Zechariah's Horse Visions and Angelic Intermediaries: Translation, Allusion, and Transmission in Early Judaism

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Abstract: In this article, I examine the interplay of transmission and exegesis in Zechariah's textual history, analyzing the strategies that early interpreters employed to create coherence in a difficult text. I use Zechariah's horse visions as examples, exploring their presentation in the early versions and the Book of Revelation. The following examination explores the form of Zechariah used by these ancient interpreters and the habits of reading that are implied in their presentation of reused material. The evidence suggests that, by the late Second Temple period, the majority of readers conceptualized Zech 1:8 *and* 6:1-5 as coreferential visions and that this linking was representative of a larger strategy of coherence. This strategy is also part of a wider tradition of correlating Zechariah's horses with other heavenly figures in the Hebrew Bible, a tradition that is most prevalent in *Targum Jonathan.*

Key Words: allusion • angel • apocalypse • coherence • Septuagint • *Targum Jonathan* • translation • Zechariah

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The prophecy of Zechariah is extremely enigmatic, because it contains visions resembling a dream that requires an interpretation. We cannot ascertain the truth of its interpretation until the teacher of righteousness comes.

—Rashi, *Commentary on Zechariah*

DESPITE RASHI'S CONFESSION, the opacity of the Hebrew text of Zechariah has not stopped commentators, ancient or modern, from grappling with this complicated composition.[1] Few explicit interpretations of Zechariah remain from antiquity, the

[1] For a recent negative appraisal of the coherence of MT Zechariah, see Mark Cameron Love, *The Evasive Text: Zechariah 1–8 and the Frustrated Reader* (JSOTSup 296; Sheffield: Sheffield

majority of which reside in a few scattered quotations and allusions, aside from its early versions.[2] In this article, I examine some instances of how ancient sources engaged with perceived incongruities in Zechariah's visionary material, concentrating on the horse visions in Zech 1:8; 6:1-8 as examples. The ancient sources that handle these segments in the most explicit manner are the Old Greek translation (OG), the Book of Revelation (6:1-8), and *Targum Jonathan of the Prophets* (*Tg. Neb.*). The entry point into this exploration is the handling of color lexemes in each of these traditions employed to describe the heavenly horses in each of these works.[3]

The following analysis requires two steps and contributes to a number of discussions pertaining to the reading and reuse of Scripture in Jewish and Christian antiquity. First, the textual form(s) of Zechariah utilized by the author of Revelation ("John") and our ancient translators must be identified. It is impossible to examine a tradent's reading strategy of an antecedent text if one does not know which form of the text was used. This is especially true in light of the demonstrable textual pluriformity of the Hebrew Bible in this period.[4] Despite the known pluriformity of texts, the evidence suggests that each tradent translated or alluded to the proto-MT form of Zechariah. Second, after the presentation of borrowed or translated material in each work is discussed, the strategies of reading reflected in each scribe's[5] presentation of material from the horse visions are examined and compared. This facet of the investigation explores the features of the Hebrew text of Zechariah that motivated these scribes to craft their particular presentation of the material, describing the processes by which they heightened the coherence of their source tradition based on the shared features of the visions and their interpretation of the horses and their implied riders as angels.

Academic Press, 1999). See also E. C. Bissell, "On Zech. vi. 1-7," *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* [*JBL*] 6 (1886) 117-18.

[2] See the collection of citations/allusions in Armin Lange and Matthias Weigold, *Biblical Quotations and Allusions in Second Temple Jewish Literature* (JAJSup 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011) 159-60.

[3] For a general evaluation of the relationship between OG Zechariah and Zechariah in *Tg. Neb.,* see C. Dogniez, "Some Similarities between the Septuagint and the Targum of Zechariah," in *Translating a Translation: The LXX and Its Modern Translations in the Context of Early Judaism* (ed. H. Ausloos et al.; BETL 213; Leuven: Peeters, 2008) 89-102.

[4] "Textual pluriformity" refers to the multiple textual exemplars, in Hebrew and Greek, of specific scriptural books in concurrent circulation in Second Temple Jewish and early Christian communities. For the case of Zechariah, there was likely a single Hebrew textual tradition (the proto-MT stream) but multiple Greek forms (OG, 8ḤevXIIgr, [proto] Hexaplaric revisions). A specific textual form refers to one of these related but distinct textual traditions.

[5] "Scribe" refers to authors/translators who transmitted and reworked texts and those who created new literary works. The understanding of scribe as merely copyist is a phenomenon that postdates the texts analyzed in this discussion. Arie van der Kooij's understanding of the role of scribes in ancient translations is relevant here ("The Septuagint of Zechariah as Witness to an Early Interpretation of the Book," in *The Book of Zechariah and Its Influence* [ed. Christopher Tuckett; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003] 53-63, esp. 54-55).

I. Transmission and Exegesis

In recent discussions on the handling of the Hebrew Bible in the late Second Temple period, numerous scholars have argued that lower criticism (textual transmission) and higher criticism (exegesis) are integrally interrelated. George J. Brooke, for example, has argued that the evidence from Qumran has drastically altered the relationship between old critical paradigms.[6] Based on the numerous variant readings found in the manuscripts from the Judean Desert and the insight they provided into how scribes handled and engaged with their scriptural traditions, Brooke makes a number of suggestions, including the call for scholars to recognize that tradents were active partners in the process of transmission. In this period, text and interpretation cannot be so easily disentangled.[7] Examples of exegetical engagement in the scriptural manuscripts from Qumran are numerous and well attested in recent secondary literature on the scrolls.[8] Additionally, the exegetical engagement with scriptural texts is witnessed beyond the immediate confines of Qumran, as D. Andrew Teeter's recent important and exhaustive study has demonstrated in regard to Jewish legal material.[9] The variant readings in the manuscripts need to be examined in the broader context of the ancient versions and quotations or allusions to particular texts. Pointing to the pesharim as one of his many examples, Teeter suggests that the long-standing debate over the status of the lemmata and variants in the interpretation portions of these texts is problematic because it presupposes a rigid division between "exegetical" and "textual" variation.[10] Ultimately, he concludes that two overarching models of scribal activity are present in early Judaism writ large. One model aims at the precise reproduction of the wording of an antegraph (e.g., the MT-like copies from Qumran), and the other aims to produce a copy that facilitates understanding (e.g. *Temple Scroll*, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 4QRP, etc.).[11] The presence of these complementary models within a single textual culture complicates the methods and approaches of modern scholarship because "text history proves inseparable from

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[6] George J. Brooke, "The Qumran Scrolls and the Demise of the Distinction between Higher and Lower Criticism," in *Reading the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essays in Method* (EJL 39; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013) 1-18.

