

THE INVERTED NUNS AT NUMBERS 10:35-36 AND THE BOOK OF ELDAD AND MEDAD

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BIBLICAL citations scattered throughout talmudic and midrashic literature frequently preserve readings which vary from printed Bibles and from extant masoretic MSS. Many of the variant readings, mostly of minor import, are gathered together in the monographs by S. Waldberg,¹ S. Rosenfeld,² and V. Aptowitz,³ and in numerous studies of more modest scope.⁴ Often the variant readings recorded in early rabbinic literature are supported by readings preserved at Qumran or by the ancient versions. Occasionally, however, while wading through the sea of talmudic and midrashic variants, one stumbles upon a well-turned phrase, sometimes an entire verse which has no counterpart in the masoretic Bibles or MSS, in the Qumran materials, or in the ancient versions. A parade example is *j. Berakhoth* 14d, where the following verse is cited: יום תעזבני ימים אעזבך, "Forsake me but a day, and two days will I forsake you." Attributed by the Jerusalem Talmud and Sifre⁵ to מגילת חסידים or מגילת חריסים, neither verse nor scroll is extant, or even echoed, outside of rabbinic literature. Stray passages, such as the one just cited, are sometimes assigned by scholars to apocryphal and pseudepigraphical books—some extant, some no longer extant—whose quasi-canonical status in the Tannaitic or Amoraic periods

¹ S. Waldberg, דרכי השינויים (Lemberg: Menkes, 1870; reissued Jerusalem: Makor, 1970).

² S. Rosenfeld, משפחת סופרים (Vilna: Romm, 1883).

³ V. Aptowitz, *Das Schriftwort in der rabbinischen Literatur* (Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien und Israelitisch-Theologischen Lehranstalt in Wien, 1906-1915; reissued New York: Ktav, 1970).

⁴ E.g., Z. Zinger, "The Bible Quotations in the Pesikta De Rav Kahana," *Textus* 5 (1965) 114-24.

⁵ Sifre on Deut 11:22 (ed. L. Finkelstein; Berlin: Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums, 1934; reissued New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1969) 112. Add to the references cited in Finkelstein's discussion: *מגילת המאור* (ed. Enelow; New York: Bloch, 1931), 3. 369; *משנת רבי אליעזר* (ed. Enelow; New York: Bloch, 1933; reissued Jerusalem: Makor, 1970) 245; and Yalqut on Deuteronomy § 873.

⁶ In one instance a stray verse preserved only in rabbinic literature was actually inserted into a Hebrew translation of an apocryphal book. Cf. Judah Loeb Ben Zeev's Hebrew translation of Sirach entitled *סירא בן יהושע* (Breslau: Koenigl. preuss. privilegierten Grafischen Stadt-Buchdruckerei, 1798). At Sirach 25:5 he inserted a variant version of the תעזבני יום passage cited above, which he copied out of *Midrash*

is then assumed.⁶ An exaggerated instance of this procedure is the suggestion advanced independently in recent years by S. Lieberman,⁷ A. J. Heschel,⁸ and M. Kasher⁹ that according to some midrashic and medieval rabbinic sources Num 10:35-36 was borrowed from a pseudepigraphical book of Eldad and Medad¹⁰ and inserted into the Torah. Thus, stray passages were not the only ones assigned to apocryphal and pseudepigraphical books; indeed, it would appear that two bona fide biblical verses suffered a similar fate despite their presence in all editions and MSS of the Bible. Our intention here is to examine the sources which gave rise to this somewhat unorthodox suggestion and, hopefully, to lay to rest any lingering suspicions that the suggestion need be taken seriously.

