

PART 3

*Abraham as an Eschatological Goat for YHWH
in the Apocalypse of Abraham*



Having explored the cultic features of Azazel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, it is now appropriate to proceed to an in-depth investigation of another crucial cluster of cultic traditions that gravitate around another main character in the story—the patriarch Abraham. Abraham, like the other characters in the narrative, is playing a crucial role in the atoning drama of this eschatological pseudepigraphon: he is depicted as the immolated goat in the eschatological Yom Kippur ritual.

Just as was the case in the cultic reinterpretations of the brotherly pairs that were previously interpreted, there is a captivating reformulation of Abraham's life and visionary experience that has been re-fashioned within the cultic and eschatological framework from which the Slavonic pseudepigraphon is working. In this sacerdotal perspective, which seems to touch upon all of the narrative's aspects, nearly every facet of the patriarch's life in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* has been endowed with a pronounced sacerdotal dimension. The text portrays him as an archetypal cultic servant to whom God reveals the very "idea of priesthood."

From the very beginning of the story, the hero of the faith is depicted as a sacerdotal celebrant in the idolatrous cult of his father, Terah. The activities and ordinances taking place in Terah's "house" are reminiscent of those that take place in the Jerusalem Temple, as other scholars have noted.³⁵⁶ As the story progresses and the polluted sanctuary is destroyed by the fire of God's wrath, Abraham is instructed about the service of the celestial sanctuary. The angel Yahoel, Abraham's heavenly pedagogue, relays the rites of celestial priestly praxis, which culminate in the service in the heavenly Holy of Holies. Just as with Abraham's service in his father's house, these cultic instructions also subtly allude to the rituals that took place in the Jerusalem Temple.

The priestly roles of the patriarch in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* have attracted scholarly attention. However, this has led to a level of neglect of his non-priestly cultic offices in the text. Just as other characters do not possess only one sacerdotal role in the Slavonic apocalypse, so also Abraham seems to take on multiple roles: he is both the high priest and also the offering to God. This kind of juxtaposition of several cultic tasks is, by no means, entirely novel in early Jewish and Christian lore. As we have already shown, in many

356 Thus, Alexander Kulik has noted that the description of the sacrificial service of Terah's family, which is found in the first chapter of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, "... precisely follows the order of the Second Temple daily morning *tamid* service as it is described in the Mishna: first, priests cast lots (*Yoma* 2, 1–4; *Tamid* 1, 1–2; cf. also Luke 1:9), then they sacrifice in front of the sanctuary (*Tamid* 1–5), finishing their service inside (*Tamid* 6)..." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 86.

of the sacerdotal reinterpretations of patriarchal stories, the heroes of these narratives assume multiple cultic functions. It has even been the case that other figures functioned simultaneously as the high priest and as the sacrificial offering. This conceptual constellation, for example, was found in the story of Joseph, where his garments were often reinterpreted as both the high priestly attire, as well as the vestments of the immolated goat. So also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Christian Messiah was explicitly depicted as the celestial high priest, but he could only enter into the Holy of Holies by his own blood, which was depicted as the heavenly counterpart to the earthly goat's blood. These conceptual currents found in the Epistle to the Hebrews are important and seem to mirror what we find in our text. Hebrews, then, is able to elucidate not only Abraham's priestly task, but is also able to shed light on his role as the heavenly, immolated goat. These are the two crucial cultic offices that the patriarch assumes in the Slavonic apocalypse.

Abraham as a Sacrificial Offering

Before attempting to prove that Abraham is being depicted as a very specific sacrificial referent—the immolated goat—in the Slavonic apocalypse, it will be beneficial to demonstrate that he is portrayed as a sacrifice more generally in our text. In this way, we can move from the general to the specific. There are certain details in the story that point to Abraham’s general sacrificial character. One of these hints is found in chapter 13, where his nemesis, Azazel, in pteromorphic form, informs the hero of faith about his surprising new sacerdotal role. *Apoc. Ab.* 13:1–5 reads:

And I did everything according to the angel’s command. And I gave to the angels who had come to us the divided parts of the animals. And the angel took the two birds. And I waited for [the time of] the evening offering. And an impure bird flew down on the carcasses, and I drove it away. And the impure bird spoke to me and said, “What are you doing, Abraham, on the holy heights, where no one eats or drinks, nor is there upon them food of men. But these will all be consumed by fire and they will burn you up. Leave the man who is with you and flee! Since if you ascend to the height, they will destroy you.”³⁵⁷

There is a panoply of cultic motifs present within this passage. At this point in the text, Abraham is in the middle of preparing sacrificial offerings for the deity. Having made his preparations, Abraham is just about ready to offer his sacrifices to the deity when another spiritual entity, the fallen “bird” of heaven, Azazel, descends upon his preparations. The fallen angel’s address to Abraham brings the narrative’s cultic thrust to a new level. It is from the fallen angel that Abraham learns about his new role, namely, that he is not just the sacrificer, but the sacrifice itself. At this point in the story, Abraham has only been ordered to offer animal sacrifices. However, now the demon informs him that he is predestined to be a sacrifice himself—an offering intended to be consumed by heavenly fire. There are two details in this passage related to Abraham’s sacrificial role that are worth noting. First, Abraham is not a typical sacrificial offering to the Lord. He is not the same kind of earthly offering as the animal carcasses lying in front of him. Rather, he is a celestial sacrifice.

