completion of Chapter 1, the second vision falls short of the first vision, and looks like ‘remnants’ of it. The assessment of the high level of the first vision as opposed to the low level of the second vision is based on the following observations:

1. The first vision bears the character of a celestial (dynamic) vision, and an angel also appears and speaks in it, phenomena that are absent from the second vision (and this absence is accentuated by the lack of any further description of the attack of one angel against the other).
2. In the first vision, there is a proper opening in which the seer and the vision are presented. In contrast, the second vision opens with a conventional emulation of the words of the prophets.
3. In fact, all the ideas in the second vision are familiar to the reader from Scripture (and from external literature), and there is nothing new (except, perhaps, some of the polemical verses), in contrast to the manifest originality of the first vision.

As a result of these differences between the visions, the second vision is more understandable than the first, since, apparently, the emotional tempest of the seer reflected in the first vision caused vague and obscure language, while the second vision was written as a secondary work composed by the seer after some time had elapsed for processing his divine impressions, after the intensity of his vision had diminished, impressions that were not written down in the command of the angel, as were those of Chapter 1.

In this chapter, the seer is revealed not only as continuing in the line of thought of the prophets dealing with the end of days, but also as a polemicist with religious opponents, similar to the actions of the prophets.[[83]](#footnote-83) In the manner of polemicists, the seer quotes the words of his opponents, and then he vigorously rejects them and mocks them as well.

Chapter 2 is one of the few chapters in the work in which King David is not mentioned. Gad the seer is also not mentioned in this chapter, but this absence is only apparent, for the entire chapter is a prophecy written by Gad the seer in the first person. The author did not clearly reveal with whom he was arguing, and it stands to reason that his words were directed against members of other sects, and even if he identified himself as Gad the seer (above, 53), his polemic seems to put this into doubt, and rather helps to identify, if only slightly, the actual historical background of his work.

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21. Cf. (Genesis 13:14): ‘To the north and south, to the east and west’; (Deuteronomy 3:27): ‘To the west, the north, the south, and the east.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Isaiah 5:26; Ibid. 38:14; Chullin 63a: Rav Beivai bar Abaye said: ‘And it is a sign of rain only when it sits on something and makes a whistling sound. And it is learned as a tradition that if it sits on the ground and whistles, this is a sign that the Messiah is coming, as it is stated (Zechariah 10:8): “I will whistle for them and gather them.”’ [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
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27. Above 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Above, 2, and in the commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
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