The point of departure for our discussion is the fact that in all Torah scrolls and biblical manuscripts Num 10:35-36 is encased between two critical marks, each taking the form of an inverted *nun*, and called in Hebrew נון מנוורת ("isolated *nun*") or נון הפוכה ("inverted *nun*").¹¹ The precise form and position of the inverted *nuns* varies in the scrolls and manuscripts and was the focal point of considerable medieval discussion, ranging from the Zohar¹² to biblicists such

Samuel (ed. Buber; Cracow: J. Fischer, 1893; reissued Jerusalem, 1965), § 1, p. 42, and ascribed falsely to Sirach. Since Sirach was accorded semi-canonical status in some rabbinic circles (see, e.g., *b. Baba Kamma* 92b; cf. D. Hoffmann, *Mischnaïot: Seder Nesikim* [Berlin: Itzkowski, 1924] 189, n. 11), and because the stray passage was found embedded in Ben Zeev's edition of Sirach, numerous scholars concluded that stray passages in rabbinic literature were in fact semi-canonical and to be assigned to lost apocryphal and pseudepigraphical books. Among the many scholars misled by Ben Zeev's misrepresentation were Z. H. Chajes, כל ספרי מהר"ץ חיות (Tel Aviv: Dibre Ḥakhamim, 1958), 1. 153, n.; I. B. Levinsohn, תעודה בישראל (Warsaw: Ginz, 1878) 88; S. J. Rappoport, in A. Harkavy (ed.), זכרון לאחרונים (St. Petersburg: Kaiserliche öffentliche Bibliothek, 1881) 32; S. Buber, *Midrash Samuel* § 1, p. 42, n. 11; and S. M. Chones in his notes to Abraham b. Elijah Gaon, רב פעלים (Warsaw: Halter and Eisenstadt, 1894; reissued Tel Aviv: Landau, n.d.) 76, n. 2.

⁷ S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (2d ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962) 41, n. 28.

⁸ A. J. Heschel, תורה מן השמים באמפקלריה של הדורות (New York: Soncino, 1962), 2. 420-24.

⁹ M. Kasher, תורה שלמה (New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1959), 19. 366-69.

¹⁰ Several lists of OT and NT apocryphal books mention a book of Eldad and Medad (or: Modad). These include Nicephorus' *Stichometry*, for which see E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 1. 50. A verse from a book of Eldad and Medad is cited in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (*ibid.*, 2. 642), thus attesting the existence of a book of Eldad and Medad in the Tannaitic period. See the references cited by A. J. Heschel, תורה מן השמים, 2. 422-23, n. 41. The rabbinic sources discussed below, of course, did not consider the book of Eldad and Medad to be a mere pseudepigraph.

¹¹ Cf. C. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1897; reissued New York: Ktav, 1966) 341-45.

¹² Zohar on Num 10:35 (ed. Margolioth; Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1964), 3. 155.

¹³ Menahem de Lonzano, אור תורה (Amsterdam: Uri ha-Levi, 1659; reissued Jerusalem: no publ., 1970) 17-18.

as Menahem de Lonzano¹³ and Jedidiah Solomon Norzi,¹⁴ to halakists such as Solomon Luria¹⁵ and Meir of Lublin.¹⁶ Despite the uncertainties concerning the form and position of the inverted *nuns*, the antiquity of the masoretic tradition that Num 10:35-36 be encased in inverted *nuns* is established beyond cavil. Parallel passages in the Sifre,¹⁷ Aboth d'Rabbi Nathan,¹⁸ the Babylonian Talmud,¹⁹ and elsewhere in rabbinic literature²⁰ attest its antiquity. Moreover, Simeon b. Gamaliel (ca. 150) and Judah the Prince (ca. 200) are regularly listed among the Tannaim who wrestled with the problem of the significance of the inverted *nuns*. The rabbinic debates need not detain us; suffice it to note that there is almost unanimous agreement among the ancient talmudists, the medieval commentators, and modern historians of the talmudic period that the inverted *nuns* indicate that Num 10:35-36 is an intrusion in its present setting. Not surprisingly, no scholarly consensus has emerged as to where it more properly belongs.²¹

The first of a series of problematic passages relating to the inverted *nuns* appears in *Midrash Mišlé* on Proverbs 26:24:²² ויהי בנסוע הארון בין למעלה ויהי בנסוע הארון בין למטה נקוד רבי אמר ספר היה בפני עצמו ונגנזו "The verses beginning: *When the ark was to set out* (Num 10:35) are marked above and below. Rabbi [Judah the Prince] said: It was a separate book and withdrawn."