357 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20.

This is intimated in the last line of the text above, where Azazel says, “since if you ascend to the height, they will destroy you!” The second important detail is that Abraham will be destroyed by fire. This is significant for the seer’s possible role as the immolated goat, because the goat’s body was also predestined to be destroyed by fire during the atoning ritual.

The Lot of God and Abraham

As was the case with the scapegoat ordinance, the ritual of the immolated goat was also initiated by lottery. This is how the goat for YHWH was chosen. We have already seen that the scapegoat's lot was eschatologically refashioned in our text, and became the left portion of humanity. The same is true of the lot of the immolated goat, which was also reformed by the authors of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* into a novel apocalyptic dimension. We first learn of Abraham's lot in *Apoc. Abr.* 10. Here, Yahoel, who is Abraham's celestial guide and instructor, informs Abraham about the special "portion" (Slav. часть) that has been prepared for him by the deity:

Stand up, Abraham, go boldly, be very joyful and rejoice! And I am with you, since an honorable portion (часть) has been prepared for you by the Eternal One.³⁵⁸

In the original Yom Kippur rite, the assignment of lots is first determined by the deity, and is only subsequently communicated by the high priest through his symbolic actions and words. The same order also occurs here, where God's decision concerning Abraham's honorable portion is communicated through the mouth of the heavenly priest, Yahoel. This choice is further affirmed in chapter 13, where the great angel again mentions the patriarch's portion. Here, Yahoel is communicating the choice of Abraham's lot to Azazel: "And he said to him, 'Reproach is on you, Azazel! Since Abraham's portion is in heaven, and yours is on earth. . . .'"³⁵⁹ Throughout the second portion of the apocalypse, there are numerous references to the lot of the patriarch, and, at the end of the narrative, the deity himself orders Abraham to be reunited with his lot.³⁶⁰

When we come to the abundant references of Abraham's lot in the Slavonic apocalypse, we find that Abraham's portion in these eschatological reinterpretations is consistently placed in binary opposition to the lot of Azazel. As we have already argued, Azazel is depicted as the go-away goat in the Slavonic apocalypse. It comes as no surprise, if Abraham is indeed the immolated goat,

358 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 18; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham. Introduction, texte slave, traduction et notes*, 60.

359 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20.

360 *Apoc. Ab.* 29:21: "See, Abraham, what you have seen, and <hear> what you have heard, and know <what you have known>. Go to your lot! And behold, I am with you forever." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 34.

that he is portrayed as Azazel's counter-offering. In this case, the required equality of both goats and even their likeness is paradoxically reaffirmed in the conceptual "twinship" of the lots.

There is another intriguing feature of Abraham's and Azazel's respective lots that connects them to the Yom Kippur rite. We have already noted that there is often significance given to the peculiar spatial arrangement of the lots on the left and the right sides in the Yom Kippur ordinance. We find the same left-right imagery at play with reference to Abraham's and Azazel's portions in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.

We first find this in *Apoc. Ab.* 22:4–5, which depicts the two eschatological lots in the following manner:

And he said to me, "These who are on the left side are a multitude of tribes who were before and who are destined to be after you: some for judgment and justice, and others for revenge and perdition at the end of the age. Those on the right side of the picture are the people set apart for me of the people [that are] with Azazel. These are the ones I have destined to be born of you and to be called my people."³⁶¹

This passage portrays two eschatological portions of humanity that are situated either on the left or right side. Those on the left side are associated with Azazel's portion and those on the right with the portion of Abraham and God. In *Apoc. Ab.* 27:1–2 and 29:11, the division of the two lots arranged on the left and right is repeated again:

And I looked and saw, and behold, the picture swayed, and a heathen people went out from its left side and they captured those who were on the right side: the men, women, and children. And some they slaughtered and others they held with them (*Apoc. Ab.* 27:1–2).³⁶²

And that you saw going out from the left side of the picture and those worshiping him, this [means that] many of the heathen will hope in him (*Apoc. Ab.* 29:11).³⁶³

A number of previous studies have attempted to establish conceptual correlations between the depictions of the left and right sides that are found in the

361 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26–27.

362 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 30.

