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Elements of *Merkābāh* Mysticism in the Targum Jonathan to the Book of Ezekiel¹

Abstract: The chariot-shaped throne of God in the heavens (*merkābāh*) from Ezekiel's visions (Ezek 1; 10) was the subject of the earliest Jewish mystical speculation. Hence, it is not surprising that there are numerous allusions and references to *merkābāh* mysticism in the Targum Jonathan to the Book of Ezekiel. This article analyzes Targum texts containing elements of *merkābāh* mysticism, namely the image of God sitting on the throne-chariot, the appearance and function of the four living beings, God's glorification by celestial beings, the motif of the mystic ascending/rising to the heavens, the description of God's glory filling the new Temple, and the motif of the new Jerusalem as a representation of the heavenly city.

Keywords: God's throne-chariot, Targum Jonathan to the Book of Ezekiel, *merkābāh*, mysticism, literature on heavenly palaces (*hêkālôt*)

The Aramaic translation of the Book of Ezekiel is part of the Targum to the Prophets called the Targum Jonathan, which in the canon of the Hebrew Bible includes the books of the earlier prophets (Josh, Judg, 1–2 Sam, 1–2 Kgs) and the later prophets (Isa, Jer, Ezek, the twelve prophets). Jewish tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel, a disciple of Rabbi Hillel, who did so at the command of the prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi (b. Meg. 3a). However, the current form of the Targum Jonathan is

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the result of a very long and complex process of composition. Scholars agree that the translations into Aramaic were initially transmitted orally and then written down and reworked. It is assumed that the Targum Jonathan is of Palestinian origin, but the final redaction took place in Babylonia, where between the 3rd and 5th centuries B.C. the Targum text underwent numerous revisions in order to standardize the translation of the prophetic books in terms of language and translation techniques. The Targum Jonathan – like the Targum Onkelos to the Pentateuch – enjoyed great respect in Babylonia, gaining the status of an official translation (see b. Meg. 3a; b. Sanh. 94b).²

The current of mystical interpretation of God's chariot-shaped throne (*merkābāh*) from Ezekiel's visions (Ezek 1:4–28; 10:1–22) initially developing within apocalypticism, as evidenced by descriptions of God seated on a throne in heaven and surrounded by countless heavenly beings (e.g., 1 En. 14:18–23; Dan 7:9–10; Apoc. Ab. 18), was already fully formed by the end of the second century A.D., as indicated by testimonies appearing in rabbinic literature (e.g., m. Ḥag. 2:1–6; y. Ḥag 77a; b. Ḥag. 11b–16a; b. Sanh. 80b).³ Numerous allusions and references characteristic of later mystical speculations, whose subject was the heavenly Temple with the throne-chariot of God inside, are found in the *Targum Jonathan to the Book of Ezekiel* (TgJ Ezek). In addition to chapters 1 and 10, many of the elements that appear in the literature on heavenly palaces (*hēkālōt*) are provided by other texts in the Book of Ezekiel (including Ezek 3:12–15; 8:1–4; 11:1; 40:1–4; 43:1–7; 48:35).⁴

² On Targum Jonathan, see Alexander, “Targum, Targumim,” 324–325; Fleisher – Chilton, *The Targums*, 169–173, 200–228; Wróbel, *Wprowadzenie*, 157–159; Kuśmirek – Parchem, *Targum Jonatana*; see also Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 1–2; Kuśmirek, “Targum do Księgi Ezechiela,” 139–141.

³ See Rowland, “Things into which Angels,” 28–31; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 221, 276–277, 443–444. More extensively on Jewish mysticism, especially its origins, see Collins, “Throne,” 43–58; Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*; Himmelfarb, “Heavenly Ascent,” 73–100; Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism*; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*; Davila, “Ancient Jewish Apocalypses,” 105–125; Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*; Parchem, “Motyw tronu-rydwanu,” 283–302.

⁴ See Levey, “The Targum to Ezekiel,” 145; Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 5–6; Kuśmirek, “Targum do Księgi Ezechiela,” 147–148. In the Mishnah,

1. The Image of God Seated on the Throne in Heaven

In the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel – to a much greater extent than in the biblical material – the transcendence of God, who inhabits a mysterious celestial reality that is completely beyond human perceptual capabilities, is highlighted. The truth that God is one and only He exists in the universe is expressed with extraordinary emphasis. As a result of emphasizing God’s transcendence, His inaccessibility is shown to such an extent that no direct relations between Him and man are possible. Thus, man is unable to directly and indirectly rebel against God or act treacherously toward Him, he can only oppose God’s “word” (2:3; 20:8, 13, 21, 25); while the Hebrew text says that because of the crimes and sins committed in Jerusalem, the city “forgot” about God, TgJ Ezek says that it “forsook the service” of God (22:12; 23:35). God is invisible even to the prophet, whom he allows to see only the “likeness of appearance” of a figure. After seeing the “likeness of the throne” on which a mysterious figure is seated (1:26), the prophet twice states that he saw “[...] the appearance of the glory which the eyes cannot see, and it is impossible to look at it and upward; and the appearance of the glory which the eyes cannot see, and it is impossible to look at it and downward” (1:27; same in 8:2).⁵

Even though the prophet cannot see God directly, He communicates His will to the prophets, although not in a direct way, but through His word. Occurring twice in Ezek 1:25, the Aramaic term *דבור* / *דביר* meaning God’s revelatory “word” and the instrument of His action was used as a synonym for God.⁶ It is noteworthy that the mention of prophets present in the text connects the vision in

the first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel is referred to as the *ma’āšēh merkābāh*, “the work of a throne-chariot” (m. Ḥag. 2:1).

⁵ The Aramaic text is a targumic paraphrase in which a motif about the impossibility of seeing the glory has been added, in the HB: “[...] as if there were an appearance of fire within him round about; from the appearance of his loins and upward; and from the appearance of his loins and downward; I saw as if there were an appearance of fire, and a brightness was round about him.”

⁶ This term appears only in the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel and is a variant of another alternate term for God, i.e., *memra* (מִימְרָא).