The problem raised by the passage is more apparent than real; nevertheless, it has perplexed medieval and modern scholars alike. The seemingly obscure passage indicates that Num 10:35-36 "was a separate book and withdrawn." If by "withdrawn" is meant that Num 10:35-36 was withdrawn from our Bibles,

¹⁴ Jedidiah Solomon Norzi, *מנחת שי* (Vienna: Holzinger, 1814; reissued New York: Shulsinger, 1950), comment on Num 10:35.

¹⁵ Solomon Luria, *שו"ת רש"י* (Fürth: Hirsch, 1768) § 73. Luria found no less than 12 different arrangements of the inverted *nuns* in the scrolls he examined. In fact, that number hardly exhausts the variety of forms and positions of the inverted *nuns* found in extant biblical scrolls, manuscripts, and commentaries.

¹⁶ Meir of Lublin, *שו"ת מהר"ם לובלין* (New York: Kohn, 1961) § 75. See also Hai Gaon's comment on *b. Shabbath* 103a cited in B. M. Lewin, *אוצר הגאונים* (Jerusalem: Warhaftig, 1930); Zemah Duran, *שו"ת יכין ובען* (Leghorn: Castillo and Saadun, 1782), l. 81; Meir Schiff's comment on *b. Shabbath* 115b; Hayyim Rapoport, *שו"ת רבינו חיים* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1969) § 50-54; and Ezekiel Landau, *שו"ת נודע* (Lemberg: Menkes, 1861) § 74. *יורה דעה מהרורא קמא*, § 74. (Jerusalem: Pesaqim, 1969), *ביהודה*.

¹⁷ Sifre on Num 10:35 (ed. Horowitz; Leipzig: Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums, 1917; reissued Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1966) 80.

¹⁸ Ch. 34 (ed. S. Schechter; Vienna: Knöpfmacher, 1887; reissued New York: Feldheim, 1967) 50.

¹⁹ *b. Shabbath* 115b-116a.

²⁰ *Soferim* 6:1 (ed. Higger; New York: Debê Rabbanan, 1937; reissued Jerusalem: Makor, 1970) 165, and references cited there.

²¹ The LXX has Num 10:35-36 preceding vs. 34, a suggestive sequence preferred by C. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction*, 343. For other views, and for a convenient summary of the present state of scholarly discussion regarding the inverted *nuns*, see S. Lieberman, *Hellenism*, 38-43.

²² Ed. S. Buber (Vilna: Romm, 1893; reissued Jerusalem, 1965) 100.

the statement is manifestly incorrect, for all manuscripts, editions, and versions of the Bible include the two verses. Alternatively, the passage has been understood as follows: Num 10:35-36 once formed part of a larger work which was withdrawn from circulation or stored away. Such an interpretation, however, wreaks havoc with the original Hebrew of the midrashic passage.²³ Moreover, the passage so understood fails to offer the slightest indication as to the nature of the larger work from which Num 10:35-36 was excerpted—a much too obvious and unforgivable oversight.

The situation became more complicated in 1897 when Elkan Adler published an eleventh-century MS which he had discovered a year earlier in the Cairo Genizah.²⁴ It contained the following passage:²⁵

ובמקצת מדרשות דרשי טעמ' אחרינא ואמ' מה ראו חכמ' ליתן נונין
הפוכין על ויהי העם כמתאוננים אלא אמרו חכמים כל התורה כולה
מיוחדת לנבואת משה חוץ מאילו שני פסוקין שהן מנבואת אלדד
ומידד לפיכך סייגן בנון כפוף ונמפל בתורה

Some Midrashim expound this differently. They state: Why did the sages place inverted *nuns* before the verse: *The people took to complaining* (Num 11:1)? The sages thereby declared: The entire Torah consists of the prophecy of Moses except for these two verses (i.e., Num 10:35-36) which are from the prophecy of Eldad and Medad. Therefore they were enclosed with a curved *nun* and inserted into the Torah.

