From Son of Man to Son of Adam — the Prophet Ezekiel in Targum Jonathan

Abstract

The ubiquitous vocative expression בן־אדם (literally 'son of man') in the Book of Ezekiel seems to underscore the prophet's status as a mere mortal. In contrast to the other ancient versions, Targum Jonathan to the Prophets interprets the word אדם as a proper noun, and renders the phrase accordingly as בר אדם 'son of Adam'. This translation runs counter to the Targum's conventional practice of rendering בן־אדם with בר אנש(א). In the absence of a satisfactory grammatical explanation for the divergent rendering, this article examines the possibility that the Targumist's eschewal of בר אנשא was motivated by doctrinal concerns. On the strength of the findings it is argued that בר אדם was a clever and subtle alternative for בר אנשא because, depending on the context, the latter phrase could evoke associations with the Danielic Son of Man figure and the Son of Man Christology.

Keywords

One of the characteristics of the Book of Ezekiel is the frequent use of the designation בן־אדם for the prophet Ezekiel. More than ninety times God uses this appellation when he addresses the prophet,[1] and it seems to highlight Ezekiel's status as a mere mortal; he is a 'son of man', a human being.[2] The Septuagint, the Vulgate and the Peshitta indeed understood אדם in the generic sense and not as a proper noun, given their rendering of בן־אדם with υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, *fili hominis*, and ܒܪܢܫܐ, respectively. However, Targum Jonathan – the ancient Jewish Aramaic rendering of the Prophets – translated the phrase as בר אדם 'son of Adam'. Intriguingly, this equation runs counter to Targum Jonathan's conventional practice of translating Hebrew בן־אדם with בר אנש(א) 'son of man':[3]

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[1] The Lord addresses Ezekiel as בן־אדם in Ezek. 2.1, 3, 6, 8; 3.1, 3, 4, 10, 17, 25; 4.1, 16; 5.1; 6.2; 7.2; 8.5, 6, 8, 12, 15, 17; 11.2, 4, 15; 12.2, 3, 9, 18, 22, 27; 13.2, 17; 14.3, 13; 15.2; 16.2; 17.2; 20.3, 4, 27; 21.2, 7, 11, 14, 17, 19, 24, 33; 22.2, 18, 24; 23.2, 36; 24.2, 16, 25; 25.2; 26.2; 27.2; 28.2, 12, 21; 29.2, 18; 30.2, 21; 31.2; 32.2, 18; 33.2, 7, 10, 12, 24, 30; 34.2; 35.2; 36.1, 17; 37.3, 9, 11, 16; 38.2, 14; 39.1, 17; 40.4; 43.7, 10, 18; 44.5; 47.6.

[2] P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2nd edn, 2006) §129j; cf. D.I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997) vol. 1, pp. 30–31; D. Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* (SNTS, 107: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) pp. 57–60.

[3] In his search for attestations of the singular emphatic form בר אנשא in Middle Aramaic sources (200 BCE–200 CE) from Palestine, David Shepherd observes, amongst others, that Targum Jonathan does not normally employ the definite form בר אנשא to express '*a* (son of) man'. He mentions TgJon. Isa. 51.12 and the variant readings of TgJon. Isa. 56.2 as rare exceptions, but according to him בר אנשא is used in these verses to refer to a particular son of man, hence the use of the definite article; D. Shepherd, 'Re-solving the Son of Man "Problem" in

Isa. 51.12	ומבן־אדם	//	ומבר[4] אנשא[5]
Isa. 56.2	ובן־אדם	//	ובר[6] אנש[7]
Jer. 49.18	בן־אדם	//	בר אנש
Jer. 49.33	בן־אדם	//	בר אנש
Jer. 50.40	בן־אדם	//	בר אנש
Jer. 51.43	בן־אדם	//	בר אנש
(Mic. 5.6	לבני אדם	//	(לבר אנש[8]

Grammatical Explanation?

From a grammatical perspective, the following observation can be made: בן־אדם is used as a vocative expression throughout the Book of Ezekiel.[9] According to grammars of Biblical Hebrew, vocatives involving common nouns are usually accompanied by the definite article, as in 1 Sam. 17.55 הַמֶּלֶךְ 'O king!'.[10] However, the vocative בן־אדם lacks the definite article,[11] which might account for the Targum's rendering with בר אדם. Had the Hebrew text read

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Aramaic', in L.W. Hurtado and P.L. Owen (eds.), *'Who is this Son of Man?': The Latest Scholarship on a Puzzling Expression of the Historical Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 2011) pp. 50–60, esp. 55–57. In fact, בר אנשא also occurs in the Targumic rendering of Mic. 5.6, namely, in the two Rabbinic Bibles and the Antwerp Polyglot, where it carries the indefinite meaning 'a son of man'. In my opinion, the scarce evidence for the singular emphatic form בר אנשא in Targum Jonathan is not so much borne out of an aversion to or even rejection of this phrase – although in some instances this might indeed have been the case, see further below in my article –, but rather reflects the character of the Jewish Literary Aramaic (JLA) dialect of this corpus. JLA was a transitional dialect insofar that the determinate nouns started to lose their definite force. Yet, this was a gradual process that did not simultaneously affect all nouns. In his study of determination in Targum Samuel, Renaud Kuty examined the (in)determinate attestations of the noun אנש in the singular, and on the basis of his findings he classified it as a Type A noun. This type of noun maintains the classic distinction between the *status absolutus* and the *status emphaticus*, whereas Type B nouns also prefer the *status emphaticus* when they are semantically indeterminate; see R. Kuty, *Studies in the Syntax of Targum Jonathan to Samuel* (Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplements, 30, Leuven: Peeters, 2010) pp. 19–54, esp. 32; cf. Menachem Kaddari's similar notion of two different systems of determination in Targum Onqelos in his 'Studies in the Syntax of Targum Onqelos', *Tarbiz* 32 (1963), pp. 232–251, esp. 235–241 (in Hebrew). Of course, Kuty's study is restricted to Targum Samuel, but his observations may well be valid for the rest of Targum Jonathan. That would explain why we hardly encounter the emphatic phrase בר אנשא as an expression for 'a son of man'. Consequently, the few instances in Targum Jonathan whereby בר אנשא does seem to have an indefinite meaning do not have to be explained away because they attest to the fact that in JLA the determinate nouns gradually lose their definite meaning.

[4] ומבר] Ms. 7 (Montefiore Library) reads ומבן.

[5] אנשא] Codex Reuchlinianus reads אדם (below I will come back to this variant reading).

[6] ובר] Codex Reuchlinianus reads ובני.