Ezek 1 containing motifs of *merkābāh* mysticism with the prophetic tradition.⁷

In TgJ Ezek God's omnipotence is often shown, expressed by the Hebrew title *Shaddai*,⁸ "Almighty" (1:24; 10:5) as well as numerous mentions of His power and might (e.g., 14:9; 16:27; 25:7, 13, 16). God is also omniscient (20:32).⁹

In the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel – as in other targums – the tendency to avoid anthropomorphisms in speaking of God, or to replace them with expressions intended to negate His likeness to man as a created and mortal being, is manifested. Such a practice was also intended to avoid speaking of God as a direct subject or object of action. In the Hebrew text, Ezekiel states that he saw "visions of God," while in TgJ Ezek says that in a prophetic vision he saw "a vision of the glory of the presence of YWY" (1:1). The phrase "the hand of YHWH" occurring in 1:3 is translated in the targum as "the spirit of prophecy before YWY" (similarly in 3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1). The phrase "My hand" appearing in God's speech is translated in the Targum as "My power" (6:14; similarly in 13:9; 14:9; 25:7; 39:21). In 1:27, the expression "the appearance of His loins" occurs twice, which is replaced in the targum with the words "the appearance of the glory which cannot be seen by the eyes, and it is impossible to behold it."¹⁰ The phrase "My face," which is present in God's utterances, is replaced in the targum by the phrase "My presence" (7:22; 39:23, 24, 29), "My wrath" (14:8; 15:7), or "My punishment" (15:7). Where the phrase "My eye" occurs in God's utterances, the phrase "My word" appears in the Targum (5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:10; 20:17).

The avoidance of anthropomorphisms to refer to God is not some special feature of *merkābāh* mysticism, since this kind of practice

⁷ See Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 122–123; Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 12; Kuśmirek, "Targum do Księgi Ezechiela," 145; Fleisher – Chilton, *The Targums*, 217.

⁸ In the Aramaic text, the word *Shaddai* (ܫܕܝܐ) was not translated, but its Hebrew form (יְהוָה) was retained.

⁹ See Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 11–12; Kuśmirek, "Targum do Księgi Ezechiela," 142–143.

¹⁰ See Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 120–121.

is typical of targumic translation techniques, including the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel. However, an extremely intriguing translation of the Hebrew text appears in 1:26, in which the anthropomorphic expression is retained.

Hebrew text (MT):

וּמַעַל לְרִקְיעַ אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשָׁם כְּמִרְאֵה אֲבֹן־סַפִּיר דְּמוּת כְּסָא וְעַל דְּמוּת הַכְּסָא דְּמוּת כְּמִרְאֵה אָדָם עָלָיו מִלְמַעְלָה: 1:26

And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance.

Targum Jonathan to Ezek¹¹:

וּמַעְלוּי רְקִיעָא דְעַל רִישֵׁיהוֹן כְּחִיזוּ אַבְן טַבָּא דְמוּת כּוֹרְסִיא וְעַל דְּמוּת כּוֹרְסִיא דְמוּת כְּמַרְאֵה אָדָם עִלוּהִי מִלְעִילָא: 1:26

And above the firmament which was over their heads there was like the appearance of a precious stone, the likeness of a throne; and above the likeness of the throne there was the likeness of the appearance of Adam, above it from on high.

In the text of TgJ Ezek 1:26, the Hebrew phrase כְּמַרְאֵה אָדָם, “(likeness) as if the appearance of a man” is not translated and is written in the same form (כְּמַרְאֵה אָדָם).¹² As in Aramaic the word אָדָם means a proper name, i.e., Adam (see Tg. Neof., Tg. Onq. to Gen 2:7, 8, 15 *et al.*), the entire phrase is most likely to be understood as “(likeness of) something like the appearance of Adam.” This understanding of the phrase in TgJ Ezek 1:26 may also be indicated by the fact that in several sources it is translated literally with Aramaic equivalents, namely כְּחִיזוּ אַנְשָׂא, “(likeness of) something like the appearance

¹¹ The English translation of Tg Jonathan is taken from Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*.

¹² Such a lesson is contained in a manuscript bearing the signature Ms. Or. 2211 from the British Museum in London, which is the main source text in the Alexander Sperber edition (see *The Bible in Aramaic*, III, V–VI), in addition, such a variant is contained in the second *Biblia Polyglotta*, Antwerp 1569–1573 and Kimchi’s commentary (ed. Soncino 1485).

of a man.”¹³ The connection between Adam and the mystical visions of *merkābāh* occurring in TgJ Ezek 1:26 is not coincidental when one bears in mind that in some writings of the Second Temple period and in rabbinic literature, the figure of Adam occupies a special place and enjoys unique prerogatives. As S.H. Levey notes, perhaps the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel originates from an environment in which Adam, seen as an ideal man and prophet, is associated with the heavenly Temple as God’s eternal dwelling place, where His chariot-shaped throne is located.¹⁴ Some rabbinic sources say that God revealed to him the future history of the world, showed him each successively coming generation until the resurrection of the dead (e.g., b. ‘Abod. Zar. 5a; b. Sanh. 38b; Gen. Rab. 24:2; Midr. Tehillim 139:6; Pesiq. Rab. 23; S. ‘Olam R. 30). The *Midrash to Genesis* attributes preexistence to Adam: “You formed me before and after (Ps 139:5). R. Jonathan said, if man is worthy, he enjoys both worlds, for it has been said, You formed me for the future [world] and for the earlier [world...]. R. Simeon ben Lakish states: He was last in the work of the last day and earliest in the work of the first day of creation” (Gen. Rab. 8:1; see also 24:2).

The motif of Adam seeing in a vision the throne-chariot and God seated on it in the heavens appears in a work dating from the first century AD entitled *The Life of Adam and Eve* (a longer review preserved in the Latin version: *Vita Adae et Evae*). Adam, addressing his son Seth, recounts a vision of a chariot (*merkābāh*) that he experienced after he and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden.¹⁵

[...] when we were in prayer, the archangel Michael, the messenger of God, came to me. And I saw a chariot [*currum*] like the wind, and its wheels were fiery. And I was raptured to the paradise of the righteous, and I saw the Lord seated, and the appearance

¹³ Such variant is presented in the *Codex Reuchlinianus* from Badische Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe and the first printed editions, namely the first *Biblia Rabbinica*, Venice 1515–1517, and the second *Biblia Rabbinica*, Venice 1524–1525.