In the light of the Adler manuscript which clearly ascribes Num 10:35-36 to Eldad and Medad (and which, by the way, presents a very early and rare medieval instance of the denial of the Mosaic authorship of a portion of the Torah²⁶), Lieberman²⁷ somewhat reluctantly proposed in 1950 that the *Midrash Mišlê* passage be rendered as follows:

[These two verses] stem from an independent book which existed but was suppressed (i.e., declared apocryphal).

²³ ספר היה בפני עצמו can only mean "it (i.e., Num 10:35-36) formed an independent book," and not "it formed *part* of an independent book." See below.

²⁴ גנוי מצרים (Oxford: Private publication by H. Hart, 1897). Modern scholars have ascribed the manuscript to Maimon (i.e., Maimonides' father) and to Ibn al-Gasom [others: al-Gasom], a pupil of Nissim b. Jacob, but both suggestions remain highly conjectural. See A. Marmorstein, "ספר דיני הפילה ומועדים של ר' מימון אבי הרמב"ם," *Tarbiz* 6 (1934-35) 426-28; J. N. Epstein, "תשובות והערות להלכות ספר תורה שבגנוי מצרים," *Tarbiz* 6 (1934-35) 429-31; and S. Assaf, בעניני (או אלגסום) של אבן אלגסום (או אלגסום) תפילה," *Kirjath Sepher* 28 (1952-53) 101, n.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁶ It is conceivable but unlikely that the anonymous author of this passage assumed that Moses incorporated Eldad and Medad's prophecy (Num 10:35-36) into the Torah, thereby rendering it Mosaic, if only in an editorial sense. If indeed this be the case, one wonders why Balaam's oracles and the Book of Genesis were not enclosed in inverted *nuns*? Moreover, the very pointed and unequivocal phraseology: מיוחדת לנבואת משה חוץ מאילו שני פסוקין seems to preclude—at least from the anonymous author's point of view—any involvement on the part of Moses with the two verses in question.

²⁷ *Hellenism*, 41, n. 28.

What did Eldad and Medad prophesy? They announced: "Moses will die, and Joshua will bring Israel into the land." Abba Ḥanin said in R. Eliezer's (ca. 100) name: They prophesied concerning the quail, saying: "Rise, O quail; rise, O quail." R. Nahman (ca. 275) said: They prophesied concerning Gog and Magog, as it is written: *Thus says the Lord God: Are you the one concerning whom I spoke in former days through my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you [Gog] against them* (Ezek 38:17)? Do not read "years" (שָׁנִים); read instead "a pair" (שְׁנַיִם). Which pair of prophets prophesied the same prophecy at the same time? Surely, none other than Eldad and Medad.

The cumulative weight of these talmudic and medieval midrashic texts has led not only Lieberman, but more recently Kasher³² and Heschel,³³ to conclude that the *Midrash Mišlê* passage does in fact reflect an ancient Jewish tradition that Num 10:35-36 was taken into the Hebrew Bible from an apocryphal book of Eldad and Medad. The book is no longer extant because it was withdrawn from circulation. Not quite satisfied, Heschel goes one step further, adding that the tradition that prophecies of Eldad and Medad were reduced to writing may be biblical in origin.³⁴ He renders Num 11:26 *והמה בכתיבם*, "their prophecies are recorded in the writings, i.e., in the book of Eldad and Medad." Heschel seems little perturbed that no version or commentator has so rendered Num 11:26 and offers the suggestion despite his awareness of the fact that *כתובים* in biblical Hebrew never designates "writings" or "books."