[7] אנש] Ms. Or. 1474 (British Library) reads אנשא; the two Rabbinic Bibles and Codex Reuchlinianus read אינשא; the Antwerp Polyglot Bible reads אדם (below I will come back to the latter variant reading).

[8] אנש] The two Rabbinic Bibles read אינשא; the Antwerp Polyglot Bible reads אנשא.

[9] The phrase 'son of man' has also been employed in the vocative sense in Dan. 8.17 and 1 En. 60.10, perhaps under the influence of the usage in the Book of Ezekiel; cf. J.J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) p. 337.

[10] See W. Gesenius and E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (trans. A. Cowley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910) §126e; Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §137g; B.K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, MI: Eisenbrauns, 1990) §13.5.2c.

[11] As noted by Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §137g4b. Interestingly, the definite form of the phrase, i.e. בן־האדם, is wholly lacking in the Hebrew Bible. One of its earliest attestations is in 1QS 11.20, where the scribe has written the definite article ה above בן אדם. The Community Rule scroll – and the abovementioned scribal modification – can be accessed online: http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/community, accessed 3 August 2016.

בן־האדם – which would have underscored the generic sense of the phrase because proper nouns do not carry the definite article – the Targumist might have chosen to translate this vocative expression with בר אנשא.[12] Yet, given the absence of the definite article, the Targumist may have genuinely understood אדם as a proper noun, hence his rendering with בר אדם.[13]

As attractive as this explanation might seem at first, it is complicated by the fact that in a recent study, Cynthia Miller demonstrates that, actually, the definite article does not function as the grammatical marker of the vocative in Biblical Hebrew.[14] After her analysis of several hundreds of Biblical Hebrew vocatives, in both prose and poetry, Miller concludes that vocative expressions involving common nouns are far more likely to appear *without* the definite article. Consequently, she questions the long held premise that vocative expressions are inherently semantically definite. Miller does not explicitly discuss the vocative expression בן־אדם in the Book of Ezekiel, but she does refer to the vocative usage of בן־אדם in Dan. 8.17,[15] and in all likelihood, her explanation for its indefiniteness also applies to בן־אדם in Ezekiel. According to Miller, vocatives such as בן־אדם in Dan. 8.17 – and, for example, 2 Kgs. 2.23, Prov. 6.9, and Dan. 10.19 – are indefinite because the speaker employs them to underline the addressee's nature, characteristics or attributes. '[Dan. 8.17] is indefinite to highlight the speaker's characterisation of Daniel as human, rather than to specify his identity as human'.[16]

I examined vocative expressions in Targum Jonathan, and it appears that, irrespective of the use of the definite article in vocatives in the Hebrew *Vorlage*, Targum Jonathan has a predilection for the definite article:[17]

Vocatives in Prose	Masoretic Text	Targum Jonathan	Examples
definite article[18]	✗	✓	1 Kgs. 13.2; 1 Kgs. 22.28; 2 Kgs. 2.23; Ezek. 34.7
	✗	✗	Ezek. 2.1 etc. (see footnote 1)
	✓	✓	Judg. 3.19; Judg. 6.12; 1 Sam. 17.55, 58; 1 Sam. 20.30; 1 Sam. 24.9; 2 Sam. 13.4; 2 Sam. 14.4; 1 Kgs. 18.26; 2 Kgs. 6.26; 2 Kgs. 9.5; Ezek. 34.9; Ezek. 37.4, 9; Zech. 3.8
	✓	✗	2 Sam. 16.7

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[12] Cf. Targum Jonathan's rendering of the vocative, genitival expression בן־המלך with בר מלכא in 2 Sam. 13.4.

[13] The first few chapters of the Book of Genesis display some ambiguity with regards to the (in)determinate form of אדם and its meaning. Sometimes (ה)אדם is used as a reference to Adam, other times it has the generic meaning 'man, mankind'. However, from chapter 5 onward אדם, without the definite article, serves as a proper noun for Adam.

[14] C.L. Miller, 'Definiteness and the Vocative in Biblical Hebrew', *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 36.1 (2010), pp. 43–64.

[15] Cf. footnote 9.

[16] Miller, 'Definiteness and the Vocative', p. 54, esp. n. 19.

[17] Gustaf Dalman made the same observation: 'Für den Vokativ dient die det. Form […]'; G.H. Dalman, *Grammatik des Jüdisch-Palästinischen Aramäisch* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 2nd edn, 1905) §38. Incidentally, the Tosefta-Targums to the Prophets also prefer the definite form to express the vocative; see, for example, רשיעא 'O wicked man!' and שטיא 'O fool!' in a Tosefta Targum to Ezek. 1.1, see A. Damsma, *The Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel* (SAIS, 13; Leiden: Brill, 2012) p. 15, lines 79 and 84 respectively; and דחלא דיי׳ 'O God-fearer' in the Tosefta Targum to 2 Kgs. 4.1, which is published in R. Kasher, *Targumic Toseftot to the Prophets* (Sources for the Study of Jewish Culture, 2, Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1996) p. 140, line 6 (in Hebrew).

[18] The absence of the definite article in a vocative is indicated with the symbol ✗, and its presence with ✓.

Vocatives in Poetry	Masoretic Text	Targum Jonathan	Examples
definite article[18]	✗	✓	Judg. 5.3; Isa. 1.2; Isa. 44.23; Joel 1.5; Mic. 1.2
	✗	✗	Isa. 22.17; Isa. 26.19; Isa. 49.1
	✓	✓	Isa. 21.5; Isa. 42.18; Isa. 66.5; Joel 1.2
	✓	✗	—

From a grammatical perspective it thus seems rather puzzling why the Targumist did not chose to translate the vocative expression בן־אדם with בר אנשא. However, rather than seeking a grammatical explanation, we may have to follow in the footsteps of Samson Levey, who argued that doctrinal concerns lie at the heart of Targum Jonathan's translational strategy. Below I will carefully examine both the validity and the shortcomings of Levey's argumentation.

Samson Levey's Studies

In several key studies Levey explained why the Targumist may have resorted to the puzzling idiom 'son of Adam' instead of 'son of man'.[19] Firstly, the rendering with בר אנש(א) could have evoked associations with the enigmatic 'son of man' (בר אנש) in Dan. 7.13, the humanlike figure coming with the clouds. Alternatively, Levey argued, the Targumist may have been influenced by post-biblical lore on Adam, which portrays him as a prophet and a mystic. The designation 'son of Adam' would thus make perfect sense, because – just like Adam – Ezekiel is bestowed with the gift of prophecy and allowed to catch a glimpse of the Merkabah, the celestial throne-chariot.[20] Finally, Levey suggested that the Targumic depiction of Ezekiel as the 'son of Adam' reflects an indirect polemical stance against Pauline theology, in which Jesus is presented as the eschatological Adam.