¹⁴ Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 8–10; Kušmirek, “Targum do Księgi Ezechiela,” 152; see also Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, I, 58–62.

¹⁵ Latin text: Meyer, *Vita Adae et Evae*, 229.

of His fire burning, unbearable. And many thousands of angels were on the right and on the left of that chariot [*currus illius*] (25:2–3).

It is worth looking at the identification in TgJ Ezek 1:26 of the figure seated on the throne as someone who has “a likeness of something like the appearance of Adam” in the context of texts that speak of Adam’s exaltation.¹⁶ For example, in the *Testament of Abraham* – a document dating from the late 1st century AD or early 2nd century AD – there is a reference to Adam sitting between two gates, one of which leads to paradise and the other to perdition. According to review A (longer), Adam sits “on a throne made of gold, and the appearance of this man was fearsome, like the Ruler” (11:4), while review B (shorter) states that he sits “on a throne of great glory, and a multitude of angels surrounded him” (8:5).¹⁷ In many documents, Adam is explicitly shown as a king whom God has granted greatness and glory.¹⁸

Extremely intriguing is the textual variant of TgJ Ezek 1:26 in a manuscript bearing the signature Ms p. 116 from the Montefiore Library at Jews’ College in London, in which a copyist’s addition appears: “Another version: the shape of Jacob our father (צורת יעקב אבונא), above him.” In the context of this variant, it is worth noting that the motif of Jacob’s face being engraved on or attached to the throne of Glory is present in the targums and in many rabbinic sources and writings concerning the heavenly palaces,¹⁹ although it is difficult to find out what was the basis of this interpretation.²⁰ It is also unclear why the figure from Ezek 1:26 is identified as

¹⁶ More, see Munoa, III, *Four Powers in Heaven*, 82–112.

¹⁷ Greek text: James, *The Testament of Abraham*, 89 (A) and 112 (B).

¹⁸ For example, Philo, *Opif.* 148; 4 Ezra 6:54; 2 En. 30:12 (review J); Pesiq. Rab. 48:2.

¹⁹ For example the targums (Tg. Neof., Tg. Ps-J., fragmentary targum from the Cairo Genizah) to Gen 28:12; b. Hul. 91b; Gen. Rab. 68:12; 82:2; Num. Rab. 4:1; Lam. Rab. 2:1; Pirqe R. El. 35; *Hekalot rabbati* 9:2; see Morray-Jones, *A Transparent Illusion*, 103.

²⁰ See Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 121; Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot*, 126.

the face of Jacob. Perhaps – as D.J. Halperin suggests – it is related to the belief that the heavenly personification/embodiment of Israel (= Jacob) is always before the eyes of God.²¹ However, regardless of the various interpretations of the textual variants of TgJ Ezek 1:26, one thing seems evident, namely, the Targumists were familiar with the traditions perceiving both Adam and Jacob-Israel in the figure seated on the throne-chariot.²²

2. The Four Living Beings/Creatures

Compared to the Hebrew text, TgJ's Aramaic translation of the Book of Ezekiel differs significantly in its description of the four living beings/creatures in the vision of Ezek 1, especially when it comes to the number of faces and wings of each being, as well as some details of their appearance.

The Hebrew term חיות, “(living) beings, creatures, animals (wild),” is not translated in the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel using the Aramaic equivalent חיותא // חיון, but as בריתא // ברין, “(living) beings, creatures” (1:5, 13–15, 19–22; 3:13; 10:15, 17, 20, 22). Looking for the answer to the question of why the targumist chose such vocabulary, D.J. Halperin points to two possible reasons. The targum deliberately omitted the word חיותא in order to avoid a term that might imply that there are wild animals/beasts in the vicinity of God's throne-chariot (*merkābāh*). The validity of such a suggestion may be indicated by the fact that elsewhere in the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel, where there are no references to the *merkābāh* mysticism, this word is used without qualification in the sense of “wild animal/beast” (5:17; 14:15, 21; 29:5; 31:13; 32:4; 33:27; 34:25; 38:20; 39:4, 17). There is also another possibility, namely that the TgJ to Ezek omits the word חיותא to exclude any connection with the four beasts (חיון) coming out of the sea representing the forces of evil from the vision in Dan

²¹ Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 121; similarly Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot*, 126–127.

²² See Morray-Jones, “The Body of the Glory,” 545.

7:2–8.²³ It is worth noting, however, that sometimes the use of the term “wild animal/beast” in texts dealing with God’s throne-chariot was not seen as something inappropriate or doctrinally unacceptable, as evidenced by its occurrence in literature on heavenly palaces (e.g., *Hekalot zutarti*, § 353–354; see also the Tosefta to Ezek 1:1 in the Manchester manuscript, Ms. Gaster 1478).²⁴

A significant change and additional material compared to the Hebrew text appears in TgJ Ezek 1:6 with regard to the number of faces and wings of the four living creatures.

Hebrew text (MT):

וְאַרְבַּעָה פָּנִים לְאֶחָת וְאַרְבַּע כַּנְּפִים לְאֶחָת לְהֵם: 1:6

Each had four faces, and each of them had four wings.

Targum Jonathan to Ezek:

וְאַרְבַּעָה אַפִּין לְחַדָּא וְאַרְבַּעָה אַפִּין לְכָל חַד וְחַד שְׁתַּת עָסָר אַפִּין לְבְרִיתָא חַדָּא הוּי מְנִין אַפִּיא דְאַרְבַּע בְּרִין שְׁתֵּין וְאַרְבַּעָה אַפִּין וְאַרְבַּעָה גַּפִּין לְחַדָּא וְאַרְבַּעָה גַּפִּין לְכָל חַד וְחַד שְׁתַּת עָסָר גַּפִּין לְכָל אַפָּא וְאַפָּא שְׁתֵּין וְאַרְבַּעָה גַּפִּין לְבְרִיתָא חַדָּא הוּי מְנִין גַּפִּיא דְאַרְבַּע בְּרִין מְתָן וְחַמְשִׁין וְשְׁתָּה גַּפִּין: 1:6

Each had four faces and each and every one of the faces had four faces, sixteen faces to each creature, the number of faces of the four creatures being sixty four. Each had four wings and each and every one of the faces had four wings, sixteen wings to every single face, sixty four wings to every single creature; the number of wings of the four creatures being two hundred and fifty six.