When confronted with an obscure passage, or a series of obscure passages, it is best to isolate the clear strands from the obscure strands so that the former may be used to shed light on the latter, and not vice versa. What is clear in the *Midrash Mišlê* passage is that Rabbi is attempting to explain why Num 10:35-36 is marked above and below. From parallel passages elsewhere in talmudic and midrashic literature,³⁵ we know precisely what Rabbi's explanation was. The usual readings are: *מפני שספר חשוב הוא בפני* and *מפני שהוא ספר בעצמו* and *עצמו*. Thus, Rabbi explains that Num 10:35-36 forms a book by itself. This is clearly implied by Mishnah, *Yadayim* 3:5: *מנלה שכתוב בה שמונים וחמש* "A biblical scroll which contains eighty-five letters, as in the paragraph which begins: *When the ark was to set out* (Num 10:35), defiles the hands."

In the light of the aforementioned passages, and in the light of the plain sense of the Hebrew of the *Midrash Mišlê* passage, the latter cannot be rendered "these two verses stem from an independent book," but can only mean "these two verses were [or, better, are]³⁶ an independent book," i.e., they form a book by themselves. The seemingly difficult *וינגנו* is not difficult at all when properly vocalized: read *וַיִּנְגְּנוּ* (niphāl participle), not *וַיִּנְגְּנוּ* (niphāl perfect). The

³² See n. 9 above.

³³ See n. 8 above.

³⁴ תורה מן השמים, 2. 423.

³⁵ See notes 17 and 19 above; cf. *Beresbit̃h Rabbah* 64:8 and *Vayyiqra Rabbah* 11:3.

³⁶ Emendation of the *Midrash Mišlê* passage yields the smoother reading: *ספר הוא בפני* *עצמו*; the explanation offered here, however, is not dependent upon this emendation.

sense is that Num 10:35-36 forms an independent book, one large enough to qualify for storage. *נִגְנָז* is a technical term in talmudic law and refers to the process by which sacred objects which have outlived their usefulness are retired. Such objects may not willfully be destroyed or discarded. They are to be stored away or buried in a manner which allows them to decompose naturally.⁸⁷ For the form and sense of *נִגְנָז*, see especially *b. Megillah* 26b: תשמישי קדושה נגנזין, "accessories of sacred objects are stored away."

Biblical scrolls rank high in the Jewish sacred economy; when worn or damaged they are to be stored away. In the *Midrash Mišlê* passage Rabbi indicated that Num 10:35-36 formed not only an independent book, but one sufficiently large to qualify for, indeed require, *genizah*: רבי אמר ספר הוא בפני עצמו ונגנז.

It would appear that the two medieval midrashim, the eleventh-century Adler MS and the *מדרש חסרות ויתרות*, both misread the *Midrash Mišlê* passage, vocalizing *נִגְנָז* instead of *נִגְנָז*. The erroneous vocalization led the medieval sources to conclude that Num 10:35-36 formed part of a "hidden" book whose identity was not immediately apparent. Ingeniously, the medieval sources combined their misreading with a talmudic discussion at *b. Sanhedrin* 17a—where the rabbis attempt to identify the content of the prophecy of Eldad and Medad alluded to at Num 11:26, the upshot of which was the ascription of Num 10:35-36 to Eldad and Medad. In turn, Lieberman, Kasher, and Heschel were misled by the medieval sources in their interpretation of the *Midrash Mišlê* passage. While it is true that the rabbis at *b. Sanhedrin* 17a disagreed concerning the content of the prophecy of Eldad and Medad mentioned at Num 11:26, none suspected, nor is there any reason to suspect, that anything so unprophetic as Num 10:35-36—which, after all, is little more than a descriptive account of what Moses is supposed to have said whenever the ark was removed from, or returned to, the camp—formed part of Eldad and Medad's "prophecy in the camp."⁸⁸