Adam in Targum Jonathan to Ezekiel 1.26

In order to examine Levey's line of reasoning it is necessary to make a detour and start with the Targumic rendering of Ezek. 1.26. According to the Hebrew *Vorlage*, Ezekiel sees the Lord seated as a humanlike figure on the sublime throne, which is made of lapis lazuli:[21]

Masoretic Text

וממעל לרקיע אשר על־ראשם כמראה אבן־ספיר דמות כסא ועל דמות הכסא דמות כמראה אדם עליו מלמעלה:

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[19] S.H. Levey, 'The Targum to Ezekiel', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 46 (1975), pp. 139–158, esp. 145–150; S.H. Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel* (The Aramaic Bible, 13, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987) pp. 6–9.
[20] This suggestion has been adopted by R.P. Gordon, *Studies in the Targum to the Twelve Prophets* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, 51, Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1994) p. 19; H.M. Patmore, *Adam, Satan and the King of Tyre: The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11-19 in Late Antiquity* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series, 2; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2012) p. 103.
[21] The textual basis for the Hebrew verse is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and for its Aramaic rendering, see Alexander Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, repr. edn., 2004).

And above the expanse that was over their head was the form of a throne, like the appearance of lapis lazuli stone. And above the form of the throne was a form like the appearance of a human being over it from above.

Targum Ezekiel

ומעלוי רקיעא דעל רישיהון כחיזו אבן טבא דמות כורסיא ועל דמות כורסיא דמות "כמראה אדם" עלוהי מלעילא:

And above the expanse that was over their heads was the form of a throne, like the appearance of *a precious stone*. And above the form of the throne was a form like the appearance of a human being over it from above.

Targum Ezekiel is in accord with the rest of Targum Jonathan as to the ambiguous treatment of anthropomorphism: the Targum tends to recoil from anthropomorphic imagery, with few exceptions to the rule.[22] In the Targumic rendering of this verse the anthropomorphic depiction of God has been circumvented as well, because most manuscripts have the Hebrew phrase כמראה אדם written into the Aramaic text.[23] The medieval Jewish commentator Kimḥi observes in his commentary on Ezek. 1.26 that the phrase is left untranslated in Targum Jonathan.[24] We may infer from these manuscripts that even though the synagogal recitation and translation of Ezek. 1 – the esoteric Merkabah chapter – was no longer prohibited,[25] the anthropomorphic phrase in verse 26 was veiled in the public rendering.[26] Other manuscripts and printed editions display a remarkable variance: Codex Reuchlinianus (1105/6) and the two Rabbinic Bibles (1515/17 and 1524/25) record a literal rendering – כחיזו אנשא –, and the Antwerp Polyglot Bible (1569/73) reads כמחזי אדם. These translations may be the work of later tradents who, living at a time when Targum Jonathan had lost its function in the public worship, did not consider the mentioning of God's humanlike form doctrinally dangerous.[27]

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[22] For instance, the mentioning of God's hand (and arm) is retained in TgJon. Ezek. 20.33–34, in contrast to TgJon. Ezek. 1.3; 3.14, 22; 6.14; 8.1; 14.9; 25.7; 33.22; 37.1; 39.21; 40.1. Cf. D.J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot* (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum, 16, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988) pp. 120–121; Levey, *Targum of Ezekiel*, p. 14. On the corporeal representation of God in the Targumim and a discussion of Michael Klein's key studies on this topic, see Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel*, pp. 40–43.

[23] It may be worth noting that אדם is set between slants in Ms. Or. 1473 in Ribera's text edition: כמראה /אדם/. The use of these marks indicates that אדם was added in the margin or above the line; J. Ribera Florit, *Targum Jonatán de los profetas posteriores en tradición babilónica: Ezequiel* (Madrid: Instituto de Filología del CSIC, Departamento de Filología Bíblica y de Oriente Antiguo, 1997) p. 45.

[24] Kimḥi literally writes: 'דמות כמראה אדם לא תרגמו יונתן'.

[25] On the synagogal function of Ezek. 1 and its Targumic rendering, see Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel*, pp. 7–66; cf. Damsma, 'An Analysis of the Dialect and Early Jewish Mystical Lore in a Targumic Tosefta to Ezekiel 1.1 (Ms Gaster 1478)', *Aramaic Studies* 6.1 (2008), pp. 17–58. For an extensive, recent study of the 'lists of forbidden Targumim', see W.F. Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) pp. 201–218.

[26] Cf. Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation*, pp. 206 n. 121, 217.

[27] Churgin mentions this verse in his treatise on later interpolation in Targum Jonathan; P. Churgin, *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, repr. edn., 1983) pp. 138–139. Cf. Smelik's explanation of the divergent versions of TgJon. Judg. 10.16, where we find an anthropopathism; Smelik, *Targum of Judges*, p. 538f. The final clause in TgJon. Judg. 10.16, which speaks of God's negative emotion, is left in Hebrew: ותקצר נפשו בעמל ישראל 'and he grew impatient over Israel's misery'. Western manuscripts do provide a translation: ועקת נפשיה במעמל ישראל 'and he was distressed over Israel's misery'. Codex Reuchlinianus goes one step further in its rendering by giving a positive, yet still anthropomorphic twist to it: ואיתגלגלו רחמוהי בצערא דישראל 'and his love was moved over Israel's grief'. According to Smelik, the *haftarah* reading of Judg. 11 may once have included Judg. 10.16, which explains why the verse's final clause could not be recited publicly in translation. Consequently, the translations found in the Western tradition stem from a period when the verse no longer served in a synagogal context: 'Had the translation in K [Codex Reuchlinianus] been original, there appears to be no reason for subsequent tradents to alter the translation. On the other hand, the

Now that we have taken note of the variance in the Targumic manuscripts and printed editions which preserve TgJon. Ezek. 1.26, it is necessary to modify Levey's contention – adopted by others – that the versions which maintain אדם – such as the Antwerp Polyglot Bible and Sperber's base text (Ms. Or. 2211) – read Adam as a proper noun in Aramaic.[28] On the strength of these versions, he consequently translates this phrase as 'the appearance of Adam', in which he sees a warrant for his theory on the purpose of the distinctive designation בר אדם in Targum Ezekiel. In contrast, these versions far from validate his claim. As said above, most Targumic manuscripts, including Ms. Or. 2211, present כמראה אדם only in Hebrew, where אדם is used in the generic sense. In addition, the rendering of the phrase in the Antwerp Polyglot Bible with כמחזי אדם is puzzling in that it remains unclear whether this edition left אדם untranslated or interpreted it as a proper noun. Even if the latter possibility is the most plausible, we have to bear in mind that we may be dealing with a later interpolation that does not tell us anything about the purpose of the designation בר אדם, which, by contrast, seems to be genuine in Targum Ezekiel.