[7] George J. Brooke, "New Perspectives on the Bible and Its Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Dynamics of Language and Exegesis at Qumran* (ed. Devorah Dimant and Reinhard G. Kratz; FAT 2/35; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) 19-37.

[8] Brooke points to the variant יומם in 4QGen^g 1:5 as an example of an "exegetical variant" ("Qumran Scrolls and the Demise," 4-5).

[9] David Andrew Teeter, *Scribal Laws: Exegetical Variation in the Textual Transmission of Biblical Law in the Late Second Temple Period* (FAT 92; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

[10] Ibid., 186-87.

[11] Ibid., 254-67.

reception history, blurring the boundaries between literary formation, textual transmission, and the history of interpretation."[12]

This is the landscape upon which the various witnesses to Zechariah's horse visions are best understood. As the following appraisal of the evidence indicates, the differences in the number and color of horses in Zechariah's visions in the proto-MT proved problematic for the translators of the ancient versions and for the author of Revelation. This incongruity between the Hebrew text and versions has also largely been characterized negatively by modern commentators. Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, for example, argue that "the Zechariah text [of the horse visions] has suffered in transmission and has received such varied treatment in the versions."[13] They also assume that at one stage the Hebrew text was consistent in its presentation of the color and number of horses.[14] Similarly, W. D. McHardy has made the case that "in the verses before us [Zech 1:8; 6:1-5] we have what was originally a stereotyped form, horses of four different colours, a tidy pattern which has become disarranged and untidy."[15] McHardy and Meyers and Meyers assume that the inconsistencies in both the Hebrew and versional traditions of Zechariah are the result of corruptions in the process of transmission, accidents of transcriptional error, and stemmatological misfortune.[16] Regardless of whether the unknown *Urtext* of Hebrew Zechariah preserved an identical pattern in both visions, messy transcriptional practices cannot fully account for the form of these visions in the late Second Temple period.

In contrast to the preceding approaches, I argue that the correlation of Zechariah's horse visions in its early reception history is part of a complex of reading strategies that assume a particular conception of angelic mediators (cf. Zech 1:11). These strategies are operative both within Zechariah and across the emerging corpus of Jewish Scripture, as interpreters grappled with the fluctuating presentations of angelic hosts. This discussion not only aids the comprehension of the troubling visions of Zechariah but also contributes to a more expansive discourse on the relationship between exegesis and transmission in early Judaism. Additionally, it identifies shared habits of reading and scribal responses to the ambiguity provided by a consonantal Hebrew text, illuminating the dialectic of translational encounters with

[12] Ibid., 33.

[13] Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25B; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987) 321.

[14] Ibid., 320.

[15] W. D. McHardy, "The Horses in Zechariah," in *In Memorian Paul Kahle* (ed. Matthew Black and Georg Fohrer; BZAW 103; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1968) 174-79, here 176. Others, like Al Wolters, have avoided emendation in the visions, although he does not offer an explanation for the variance of colors (*Zechariah* [Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven: Peeters, 2014] 49-50, 172-75).

[16] There is no direct evidence for ancient alternative readings in the Hebrew text of these visions, with the possible exception of the variant in 4QXII[e] at 6:1 (נחז[ש] for נחשת).

complex narrative structures. Although modern scholars like McHardy and Meyers and Meyers fail to take into account the dynamics of exegesis and transmission in the late Second Temple period, they share with their ancient counterparts an expectation of consistency between the horse visions, as the following discussion intimates.

Reading Strategy

A brief note on what is meant by the collocation "reading strategy" is necessary at this juncture. By "reading strategy" I refer to the manner in which scribes read their source texts as evidenced by the nuance of textual changes preserved in the tradition. In this case, the source text I hone in on is the proto-MT of Zech 1:8; 6:1-5. I am interested in the textual cues, real or perceived, that motivated scribal reformulation. The author of Revelation's reading, for example, is witnessed in the manner in which the four-horsemen narrative (Rev 6:1-8) was composed and how linguistic material from Zechariah was incorporated into this new literary construction. The following analysis is focused on identifying the textual signals that sparked ancient scribes to rework Zech 1:8; 6:1-5. In addition, investigating a scribe's "reading strategy" is not meant to imply that scribes had a particular method of reading that was applied to all texts that they interacted with in a methodical fashion. The reading strategies of ancient literati were intuitive insofar as a particular strategy of reading was not imposed across all reused or translated texts.[17]

II. Old Greek Zechariah

The discussion begins with the oldest source that explicitly engages proto-Zechariah 1–8: the OG translation.

Textual Form

There is general agreement that the *Vorlage* of the OG Minor Prophets is very similar to the proto-MT. This agreement is supported by the fact that the 4QXII manuscripts do not definitively witness a textual stream for the Twelve that stands outside the proto-MT family, including Zechariah 1–8 (preserved only in 4QXII[e] and MurXII). While 4QXII[e] is certainly not unified in all areas of detail with proto-MT (e.g., possible omissions in 1:6 and a morphological variant in 3:9),[18] the extent and

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[17] This intuitive reading and interpretation are what Alexander Samely calls "implicature," a process of interpretation that flows instinctively from certain background assumptions of the text in question in dialogue with the surface features of the text itself. See Samely, "Scripture's Implicature: The Midrashic Assumptions of Relevance and Consistency," *JSS* 37 (1992) 167-205.

