The close affinity between the Zadokite Fragments (= ZF) and the non-biblical documents among the Dead Sea Scrolls (= DSS), linguistic and ideological, had led to a very nearly unanimous agreement among scholars ¹) that the selfsame sect is reflected in all the documents concerned. Although the DSS contain a great deal of additional information about the sect in question, it is still to the ZF that scholars must turn for chronological data with precise figures. Whilst widely differing among themselves as regards the authenticity of the data in the ZF and DSS or the degree of their historical accuracy, the majority of scholars agree in principle with Schecter’s view, in his ed. pr. of the ZF, that the crucial phrase בקץ חꢄי שꢄם שלוח מקה דג א稠ם יירת ア稠ם יירת ייוון צꢄם נביר דנס_chunks in ZF I 5-7 ²) places the rise of the sect concerned 390 years after Israel’s delivery into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, i.e. after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. That view has led a great many scholars to the dating of the sect’s migration from Judea to Damascus or its environs, as apparent from numerous references in the ZF, at 196 BCE or some later date in the first or second century BCE or CE; the exact date depending on the degree of the sectarian writer’s reliability as regards chronology. That dating led in turn to intricate problems. The affinity between the ZF and the DSS being generally admitted, as also the Judean provenance of the DSS, it seemed necessary either to distinguish somehow the sect reflected in the ZF from that in the DSS or to account for the return of the sect to Judea and to ascertain its date,

²) The citations from the ZF are according to the pages and lines in Schecter’s ed. pr. of the ZF generally followed by later scholars.
circumstances, etc. 1). All attempts at the solution of those problems and the reconstruction of the history of the sect in question, have to face the serious difficulty that the historical sources hitherto accessible seem to be silent about the movements of any Jewish body backward and forward between Judea and the region of Damascus during the period under consideration.

A fundamentally novel interpretation of the ZF has been propounded by Dr. Isaac RABINOWITZ 2) (= R) who claims to have with one stroke eliminated all those problems 3) by rendering מְמַכְּרָא in the ZF as “at (the time of) His giving them” 4). R maintains that neither that phrase nor its context has any bearing whatever on the history of any sect reflected in the ZF, the whole passage referring to nothing else than the history of Israel as recorded in Scripture. The author of the ZF, according to R, reviews biblical history as follows: The divine visitation of Israel in a period of wrath—the time of Israel’s delivery into the power of Nebuchadnezzar, i.e. the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 586 BCE—did not result in Israel’s complete annihilation. God “caused to grow from Israel and from Aaron a root of planting to inherit His land”; i.e. He saved from the sword a righteous remnant which, as known from Scripture, was exiled to Babylon and ultimately returned from there and re-inherited the land. The supposed allusions in the ZF to a sectarian migration to Damascus all refer, according to R, to Israel’s exile to Babylon.

As an important result of his novel interpretation, R claims that the ZF passages concerned, “referring to the past history of Israel as recorded in Scripture” and having thus no bearing on the period when the text of the ZF was composed, may be left out of consideration when endeavouring to ascertain the identity of “the Jewish group to whom its author(s) belonged, and its date and locale of composition”.

In investigating the 3 chronological data in ZF I 5-7, ibid. 9-10 and XX 15, I independently arrived at the same conclusion as R—on the basis of evidence far weightier than that adduced by him—that

1) Cf. the literature listed in ROWLEY’s The Zadokite Fragments and the Dead Sea Scrolls (Oxford 1952), p.78 notes 1 and 2; and in JBL LXXIII (1954), p. 11 note 2.
2) Ibid. p. 11-35.
3) Ibid. p. 13 and 33-34 and note 8b. Further references, except where otherwise indicated, are to the passages just cited.
4) R’s alternative “to the time of His giving” is somewhat harsh, his definitive “as of His giving” even harsher.