In sum, then, the notion that Num 10:35-36 was borrowed from an apocryphal or pseudepigraphical book of Eldad and Medad is rooted neither in biblical

⁸⁷ Several methods of *genizah* described in *b. Megillah* 26b leave no doubt as to what the process entailed; note especially the citation from Jeremiah: אמר מר זוטרא מטפחות אמר מר זוטרא מטפחות וזו היא גניזתן. ואמר רבא ספר תורה שבלה גוזזין אותה אצל תלמיד חכם ואפילו שונה הלכות. אמר רב אחא בר יעקב ובכלי חרס נגנזין אותה. שנאמר ונתתם בכלי חרס למען יעמדו ימים רבים. Wrappings of scrolls which are worn out may be used for making shrouds for an unattended corpse; and this act constitutes their storing away. Raba (320-350) said: A scroll of the Law which is worn out may be buried by the side of a rabbinical scholar, even though he be one who merely repeats the laws. R. Aha b. Jacob (300-330) said: But it should be placed in an earthenware vessel, as it says: *And put them in an earthenware vessel that they may last many days* (Jer 32:14).

⁸⁸ For the prophecies of Eldad and Medad as recorded in midrashic and related literatures, see L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909-38), 3. 251-53; 6. 88-89. Apparently, Ginzberg was unaware of the Adler manuscript (despite its publication in 1897) and its ascription of Num 10:35-36 to Eldad and Medad.

sources (as Heschel would have it), nor in midrashic sources (as Lieberman and Kasher would have it), but first appears in medieval sources which no longer understood the earlier midrashic materials (viz., the *Midrash Mišlé* passage), and which offer no testimony of independent value regarding the history of the biblical text at Num 10:35-36.



More on the Inverted Nuns of Num 10:35-36

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Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 95, No. 1. (Mar., 1976), pp. 122-124.

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CRITICAL NOTE

MORE ON THE INVERTED *NUNS* OF NUM 10:35-36

Sid Z. Leiman's recent study of traditions on the inverted *Nuns* at Num 10:35-36 is of obvious interest to modern students of the Bible.¹ Medieval exegetical traditions are relevant to critical scholarship as long as each source is viewed in its proper historical perspective and with an awareness of its particular idiom and literary form. Leiman's treatment, however, is open to question on methodological grounds: (1) In examining exegetical traditions, one has to distinguish between the original sense of an early statement and the sense attributed to it by a later writer, who may be paraphrasing it. (2) The interpretation of Hebrew texts must conform to the requirements of syntax and usage.

The starting-point of our discussion is a rabbinic statement which occurs with minor variations in several sources datable to the talmudic period, including the *Sifre* and a *Baraita* in *b. Shabbath* 115b. This statement was discussed in an earlier study on the inverted *Nuns* by S. Lieberman, who translated it as follows:

[It is written] "When the ark set forward" etc. These two verses are marked at the beginning and at the end to show that this is not their proper place. Rabbi said: [They are marked] to indicate that they form a separate book.²

It is the saying of Rabbi (i.e., Judah the Prince) which interests us primarily. In Hebrew it reads: *mipp'ne šehû² sēper b'asmô*. We will be referring to this saying throughout our discussion.

Lieberman explained the saying of R. Judah the Prince on the basis of comparative evidence from Greek papyri and grammatical literature. The notion that two brief verses could, in and of themselves, constitute a book is not as odd as it might seem, and the interpretation given by R. Judah the Prince emerges as a reasonable one in the light of similar notions known from Greek sources.³ Quite as an aside, Lieberman noted that there is a medieval tradition, attested in an eleventh-century MS from Cairo, according to which Num 10:35-36 are identified as an excerpt from a source known as "the Prophecy of Eldad and Medad."⁴ In this connection, Lieberman ventured the further suggestion that such a tradition, or one similar to it, might underlie another somewhat cryptic statement on Num 10:35-36, an obvious paraphrase of the primary versions of the saying of R. Judah the Prince, in an earlier source, *Midrash Mišlê*. In Hebrew it reads: *sēper hāyāh bipmê 'ašmô w'nignaz*. Lieberman translated this saying as follows: "These two verses stem from an independent book which existed *but was suppressed* (i.e., declared apocryphal)."⁵