[18] These differences are largely due to issues of orthography, graphically similar grapheme confusion, methathesis, *waw* elision, sibilant interchange, and a variety of minor morphosyntactic structures. For more on this issue, see George J. Brooke, "The Twelve Minor Prophets and the Dead Sea

the form of variation do not require that we posit a Hebrew form different from the proto-MT. The variation can be attributed to features internal to the proto-MT tradition. Moreover, those working with OG Zechariah (Zech[OG]) have consistently noted the similarity between the translation's *Vorlage* and the proto-MT.[19]

An investigation into the *Vorlage* of Zechariah's horse visions confirms the assertion that the form of Zechariah underlying this translation is the proto-MT. First, the changes to the vision in 1:8 (see below) are a result of the translator's reading of the Zech 6:1-5[PM]. The readings do not reflect Zech 1:8[PM] but, nonetheless, reflect a reading of the proto-MT found in the corresponding pericope (Zech 6:5). Another minor narrative difference between proto-MT and OG is witnessed in Zech 6:5:

Zechariah 6:5[PM]	Zechariah 6:5[OG]
ויען המלאך ויאמר אלי אלה ארבע רחות השמים יוצאות מהתיצב על־אדון כל־הארץ	αἱ ἀπεκρίθη ὁ ἄγγελος **ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ** καὶ εἶπε Ταῦτά ἐστιν οἱ τέσσαρες ἄνεμοι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ἐκπορεύονται παραστῆναι τῷ κυρίῳ πάσης τῆς γῆς.
And the angel answered and he said to me, "These are four winds of heaven sent out from presenting themselves before the lord of all the earth."	The angel **who was speaking with me** answered and he said, "These are the four winds of heaven sent out to stand before the lord of all the earth."

The OG specifies which angel was speaking in this locution: "the one who was speaking with me [the visionary]." In this manner, אלי does not refer to the direction of speech, as in the MT, but specifies the speaker. The phrase "the angel who was speaking with me" is common in Zechariah (e.g., 1:9, 13, 14; 2:3; 4:1, 4; 5:5, 10; 6:4), and the inclusion of the phrase in the Greek (ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοί) may reflect a habit of following the internal patterns of the source text. The translator's *Vorlage*

may have included this phrase, but, based on its prominence in the rest of the book, the variation is likely a change that the translator introduced to cause the style of the dialogue to cohere with local patterns. Beyond this variation in metadiscourse, the relationship between the OG and proto-MT is literal in terms of word order, syntax, semantics, and style. Minor differences between proto-MT and the *Vorlage* of the OG may have existed, but even if these divergences are truly related to *Vorlage* and not reflective of translation technique or scribal error, the evidence strongly suggests that the proto-MT and the Hebrew *Vorlage* of Zech[OG] are closely related.

Translation and Habits of Readings

How, then, does the Greek translator handle the Hebrew *Vorlage* of Zechariah? The OG translation of Zechariah's horse visions indicates two of the translator's primary goals. First, the translator strives for narrative coherence, harmonizing Zechariah's horse visions in terms of content: color/number of horses and the visionary setting of the riders. Second, the translator strives for a literal, serially consistent, representation of his *Vorlage*.

Horse Colors in Zechariah 1:8; 6:2-3[20]	
Proto-MT	*OG*
Red (אדמים) 6:2; 1:8	Red (πυρροί) 1:8; 6:2
Vine-tendril colored (שרקים) 1:8	Dappled (ψαροί)
Spotted strong (ברדים אמצים[21]) 6:3	Spotted (ποικίλοι) 1:8; 6:3
White (לבנים) 1:8; 6:3	White (λευκοί) 1:8; 6:3
Black (שחרים) 6:2	Black (μέλανες) 6:2

In Zech 1:8, the Greek translator inserted an additional horse to correspond to his translation of ברדים אמצים in 6:3. The obscure Hebrew word שרקים (1:8) does not have an equivalent in the OG translation, and the two adjectives that describe the fourth horse in the second vision (6:3) are inserted in its place. With the exception of the black horses (6:2), which are not witnessed in any version of 1:8, the colors from

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[20] On the semantics of these color lexemes, see Athalya Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (JSOTSup 21; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982); John E. Hartley, *The Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Colour Lexemes* (Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement 33; Leuven: Peeters, 2010); Eleanor Irwin, *Colour Terms in Greek Poetry* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974).

[21] *HALOT*, 65, s.v. אמץ, suggests that the adjectival form of אמץ here refers to "flesh-colored" or "skewbald," citing L. G. Rignell, *Die Nachtgesichte des Sacharja: Eine exegetische Studie* (Lund: Gleerup, 1950) 200ff. The primary difficulty with this definition is that every other form of the root אמץ refers in some way to strength or growing. BDB (p. 54) also understands this adjective in Zech 6:3 to refer to strength.

1:8 and 6:2-3 correspond in the OG translation. The translator's insertion of an extra substantive adjective corresponds to the double adjective of the fourth horse in Zech 6:3. This translation sidesteps semantically difficult words from both visions: שרקים (1:8) and אמצים (6:3). The translator conflates the "vine-tendril colored" horses and the "spotted strong" horses in both visions, implying via selective translation that they are indeed the same group of horses.

Another feature of Zech 6:1-5 that the Greek translator inserts into the translation of 1:8 is the backdrop upon which the riders are introduced. The rare word ההדסים ("the myrtles") from the proto-MT is, in 1:8, replaced with the phrase τῶν δύο ὀρέων τῶν κατασκίων ("two overshadowing mountains"). The Greek phrase is influenced by Zech 6:1—שני ההרים וההרים הרי נחשת—which introduces the second horse vision by describing whence the chariots come: out from between two mountains. The translator's alteration of Zech 1:8 harmonizes both horse visions and allows the translator to avoid a rare word (ההדסים).[22] As with the color of the horses, the translator imposed the context and visionary reality of the second horse vision (Zech 6:1-5) onto the first (Zech 1:8).

