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A FRAGMENT OF THE VISIONS OF EZEKIEL

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THE famous Stichometry of Nicephorus mentions along with the *ψευδεπίγραφα* of Baruch, Habakkuk, and Daniel, one of Ezekiel also.¹ There was, therefore, known a Pseudepigraph attributed to Ezekiel the prophet. Apparently the traces of such a book are entirely lost. Yet from the references thereto given by the Rabbis we know that as late as the eleventh and twelfth centuries there was a Baraita called *Maaseh Merkabah* dealing with the Chariot Visions of Ezekiel.² In a manuscript of the British Museum I have discovered a fragment (Or. No. 5559, D, p. 18 A and B) which contains, as the title says, the last page of a writing called *The Visions of Ezekiel ben Buzzi, the priest*.

Unfortunately only thirty-four lines are preserved, nineteen lines on the recto, fifteen (including the postscript) on the verso. The writing is ancient, square Hebrew, of the tenth or the eleventh century. The contents of the fragment leave no room for the slightest doubt that the Visions of Ezekiel belong to the Pseudepigrapha. The question arises whether the book was pre-talmudic, and was conse-

¹ See *Nicephori Opuscula*, Lips., 1880, pp. 132-5; Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*⁴, II, 263; Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche*, p. 20; *Orientalistische Literatur-Zeitung*, XV, 254; and *Journal of Theological Studies*, XV, 236-9.

² Cf. Zunz, *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge*, p. 166; add there שבוּלֵי הַקָּטָה, ed. Buber, nos. 17 and 20.

quently used as a source by the Rabbis, or belonged to the writings of the mystics of the gaonic period. The description of the various heavens, as the שחקים, מכון, ערבות, and of the כסא הכבוד, their distances and purpose, the functions of the chariot, and the dwelling-place of God, the throne of glory, are all familiar subjects in kindred literature, as we shall see in due course.

I begin by giving the text with a translation. Then I shall proceed to discuss the chief features of the Visions compared with similar subjects in Greek literature, in the O.T. Pseudepigrapha, and in the Rabbinical sources. Before dealing with the last lines of our fragment, we shall have to pay attention to the date of the Kaddish prayer, which shows undoubted resemblances to the expressions used by our author. Finally, we may attempt to settle the date of the composition of the fragment.

TEXT.

[Or. British Museum, No. 5559, D, p. 18 A.] [*recto*]

1 מרכבה של כרוב שבה רכב וירד לתחתונים
 וירכב על כרוב ויעף ונו' ³ ומן שחקים ועד
 מכון מהלך חמש מאות שנה ⁴ וכן עוביו של
 מכון מהלך חמש מאות שנה. ומה יש בו?
 5 אוצרות שלג ואוצרות ברד ומחת ⁵ פורענות [1]

³ 2 Sam. 22. 11, cp. Pirḳe derabbi Eliezer, chap. 4 (according to a Genizah Fragment, copied by the present writer in Cambridge, read: כשהוא בשמים (רכב על כרוב קל שנ' וירכב על כרוב ויעף).

⁴ The same number and the same measure is mentioned Cant. r. 6. 14: תני עין חיים מהלך תק שנה. Cp. *Agadath Shir Hashirim*, ed. Schechter, p. 13, l. 307; on the subject see now my *Midrash Haserot ve Yeserot* (London, 1917), p. 10, note 39.

⁵ מחת occurs here and in line 11; cp. Job 6. 21.

של רשעים ומתן שכרן של צדיקים: ⁶
 מן מכוון ועד ערבות מהלך חמש
 מאות שנה וכן עוביו מהלך חמש מאות
 שנה. ומה יש בו? גנזי ברכה ואוצרות
 שלג ואוצרות שלום ונשמות של צדיקים ¹⁰
 ורוח נשמות שהוא עתיד להבראות ומחת
 פורענותן של רשעים ומתן שכרן של צדיקים.
 ומרכבה בתוכה. ומה שמה? עב שמה. שנא' [מר]
 משא מצרים הנה יי רוכב על עב[קל] ⁷
¹⁵ ומן ערבות ועד כסא כבוד מהלך
 חמש מאות שנה וכן עוביו מהלך חמש
 מאות שנה. ומה יש בו בערבות? פרסות
 החיות ומקצת כנפי החיות שנא' [מר] ומתחת
 הרקיע כנפיהם ישרות ⁸ ומרכבה. . [נת] ? לה

B

[verso]