Messianic Interpretation of Danielic Son of Man

The extant manuscripts – Babylonian, Yemenite, and Western – are highly consistent as to the rendering of Hebrew בן־אדם with בר אדם in Targum Ezekiel,[29] and בר אדם is also preserved in a Tosefta-Targum to Ezek. 37.1–14.[30] As Kimḥi already observed, this rendering runs counter to Targum Jonathan's translational strategy, in which Hebrew בן־אדם is equated with בר אנש(א).[31] Levey first suggests that the Targumist wanted to avoid the association of Ezekiel with the apocalyptic 'son of man' (בר אנש) in Dan. 7.13,[32] the exalted, humanlike figure coming with the clouds, who featured prominently in eschatological imagery in the late Second Temple period, judging from works such as the *Similitudes of Enoch* and *4 Ezra*.[33] Regrettably, Levey does not elaborate on his conjecture, whose plausibility can be further proved. Important in this respect is the messianic interpretation of Dan. 7.13, which circulated in Jewish exegetical traditions from the late Second Temple period onward. The Danielic Son of Man is identified as the Messiah in Jewish apocalyptic thought, as attested in the *Similitudes of Enoch* and *4 Ezra*.[34] In addition, in several rabbinic passages the rabbis

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absence of a translation or a translation which was deemed unacceptable may well have inspired Targumists of a later generation to fill out the gap'; *Targum of Judges*, p. 540.

[28] Levey, *Targum of Ezekiel*, pp. 22 n. *i*, 23 n. 19; idem, 'The Targum to Ezekiel', pp. 155–156; cf. Marcus, 'Son of Man as Son of Adam', p. 50, n. 52; Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre*, p. 103.

[29] In all the verses mentioned in footnote 1, Targum Ezekiel has the translation בר אדם. Codex Reuchlinianus adds בר אדם in TgJon. Ezek. 8.9: ואמר לי בר אדם. This variant appears to be due to dittography; cf. ואמר לי בר אדם in the preceding verse.

[30] This Targumic Tosefta is preserved in the Pentateuch of Salonika, see Damsma, *Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel*, p. 144f.

[31] See Kimḥi's commentary on Ezek. 2.1; cf. footnote 40 below.

[32] Levey, 'Targum to Ezekiel', p. 147; idem, *Targum of Ezekiel*, p. 7.

[33] Adela Yarbro Collins offers a detailed overview of the debate on the development and transmission of the Danielic Son of Man imagery in eschatological writings, particularly in the synoptic Gospels and the Book of Revelation, in Collins, *Daniel*, pp. 90–105. The same work includes an excursus on the philological meaning of the phrase בר אנש in Dan. 7:13 and its traditional and modern interpretations; Collins, *Daniel*, pp. 304–310. Cf. J.J. Collins, 'The Son of Man in Ancient Judaism', in T. Holmén and S.E. Porter (eds.), *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2011) vol. 2, pp. 1545–1568.

[34] According to Collins, '[...] the two texts share some common assumptions about the interpretation of the "one like a son of man" in Daniel 7. Both assume that the figure in Daniel is an individual, not a collective symbol. Both identify him with the messiah, and describe his role in terms usually applied to the Davidic messiah, although they understand his role in different ways'; Collins, 'The Son of Man in Ancient Judaism', p. 1561. Cf.

quote Dan. 7.13 as a proof text whilst speculating on the coming of the Messiah, for instance in b.Sanh. 98a and Num.R. 13.14.[35] The existing messianic interpretation of the phrase בר אנש may thus have prompted the composer of Targum Ezekiel to resort to בר אדם instead. Unfortunately, Levey mentions the Targumic verses that do have the equivalent (א)בר אנש only in passing,[36] because a contextual comparison would have yielded an important observation: it explains why the phrase in these verses does not evoke any association with the Danielic Son of Man. With the exception of the Book of Ezekiel, in almost every instance where בן־אדם has been employed in the Hebrew Bible, the phrase is accompanied by a generic word for humanity, namely איש, אנוש or גבר.[37] Due to this synonymous parallelism, the Targumists could freely use the equation (א)בר (א)נש, its generic sense being evident from the context and precluding any association with the enigmatic figure in Dan. 7.13.[38] However,

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W.T. Horbury, 'The Messianic Associations of the "Son of Man"', in W.T. Horbury, *Messianism among Jews and Christians. Biblical and Historical Studies* (London: T&T Clark, 2003) pp. 125–155.

[35] Horbury, 'The Messianic Associations of the "Son of Man"', p. 141.

[36] Levey, 'Targum to Ezekiel', p. 146; Levey, *Targum of Ezekiel*, p. 7. For an extensive study on the use of the expression (א)בר אנש in the Targumim, see M. Casey, 'The Use of the Term (א)בר (א)נש in the Aramaic Translations of the Hebrew Bible', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 54 (1994), pp. 87–118; cf. J.A. Fitzmyer, 'The New Testament Title "Son of Man" Philologically Considered', in J.A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS, 25; Missoula, Scholars Press, 1979) pp. 143–160; Shepherd, 'Re-solving the Son of Man "Problem" in Aramaic', pp. 54–57.

[37] See Num. 23.19; Isa. 51.12; 56.2; Jer. 49.18, 33; 50.40; 51.43; Mic. 5.6; Ps. 8.5; 80.18; Job 16.21; 25.6; 35.8. In Ps. 146.3 בן־אדם is parallel to נדיבים 'princes, noble ones'.

[38] It is nevertheless interesting that the equation בר נש // בן-אדם in Tg. Ps. 80.18 is being employed in a messianic context, despite the phrase apparently having a strictly human reference, which is being underscored by the use of גבר in the first part of the verse:

תהי־ידך על־איש ימינך על־בן־אדם אמצת לך:	MT Ps. 80.18 (as per *BHS*)
Let Your hand be upon the man at Your right hand, upon the son of man whom you made strong for Yourself.	
תהי אידך על גבר דקיימתא ליה ביד ימינך על בר נש דחיילתא לך:	Tg. Ps. 80.18 (as per Lagarde's *Hagiographa Chaldaice*)
Let Your hand be upon the man whom *You established with* Your right hand, upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.	

When we look at the Targumic rendering of verse 16, the messianic exegesis becomes evident:

וכנה אשר־נטעה ימינך ועל־בן אמצתה לך:	MT Ps. 80.16
And the shoot which Your right hand planted, and upon the son whom You made strong for Yourself.	
ועוברא די נציבת ימינך ועל מלכא משיחא דחיילתא לך:	Tg. Ps. 80.16
And the shoot which Your right hand planted, and upon the *King Messiah* whom you made strong for Yourself.	