The Greek translator's second goal, which is not always compatible with his first, is to maintain the same syntactic slotting and serial arrangement as his source. For the translator, the appearance of two adjectives describing the fourth group of horses in the Hebrew of Zech 6:3 requires two adjectives in the target language. This goal, when coupled with the desire to harmonize the horse visions, paradoxically requires the insertion of an additional adjective into 1:8. This move breaks a literal adherence to syntactic slotting and quantitative fidelity in 1:8 while retaining it in 6:3. Likewise, the inclusion of the longer phrase from 6:1 into the first vision (1:8) draws the visionary accounts together syntactically, but the expansion disrupts the syntax of Zech 1:8[PM]. The translator privileged syntactic and quantitative fidelity to the longer horse vision (6:1-5).

The Greek translator's approach illustrates a dual desire to remain faithful to the Hebrew *Vorlage* while explicating difficult words and creating linguistic coherence between logically similar visions.[23] The consistent deployment of these strategies creates translational tension. In order to address the differing depictions of the color and number of horses in each vision, the translator coordinated the fourth group in 6:3 (ברדים אמצים) with the third horse in 1:8 (שרקים), sacrificing semantic and syntactic fidelity to the source tradition to create a new coreferential narrative harmony in the target text. This move coordinates Zechariah's two horse visions and adjusts

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[22] The words ההרים and ההדסים are visually similar, a graphic feature that might further explain their coordination in the translation.

[23] This translation unit also offers insight into the translator's editorial process. It is unlikely that he inserted ψαροὶ καὶ ποικίλοι in 1:8 without first translating 6:3. The inclusion of these substantive adjectives in 1:8 is evidence of an editorial process: (1) translation of 1:8; (2) translation of 6:3; (3) editing of 1:8 to correspond to 6:3.

features of the source tradition in the process of translation to create a heightened
level of logical congruence between visions.

III. Revelation 6:1-8

The next source that engages Zechariah's horse visions is the Book of Revelation.
This work differs from the OG, as its author ("John") does not simply translate
Zechariah but includes material from Zechariah as part of the allusive fabric of the
opening of the first four seals. Allusion is a more complex procedure, especially
when a Greek text alludes to a Hebrew tradition.

Textual Form

There is wide agreement that Rev 6:1-8 is, in part, an extended allusion to the
horse visions of Zech 1:8; 6:1-5.[24] The identification of the *Vorlage* that John used to
construct the four horsemen in Rev 6:1-8 is more complicated than his translating

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[24] David E. Aune states that "the four cavaliers described in Rev 6:1-8 are in part allusions to
Zech 1:7-11; 6:1-8" (*Revelation 6–16* [WBC 52B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998] 390). Grant R.
Osborne agrees: "The imagery of the four horsemen is drawn from Zech. 1:7-11 and 6:1-8" (*Revelation*
[Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002] 274). G. K. Beale
also suggests that John's description of the four horsemen is reliant on Zech 1:8-15 and 6:1-8 (*The Book
of Revelation* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999] 372). Multiple other scholars make this same
connection between Rev 6:1-8 and Zech 1:8; 6:1-5. See Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*
(NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 152; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John* (BNTC;
Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1966) 79-80; Traugott Holtz, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (NTD 11;
Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008) 64; Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (MNTC;
London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1940) 111 (Zechariah is the only "*specific* source" for Rev 6:1-8 [italics
Kiddle's]); Henri Volohonsky, "Is the Color of That Horse Really Pale?," *International Journal of
Transpersonal Studies* 18 (1999) 167-68; Barry F. Peachey, "A Horse of a Different Colour: The Horses
in Zechariah and Revelation," *ExpTim* 110 (1999) 214-16; J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduc-
tion, Translation, and Commentary* (AB 38; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978) 103-4; G. R. Beasley-
Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1974) 131; Brian K. Blount, *Revelation:
A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009) 121; Judith Kovacs and Christopher
Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Blackwell Bible Commentaries; Oxford: Black-
well, 2004) 78; Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of St John* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2006) 104-5;
Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (New York: Macmillan, 1919) 517; Jürgen Roloff, *The
Revelation of John* (trans. John E. Alsup; Continental Commentary; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 86;
Edmondo F. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John* (trans. Maria Poggi Johnson and Adam
Kamesar; Italian Texts and Studies on Religion and Society; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 142.
Marko Jauhiainen is the primary dissenter (*The Use of Zechariah in Revelation* [WUNT 2/199; Tübin-
gen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005] 63-65). He argues that Rev 6:1-8 is not a reference to Zechariah's horse
visions because (1) each horse vision features a different number of horses, and (2) the horses are
different colors. His initial objections are correct, but he does not take any of the data from the versions
into consideration.

counterparts. The identification hinges on the relationship between the color of the third horse in Zech 1:8 (שרקים) and the fourth horse in Zech 6:3 (ברדים אמצים).

Horse Colors in Zechariah 1:8; 6:2; and Revelation 6:1-8		
Proto-MT	*OG*	*Revelation*
Red (אדמים) 6:2; 1:8	Red (πυρροί) 1:8; 6:2	Red (πυρρός) 6:4
Vine-tendril colored (שרקים) 1:8	Dappled (ψαροί)	Green (χλωρός) 6:8
Spotted strong (ברדים אמצים) 6:3	Spotted (ποικίλοι) 1:8; 6:3	
White (לבנים) 1:8; 6:3	White (λευκοί) 1:8; 6:3	White (λευκός) 6:2
Black (שחרים) 6:2	Black (μέλανες) 6:2	Black (μέλας) 6:5

The comparison visualized in the table suggests that John crafted his description of the four horsemen by using material unique to both of Zechariah's horse visions. White and red horses appear in the proto-MT *and* OG Zech 1:8; 6:2 (Rev 6:2, 4). However, black horses (שחרים; μέλανες) appear only in the second horse vision (Zech 6:2). John's inclusion of this horse (Rev 6:5) suggests that he derived this image from Zechariah 6 alone. Thus far, it is unclear which textual form John used to craft these references. All textual evidence of the color of these three horses is consistent in the OG and proto-MT.