According to the Hebrew text, each of the four beings has four faces, and although the biblical author does not give the total sum of faces, the total is sixteen. A similar number appears in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (Apoc. Ab. 18:4–5). In TgJ Ezek 1:6 it is stated that each being has sixteen faces, and all together they have 64 (= [4 × 4] × 4; i.e., 16 × 4). As I. Gruenwald notes, the number of faces of the four beings residing in proximity to the throne-chariot of God was an extremely important issue in Jewish mystical speculation,²⁵

²³ Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 128–129; see also Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot*, 49–50.

²⁴ See Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot*, 50–51.

²⁵ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 95.

but it is difficult to clearly explain the meaning and significance of the calculations.²⁶ The literature on the heavenly palaces states that each of the four beings has 64 faces, so all together they have 256 faces (*Hekalot rabbati*, § 245; *Hekalot zutarti*, § 354).²⁷

In the biblical material it is stated that each of the four beings has four wings, and although – as in the case of faces – the total number of wings is not given, the sum of all wings is sixteen. It is worth noting that the mention that each of the living beings has six wings appears in the Apocalypse of Abraham (Apoc. Ab. 18:6–7) and in the Book of Revelation (4:8), which doubtlessly refers to the seraphim in Isaiah’s vision (Isa 6:2). According to the targumist’s calculations, each being has 64 wings, and all together they have 256 (= $[4 \times 4 \times 4] \times 4$; i.e., 64×4). The same numbers are given by the *Hekalot zutarti*, namely each of the four beings has 64 wings, and all of them together have 256 (§ 354).²⁸ As with the number of faces, it is difficult to explain the meaning of these calculations. An interesting suggestion was made by S.H. Levey, who believes that these numerical speculations should be linked to the singing of the heavenly beings, since praising God was the effect of the movement of their wings (TgJ Ezek 1:24; 3:13; 10:5; see b. Ḥag. 13b). According to this scholar, the number 256 – using gematria – corresponds to the word שָׁרָו, “sing” ($\text{ש} = 200 + \text{ו} = 50 + \text{ו} = 6$).²⁹

The motif of heavenly beings praising God seated on the throne-chariot appearing in the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel (1:24; 3:12–13; 43:2) is another element characteristic of Jewish mystical speculation.³⁰

²⁶ See Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 125; Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 21.

²⁷ See Davila, *Hekhalot Literature*, 129 (*Hekalot rabbati*, § 245) and 209 (*Hekalot zutarti*, § 354).

²⁸ See Davila, *Hekhalot Literature*, 209–210.

²⁹ See Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 21.

³⁰ See Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 57; O’Hare, *Have You Seen*, 123–137; Cook, *Ezekiel 38–48*, 183.

Ezek 1:24:

Hebrew text (MT):

וְאִשְׁמַע אֶת־קוֹל כְּנַפֵּיהֶם כְּקוֹל מַיִם רַבִּים כְּקוֹל־שִׁדִּי בְלִכְתָּם קוֹל הַמֶּלֶךְ כְּקוֹל מִחָנָה בְּעִמָּדִם
וְתַרְפִּינָה כְּנַפֵּיהֶם: 1:24

I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army. When they stood still, they let down their wings.

Targum Jonathan to Ezek:

ושמעית ית קל גפיהון כקל מיינ סגיאין כקלא מן קדם שדי במהכהון קל מלולהון כד
מודין ומברכן ית רבונהון קיימא מלך עלמא כקל משרית מלאכי מרומא במקמהון משתקן
גפיהון: 1:24

And I heard the sound of their wings, like the sound of many waters, like a sound from before Shaddai; as they went, the sound of their words were as though they were thanking and blessing their Master, the everlasting King of the worlds; like the sound of the hosts of the angels on high; when they stood still, their wings became silent.

Ezek 3:12–13:

Hebrew text (MT):

וַתִּשְׁאֲנֵי רוּחַ וְאִשְׁמַע אֶתְרִי קוֹל רֵעַשׁ גָּדוֹל בְּרוּחַ כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה מִמְקוֹמוֹ: 3:12
וְקוֹל כְּנָפֵי הַחַיּוֹת מְשִׁיקוֹת אִשָּׁה אֶל־אֲחֹתָהּ וְקוֹל הָאוֹפְנִים לְעִמָּתָם וְקוֹל רֵעַשׁ גָּדוֹל: 3:13

*Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great earthquake: “Blessed be the glory of YHWH from its place!”
It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, and the sound of a great earthquake.*

Targum Jonathan to Ezek:

ונטלתני רוחא ושמעית בתרי קל זיע סגי דמשבחין ואמרין בריך יקרא דיוי מאתר בית
שכינתיה: 3:12

וקל כנפי בריתא נקשין חד לחד וקל גלגליא לקבלהון וקל זיע סגי: 3:13

*Then the spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great quaking sound, for they were offering praise and saying, “Blessed be the glory of the Lord from the place of His Shekinah”;
the sound of the wings of the creatures touching each other, and the sound of wheels beside them—a great quaking sound.*

Ezek 43:2:

Hebrew text (MT):

וַהֲגָה כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּא מִדְרָרָה הַקְּדִים וְקוּלוּ בְּקוֹל מַיִם רַבִּים וְהָאֲרֶז הָאֵיִרָה מְכַבֵּדוֹ: ^{43:2}
And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east, and His voice was like the voice of many waters, and the earth shone from His glory.

Targum Jonathan to Ezek:

וְהָא יְקָר אֱלֹהָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל אֲתַגְלִי בְּאוּרָה מְדַנְחָא וְקַל מְבַרְכֵי שְׁמֵיהּ כְּקַל מַיִן סְגִיאִין וְאַרְעָא ^{43:2}
 נְהַרַת מְזִיו יְקָרִיהּ:
And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was revealed in the east, and the voice of those blessing His name was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone from the radiance of His glory.