The second part of verse 16 in the Hebrew *Vorlage* mirrors the second part of verse 18, and according to the editors of *BHS* we may be dealing here with a case of dittography. Be that as it may, the Targumist has interpreted בן messianically, whereas the human references in verse 18 have been translated literally. The messianic interpretation of verse 16 is striking because it is the only instance in Targumic exegesis where בן has been associated with the Messiah. The concept of the son of God as the Messiah may have been a concern given the Christological similarity. Levey argues that the Targumist probably understood בן in the sense of 'branch' rather than 'son' given the use of כנה 'shoot' in the first part of the verse (he even renders בן in the MT as 'branch', leaving the preposition על untranslated); S.H. Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation. The Messianic Exegesis of the Targum* (MHUC, 2; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1974) pp. 119–120. To substantiate his claim, Levey notes that the Hebrew Bible often depicts the messianic figure in horticultural terms. Moreover, he refers to Gen. 49.22, where Joseph is depicted as בן פרת, rendered by him as 'a fruitful branch'. In my opinion, caution is to be called for because the meaning of בן פרת in Gen. 49.22 is uncertain (see under the verb פרה in *HALAT*). In contrast, the other ancient versions – the Septuagint, the Vulgate and the Peshitta – associated בן with בן־אדם in verse 18 as is clear from their rendering of בן with 'the son of man'. Nevertheless, the Targumic messianic exegesis of verse 16 remains noteworthy, especially being so close to

בן־אדם stands on its own in the Book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel is addressed by God as a בן־אדם, and although the Hebrew phrase seems to accentuate the prophet's status as a mere mortal, its rendering in Aramaic with בר אנש(א) could have created the opposite impression, highlighting the supernatural, messianic status of Ezekiel.[39] By employing בר אדם 'son of Adam, Adamite' instead, the composer sought to convey Ezekiel's humanity, an explanation that is supported by Kimḥi.[40] Contrastingly, Joseph Fitzmyer explains the use of בר אדם in Targum Ezekiel as a deliberate shift by the Targumist 'to avoid the ordinary בר אנש and to insure the solemnity of the phrase'.[41] Until we have attestations of the expression בר אדם outside Targum Jonathan, there is no proof to substantiate Fitzmyer's claim that בר אדם would have sounded more solemnly in the ears of the Targumist than בר אנש(א). As I indicated above, it rather seems that בר אדם was a subtle, clever alternative for בר אנש(א). Just like its Hebrew counterpart, the phrase seems to have emphasized Ezekiel's status as a mere mortal, putting the prophet's feet firmly and unceremoniously back on the ground after his vision of the celestial chariot.

Adamite-Temple-Merkabah Motif

Caution is in place regarding Levey's suggestion that the Targumist's use of the phrase בר אדם reflects a deeper, more esoteric link between Adam and Ezekiel:

> His [the Targumist's] *bar 'adam* may be his way of elevating Ezekiel to the most exalted level of prophecy, since Adam was regarded in some Rabbinic opinion as a prophet who foresaw all that was to happen in the entire course of human history, generation by generation, until the resurrection of the dead. It also may be a subtle ploy relating to the mystery of the Merkabah which is integral to Ezekiel's role in Rabbinic Mysticism.[42]

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verse 18 with its equation בר נש // בן־אדם. Cf. Horbury, 'The Messianic Associations of the "Son of Man"', p. 144. Contrast Casey, 'The Use of the Term בר (א)נש(א)', pp. 100–109.

[39] Maurice Casey briefly discusses the use of בר אדם in Targum Ezekiel; Casey, 'The Use of the Term בר (א)נש(א)', p. 103. He argues that the Targumist did not employ the conventional translational equivalent בר (א)נש for בן־אדם in Targum Ezekiel because he realized that the use of the term בן־אדם as an address to the prophet was at odds with its more common usage in the generic sense of 'man, mankind'. To stress the fact that בן־אדם in the Book of Ezekiel refers to a particular individual rather than to people in general, the Targumist resorted to בר אדם instead. In my view, Targum Jonathan does not shy away from using בר אנש as a reference to a particular man. As I have set out to demonstrate in footnote 3, the emphatic form בר אנשא can be used in both semantically determinate and indeterminate contexts, due to the transitional character of Targum Jonathan's JLA dialect. Although the noun אנש shows a marked preference for the classic system of determination, we have seen that the emphatic expression בר אנשא can refer to man in general as well as a particular man. As long as the phrase בן־אדם was accompanied by a synonym, such as איש, אנוש or גבר, the Targumist did not seem to have had any qualms about employing the translational equivalent בר אנש(א).

[40] Kimḥi notes the following in his commentary on Ezek. 2.1:

פירשו המפרשים כי לפיכך קראו בן אדם כדי שלא יתגאה ויחשוב עצמו כאחד המלאכים לפי שראה המראה הגדולה הזאת והנכון בעיני לפי שראה פני אדם במרכבה הודיעו כי ישר וטוב הוא בעיניו והוא בן אדם לא בן אריה ולא בן שור ולא בן נשר על הדרך שפירשנו לפיכך תרגם יונתן בר אדם לא בר אנשא ואע״פ שתרגם פני אדם אפי אנשא לענין הדמיון אמר זה.

'The commentators have explained accordingly that he [God] called him בן אדם so that he would not become haughty and think of himself as one of the angels because he had seen this great vision. In my eyes it seems correct that, because he saw the face of a man in the Merkabah, he [God] made known to him that he is upright and good in his eyes and that he is a son of man, not the son of a lion, nor the son of an ox, nor the son of an eagle in the manner in which we have explained. Accordingly, Jonathan renders בר אדם not with בר אנשא, although he renders פני אדם with אפי אנשא with regards to the resemblance (Ezek. 1.10)'.

[41] Fitzmyer, 'The New Testament Title "Son of Man" Philologically Considered', p. 152.

[42] Levey, *Targum of Ezekiel*, p. 7; cf. idem, 'Targum to Ezekiel', p. 147.