The difficulty arises with John's fourth horse (χλωρός). The question is, did John derive his description of the χλωρός horse from an extant textual witness and, if so, how? The word χλωρός itself is semantically opaque. In classical Greek poetry, as well as in usage contemporary with the Apocalypse, χλωρός referred to fresh-cut wood, leafy tress, and growing things, or to their color: "yellowish-green; light green; greenish gray."[25] In reference to Zech 1:8; 6:3^OG, χλωρός does not correspond graphically or semantically to ψαροί, ποικίλοι, or a collocation of the terms. If John utilized the OG here, why would he diverge from colors that the OG translator harmonized in both visions?[26] Based on the text of the OG translation, there is no exegetical move that could lead from ψαροί ποικίλοι to χλωρός. This leaves the two visions in the proto-MT, which witness different but parallel horse colors: שרקים (1:8) and ברדים אמצים (6:3). There is no example of ברדים, אמצים, or a collocation of these words underlying a form of χλωρός in the Jewish Greek scriptural tradition and there

[25] For a discussion of χλωρός in Greek poetry, see Irwin, *Colour Terms in Greek Poetry*, 31-78. She notes that χλωρός may also connote fear or other emotions (pp. 62-68). This identification is also fitting for the fourth horse in Rev 6:7-8, as its rider is "Death" and "Hades" follows after it.

[26] The horse colors are consistent in all OG manuscript traditions except for manuscript 130, which contains a text that slightly alters the color of the first horses mentioned in Zech 1:8 from πυρρόν to πύρινον.

is no possible misreading of the consonantal text that would lead to χλωρός as a reasonable translation equivalent of ברדים אמצים.

The final option in Zechariah's horse visions that could underlie χλωρός is the שרקים horses (Zech 1:8). The word שרק ("sorrel, vine-tendrils")[27] is translated primarily as a form of ἄμπελος in the OG (Isa 5:2; 16:8; Jer 2:21). The exception to this rule is the "translation" witnessed in Zech 1:8.[28] The common translation of שרק as ἄμπελος and the connection between χλωρός and plant life or living things suggest that the author of Revelation arrived at χλωρός for the color of his fourth horse by reading שרק in Zech 1:8. John conflated the horse visions (including unique elements from both)[29] by expanding the referent of שרק to the color of items the term usually describes ("vineyard, vine, vine-cluster") to the fourth horse of Zech 6:3. This move is not unprecedented, as Galen utilized χλωρός adjectivally to describe an ἄμπελος or the leaves of an ἄμπελος.[30] Likewise, elsewhere in Revelation χλωρός refers to grass or vegetation.[31] John did not include lexical material from the locution ברדים אמצים (Zech 6:3) in his composition, opting instead for the color of the referent of the third horse in Zech 1:8 to describe the fourth horse in his vision.

John's referential reading of שרק connects each of the four horses in Rev 6:1-8 to Zech 1:8 *and* 6:1-5[PM]. The first three colors of the horses in Rev 6:1-8 correspond to both the OG and the proto-MT, but the only possible extant textual tradition that can account for the fourth horse in Rev 6:8 (χλωρός) is the word in the proto-MT used to describe the third horse in Zech 1:8 (שרקים). These words differ morphologically but they overlap syntactically. John's *Vorlage* of Zechariah, in this case, is the proto-MT. If he had used the OG as his source text to construct his vision of the first four seals, he would have been forced to default to the common language that is shared by both of Zechariah's horse visions in this version (ποικίλος and/or ψαρός) or simply report a different color. Instead, he referenced the proto-MT and disregarded the description of the fourth horse in Zech 6:3.

This conclusion becomes clearer when one observes that there is little evidence to suggest that John used Hebraizing revisions of the OG in this instance. Zechariah 1:8; 6:1-5 are not extant in 8ḤevXIIgr, and there is no pattern of revision in the manuscript to suggest that the scribe would have altered the OG translation of these

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[27] BDB, 977; *HALOT*, 1361-62.

[28] Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *Concordance to the Septuagint and Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1897) 2:1168 (ποικίλος), 1484 (ψαρός). The rendering in Zech 1:8[OG] is likely not a direct translation of שרק but rather a retrojected harmonization of ברדים אמצים in Zech 6:3.

[29] The black horses from Zech 6:2 and the "vine-tendril" colored horses from 1:8.

[30] Galen *Comp. Med. Loc.* 12.791.8; 13.171.1 (trans. Ian Johnston; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[31] Rev 8:7; 9:4; see also Gen 1:30; 2 Kgs 19:26; Ezek 17:24; Mark 6:39.

colors.[32] A proto-Hexaplaric source is unlikely since the horse colors in Rev 6:1-8 do not match any of the small alterations in the witnesses to this tradition.[33] The entire scope of the available textual evidence suggests that John's choice of horse color was predicated by a sustained reading of Zech 1:8; 6:1-5ᴾᴹ.

IV. Targum Jonathan (Tg. Neb.)

A similar, but more subtle, coordinating strategy of reading is present in *Tg. Neb.* Zechariah. The investigation in this case is complicated by the presence of an "inner-Targum corruption" in Zech 1:8.[34] The manuscript evidence for this verse offers six different options for the color of our difficult third horse (שרקים).[35] Robert Gordon suggests that it was from one original reading, קרוחין, that all other manuscript corruptions arose.[36] The corruptions appear, in part, because the Aramaic equivalent chosen to represent שרקים is as opaque as its Hebrew equivalent.[37] Gordon suggests that the best rendering of קרוחין in English is "white-spotted."[38] For this discussion, I have adopted Gordon's reconstruction.

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[32] See the translational data provided in Dries de Crom et al., "A Hebrew-Greek Index to 8ḤevXIIgr," *RevQ* 95, no. 3 (May 2010) 331-49, and the revising tendencies identified by Wm. Randolph Bynum, *The Fourth Gospel and the Scriptures: Illuminating the Form and Meaning of Scriptural Citation in John 19:37* (NovTSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2012) 153-54.