363 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 33.

Apocalypse of Abraham with the imagery of the eschatological lots that is present in a number of Qumran texts.³⁶⁴ Yet, considerably less attention has been paid to the connections with rabbinic cultic traditions. However, the distinction between left and right is of paramount cultic significance in the mishnaic and talmudic descriptions³⁶⁵ of the selection of the goats on Yom Kippur.³⁶⁶

The left-right spatial arrangements that are found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* are reminiscent of the cultic correspondences reflected in the mishnaic treatise *Yoma*. Thus, *m. Yoma* 4:1 reads:

He shook the casket and took up the two lots. On one was written “For the Lord,” and on the other was written “For Azazel.” The prefect was on his right and the chief of his father’s house on his left. If the lot bearing the Name came up in his right hand the Prefect would say to him, “My lord High Priest, raise thy right hand”; and if it came up in his left hand the chief of the father’s house would say to him, “My lord High Priest, raise thy left hand.” He put them on the two he-goats and said “A sin-offering to the Lord.”³⁶⁷

364 Francis Schmidt observes that “at Qumran one finds the pre-eminent presence of the concept of *goral*.” F. Schmidt, “Gôral Versus Payîs: Casting Lots at Qumran and in the Rabbinic Tradition,” in: *Defining Identities: We, You, and the Other in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Fifth Meeting of the IOQS in Groningen* (eds. F. García Martínez and M. Popović; STDJ, 70; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 184.

365 Schmidt has noticed the sacerdotal angle of the term גורל in rabbinic materials. He notes that “the four attestations of *goral* in the Mishnah, all of which are located in the *Yoma* treatise,” thus make allusion to the “lots” (*goralot*) “for the Lord” and “for Azazel” that “the High Priest in Lev 16:8–10 draws from the urn to place on the two goats at the feast of Yom Kippur. Likewise, the 69 attestations of *goral* in the *Yoma* of the Palestinian Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud are located in a liturgical or exegetical context, and refer to Leviticus 16 and the casting of lots over the two goats at Yom Kippur. The same is found in other Talmudic treatises.” Schmidt, “Gôral Versus Payîs: Casting Lots at Qumran and in the Rabbinic Tradition,” 181.

366 Along with their emphasis in the mishnaic and talmudic materials, these topological arrangements of the lots on the left and right sides also take on a significant role in later Jewish mysticism. For example, Box noticed that the *Apocalypse of Abraham*’s distinction between the left and the right side is reminiscent of developments that are found in the *Book of Zohar*. He observes that “in the Jewish Kabbalah . . . ‘right side’ and ‘left side’ . . . become technical terms. In the emanistic system of the *Zohar*, the whole world is divided between ‘right’ and ‘left,’ where pure and impure powers respectively operate—on the right side the Holy One and His powers, on the left the serpent Samael and his powers. . . .” Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, xx.

367 Danby, *The Mishnah*, 166.

Although this passage from the Mishnah does not openly identify the right side with the divine lot, as does the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the Babylonian Talmud makes this connection explicit in *b. Yoma* 39a:

Our Rabbis taught: Throughout the forty years that Simeon the Righteous ministered, the lot ["For the Lord"] would always come up in the right hand; from that time on, it would come up now in the right hand, now in the left. And [during the same time] the crimson-colored strap would become white. From that time on it would at times become white, at others not.³⁶⁸

This imagery of the selection of the goats in rabbinic materials, in which the scapegoat is placed on the left and the goat for the Lord on the right, recalls the spatial arrangement of the lots in the Slavonic apocalypse, where the divine lot is similarly situated on the right side, and the lot of Azazel is placed on the left side. Abraham, when standing in opposition to the celestial scapegoat, Azazel, is consistently associated with the right side. And this seems to indicate that Abraham is reaffirmed as the immolated goat for YHWH.

368 Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Yoma* 39a. See also *y. Yoma* 6:3: "All the time that Simeon the Righteous was alive, the lot bearing the Divine Name would come up in the right hand. When Simeon the Righteous died, sometimes it would come up in the right hand, sometimes in the left." J. Neusner, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel. Volume 14. Yoma* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 175.

Yahoel's Right Hand

Other studies have noted that the interaction between Yahoel and Azazel is reminiscent of the interaction between the high priest and the scapegoat in the Yom Kippur rite. This cultic relationship between the great angel and the eschatological scapegoat is certainly significant, but there is another sacerdotal interaction within the story that has consistently escaped scholars' notice: Yahoel's handling of Abraham. Moreover, Yahoel's conduct appears to resemble the high priest's actions toward another cultic animal in the atoning rite: the goat for YHWH.