In this view, Ezekiel's association with Adam stems from the latter, too, being a prophet and a mystic. To prove his theory on Ezekiel being the spiritual descendant of Adam in Targum Ezekiel, Levey utilizes not only rabbinic sources, but also a legend preserved in the *Vita Adae et Evae*,[43] which relates Adam's vision of the Merkabah.[44] According to Levey, the Targumist may have drawn his exegesis from this source, not at least because the *Vita*'s eschatological outlook is devoid of messianic references, just like the non-messianic theology of Targum Ezekiel. However, Levey's argumentation may prove to be too speculative. Concerning the rabbinic lore, Adam is indeed bestowed with the gift of prophecy,[45] but he is never *directly* linked to the Temple and the Merkabah. Only by inference is Levey able to associate the pre-existent Adam with the primordial temple and the Merkabah.[46] Hence only the *Vita Adae et Evae* remains as undisputed evidence for the Adamite-Temple-Merkabah motif, but its date and origin are subject to a debate which is complicated by the existence of different versions in various languages.[47] Moreover, as has been demonstrated elsewhere, the doctrine of the Messiah is not absent in Targum Ezekiel; the latter's messianic exegesis is in accord with the rest of Targum Jonathan.[48] So any comparison between the *Vita Adae et Evae* and Targum Ezekiel falls short in this respect. Furthermore, בר אדם being perhaps 'a subtle ploy' to link two figures in Jewish mystical speculation may be a bit too subtle, especially because the designation בן־אדם and its Targumic equivalent are wholly lacking in the primary Merkabah chapters (Ezekiel 1 and 10).

Polemic against Christianity

According to Levey's final suggestion, the Targumic rendering with בר אדם reflects a polemical stance against Pauline theology, in which Jesus is presented as the eschatological Adam.[49] We find the scriptural reference for this imagery in 1 Cor. 15.45, where Jesus is described as the last Adam, 'the life-giving spirit' (cf. Rom. 5.12–19; 1 Cor. 15.47). Levey argues that Targum Ezekiel counters this Pauline concept by portraying the prophet as the unique Adamite, who personifies goodness and whose life-giving spirit raises not just one man from the dead, but a whole multitude of people (cf. Ezekiel 37). The use of בר אדם in Targum Ezekiel may indeed have been driven by polemical concerns. However, rather than being directed against Pauline theology – as Levey suggested –, the Targumic rendering may have been triggered by the Son of Man expression in the synoptic Gospels.

Albeit in a veiled manner, the Talmud Yerushalmi seems to refer to and criticize the Christian appropriation of the Son of Man expression. In y.Taan. 65b the following dictum is attributed to the late third/early fourth century Palestinian rabbi Abbahu:[50]

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[43] The Greek version is known as the *Apocalypse of Moses*.

[44] See Halperin's detailed analysis of Adam's vision; *Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 96–103.

[45] See b.'Abod. Zar. 5a; b.Sanh. 38b; and Midr. Ps. 139.6.

[46] Levey refers to b.Ned. 39b; b.Pes. 54a; and Gen. R. 8.1; *Targum of Ezekiel*, p. 8; Levey, 'Targum to Ezekiel', pp. 148–149.

[47] For an overview of this scholarly discussion and further bibliography, see Marcus, 'Son of Man as Son of Adam', p. 53, n. 64.

[48] A. Damsma, 'The Merkabah as a Substitute for Messianism in Targum Ezekiel?', *Vetus Testamentum* 62 (2012), pp. 515–533.

[49] Levey, 'Targum to Ezekiel', pp. 149–150; Levey, *Targum of Ezekiel*, p. 9.

[50] As per the Vilna edition of the Talmud Yerushalmi in the Bar Ilan Responsa Project. I am very grateful to David Shepherd for calling my attention to this passage; Shepherd, 'Re-solving the Son of Man "Problem" in Aramaic', p. 60.

אמר רבי אבהו אם יאמר לך אדם אל אני מכזב הוא בן אדם אני סופו לתהות בו שאני עולה לשמים ההוא אמר ולֹא יקימנה

> Rabbi Abbahu said: 'If a man says to you, "I am God", he is lying; [if he says] "I am (the) Son of Man", he will regret it; [if he says] "I will go up to heaven", he says so, but will not do it.'

According to Peter Schäfer, the saying very likely reflects an anti-Christian exegesis of Balaam's oracle in Num. 23.18–24, specifically verse 19: '[…] R. Abbahu uses a complex midrash tradition in order to apply it to Jesus and his movement: Jesus is a common human being, not God, not the Son of Man, and he certainly did not ascend to heaven to return to his divine father'.[51] Schäfer substantiates his claim by referring to the fact that Rabbi Abbahu lived in Caesarea, the heartland of Palestinian Christianity.[52] Very important for our present study is John Collins' observation that Jewish authors would have avoided the Son of Man imagery 'after the Christian identification of Jesus as Son of Man became current'.[53] If that was indeed the case, then we have found another possible reason for Targum Ezekiel's rendering of בן-אדם with בר אדם: the Targumist wanted to avoid any association with the blasphemous Christological concept of Jesus as the Son of Man.

The ubiquitous synoptic phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου has been the subject of an intense debate.[54] The Greek expression, with two definite articles, is unattested in non-Christian, Hellenistic writings, but it would most probably have been understood as 'the son of the man'. This synoptic phrase is commonly held by scholars to be authentic to Jesus.[55] Lee McDonald, for instance, suggests that Jesus' self-designation as the Son of Man belongs to the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus on the grounds that i) Jesus uses it as a self-reference 81 times out of 85 instances; ii) the Son of Man expression is not typically employed for Jesus in the rest of the New Testament, nor in subsequent early Christian writings.[56] Although the Christological appropriation of the Son of Man expression may go back to the historical Jesus, the use of this designation seems to have only been short-lived. According to a study

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[51] P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) p. 109; see pp. 107–109 for Schäfer's full analysis of R. Abbahu's saying. In several studies Geza Vermes also argued that this dictum undoubtedly alludes to Jesus' claim of divine origin; see G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973) p. 258, n. 40; idem, *Jesus: Nativity-Passion-Resurrection* (London: Penguin, 2010) pp. 270–71. Contrast J. Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudische Überlieferung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978) pp. 76–82.

[52] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, p. 109.

[53] Collins, 'The Son of Man in Ancient Judaism', p. 1552. The Christian appropriation of the Son of Man expression may have affected the use of the Son of Man terminology and imagery in Jewish circles, but in his study on the *Parables of Enoch*, Charlesworth suggests that a similar development could have taken place in the opposite direction: '[...] some biblical experts argue that the *Parables of Enoch* is not quoted by the Fathers of the Church, and thus must be a late Christian document. They miss the point that many early Jewish works are not quoted by the Early Scholars of the Church. Most importantly, however, the *Parables of Enoch* would have been rejected by early Christians, since they believed Jesus, not Enoch, is the Son of Man'; J.H. Charlesworth, 'The Books of Enoch: *Status Quaestionis*', preface in D.L. Block and J.H. Charlesworth (eds.), *Parables of Enoch – A Paradigm Shift* (Jewish and Christian Texts in Context and Related Studies Series; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013) pp. xiii–xvii, esp. xv.