Appearing in all the texts cited above, the motif of heavenly beings glorifying and blessing God is a targumic addition. In the Aramaic translation of Ezek 1:24 and 3:12–13, the sound of moving wings is the voice of those who glorify God. In other words, for the targumist, the sound-producing wings become the singing organs of heavenly beings.³¹ It is worth noting that probably the oldest mention of worshipping God, where the sound is the effect of cherubim moving their wings, appears in the *Songs of the Sabbath sacrifice* from Qumran (4Q405 frag. 20, col. 2 + frag. 21–22, lines 7–14). In later mystical literature, the sound of the moving wings of heavenly beings, understood as the voice of worship and adoration, is the object of further discussion (e.g., *Ma'āšēh merkābāh*, § 552, § 596; *Hekalot zutarti*, § 355; *Hekalot rabbatī*, § 189).³²

The sound coming from the moving wings is likened to “the voice of many waters,” and then referred to those who glorify and bless God (see also Rev 14:1–3; 19:6). Likewise, in the targum to Ezek 43:2, the “voice of many waters” is compared and referred to the voice of those who bless God’s name. It is worth noting that while the biblical material refers to the voice of God, both Aramaic translations – Ezek 1:24 and 43:2 – refer to the voice of heavenly

³¹ See Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 122; Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot*, 45.

³² See Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 313–314; Schiffman, “Merkavah Speculation at Qumran,” 36–37; Parchem, “Motyw tronu-rydwanu,” 291–293; see also Zdun, *Pieśni ofiary szabatowej*, 111–113; Zdun, “Kilka uwag,” 421–422.

beings. In the Hebrew text, the sound of moving wings is compared to “the voice of the camp,” while the Targum paraphrase states that it is “the voice of the armies of the messengers of the heights” (1:24), which clearly emphasizes more the military nature of the organization of the heavenly beings. Speaking of heavenly beings using terminology of a military nature also occurs in mystical speculations concerning the throne-chariot of God (*merkābāh*),³³ where reference is made to “hosts” of angels (e.g., *Ma’āsēh merkābāh*, § 588, § 665, § 69; *Hekalot zutarti*, § 351, § 358; *Hekalot rabbati*, § 92).

Terminology characteristic of *merkābāh* mysticism appears in targumic additions referring to the addressee of the heavenly singing. While the Hebrew text of Ezek 1:24 does not explicitly mention God, likening only the voice of the wings to that of the Almighty (שד), the targums strongly emphasize God’s power, majesty and royal dominion, as expressed by the titles with which He is endowed: שד, “Shaddai,” i.e., “Almighty,” רבון, “Lord, Ruler,” and מלך עלמיא, “King of the ages / worlds.” In the literature on heavenly palaces God appears primarily as exalted and seated on a throne as King of the entire universe (e.g., *Hekalot rabbati*, §§ 97–98, § 105, §§ 152–153, §§ 189–191, § 217, § 249, § 255; *Hekalot zutarti*, § 412, §§ 416–417; *Ma’āsēh merkābāh*, § 548, § 552, §§ 555–556, § 593), as clearly evidenced by the frequent formula: “YHWH is King, YHWH was King, YHWH will be King forever and ever” (*Hekalot zutarti*, § 374, § 410, § 417, § 421).³⁴

The Hebrew formula from Ezek 3:12: “Blessed be the glory of YHWH from His place (ממקומו)” is extremely important in Jewish liturgy, as it is a component of daily prayers and those related to the celebration of the Sabbath and various holidays. As S.H. Levey rightly notes, the targumic paraphrase of this text tries to answer an important question and thus solve a kind of difficulty arising in connection with the interpretation of the Hebrew text. The issue at stake is a problematic one, namely, where is “His place” actually situated? At the time of Ezekiel, there was no longer a Temple of Solomon, and at the time of the editing of the TgJ to the Book

³³ See Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 23.

³⁴ See Scholem, *Mistycyzm żydowski*, 90–94.

of Ezekiel, the Second Temple had long since ceased to exist. The targumic translation interprets “the place of Him” as “the places of the House of His presence,” which in the terminology of *merkābāh* mysticism can mean God’s heavenly palace or throne-chariot in heaven on which God sits, and from which His glory emanates. The Targumist’s attribution of these words of praise to celestial beings recalls rabbinic tradition (see b. Ḥul. 91b–92b), according to which it is with these words that angels used to glorify God. In addition to this prayer taken from Ezekiel (Ezek 3:12), they also glorified Him with the words “Holy, Holy, Holy” from Isaiah (Isa 6:3).³⁵ Isaiah’s trisagion often appears in later literature on heavenly palaces (e.g., *Hekalot rabbati*, § 95, § 97, § 101, § 104; *Sar Torāh*, § 306; *Ma’šēh merkābāh*, § 555, § 556, § 593, § 596; *Merkābāh rabba*, § 682, § 687).

The expression “His voice,” i.e., God’s one, in the targumic paraphrase of Ezek 43:2 was explicitly replaced by “the voice of those blessing His name,” i.e., heavenly beings praising God. It should also be noted that while the biblical material states that “the earth shone from His glory,” according to the Aramaic translation, “the earth shone from the brightness (זיו) of His glory.” The same expression – in which the term “splendour” is a targumic addition, namely “the splendour of His glory” (זיו יקרִיה) – appears twice in TgJ Isa 6:1–3 in the context of God’s presence in the Temple, while TgJ Hab 3:3 states that “the heavens were covered with the splendour of His glory.” It worth noting that in a similar context splendour is mentioned in the Qumran scrolls, including the phrase “works of splendour” in the *Songs of the Sabbath sacrifice* in describing God’s glory (4Q405 frag. 20, col. 2 + frag. 21–22, lines 10–11), while in the *Beatitudes and Curses* the phrase “flames of splendour” occurs in the context of describing God’s blessings in His heavenly sanctuary (4Q286 frag. 1, col. 2, line 3). In the document titled Pseudo-Ezekiel (4Q385 frag. 6, lines 5–15), which alludes to the vision in Ezek 1 and is a paraphrase of biblical material, there is mention of “the splendour of the chariot (נגה מרכבה)” (line 6). The motif of splendour is a frequent element in descriptions of the heavenly throne-chariot

³⁵ Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 27.

