

not imagine that they stay there permanently. Rather, said R. Levi, [God creates] *new ones every morning; great is your faithfulness* [Lamentations 3:23]. What are they fashioned from? The river of fire [Daniel 7:10]. As soon as they are fashioned, they stretch out their hands, take fire from the river of fire, and wash their lips and tongue. Thereupon they begin the *Qedushshah*. They do not stop singing from sunrise to sunset; as it is written, *From the rising of the sun*, and so forth [to its setting, the Lord's name is glorified; Psalm 113:3]. They are thereupon hidden away [?], and others fashioned in their place.

[C2] There is one *merkabah* in it [that is, in *Sheme Shamayim*]. What is the name of the *merkabah*? [The *merkabah*] of *Susim*; as it is written, *I saw in the nighttime a man riding a red horse*, and so forth [... and following him were red, sorrel (?) and white horses (*susim*); Zechariah 1:8].

[D1] It is a journey of five hundred years from *Sheme Shamayim* to *Zebul*.

What is in *Zebul*? R. Levi quoted R. Hama b. ^cUqba, quoting R. Johanan: The prince dwells only in *Zebul*, and it is he who constitutes the fullness of *Zebul*. Thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads are in his presence, serving him. Daniel says of them: *While I was watching, thrones*, and so forth [were set up, and the ancient of days took his seat. His clothing was white as snow, the hair of his head like pure wool. His throne was flames of fire, its wheels blazing fire.] *A river of fire flowed [forth from before him. Thousands of thousands served him, and myriads of myriads stood before him; Daniel 7:9–10].*

[D2] What is his name? *Qimos* is his name. R. Isaac says: *Me^cattah* is his name. R. ^cAnayni b. Sasson says: *Bizebul* is his name. R. Tanhum the elder says: *'t^tyh* is his name. Eleazar of Nadwad says: Metatron, like the name of the Power. Those who make use of the name say: *slns* is his name, *qs bs bs qbs* is his name, by [?] the name of the creator of the world¹³.

[D3] What is the name of the *merkabah* of *Zebul*? *Ha-Lewiyyah* ["the Levites"] is its name¹⁴. David says of it: [Sing praises] to him who rides the heavens, the ancient heavens [Psalm 68:34].

[E1] It is a journey of five hundred years from *Zebul* to ^c*Arafel*. Its [^c*Arafel*'s] thickness is similarly a journey of five hundred years. In it is the canopy of Torah; as it is written, *Moses drew near the thick cloud [^c*Arafel*] where God was* [Exodus 20:18].

[E2] In it is the *merkabah* in which God descended to Mount Sinai. What is its name? *Merkabah* of *Melakhim* ["kings"]¹⁵. David says of it: *God's chariotry is two myriads*, and so forth [thousands of *shin an*; the Lord is among them, Sinai in holiness]. *God's chariotry is two myriads* [Psalm 68:18]¹⁶.

[F1] It is a journey of five hundred years from ^c*Arafel* to *She^haqim*. Its [*She^haqim*'s] thickness is similarly a journey of five hundred years. What is in it? Jerusalem rebuilt and restored; the sanctuary, temple, [tablets of] testimony [Exodus 25:16], ark, candelabrum, table [Exodus 25:23–30], and vessels; all the adornments of the temple; and the manna that the Israelites ate.

13 Scholem and Jacobs [598,250] translate *beslum*, "by the name," as if it were *keslum*, "like the name." The emendation seems a very plausible one. — I do not know how to vocalize *'t^tyh*, *slns*, and *qs bs bs qbs*. We will return to these weird names, and to the entire passage containing them, in chapter IX.

14 The reference is to a midrash on Psalm 68:18, attributed in several *Tan^huma* sources to R. Berechiah (and discussed above, in chapter IV, section 5), which claims that twenty-two thousand *merkabahs* descended with God to Sinai, "corresponding to the Levitic camp" (*ma^haneh lewiyyah*). In Appendix IV, I argue that the text of the *Visions* has become disarranged, and that the author originally invoked Psalm 68:18 (and not 68:34) to prove the existence of a *merkabah* named *ha-Lewiyyah*. (I also indicate a possible alternative vocalization of the name; which, however, does not essentially affect my argument.) This point is crucially important for us, in that it shows that the author of the *Visions* drew upon a synagogue midrashic tradition which used Psalm 68:18 as the link combining the Sinai revelation with Ezekiel's *merkabah*. We will later pursue its implications.

15 I discuss the meaning of this name in Appendix IV.

16 I do not know why the author repeats the opening words of the Biblical text.