[54] It falls outside the scope of the present study to provide a survey of scholarship on the Son of Man problem. The most extensive and thorough treatment of the Son of Man debate has been provided by M. Müller, *The Expression 'Son of Man' and the Development of Christology: A History of Interpretation* (London: Equinox Publishing, 2008).

[55] Although New Testament scholarship is still divided over the question of whether all the synoptic Son of Man sayings were uttered by the historical Jesus. On the question of authenticity, see Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate*, pp. 43–56; cf. Collins, *Daniel*, p. 96ff.; Collins, 'The Son of Man in Ancient Judaism', p. 1565ff.

[56] L.M. McDonald, 'The *Parables of Enoch* in Early Christianity', in Block and Charlesworth (eds.), *Parables of Enoch – A Paradigm Shift*, pp. 329–363, esp. 347.

by Sabino Chialà, the expression fell in decline by the end of the first century.[57] Yet, he argues, despite its demise, the Son of Man terminology did not vanish completely in early Christianity. Interestingly, Chialà refers to y.Taan. 65b to prove his point: a few centuries after the expression had been in vogue amongst the early Christians, the Talmud Yerushalmi still agitated against it, which implies that some continued to refer to Jesus as the Son of Man.[58]

In his extensive survey of the history of research on the Son of Man problem, Mogens Müller mentions numerous thinkers – from the Reformation onward – who believed that the appellation בן־אדם in the Book of Ezekiel offers the best clue for understanding Jesus' self-designation as the Son of Man.[59] Interestingly, according to a strand in New Testament scholarship, the expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου 'the son of the man' in the Gospels should even be interpreted as 'the son of Adam'.[60] The advocates of this theory identify the particular man as Adam, whom the Septuagint refers to as ὁ ἄνθρωπος in its rendering of Genesis 1-2. Those who defend this interpretation follow an old track that goes all the way back to patristic and medieval exegesis.[61] They view the post-Biblical lore on Adam as the likely background for the synoptic expression, and they tend to refer to the use of בר אדם in Targum Ezekiel – amongst other sources – to further prove their point.[62] However, Joseph Fitzmyer criticized the Adamic interpretation of the Son of Man expression on the grounds that any reference to the Targumic attestation of בר אדם is irrelevant given the Targum's late date. Moreover, he argued, why resort to the enigmatic expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου if one could have used the unambiguous phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Ἀδάμ?[63] Although the origin of Targum Jonathan's composition – including Targum Ezekiel – may go back to the first century CE,[64] which makes Fitzmyer's first argument untenable, I agree with his latter point of criticism.

Joel Marcus, one of the strongest advocates of the Adamic theory, remarks the following about the translation of בן־אדם with בר אדם in Targum Ezekiel: '[…] no matter how late this Targum is, it at least reveals that some Aramaic speakers understood the biblical phrase "son of man" as a reference to the offspring of Adam'.[65] In my opinion, the rendering with בר אדם was not a straightforward choice for the Targumist, but was borne out of his concern over the phrase בר אנשא, which may have underlain the Greek expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in the Gospels. He opted for בר אדם as a subtle and original solution for a dilemma he was faced with, namely, whether or not to use the conventional translational equivalent בר אנשא and risk the association with the Christological appropriation of that term.[66]

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[57] S. Chialà, 'The Son of Man: The Evolution of an Expression', in G. Boccaccini et al. (eds.), *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) pp. 153–178.

[58] Chialà, 'The Son of Man: The Evolution of an Expression', p. 177, n. 20.

[59] Müller, *The Expression 'Son of Man' and the Development of Christology*, pp. 112, 222–224, 298–99 esp. nn. 101–103, 362, 382 n. 28, 388 n. 57; cf. Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate*, pp. 57–60.

[60] See, for instance, Marcus, 'Son of Man as Son of Adam', pp. 36–61, 370–386; cf. J.B. Cortés and F.M. Gatti, 'The Son of Man or The Son of Adam', *Biblica* 49 (1968), pp. 457–502.

[61] For an overview of thinkers who claim an Adamic background for the synoptic Son of Man figure and the expression itself, see Marcus, 'Son of Man as Son of Adam', p. 39, nn. 2–3.

[62] Cortés and Gatti, 'The Son of Man or The Son of Adam', pp. 483–484; Marcus, 'Son of Man as Son of Adam', p. 46.

[63] Fitzmyer, 'The New Testament Title "Son of Man" Philologically Considered', pp. 144–145.

[64] Below I will come back to the theory on the phasal composition of Targum Jonathan.

[65] Marcus, 'Son of Man as Son of Adam', p. 46.

[66] It is noteworthy that, at a later stage, Aramaic-speaking Christians rendered the synoptic expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου with the phrase ܒܪܗ ܕܐܢܫܐ, as evidenced by the Peshitta; cf. Fitzmyer, 'The New Testament Title "Son of Man"', p. 154.

I realize that the philological background of the Greek expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is a hotly debated issue[67] and that caution is in order with my assumption that this Greek idiom may be a translation – or perhaps mistranslation given the obscure grammatical construction – of the Aramaic term בר אנשא. However, nowadays it is commonly held that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is a Semitism, which is based on either Hebrew בן־אדם or Aramaic בר אנשא.[68] The latter phrase seems the more likely candidate because Jesus grew up and carried out his ministry in a predominantly Aramaic milieu.[69] Unfortunately, due to the absence of first-century Galilean Aramaic sources, it is impossible to unearth the exact Aramaic idiom that may have underlain the synoptic expression.

Assuming that בר אנשא was indeed the phrase that came from the lips of Jesus, we are now faced with another fiercely debated topic, namely, the interpretation of the expression. Some believe it to be a proper title ('the Son of Man'), whereas others favour non-titular interpretations, which range from it being a circumlocution for the first person singular pronoun ('I'), having a generic meaning ('man, mankind'), or it being used in the indefinite sense ('a man, someone').[70] In my view, depending on the context, the expression may have been employed in a titular and non-titular, particularly generic, sense. As demonstrated above, in the late Second Temple period the term seems to have crystallized into a quasi-title which was rooted in the messianic interpretation of the Danielic Son of Man.[71] Given his familiarity with the Scriptures and their exegetical traditions, Jesus may have been well aware of the titular usage of בר אנשא and its messianic association. Moreover, his followers may have sensed the term's messianic connotation, however vaguely. Intriguingly, the apparent ambiguity surrounding the meaning of בר אנשא may have been exactly the reason why Jesus adopted it.