[33] Frederick Field notes an Aquilanic variant in Zech 1:8 against the OG translation of ψαροὶ καὶ ποικίλοι for שרקים: ξανθοί ("yellow") (*Origenis Hexaplorum* [2 vols.; 1867–71; repr., Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2010] 2:1018). This revision of the OG toward a more literal representation of the proto-MT is not related to the color of the horses in Revelation. The Hebrew phrase ברדים אמצים in Zech 6:3 is also revised toward the proto-MT against the OG by Hexaplaric evidence (Field, 2:1021). Both Symmachus and Theodotion revised the OG translation of ברדים (ποικίλοι) to πελιδνοί ("livid"), and Aquila revised the OG rendering of אמצים (ψαροί) to καρτεροί ("strong"). None of these revisions matches the color of the fourth horse in Rev 6:8. It is unlikely that the author of Revelation used proto-Hexaplaric revisions in this instance.

[34] This phrase is borrowed from Robert P. Gordon, "An Inner-Targum Corruption (Zech. I 8)," *VT* 25 (1975) 216-21.

[35] Ibid., 216.

[36] Ibid., 219.

[37] Ibid., 218-19. The *Vorlage* of all Targumim, including *Tg. Neb.*, is the consonantal text reflected in the medieval MT (proto-MT). See Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012) 147-50; and Robert P. Gordon, *Studies in the Targum to the Twelve Prophets from Nahum to Malachi* (VTSup 51; Leiden: Brill, 1994) 72-73.

[38] Gordon, "Inner-Targum Corruption," 219. This definition is followed by Jastrow, 1413, s.v. קְרוּחַ. Michael Sokoloff notes that the root קרח is often associated with baldness (*The Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* [2nd ed.; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002] 504). The root, however, can also refer to "bald spots" or the "empty (lit. bald) section in a field." Gordon also notes that other instances of קרוח that appear in *Targum Neofiti* Gen 30:32, 33, 35; 31:8 refer to the color of sheep and goats ("Inner-Targum Corruption," 217).

Horse Colors in Zechariah 1:8; 6:2; and Revelation 6:1-8			
Proto-MT	*Tg. Neb.*	*OG*	*Revelation*
Red (אדמים) 1:8; 6:2	Red (סומקין) 1:8; 6:2	Red (πυρροί) 1:8; 6:2	Red (πυρρός) 6:4
Vine-tendril colored (שרקים) 1:8	White-spotted (קרוחין) 1:8	Dappled (ψαροί)	Green (χλωρός)
Spotted strong (ברדים אמצים) 6:3	Ash-spotted (פציחין קטמנין) 6:3	Spotted (ποικίλοι) 1:8; 6:3	
White (לבנים) 1:8; 6:3	White (חורין) 1:8; 6:3	White (λευκοί) 1:8; 6:3	White (λευκός) 6:2
Black (שחרים) 6:2	Black (אוכמין) 6:2	Black (μέλανες) 6:2	Black (μέλας) 6:5

The scribe(s) of *Tg. Neb.* aimed for a high level of quantitative literalness in their translation. In Zech 1:8, however, like the Greek translator and the author of Revelation, they altered the semantic value of the third horse (שרקים). Unlike the Greek translator, they remained quantitatively faithful to the proto-MT. The translation of the color of the fourth horse in Zech 6:3 also illustrates semantic diversion. The scribes translated the proto-MT phrase "strong spotted" (ברדים אמצים) as "ash-spotted" (פציחין קטמנין). When the two translations in Zech 1:8 and 6:3 are taken together, it seems that the goal was to harmonize the visions through subtle semantic adjustment while remaining entirely faithful to the syntactic slotting of the source text. They attempted to create an entirely identical text in terms of serial arrangement and quantitative output. Again, like the Greek translator, the scribes identified שרקים and אמצים as a nonidentical parallel pair. Both Aramaic equivalents refer to a light color ("white" or "gray"), and קרוחין (Zech 1:8) is semantically and visually similar to קטמנין in Zech 6:3 ("ash").

The semantic alteration of אמצים to קטמנין further strengthens the connection between the horse visions. The translator rendered אמצים ("strong") as a color ("gray") in order to match the sequence of horses in 6:2-3 and to equate the third horse of the vision in 1:8 with the fourth horse in 6:3: they are both light-colored and dappled. The translators' technique is less intrusive than the Greek translator's. They do not diverge quantitatively from the proto-MT, but the scribes work within the syntactic confines of the source text. In addition, because their Hebrew *Vorlage* utilized different adjectives to describe the two horses, the translators followed suit. The semantic alteration of שרקים and אמצים to similar but distinct Aramaic equivalents suggests that the scribes read these visions coreferentially using the tools amenable to their form of transmission and norms of translation. Although they utilized different techniques than the Greek translator, the scribes of *Tg. Neb.* responded to the same textual cues. They sacrificed semantic fidelity for narrative harmony, thus smoothing out the rough texture of the horse visions of Zechariah's Hebrew text.

V. Transmission and Exegesis Revisited

Each of the above tradents read Zechariah's horse visions coreferentially—that is, as parallel and coherent episodes. This allowed each to target and solve two ambiguities within the proto-MT: the logical dissonance presented by the horses described as שרקים in 1:8 and as ברדים אמצים in 6:3.

Although all three scribes share a set of reading habits, they responded to the issues presented by the proto-MT by employing different strategies for reworking the problem texts. Their forms of presentation differ, but their underlying interpretations are consistent. For example, John's presentation contrasts with that of the Greek translator. The Greek translator implicitly gave precedence to the second horse vision (Zech 6:1-5) by altering the first vision (Zech 1:8) to cohere with the setting and description of the charioteers in 6:1-5. In contrast, John's referential rendering of שרקים (Zech 1:8) as χλωρός (Rev 6:8) suggests that he gave precedence to the first horse vision, equating the third horse in Zech 1:8 with the fourth horse of Zech 6:3. John did not revert his reading of Zech 6:3 back into the context of the vision in Zech 1:8—just the inverse. He conflated the horse visions by correlating the Hebrew root שרק, expanded further to the color of its referent ("vineyard, vine, vine-cluster"), with the fourth group of horses of Zech 6:3. John presented material relating to the color of the third horse in Zech 1:8 and omitted any material that referred to the ברדים אמצים horses (Zech 6:3).