Leiman disputes Lieberman's translation on the grounds that the Hebrew can only mean that

¹ "The Inverted *Nuns* at Numbers 10:35-36 and the Book of Eldad and Medad," *JBL* 93 (1974) 348-55.

² *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (2d ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962) 38 and notes 1-5.

³ *Ibid.*, 41-43.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 41 n. 28; cf. p. 40 n. 16. This MS was published by E. Adler under the title of *Ginzê Mišrāim* (Oxford: Private publication by H. Hart; 1897). The author is unknown.

⁵ *Hellenism*, 41 n. 28.

these two verses *form* a separate book, but not that they *stem from* a separate book. According to Leiman, the statement in *Midrash Mišlê* means that a scroll on which these two verses were written was to be stored away in the manner prescribed for sacred books. Consonantal *ngnz* is to be taken as a niphthal participle, pointed *nignāz*, and not as a perfect form, pointed *nignaz*. Presumably, it would be rendered, “it is stored away” (= it is to be stored away). On this basis, there would be no reference in *Midrash Mišlê* to a lost source. There was only instruction on the proper disposition of sacred books.⁶

The status of Num 10:35-36 as sacred writ is not in question, but given the syntax of medieval Hebrew, and of rabbinic Hebrew, for that matter, Leiman’s translation cannot be sustained. The writer of the statement in *Midrash Mišlê* affected the sense of the earlier versions by introducing a finite verb, *hāyāh*, in place of the pronominal subject *hūʔ*, and by adding a second clause, *wʔnignaz*, thus setting up a sequence of tenses: “It was (*or* had been) a book by itself, but it was stored away.” This makes it virtually impossible to analyze *ngnz* as representing anything but a perfect form of the verb. Equally untenable is the analogy cited by Leiman for taking *ngnz* as a participle. He cites a statement from the Mishnah on the proper disposition of articles used together with sacred objects: *tašmišê qʔdūšāh nignāzīn*, “accessories of sacred objects are stored away.”⁷ But the use of participles to express durative action, or customary, proper action — a common feature of Hebrew from the early rabbinic period and later — requires a certain syntax. Thus, in this clause cited by Leiman, the participle *nignāzīn* functions as a predicate in a simple sentence. More precisely, the niphthal participle, with passive force, serves as a predicate adjective. On the other hand, active participles often function as elliptical subjects, with the sense: “One does, they do,” etc.⁸ To convey the sense which Leiman is suggesting, the writer of *Midrash Mišlê* would have had to say: *wʔgônʔzīn ʔōtō*, “and they store it away” (= it is to be stored away). And even that might have been a bit awkward in view of the perfect verb, *hāyāh*, in the first clause.

Lieberman’s translation of the statement in *Midrash Mišlê* conveys exactly what the writer had in mind. There is a clear reference here to a text that was lost, or declared apocryphal, and that reference cannot legitimately be disclaimed. Whereas the primary saying of R. Judah the Prince was unambiguous in referring to a separate book, this secondary paraphrase of it incorporated a certain twist, or turn of phrase, which affected the precise meaning.⁹

Leiman calls attention to yet another attestation of the Eldad and Medad tradition relevant to Num 10:35-36 in a Masoretic treatise known as *Midrash (Taʔamê) Hʔsērôt Wīyērôt*.¹⁰ That midrash presents the view that Num 10:35-36 are an excerpt from “the Prophecy of Eldad and Medad.” It cites a midrash on Ezekiel in this connection and concludes by saying: “This teaches us that there was an apocryphal book there.” The Hebrew reads: *mʔlammêd šehāyāh šām sēper gānūz*.¹¹

⁶ “The Inverted Nuns,” 353-54.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 354, citing *b. Megillah* 26b.