בתוכה שבהעת דהקב"ה לירד ולשפט ¹
 את כל האומות עליה אמר ישעיה כי הנה
 יי באש יבוא וכסופה מרכבותיו וגו'. ⁹ ומה
 שמה? מרכבות אש וסערה למעלה כנפי
 החיות כנגד שבעה רקיעים ושבעה ⁵
 כרובין. ולמעלה מהן הקב"ה יתברך
 וישתבח ויתפאר ויתרומם ויתגדל
 ויתהדר ויתנשא ויתעלה ויתקדש
 ויתקלס שמה דמלך מלכי המלכים
¹⁰ ברוך הוא קיים כל עלמיה אמן ואמן
 נצח סלה ועד סס
 סְלִיקוּ רְאוּיֹת יְחֻקָּאֵל בְּן
 בְּוִי תְּפִיָּן ׀
 וְכָר צְדִיק ׀
 לְבָרְכָה ¹⁰ ׀ ¹⁵

⁶ According to Pirke derabbi Eliezer, chap. 3: רוח פנת הצפון משם: אוצרות השלג ואוצרות הברד וקור וחום וגשמים יוצאים לעולם.

⁷ Isa. 19. 1.

⁸ Ezek. 1. 23.

⁹ Isa. 66. 15.

¹⁰ Prov. 10. 7.

TRANSLATION.

(1) The Chariot of the Cherub whereon He rides and descends to the lower (heavens or regions). (2) *And He rode upon the Cherub and did fly.*¹¹ And from the Šehakim (3) to the Makon is a journey of five hundred years, and likewise the dimension of (4) the Makon is a journey of five hundred years. And what is therein? (5) (Therein are) the treasuries of snow, the treasuries of hail, the dread of the punishment (6) of the wicked and the reward of the righteous. (7) From the Makon up to the Arabot is a journey of five (8) hundred years, likewise its dimension is a journey of five hundred years. And what is therein? The treasuries of blessing and the treasuries of snow, the treasuries of peace, and the souls of the righteous and the spirit of the souls which He will bring into existence in the future, and the dread of the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous. And the Chariot is therein. And what is its name? ענן (cloud) is its name, as it is said: *The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud.*¹² And from the Arabot up to the throne of Glory there is a journey of five hundred years; its dimension is likewise a journey of five hundred years. And what is there in the Arabot? The hoofs of the living creatures and a part of the wings of the living creatures, as it is said: *And under the firmament were the wings straight.*¹³ And the Chariot (is suspended?) therein. For when the Holy One, blessed be He, will descend in order to judge all the nations, concerning which it is said through Isaiah: *For behold the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind.*¹⁴ And what is its name? The Chariots

¹¹ 2 Sam. 22. 11.¹² Isa. 19. 1.¹³ Ezek. 1. 23.¹⁴ Isa. 66. 15.

of fire and storm. Higher up are the wings of the living creatures, corresponding to the seven heavens and the seven Cherubim. Higher than these is the Holy One, blessed be He. Blessed be, and praised, and honoured, and exalted, and magnified, and glorified, and extolled, and lauded, and sanctified, and adored the name of the King, of the King of Kings, blessed be He, who exists for ever, Amen and Amen, Nezaḥ, Selah, for ever. Finished are the Visions of Ezekiel, the son of Buzzi, the priest. *The memory of the righteous is blessed.*¹⁵

The fragment deals with the last three of the seven heavens. They are שחקים, מכון and ערבות; then we have the throne of Glory. In the rabbinical sources the order of the seven heavens is as follows: 1. וילון, 2. רקיע, 3. שחקים, 4. זבול, 5. מעון, 6. מכון, and 7. ערבות (b. Hagigah 12 b, R. Simon ben Laḳish, third century). In the Pirḳe Rabbenu Haḳadosh the order is: ז' רקיעין הן שמים ושמי השמים; שחקים זבול ומכון ומעון ערבות.¹⁶ We infer that the order in the Visions must have been different from that mentioned in the talmudic sources. The idea of seven heavens is, of course, current in the rabbinical literature. Even in Greek prayers, we are taught, generally seven heavens are entreated.¹⁷ The seven heavens are described in 3 Baruch 2 ff. and in *Ascensio Isaiae* 6–11.¹⁸ Paul speaks of three

¹⁵ Prov. 10. 7.