God in mystical literature.³⁶ Given that the word “chariot (מרכבה)” does not appear in Ezek 1 to describe God’s throne, the use in 4Q385 frag. 6, line 6, of the word “splendour” in conjunction with the term “chariot” occurring here in a technical sense to denote the throne-chariot of God is a clear testimony to the enrichment of the motif of the heavenly throne of God from the vision of the prophet Ezekiel, and at the same time represents one of the oldest interpretations of the biblical text using terminology characteristic of *merkābāh* mysticism.³⁷ The content of 4Q385 frag. 6 can be seen as a kind of charting the way of interpreting God’s heavenly throne-chariot from Ezekiel’s vision, which found its full expression in the later speculations of Jewish mysticism (e.g., *Ma’āsēh merkābāh*, § 596). The TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel is also part of this trend – thanks to the presence of elements characteristic of mystical literature.

The Aramaic translation of the Book of Ezekiel presents two functions relating to living beings – in both cases targumic additions, namely, they are shown as executors of God’s punishment against sinners (1:8) and as His messengers (1:14).

In TgJ Ezek 1:8, living beings are shown as executors of God’s punishment:

Hebrew text (MT):

וידון [וידן] אדם מתחת כנפיהם על ארבעת רביעיהם ופניהם וכנפיהם לארבעתם: 1:8
And (there was His hand: K.) [there were hands: Q.] of a man from under their wings on their four sides. And their faces and their wings were on the four of them.

Targum Jonathan to Ezek:

וידין כידי אנשא עביד להון מתחות גפיהון על ארבעה סטריהון למחתן בהון גמרין דאישא 1:8
 מביני כרוביא מתחות רקיעא דעל רישיהון למיתן על חופני סרפאי למזרק על אתר
 רשיעיא לאבדא חייביא עברי מימריה ואפיהון וגפיהון שוי לארבעתיהון:

³⁶ See Schiffman, “Merkavah Speculation at Qumran,” 41; Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 316; Davila, *Liturgical Works*, 152.

³⁷ See Dimant, “4QPseudo-Ezekiel a,” 45; Parchem, “Motyw tronu-rydwanu,” 288–290; see also Dimant – Strugnell, “Merkabah Vision,” 344–347; Manning, *Echoes of a Prophet*, 71; Parchem, “Księga Ezechiela w Qumran,” 124–127.

Hands like the hands of a man were fashioned for them from beneath their wings on their four sides, with which to take out burning coals of fire from among the cherubim underneath the expanse which was over their heads, placing them into the hands of the seraphim to sprinkle on the place of the wicked, to destroy the sinners who transgress His word. And their faces and their wings were the same on the four of them.

There is an argument in the rabbinic tradition according to which the *Ketib* lesson, i.e., וידו, “His hand,” has mystical connotations, since it refers to God’s hand, which He stretches from under the wings of living creatures to forgive repentant sinners in His mercy and receive those who repent (b. Pesah. 119a). As A. Damsma rightly notes,³⁸ the targumic translation “and He made for them hands like the hands of man” may refer to a similar exegetical tradition aimed at harmonizing *Ketib* and *Qere* in the Hebrew text. According to this suggestion, the translation “and hands like the hands of man (ידין כידין אַנשאַ)

וּידי אדם” would be the Aramaic equivalent of the *Qere* lesson: וידי אדם, “and the hands of man,” while the targumic phrase “He made for them (עביד להון)”³⁹ would refer to *Ketib*: “His hand (וידו).” According to TgJ Ezek 1:8, God by His hand made hands for living creatures similar to human hands. An additional element that appears in the targum is the mention of the hands of living beings, with which they take coals of fire, so that with them sinners will be punished for transgressions against the word (מימרא) of God. In this way, living beings, cherubim and seraphim form a string of heavenly beings whose purpose is to annihilate evildoers. A. Damsma⁴⁰ is of the opinion that the purpose of the Targumist’s introduction of the motif of punishment against sinners was to inspire awe, fear and reverence towards the majesty of God seated on the throne-chariot (*merkābāh*) in the heavens. In the context of the interpretation of the phrase “His hand” in Ezek 1:8 found in b. Pesah. 119a, it is worth noting that the following

³⁸ Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot*, 115.

³⁹ Halperin (*The Faces of the Chariot*, 124) and Levey (*The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 20) translate this expression as “they were formed for them,” referring them to the hands of the living beings, which would conform the Aramaic translation with the *Qere* lesson; however, it should be noted that the word עביד is a masculine participle in the singular.

⁴⁰ Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot*, 115.

addition appears in one of the TgJ manuscripts for the Book of Ezekiel (*Codex Reuchlinianus*):

The right hand is extended toward penitent sinners who repent, to acquit them on the Day of Judgment, so that they may inherit eternal life. But the left hand is extended to carry away the glowing coals of fire in it, etc.

Since God made two hands for each of the living beings, the text added in the code completes the description of these beings while giving an explanation of their actions. Living beings are not only executors of God's punishment, but also show mercy to repentant sinners. While the targum does not say specifically with which hand the living beings carry away the glowing coals of fire, the appendix found in the codex makes a distinction between the right hand extending toward the repentant and the left hand annihilating evildoers. Parallels of this tradition can be found in rabbinic literature, although it does not refer to heavenly beings, but to God extending His hand toward sinners (e.g., Tg. 2 Chr 33:13; PRE 43).⁴¹

In TgJ Ezek 1:14 living beings are presented as God's messengers:

Hebrew Text (MT):

וַהֲחִיּוֹת רָצוּא וְשׁוּב כְּמֶרְאֵה הַבָּזָק: ^{1:14}

And the living beings ran and returned like a sight of lightning.

Targum Jonathan to Ezek:

וּבְרִיתָא בַּאֲשַׁתְּלוּחֵיהוֹן לְמַעַבְד רַעוֹת רַבּוֹנְהוֹן דְּאִשְׁרֵי שְׁכִינְתֵיהּ בְּמַרְוּמָא עֵילָא מְנַהֵן כְּאַנְפָּא ^{1:14}
עֵינָא לְמַחְזֵי חֲזוֹן וּמְקַפְּן יָת עֵלְמָא וְתִיבְנ בְּרִית חֲדָא וְקִלְלִין כְּחִיזוֹ בְּרַקָּא:

And the creatures, when they are sent to do the will of their Master who makes His Shekinah dwell on high above them, are like the eye seeing a bird on the wing, they turn and circle the world; and the creatures return together, quickly, like a flash of lightning.