Likewise, John's approach is both similar to and different from the translator(s) of *Tg. Neb.* Unlike the Aramaic tradition, John did not rely on a semantic middle ground between the description of the third horse in Zech 1:8 and fourth horse in Zech 6:3 to illustrate an awareness of both visions. He does not display the semantic subtlety of the scribes who produced *Tg. Neb.*, scribes who carefully adjusted the semantic sense of the enigmatic horse colors to draw both of Zechariah's visions into a closer relationship. John presented material pertaining to one of these horse groupings (Zech 1:8) and omitted materials (from Zech 6:3) that are harmonized in *Tg. Neb.*

The differences between the presentation of the interpretation of the Greek translator, the author of Revelation, and the scribes of *Tg. Neb.* are closely related to the confines of the form of their compositions. The translations give a broader picture of a scribe's reading strategy as the textual data from the harmonized section can actually be compared. By definition, John's extended allusion excludes certain lexical data from at least one of the harmonized texts. We cannot say for certain what was John's perspective on the horse described as ברדים אמצים (Zech 6:3) but only observe that in his conflation of Zechariah's horse visions this horse has been omitted. Nonetheless, despite the differences in engagement with Zechariah's visions, each of these ancient text producers demonstrates shared habits of reading.

The translators of the OG and *Tg. Neb.* and the author John responded to the textual and semantic difficulties of the proto-MT by conflating both of Zechariah's

horse visions. The internal conflation of these visions allowed them to be mutually interpretive and afforded each tradent the freedom to smooth the rutted texture and inconsistencies of the narrative. Each responded to the same textual cues present in Hebrew Zechariah (inconsistency in logically parallel visions, semantic ambiguities of horse colors), reworking their source text in a manner that explicated and harmonized these perceived issues. This reworking was undertaken within the bounds of their forms of transmission. Each of these tradents produced witnesses to the text of Zechariah's horse visions, but their presentation of material is deeply influenced by their exegetical encounters with a seemingly incoherent tradition. The differences in the versions are not simply the result of a series of *Schreibfehler* but derive from careful readings of the Hebrew text.

VI. Zechariah's Visions in Context: Angelic Mediators

There is a surprising level of consistency among the three ancient approaches to Zechariah found in its versions and in the Book of Revelation. Together the preceding evidence supports the idea that a particular reading of Zechariah's horse visions had developed by the late Second Temple period in which it was assumed that the two disparate visions were integrally related. But why were they conceptualized in this way?

A compelling answer may be that the interpretive moves common to these traditions arose due to the shared assumption that the text of Zechariah was, like other scriptural texts, "perfectly harmonious."[39] Interpreters in this period largely sought to understand the basic harmony of a text in the face of apparent discord and inconsistency. The compositional and translational strategies of the scribes of the OG, *Tg. Neb.*, and John cohere in this assumption. In this way, the similarities in the visions created an interpretive environment that privileged the correlation of the colored horses based on their textual overlap. While this explanation is valid, it is not entirely sufficient.

There appears also to be another motivation in play here beyond pure textual hermeneutics. The horse visions were correlated not only because they were textually linked but because ancient readers interpreted these figures as angelic mediators. In other words, the internal conflation of Zechariah's horse visions also reflects a broader tradition across the Hebrew Bible of coordinating Zechariah's horses with heavenly creatures.

The handling of Zechariah's horse visions in the OG and the Book of Revelation are preliminary witnesses to a tradition that finds its fullest expression in *Tg. Neb.* Beyond internal coordination of scenes in *Tg. Neb.*, Zechariah, the חיות ("creatures") of Ezekiel 1 and Zechariah's charioteers are coordinated in the Aramaic tradition.

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[39] James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambrdige, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997) 20. See also Samely, "Scripture's Implicature," 181-83.

This connection is predicated on the implied similarities of the texts in the proto-MT and moves in both directions.[40] The addition of the phrase די בבבל ("which is in Babylon") in *Tg. Neb.* Zech 1:8,[41] which describes the position of the glen in which the rider stands, locates the vision of Zechariah in Babylon. The recontextualization of the vision alludes to the setting of Ezekiel's vision (1:3; cf. 12:13). Likewise, in *Tg. Neb.* Ezek 1:14, the Aramaic text is expanded vis-à-vis the proto-MT in a way that connects the angelic creatures with Zechariah's horses.[42] The patrolling function of Zechariah's horses in 1:8-10 corresponds to the expanded description of the actions of Ezekiel's creatures, who "circle the world" (cf. Zech 1:10-11). Further, the translation of the Hebrew phrase "set my spirit at rest" (הניחו את־רוחי) in Zech 6:8 with the phrase "do my will" (עבידו ית רעותי) in Aramaic is similar to a segment of the wording of the expansion in *Tg. Neb.* Ezek 1:14: "to do the will of their master" (למעבד רעות רבונהון).

This external example suggests that the correlation of horse visions within ancient Zechariah traditions is a symptom of a broader conceptualization of the identity and function of divine agents in the Hebrew Bible. Conceptions of the role of angelic intermediaries as members of the divine council (cf. Ps 82:1; 1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 18:18; Isa 6:1-8), along with the tradition of angels as heavenly warriors (cf. Isa 13:3-4; 40:26; 45:12; Joel 4:9-11; Ps 103:20-21; Zech 14:5), influenced the transmission of Zechariah's visions.[43]

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[40] See Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "Zechariah's Spies and Ezekiel's Cherubim," in *Tradition in Transition* (ed. Boda and Floyd), 104-27. Tiemeyer also identifies a connection between Ezekiel 1, Zechariah's horses, *and* Job 1–2, arguing that there is evidence of subconscious inner-biblical literary borrowing on the part of Zechariah 1–8. In the same volume, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Targum Jonathan's Reading of Zechariah 3: A Gateway for the Palace," 271-90. See also Kelley Coblentz Bautch, "Putting Angels in Their Place: Developments in Second Temple Angelology," in *With Wisdom as a Robe: Qumran and Other Jewish Studies in Honour of Ida Fröhlich* (ed. Károly Dániel Dobos and Miklós Kőszeghy; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009) 174-88, here 176.