¹⁶ See ed. Grünhut, p. 79, VII, 13. Zohar (II, 287) has the order: ערבות, מכון, מעון, זבול, שחקים, רקיע, וילון; the same enumeration is to be found in M. Psalms, ed. Buber, p. 471 (R. Eleazar), Aboth of R. Nathan, XXXVII, 9 (R. Meir). A similar order to that in Pirḳe we find in Lev. r. 29, 9; cp. Pesikta, ed. Buber, p. 154 b. The Midrash on the Decalogue shows the order represented by Zohar, M. Psalms, Aboth of R. N.

¹⁷ See Fritz Pradel, *Griechische Gebete*, pp. 66 ff., and the literature given there.

¹⁸ See, further, Morfill and Charles, *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, 1896, pp. xxx–xlvii.

heavens.¹⁹ Bousset²⁰ derives the whole conception from Babylonian ways of thought. In rabbinical sources we find the subject discussed in Genesis rabba 19 c, Num. rabba 3. 8 (R. Levi), Lev. rabba 29. 9, Pesikta Rab, ed. Friedmann, p. 18 b; Pirke de rabbi Eliezer 41;²¹ Otiot of R. Akiba (ed. Jellinek, *Beth Hamidrash*, III, p. 46); Bereshit rabbati of R. Moses Hadarshan.²²

The measures given between the heavens is also to be found in Greek philosophy, in the Pseudepigrapha, and in the rabbinical sources. The teaching that to travel from earth to heaven takes five hundred years is, as Peritz has demonstrated, identical with Plato's reckoning of the world year.²³ The distance from the earth to the heaven is as great as its thickness, says 3 Baruch 2. 5, a point which agrees remarkably with our Visions of Ezekiel and the sayings of the Rabbis to be mentioned hereafter. The Ascension of Isaiah, however, held that the height from the third to the fourth heaven was greater than from the earth to the firmament.²⁴ Yet the Ascension teaches that the height of the second heaven is the same as from the heaven to the earth.²⁵ In the Rabbinical literature it is generally assumed that the journey from heaven to earth,

¹⁹ See 2 Cor. 12. 2; cp. Gfrörer, *Das Jahrhundert des Heils*, II, p. 38. In Rabbinical sources we read also of two heavens, Rab (Deut. r. 2. 32), R. Judah (b. Hag. 12 b), Rabbanan (Midr. Psalms, ed. Buber, 471).

²⁰ *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, p. 25. See, however, Zimmern, *Keilinschriften und Altes Test.*,³ p. 615; P. Jensen, *Kosmologie*, pp. 163 ff.; Budge, *Book of the Dead*, chaps. 144-7, *Coptic Apocrypha*, p. lxiii.

²¹ Cp. Hildesheimer, *Halachot Gedolot*, p. 5.

²² See Zunz, *Gottesd. Vort.*, p. 288; cp. *Hammagid*, XXII, p. 70.

²³ See Zeller, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, pp. 52, 521, n. 3; and *Monatschrift für die Gesch. und Wissenschaft des Judent.*, XXXVI (1887), p. 71.

²⁴ Chap. XXXIII, 28, ed. Charles, p. 53.

²⁵ Chap. VII, 18, *l. c.*, p. 50.

or *vice versa*, takes five hundred years; likewise from one heaven to another, and the thickness of each heaven has the same size.²⁶ Rabban Gamaliel held that the journey from the earth to the highest heaven takes 3,500 (500 × 7) years.²⁷

We must also consider that the purpose served by the various heavens as mentioned in our text almost agrees with the Talmud. The Makon holds the treasuries of snow and hail, punishment and reward. In the Talmud we read: מכון שבו אוצרות שלג וברד ועליית טללים רעים ועליית אנלים (b. Ḥagigah 13 b). We see that the talmudic report adds a few things, and omits the reference to punishment and reward, which is repeated in the fragment, as being preserved in the Arabot also. In the Arabot there are, according to the Visions, besides the two last-mentioned things the treasuries of blessing, the treasuries of snow and peace, the souls of the righteous, the spirits of the souls of the generations destined to come into existence. The Talmud adds: justice, righteousness, charity, the treasures of life and peace and blessing, the souls of the pious, the spirits of the souls of the future generations, and the dew of resurrection (b. Ḥagigah 13 b). Consequently the Talmud has five things more than our fragment. It is strange that אוצרות שלג occur twice. In the Arabot there are the hoofs of the living creatures and parts of the wings.