⁸ For further examples of niphthal participles as predicate adjectives see Mishnah, *Megillah* 5:10. The active participle is used frequently, in its role as a present tense, to indicate an elliptical third-person subject in a manner resembling the French “on” or German “man.” The effect is a kind of stative. Good examples, in English translation, are provided by J. Neusner (*Invitation to the Talmud* [New York: Harper & Row, 1973] 44-45) from Mishnah, *Berakoth*, ch. 8.

⁹ In *Midrash Mišlê* there is the nuance of an indefinite antecedent, i.e., “there was a book” (= a book existed). This is implied in Lieberman’s translation. See n. 4 above.

¹⁰ S. Wertheim, *Bāṭê Midrāšôt* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1953; reissued, Jerusalem: Ktav Vasepher, 1968), 2. 203-332.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2. 274.

Now, Leiman views the statement in *Midrash Mišlê*, cited earlier, as standing together with the earlier traditions of the talmudic period, but assigns the above statement from *Midrash (Ta^amê) H^asêrôt Wiytêrôt* to the same stratum of later interpretation as is represented by the eleventh-century Cairo MS. According to him, *Midrash Mišlê*, usually dated to the period between 640-900 C.E., knew the original import of the saying of R. Judah the Prince and intended no reference to an apocryphal source, whereas these two later sources did not understand this and misread a niphral participle for a perfect form. This, in turn, led them to make the connection between Num 10:35-36 and the Eldad and Medad tradition, a connection not made before.

This alinement of literary sources is questionable. There are indications that *Midrash (Ta^amê) H^asêrôt Wiytêrôt* is as early as *Midrash Mišlê*, if not earlier. Leiman claims that it contains "numerous editorial additions by later hands."¹² We assume he means that the statement in question is not original to that compilation. If it is original, however, we would have an attestation of the linkage between Num 10:35-36 and the Eldad and Medad tradition contemporary with *Midrash Mišlê*, if not prior to it. It is tempting to compare the statement in *Midrash Mišlê*, viz., *sêper hâyâh. . .w^anignaz with šehâyâh. . .sêper gânûz*, which appears in *Midrash (Ta^amê) H^asêrôt Wiytêrôt*. In fact, it is possible that *Midrash (Ta^amê) H^asêrôt Wiytêrôt* may be the earlier source referred to in the eleventh-century Cairo MS, which quotes the Eldad and Medad tradition in the name of "some Midrashim" (*b^amiqšat midrâšôt*).¹³

All of this suggests that Lieberman's hunch warrants serious study. On the other hand, we agree with Leiman that A. J. Heschel's views carry Lieberman's suggestion too far.¹⁴

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¹² "The Inverted Nuns," 352 and n. 28, for literature.

¹³ From what we have been able to learn, it is the arrangement of the contents according to the order of the biblical verses commented upon which is the work of later editors, but not the essential material included in *Midrash (Ta^amê) H^asêrôt Wiytêrôt*. For a survey of current views on the dating of the various midrashic compilations, see M. D. Herr, "Midrash," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (16 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1970), 11. 1507-14, and especially the chronological table, p. 1511.

¹⁴ "The Inverted Nuns," 353 n. 34. The reference is to A. J. Heschel, *Tôrâh min haššamaim hâ^aspaqlâriâh šel haddôrôt* (2 vols.; New York: Soncino, 1962), 2. 420-24.

CORRECTION

In the article of R. D. Worden, "Redaction Criticism of Q: A Survey," *JBL* 94 (1975) 543, a word has been omitted at the end of line 4. The sentence involved should read: "It is evident that there were four beatitudes in Q, the first three of which may have been joined through catchword association with μακάριοι."