In the targumic paraphrase, living beings are depicted as sent (בַּאֲשַׁתְּלוּחֵיהוֹן, “when they are being sent”) by God to do His will. It is noteworthy that the heavenly beings glorifying God's throne-chariot

⁴¹ See Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 124–125; Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot*, 116.

are mentioned as “messengers of holiness” (מלאכי קודש) in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* from Qumran (4Q405 frag. 20, col. 2 + frag. 21–22, line 9). D.J. Halperin⁴² points out a difficulty in understanding the Hebrew text of Ezek 1:14, since the phrase “ran” (רצוא), which occurs there, can be understood as coming from the compound יצא, “to go out, to set forth” and רוץ, “to run, to rush.” The Targumist also saw in this Hebrew word a compound, but consisting of other components, namely רצה, “to desire, covet; to take pleasure” and רוץ, “to run, rush.” Hence the Aramaic translation refers to “the will of the Lord” (רעות רבוניהון), which is done by heavenly beings. A similar etymology of this Hebrew term appears in the *Midrash to Genesis*, which speaks of living beings who “desire to fulfill their mission” (Gen. Rab. 50:1). Heavenly beings doing the will of God sitting on the throne is also mentioned in *Ma‘āšēh merkābāh* (§ 596).

3. Other Allusions to *Merkābāh* Mysticism

In the Book of Ezekiel, it is stated several times that the prophet is lifted up by the spirit, as a result of which he experiences visions and sees God’s glory (Ezek 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5; see also 40:1–4). Such statements may echo the motif of ascending/rising to the heavens to view God seated on the throne-chariot (*merkābāh*), which is often found in literature on heavenly palaces.⁴³ Ezekiel’s words “and I was lifted up by the spirit” indicate that he is referring to the deep ecstatic spiritual experience the prophet experienced. This understanding is indicated by his statement in 8:3: “and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and between the heavens, and led me to Jerusalem in the vision of God” and in 11:24: “and the spirit lifted me up and led me [...] in the vision by the spirit of God.” The targumic paraphrase of both these texts – Ezek 8:3 and 11:24 – emphasizes with greater emphasis the divine origin of what happened to the prophet:

⁴² Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 123.

⁴³ See Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 5; Morray-Jones, *A Transparent Illusion*, 100–102.

[...] ונטלת יתי רוחא בין ארעא ובין שמיא ואעילת יתי לירושלם בחיזו נבואה דשרת עלי
 מן קדם יוי [...] 8:3

[...] and a spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me into Jerusalem, by a prophetic vision from before the Lord which rested upon me [...].

[...] ורוחא נטלתני ואיבלתני [...] בחזווא ברוח נבואה דשרת עלי מן קדם יוי [...] 11:24
 And the spirit lifted me up and brought me [...], in a vision by the prophetic spirit which had rested upon me from before the Lord [...]

In the context of mystical speculations concerning ascending and contemplating the throne-chariot of God, it should be noted that the result of Ezekiel's being lifted up by the spirit was the prophet's seeing God's glory (see 3:12–13; 8:3–4; 43:5).

The object of the oldest Jewish mystical speculations is viewing and contemplating God seated on the throne-chariot (*merkābāh*) in the heavens, hence the motif of ascending⁴⁴ to the heavens becomes one of the main themes of the literature on heavenly palaces, which contains numerous instructions and guidelines related to this issue (*Hekalot rabbati*, §§ 198–237; *Hekalot zutarti*, §§ 407–426; see also *Ma'āšēh merkābāh*, § 547, § 550, § 570, §§ 591–596).⁴⁵ The visionary / mystic would embark in a state of ecstatic rapture on a journey full of hardships and dangers through the seven celestial spheres and through the seven celestial palaces located in the highest of the heavens, in order to stand before the throne-chariot of God at the end of his journey. According to *Hekalot rabbati*, once the visionary/mystic reaches the heavenly chamber where God sits on

⁴⁴ In the history of the development of Jewish mysticism, the ecstatic contemplation of the glory of God and the mysteries of heavenly reality have been shown in various ways; in the oldest sources the visionary “ascended” and “rose” to the throne-chariot (*merkābāh*), while later writings showing the visionary journey of the soul to the heavens speak of “descending” to the throne-chariot (*merkābāh*), and the mystics themselves are described as “descending to the throne-chariot” (ירדי (מרכבה), see Scholem, *Mistycyzm żydowski*, 75.

⁴⁵ See Davila, *Hekhalot Literature*, 8–9; Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*, 2–3; more on this, see Scholem, *Mistycyzm żydowski*, 72–87; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 12–13; Morray-Jones, “Paradise Revisited,” 182–185; Morray-Jones, *A Transparent Illusion*, 217–225; Morray-Jones, “Divine Names,” 234–235; Arbel, *Beholders of Divine Secrets*, 67–103.

the throne, he will recite the hymns that the throne itself sings each day (§§ 251–257), while in *Hekhalot zutarti* it is stated that the traveller will sit in God’s bosom and receive everything he desires (§ 417).⁴⁶

In Ezek 40:1–43:12 there is a detailed description of the new Temple. In the first part of the vision, Ezekiel is taken around the new Temple and then watches the return of God’s glory to it (43:1–12). In 43:3, the prophet compares the vision of God’s glory filling the new Temple with the vision of God seated on a throne lifted by cherubim that he experienced at the river Kebar (1:3–28). Thus, according to the prophet Ezekiel, the future Temple described in chapters 40–43 becomes a reflection of the heavenly sanctuary in which God is seated on the throne-chariot (*merkābāh*).⁴⁷

Noteworthy is the text in TgJ Ezek 43:7, which utilizes terminology used in the literature on heavenly palaces.

Hebrew text (MT):

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן אָדָם אֶת־מְקוֹם כְּסֵאִי וְאֶת־מְקוֹם כְּפֹת רַגְלֵי אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁכֵּן שָׁם בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְעוֹלָם [...] 43:7

And he said unto me, Son of man, (this) is the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, for there will I dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever [...].