²⁶ Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai, b. Ḥagigah 13 a; b. Pes. 94 a; Bacher, *Die Agada der Tannaiten*, I, p. 41, doubts whether the authorship is genuine; pal. Berakot 2 c, line 63, cp. Jalkuṭ II, 337; Gen. rabba, chap. 6, ed. Theodor, p. 45, and parallels; add Midrash Konen 1 c and Qalir's poem וחיית אשר כסא הנה מרבעת כסא 'Maḥzor to New-Year', ed. Heidenheim, p. 79 a.

²⁷ Jalkuṭ II, no. 657; cp. Herzfeld, *Geschichte* II, p. 420, where 850 is to be corrected accordingly.

Before proceeding to deal with the last words of our fragment, we shall consider the question whether the Visions are dependent on the Talmud, or were the source used by the Rabbis of the third and fourth centuries, who otherwise borrowed these expressions from the Pseudo-epigrapha. The statements concerning the seven heavens, and their contents, as well as the measures given in the Talmud, make the impression that we have in our text quotations from some other sources, which had more material than is mentioned in our text. That our fragment neither copied nor altered the talmudical source is fairly obvious. One has only to compare it with the Midrash *Konen*, a product of the Mystics of the gaonic period, where the order of the heavens and their names are of talmudical origin (ארזי לבנון, Venice ed., p. 8 a). It is not likely that a post-talmudic writer would alter the names and the order of the seven heavens and disagree in such a matter with the talmudic tradition. It is, therefore, likely that the teachers of the Talmud used the Visions. Yet it is another question whether they used it in the form as it is now before us. There are a few points which support the view that the Visions were written in the early gaonic time. The introduction of biblical passages is the first to be considered. Twice we have שנאמר (ll. 13 and 18). That is the usual way of introducing Bible passages in the Mishnah²⁸ and in the New Testament (ἐρρέθη, εἴπεται, κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον).²⁹ The second is: עליה אמר ישעיה (l. 22). We shall adduce merely a few instances from our collection to show the manner of quotations in the later Midrashim

²⁸ See Bacher, *Terminologie*, I, p. 6.

²⁹ See Georg Aicher, *Das Alte Testament in der Mischna*, Freiburg i. B., 1906, p. 41.

(between 600 and 1000). Tanḥ. ed. Frankfurt a. Oder, p. 13^b, וכן הק' אומר p. 27^a, וכן משה אמר p. 3^b, וכן אמר ישעיה p. 22^a, וכן דניאל אמר p. 32^a, ושלמה אמר p. 23^b, 19 a, לירמיהו p. 38 a, ושבעה דוד p. 40 a, ויהוה שנאמר על ידי יחזקאל, Cant. rabba I. 65, 2, 4. דוד, 3, 3. 4, 17; Agadath Shir Hashirim, ed. Schechter, p. 31, l. 876: וכן אמר יחזקאל; Ruth rabba 5, 6, ואמר ישעיהו, p. 4, עד שאמרו ירמיהו, Nistarot of R. Simon ben Johai, ולא כך, (Jellinek, III, p. 78); Otot Hamashiah על אותו זמן נתנבא ישעיה ואמר גרא כי אין איש (אבקת רובל) p. 5^b). and ובדניאל כתיב, שנ' בזכריה, p. 6^b, and שנה מר בירמיהו and ובהם מתקיים מה שנ' בהושע.

Karaite authorities generally introduce the passage with the name of the biblical author.³⁰ Therefore one would be inclined to see in this way of introducing Bible passages rather a sign of late origin. In any case the method of introducing biblical passages by giving the name of biblical personages or authors is more common in later Midrashim (from 600 to 1000) than in earlier ones, although they occur, e.g. in the Mekilta to Exod. 7. 29.³¹

There is, moreover, another reason which supports the assigning of our fragment in the period of the Mystics of the gaonic age. The heaping up of expressions for praise and blessing is a familiar feature in the prayers which have come down to us from the Mystics, whom we call the *Yorde Merkabah*, the descenders of the Merkabah. Their influence upon the Jewish liturgy has been investigated by Ph. Bloch.³² Bloch has recognized the relation between

³⁰ See *מיצאת בנימין*, p. vi c'; Sahl ben Mazliaḥ in Pinsker, *ל"ק*, pp. 31, 34, 36; *מבחר ישרים*, p. 19 a.

³¹ See further on the subject, Ginzberg, *MGWJ.* (1914), 39, v. also Bächler, *JQR.*, N. S., III, p. 469.