[41] A marginal note in Codex Reuchlinianus expands the expansion to בין צדיקי דבגלות בבל ("between the righteous ones who are in exile in Babylon"). *Targum Esther Sheni* 2:7 also quotes *Tg. Neb.* Zech 1:8 as the scribes of *Sheni* correlate Esther's Babylonian name (הדסה) with the scent of a myrtle tree (הדס). The scribes of *Sheni* suggest that it is Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah who are standing in the location identified in Zech 1:8. The quotation does not, however, address the identity of the heavenly riders. See further Beate Ego, *Targum Scheni zu Ester: Übersetzung, Kommentar und theologische Deutung* (TSAJ 54; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996) 219-23.

[42] See William A. Tooman, "The Hermeneutics of Scribal Rewriting in Targum Jonathan Ezekiel 1," *JAJ* 5 (2014) 393-414; and idem, "'To Do the Will of Their Master': Reenvisioning the *ḤAYYÔT* in Targum Jonathan of Ezekiel," in *"I Lifted My Eyes": Reading Dream and Vision Reports in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Elizabeth R. Hayes and Lena-Sophia Tiemeyer; LHBOTS 584; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014) 229-30.

[43] For a recent survey of these interlocking traditions, see Aleksander R. Michalak, *Angels as Warriors in Late Second Temple Jewish Literature* (WUNT 2/330; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012) 12-54. Zechariah 3 is also closely connected to traditions in Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7. See Karin Schöpflin, "Yhwh's Agents of Doom: The Punishing Function of Angels in Post-Exilic Writings of the Old

A further example, which is similar to the coordination of creatures in *Tg. Neb.* from the post–Second Temple period, is found in the *Testament of Adam*. In 4:6-7, the sixth order of heavenly powers is described as those who rule over kingdoms and determine the outcomes of military engagements. The text goes on:

> And this is shown (to be) so by the Assyrian king. For when he went up against Jerusalem, an angel descended and ravaged the camp of the wicked, and one hundred eighty-five thousand died in one moment. And also the blessed Zechariah saw the angel in the form of a man riding on a red horse standing among the trees of the tabernacle and following him white and red horses with lances in their hands. And Judah the Maccabee also saw the angel riding on a red horse all decked out with gold trappings.[44]

Although Ezekiel is not connected in this discourse (cf. *T. Adam* 1:5), Zechariah's first horse vision (Zech 1:8-11) is explicitly connected to other traditions of heavenly intervention. Sennacherib's defeat before Jerusalem (2 Kgs 19:35-37; 2 Chr 32:20-23; Isa 37:36-38) functions as the prototypical example of angelic warrior intervention in this text. Interestingly, a Tosefta *Targum of Ezekiel* explicitly connects the creatures of Ezekiel 1 with the destruction of the Assyrians in 2 Kgs 19:35.[45] The rehearsal of the Assyrian defeat in *T. Adam* is followed by a summary of Zech 1:8-11 with a small expansion (the adding of lances). This juxtaposition is striking, since the angelic riders in Zechariah do not explicitly do anything except "patrol" (התהלך) the earth. The section concludes with a reference to the angelophanies in 2 Maccabees (3:24-28; 5:1-5; 10:29-31), manifestations that keep gentiles from the temple, serve as good omens, and intervene on behalf of the Maccabees. The inaction of Zechariah's angelic warriors sets this text apart from the other traditions mentioned in *T. Adam*. The juxtaposition of similar traditions, however, supports the interpretations of the translators of the early versions and John: Zechariah's horses are angelic warriors representing and enacting the will of the divine council. The internal correlation of these visions highlights the consistency of the makeup of the divine council and its actions. The ancient coordination of horse visions internal to Zechariah preserves the early stages of a developing tradition of coordinating angelic figures in other scriptural works. The ways that John and the translators handle the internal issues with Zechariah 1 and 6 are antecedents to the more explicit interpretations of these figures as angels in the post–Second Temple period. The conceptual framework

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Testament," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings: Origins, Development and Reception* (ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, and Karin Schöpflin; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007) 125-38, here 133-35.

[44] Translation from S. E. Robinson, "Testament of Adam," in *OTP* 1:995. Cf. Michalak, *Angels as Warriors*, 59-62.

[45] Ms Gaster 1478. See Rimon Kasher, "Angelology and Supernal Worlds in the Aramaic Targums to the Prophets," *JSJ* 27 (1996) 168-91, here 173-74.

for this interpretation has its roots in the OG and the Book of Revelation but sees its fullest expression in *T. Adam* and the Aramaic tradition.

Even among varying forms of transmission and textual engagement, scribes who reworked Zechariah's horse visions used coreferentiality as a means of creating coherence. This coreferential reading is presented with varying levels of explicitness, but it is present within each direct reworking of these visions in Jewish and Christian antiquity. On a broader scale, the correlation of these equine visions with other episodes in the Hebrew Bible, including Ezekiel 1, the Sennacherib traditions, and Maccabean angelophanies, demonstrates that the quest for a coherent angelology extended well beyond Zechariah. The internal association of the horse visions is part of a more expansive approach to understanding the function of angelic beings depicted across the Hebrew Bible. The process of referential harmonization was one of numerous approaches available to ancient readers that allowed them to make sense of complex texts that they assumed were coherent. In this way, the text historical issues associated with Zechariah's visions are integrally linked with a broader complex of exegetical concerns in early Judaism. The various witnesses to these visions are the product of interpretive engagement in the process of transmission.