Targum Jonathan to Ezek:

ואמר לי בר אדם דין אתר בית כורסי יקרי ודין אתר בית אשריות שכניתי דאשרי שכניתי
תמן בגו בני ישראל לעלם [...] 43:7

And He said to me, “Son of Adam, this is the place of the abode of My throne of glory, and this is the place of the abode where My Shekinah dwells, for I will make My Shekinah dwell there, in the midst of the Children of Israel forever [...].”

In the targumic paraphrase, the anthropomorphic way of describing the Temple has been rejected, namely, it is not “the place of the soles of My feet” (cf. Isa 66:1); and moreover, according to the targumist, it will be the dwelling place of God’s “presence” (שכינה) and not

⁴⁶ See Davila, *Hekhalot Literature*, 9; Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*, 169–195.

⁴⁷ See Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 542; Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel; Translated*, 5; Kušmirek, “Targum do Księgi Ezechiela,” 148–149.

of Himself. As regards the Aramaic translation, according to which the Temple is “the place of the House of the throne of My glory,” it is worth noting that a similar expression appears in the Book of Jeremiah, where the prophet calls the Temple “the throne of glory (Jer 17:12). In the literature on heavenly palaces, the expression “throne of glory” is one of the most common terms for the throne on which God sits in the heavenly chamber (e.g., *Hekalot rabbati*, § 161, § 251; *Hekalot zutarti*, § 371, § 373; *Ma’šēh merkābāh*, § 544, § 559, §§ 592–594; 3 En. 1:6–12; 7:1). Jewish mystical speculation is also echoed in the Aramaic term for the Temple as “the dwelling place of My presence,” in which the word “presence (שכינה)” appears as synonymous with God. According to TgJ Ezek 43:7 – similarly to *merkābāh* mysticism – the Temple is the place where the throne of God’s glory is located and His presence dwells. In other words, the new Temple described by Ezekiel is a replica of God’s the heavenly dwelling place found in the mystical tradition, which is particularly highlighted by the targumic paraphrase.⁴⁸

The last words of the book (Ezek 48:35) point out the divine origin of the Temple and the entire city of Jerusalem, where the future sanctuary will be located. As S.H. Levey notes,⁴⁹ one can see mysticism and mystery in the concluding statement of the Book of Ezekiel, which in the Aramaic translation reads, “And the name of the city – will be announced from the day His presence dwells – YWY is there” (TgJ Ezek 48:35). According to the targumist, the name of the city so far has not yet been specified, but God Himself will name it in the future, when it will be renewed by Him. In short, the new Jerusalem – like the new Temple – will be a reflection of the heavenly city, which brings to mind the mystical speculation of *merkābāh* (cf. also Rev 3:12; 21:1–2, 10; b. Ta’an. 5a).

⁴⁸ See Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 117.

⁴⁹ Levey, “The Targum to Ezekiel,” 145; Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel Translated*, 129; see also Kuśmirek, “Targum do Księgi Ezechiela,” 149.

Summary

The chariot-shaped throne of God in the heavens (*merkābāh*) from Ezekiel's visions (Ezek 1; 10) was the subject of the earliest Jewish mystical speculation, hence it is not surprising that there are numerous elements of *merkābāh* mysticism in the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel. The Aramaic translation emphasizes the transcendence of God dwelling in the heavens, His omnipotence, majesty and royal authority. Allusions to *merkābāh* mysticism present in the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel are primarily concerned with the image of God seated on the throne-chariot. According to TgJ Ezek 1:26, the figure seated on the throne had "the likeness of something like the appearance of Adam," which alludes to traditions in which Adam was seen as the ideal man and prophet associated with the heavenly sanctuary as God's eternal dwelling place. Another motif associated with *merkābāh* mysticism is the description of the four living beings surrounding God's throne-chariot. While according to the Hebrew text each one has four faces, the targum states that each being has 16 faces, and all together they have 64. As concerns wings, according to the biblical material each being has four, while the Aramaic translation says that each being has 64 wings, and all together they have 256 (TgJ Ezek 1:6). In the material, which is a targumic addition, the four living beings are presented as executors of God's punishment against sinners (TgJ Ezek 1:8) and His messengers (TgJ Ezek 1:14). The TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel – in material which is a targumic addition – emphasizes the motif of God being glorified by heavenly beings (1:24; 3:12–13; 43:2), a common element in Jewish mystical speculation. In the Book of Ezekiel, the prophet is said to have been lifted up by a spirit, resulting in seeing God's glory (TgJ Ezek 3:12–15; 8:1–4; 11:1, 24; 43:5; see also 40:1–4), which can be seen as an echo of the mystic's motif of ascending/rising to the heavens, which was one of the main themes of literature on heavenly palaces. There is an allusion to the *merkābāh* mysticism in the description of God's glory filling the new Temple, which will be the God's eternal dwelling place (TgJ Ezek 43:1–7), and the motif of the new Jerusalem as a representation of the heavenly city where God will reside (TgJ Ezek 48:35). In conclusion, it can be said that the numerous elements of *merkābāh* mysticism present in the TgJ to the Book of Ezekiel

are a testimony of a mystical trend already fully formed, the source of which is the biblical visions of the prophet Ezekiel, and which developed in later literature on heavenly palaces.

Elementy mistyki *merkābāh* w Targumie Jonatana do Księgi Ezechiela

Abstrakt: Przedmiotem najwcześniejszych spekulacji mistycznych był tron Boży w niebiosach o kształcie rydwanu (*merkābāh*) z wizji Ezechiela (Ez 1; 10). Nie dziwi więc fakt, że w Targumie Jonatana do Księgi Ezechiela pojawiają się liczne aluzje i odniesienia do mistyki *merkābāh*. W niniejszym artykule została przeprowadzona analiza tekstów targumicznych zawierających elementy mistyki *merkābāh*, mianowicie: obraz Boga zasiadającego na tronie-rydwanie, wygląd i funkcji czterech istot żyjących, wystawianie Boga przez istoty niebiańskie, motyw wznoszenia się / wstępowania do niebios przez mistyka, opis chwały Bożej wypełniającej nową Świątynię oraz motyw nowej Jerozolimy jako odwzorowanie miasta niebiańskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: tron-rydwan Boży, Targum Jonatana do Księgi Ezechiela, *merkābāh*, mistycyzm, literatura na temat pałaców niebiańskich (*hēkālōt*)

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