³² *MGWJ.*, 1893, pp. 262 ff.

the prayers and the heaping up of phrases in the mystic books. D. de Sola Pool comes to the conclusion that we are justified in seeking the original of this paragraph (of the *Ḳaddish*) among the mystics, most probably among those who followed and carried on the traditions of the Old Essenes, the predecessors of the gaonic *Yorde Merkabah*.³³ That is in so far justified, as we see that the piling up of synonyms of praise was on the one hand really practised, as the instances of the talmudic sources prove, and on the other hand was strongly criticized by authorities of the third century. Yet Pool has not removed Bloch's very serious difficulties, which consist in the fact that notwithstanding R. Joḥanan's strong statement the heaping up of synonyms of praise found its place in the prayer book and official service, in the *Ḳaddish*, in the *Nishmat* prayer, and in the *Al-hakkol*. In the *Ḳaddish* there are 8, in *Nishmat*, *Al-hakkol*, and in the *Haggadah* there are 9, in our fragment 10, and finally in the *Hekalot* 11 synonyms of praise, the order being, as the present table shows, the following :

- I. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.
- II. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 6, 8, 10.
- III. -, -, 2, 3, 4, 6, 1, 8, 10.
- IV. 5, 9, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8-, 6, 10.
- V. -, -, 2, 3, 4, 6, 1, 8, 10.
- VI a 1, 6, 4, 7, 3, 1, 2, 5, 8, -, 10.
- VI b. -, 6, 1, 2, 8, 5, 9, 4, 3, 7, 10.

³³ See Pool, *The Old Jewish-Aramaic Prayer*, Leipzig, 1909, p. 57; cp. already K. Kohler, *MGWJ.* (1893), 490.

Frag.	Kaddish	Nishmat	Al-hakkol ³⁴	M. Pesahim ³⁵	Hekalot ³⁶		
					A	B	
1.	יתברך	יתברך	להודות	יתגדל	להודות	תתאדר	לאדרך
2.	ישתבח	ישתבח	להלל	יתקדש	להלל	תתהדר	להרוך
3.	יתפאר	יתפאר	לשבח	ישתבח	לשבח	תתרומם	לברכד
4.	יתרומם	יתרומם	לפאר	יתפאר	לפאר	תתנשא	לשבחך
5.	יתגדל	יתנשא	לרומם	יתרומם	לרומם	תתפאר	לעלך
6.	יתהדר	יתהדר	להדר	ויתנשא	להדר	תתברך	לגדלך
7.	יתנשא	יתעלה	לברך	ויתעלה	לברך	תתשתבח	לקדשך
8.	יתעלה	יתקלם	לעלה	ויתהדר	לעלה	תתגדל	לרוממך
9.	יתקדש		לקלם	ויתהלל	לקלם	תתעלה	לפארך
10.	יתקלם					תתעלז	לנשאך
11.						תתקלם	לקלמך

Only 3 and 5 agree entirely, 1 and 2 would have the same number if we add יתגדל יתקדש of the first part of the Kaddish, though the order would be 5, 9, 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 6, 8, 10. Then, if we substitute ויתהלל with ויתקלם and add יתברך in 4, in that case 2 and 4 would be identical and nearest to 1. Our fragment teaches us that all this heaping up of synonyms goes back to one and the same formula; furthermore, we learn that both Bloch and Pool were mistaken in saying that we must not translate these two Itpael as pure passives ('may His great name be magnified and sanctified', *MGWJ.*, 1893, p. 264, and Pool, p. 29), for they are exactly like the seven praises יתברך, as the context presupposes.

All these comparisons show that this method was used by the Mystics, and by their work and agitation these prayers were introduced in the Jewish prayer book. It is, therefore, not improbable that the Visions, in the form as they present themselves to us in the fragment, were

³⁴ Maseket Soferim XIV, 12.³⁵ X, 5.³⁶ Ed. Jellinek, p. 103.

written down in the early gaonic period, in the time of the *Yorde Merkabah*. This view is supported by a tradition handed down by the Gaon Amram, who says that the seven praises of the Kaddish correspond to the seven heavens (s. המנהיג, p. 11^b).³⁷ The original, of course, may have been the source of the talmudic utterances on the subject of the Merkabah in the third century.

³⁷ אלא שיש בקדיש ז' עניני שבח נגד ז' רקיעים. Cp. Seder R. Amram 4 a. This fact might explain wherefore the Kaddish became the prayer of mourning.