The next question that needs to be tackled touches upon the date of Targum Ezekiel: could the Targumist have been aware of the Christian appropriation of the Son of Man expression? Levey dates the origin of Targum Ezekiel to the late first century, right after the cataclysm of 70 CE. He argues that Targum Ezekiel is a document that reflects the theological stance of R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai.[72] It is highly doubtful, however, whether already by the late first century the nascent Christian movement posed such a threat to Judaism that the Targumist felt the need to avoid בר אנשא in his rendering of the Book of Ezekiel.[73]

Whereas Levey dated Targum Ezekiel to the period immediately following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, it is nowadays commonly, although not unanimously, held in Targumic scholarship that the composition of Targum Jonathan – the corpus to which Targum Ezekiel belongs – was a work in progress that began in Palestine in the early tannaitic period and reached its completion in Babylonia in amoraic times, probably in the

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[67] For an overview of the discussion and further bibliography, see A.L. Lukaszewski, 'Issues concerning the Aramaic behind ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου: a critical review of scholarship', in L.W. Hurtado and P.L. Owen (eds.), *'Who Is this Son of Man?': The Latest Scholarship on a Puzzling Expression of the Historical Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 2011) pp. 1–27; cf. G. Vermes, 'The Son of Man Debate Revisited (1960–2012)', in D.L. Bock and J.H. Charlesworth (eds.), *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013) pp. 3–17.

[68] Collins, 'The Son of Man in Ancient Judaism', p. 1545; idem, *Daniel*, p. 93.

[69] Cf. Vermes, 'The Son of Man Debate Revisited (1960–2012)', p. 12.

[70] See Lukaszewski's discussion of the *status quaestionis* in his article 'Issues concerning the Aramaic behind ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου: a critical review of scholarship', pp. 1–13; cf. Vermes, 'The Son of Man Debate Revisited (1960–2012)', pp. 3–17.

[71] Cf. Collins, 'The Son of Man in Ancient Judaism', p. 1547.

[72] Levey, 'Targum to Ezekiel', pp.143–44; idem, *Targum of Ezekiel*, pp. 2–5.

[73] Cf. Willem Smelik's criticism of Levey's suggestion that the Targumic rendering with בר אדם reflects a polemical stance against Pauline theology; Smelik, *Targum of Judges*, p. 51, n. 296.

fourth and fifth centuries.[74] Given the phasal composition of Targum Jonathan in late antique Judaism, the Targumist may have been well aware of the Christological connotation of the term בר אנשא and therefore decided to render the vocative בן־אדם in Ezekiel with בר אדם.

R. Abbahu's saying in y.Taan. 65b is presumably the earliest textual evidence of Jewish awareness of the Christian appropriation of the Son of Man title. It seems, however, that the rabbis were much more acutely aware of the Son of Man Christology than this isolated instance in the Yerushalmi suggests. Peter Schäfer has demonstrated in his work *Jesus in the Talmud* that the scarce references to Jesus in the Talmud Yerushalmi and early midrashim do not indicate that the rabbis considered Christianity to be of marginal importance.[75] On the contrary, especially when the Christianization of the Roman Empire started, the rabbis must have felt threatened, yet the increasingly anti-Jewish political and religious climate prevented them from being overly vocal in their criticism of Jesus and Christianity.[76] Hence, Schäfer argues, there are hardly any polemical traces discernible in Palestinian sources such as the Talmud Yerushalmi. We can therefore assume that, despite the scarce textual evidence, there was an awareness of the Son of Man Christology in Jewish (learned) circles, as a result of which בן־אדם and בר אנשא had become doctrinally suggestive terms.

Conclusions

Given the absence of a satisfactory grammatical explanation for the divergent translational equivalent בר אדם, we followed in the footsteps of Samson Levey by examining the possibility that this translation was motivated by doctrinal concerns. We can conclude that the rendering with בר אדם in Targum Ezekiel appears to be a genuine translational strategy. The Targumist circumvented the phrase בר אנשא – with its interpretative ambiguity – because as a vocative expression, its generic meaning would not have been obvious, which could have posed a doctrinal threat. The sensitivity surrounding בר אנשא can be traced back to the titular usage of the term in Jewish exegetical circles and, subsequently, in the early Christian movement.

Levey made a valid observation when he suggested that the Targumist wanted to avoid any association with the Danielic Son of Man figure, who was identified as the Messiah in Jewish exegetical traditions from the late Second Temple period onwards. We managed to substantiate Levey's claim by examining the context within which בר אנש(א) was used in other Targumim. We discovered that outside Targum Ezekiel בר אנש(א) always appears with another generic word for humanity, and this synonymous parallelism underscores the term's non-titular meaning.

However, far less convincing is Levey's theory that the term בר אדם highlights Ezekiel's status as the spiritual descendant of Adam. Our analysis of the rabbinic sources

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[74] For a discussion of the two-phase theory of Targum Jonathan's formation and alternative views on the history of its composition, see P.V.M. Flesher and B. Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011) pp. 181–183; P.V.M. Flesher, 'The History of Aramaic in Judaism', in J. Neusner and A.J. Avery-Peck, et al. (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2nd ed., 2005) pp. 85–96. The two-fold presence of the term דבורא 'Dibbur' in Targum Ezekiel's translation of Ezek. 1.25 may offer an important clue for the Targum's dating. The term is not found elsewhere in either Targum Onqelos or Targum Jonathan, in contrast to the later Pentateuchal Targums. The term seems to have been introduced in rabbinic theology only in the Amoraic period, around 250 CE; cf. Flesher and Chilton, *The Targums*, p. 217; Smelik, *Targum of Judges*, p. 52.
[75] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, pp. 113–116.
[76] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, p. 116.

mentioned by Levey showed no traces of the Adamite-Temple-Merkabah motif, which makes his suggestion of a profound, esoteric link between Adam and Ezekiel too speculative.

Levey nevertheless pointed us in the right direction with his observation that בר אדם may have been borne out of a polemic against Christianity. However, he was looking at the wrong strand of Christian theology. Rather than being a polemical stance against the Pauline concept of Jesus as the eschatological Adam, בר אדם may have been used to avoid any association with the Son of Man Christology. In the time of Targum Jonathan's wording rivalry with Christianity was rife, and the Christian appropriation of the phrase בר אנשא may have triggered the Targumist's usage of בר אדם.

Finally, we have to allow for the possibility that the use of the designation בר אדם may not be restricted to Targum Ezekiel as we do find בר אדם instead of בר אנש as the equation for Hebrew בן־אדם in two variant readings outside Targum Ezekiel: in Targum Jonathan's rendering of Isaiah 51.12 in Codex Reuchlinianus, and Isaiah 56.2 in The Antwerp Polyglot Bible. More manuscripts need to be collated, though, in order to establish whether these variants are merely scribal errors or reflect a more widespread usage of בר אדם in Targum Jonathan.