We have previously noted that the symbolism of the right and the left was highly significant in the ritual of the goats' selection on Yom Kippur and its reinterpretations. The left side was consistently associated with the scapegoat and the right side was typically associated with the immolated goat. Rabbinic descriptions and interpretations of the high priest's right and left hands reinforced this peculiar spatial correspondence. In the ritual of the goats' selection in *m. Yoma* 4, the imagery of the celebrant's hands plays an important role. This passage explicitly mentions the left and right hands of the celebrant:

He shook the casket and took up the two lots. On one was written "For the Lord," and on the other was written "For Azazel." The prefect was on his right and the chief of his father's house on his left. If the lot bearing the Name came up in his *right hand* the Prefect would say to him, "My lord High Priest, raise thy *right hand*"; and if it came up in his *left hand* the chief of the father's house would say to him, "My lord High Priest, raise thy *left hand*." He put them on the two he-goats and said "A sin-offering to the Lord."³⁶⁹

A similar description of the ritual is found in *b. Yoma* 39a, and the symbolism of the high priest's right and left hands is again laden with cultic significance:

Our Rabbis taught: Throughout the forty years that Simeon the Righteous ministered, the lot ["For the Lord"] would always come up in the *right hand*; from that time on, it would come up now in the *right hand*, now in the *left*. And [during the same time] the crimson-colored strap would

become white. From that time on it would at times become white, at others not.³⁷⁰

During the ritual selection of goats, the celebrant would place his left hand on the scapegoat and his right hand on the immolated goat. It may even be that the peculiar handling of the two goats with each respective hand is present not only during the ritual of the goats' selection, but also during other phases of the atoning ordinance. For example, according to *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, the high priest's manipulation in the Holy of Holies, which is accomplished with the blood of the immolated goat, must be executed with the high priest's right hand. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Lev. 16:18–19 reads:

And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat, mixed together, and put it on the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle some of the blood upon it seven times with the finger of his right hand.³⁷¹

The correspondence of the left and the right hands and their relationship to the respective goats is further affirmed in rabbinic descriptions of the transference ritual. In this ritual, both of the high priest's hands were placed on the scapegoat. Certain rabbinic sources specifically instruct that the priest's left hand should be the one that touches the scapegoat. In the depiction of the hand-laying ritual for the scapegoat found in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Lev. 16:21–22, it is explicitly stated that the priest's right hand should be placed on top of his left hand:

Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, in this fashion: his right hand upon his left. He shall confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their rebellions, whatever their sins; he shall put them on the head of the goat with a declared and explicit oath by the great and glorious Name. And he shall let (it) go, in charge of a man who has been designated previously, to go to the desert of Soq, that is Beth Haduri. The goat shall carry on himself all their sins to a desolate place; and the man shall let the goat go into the desert of Soq, and the goat shall go up on the mountains of Beth Haduri, and the blast of wind from before the Lord will thrust him down and he will die.³⁷²

370 Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud*. Yoma 39a.

371 McNamara et al., *Targum Neofiti 1, Leviticus*; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Leviticus*, 169.

372 McNamara et al., *Targum Neofiti 1, Leviticus*; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Leviticus*, 169.

Given the tradition of interpretation concerning the right and left hands of the high priestly figures in the texts we have explored, it is intriguing that, in the Slavonic apocalypse, the imagery of the heavenly high priest's right hand looms large. This is also true of the seer's right hand. Both the right hand of Yahoel and the right hand of Abraham are mentioned when they come into contact with one another. Thus, in *Apoc. Ab.* 10:4, a passage describing the initial encounter between the seer and his heavenly instructor, the following interaction occurs, emphasizing the symbolism of the right hand: "And the angel whom he sent to me in the likeness of a man came, and he took me by my right hand and stood me on my feet."³⁷³ The theme again appears in *Apoc. Ab.* 11:1, where the interaction between Yahoel and Abraham is once again executed through the right hand of the patriarch: "And I stood and saw him who had taken my right hand and set me on my feet."³⁷⁴ The heavenly high priest, represented by the great angel, repeatedly grasps not the left hand, but the right hand of the patriarch. This insistence on the right hand cannot be merely coincidental in light of the significance that the imagery of the right and left sides play during the division of God's allies and his enemies. Even more important for our study is the fact that the apocalypse depicts Yahoel's handling of the patriarch as occurring with his right hand. This portentous cultic interaction is found in *Apoc. Ab.* 15:2–3:

And the angel took me with his right hand and set me on the right wing of the pigeon and he himself sat on the left wing of the turtledove, since they both were neither slaughtered nor divided. And he carried me up to the edge of the fiery flame.³⁷⁵

This peculiar hand laying gesture occurs right before Abraham's entrance into the celestial Holy of Holies. This further strengthens the possibility that the patriarch is being portrayed as the immolated goat—the crucial sacrificial agent who was consistently handled in the Jewish atoning rite with the high priest's right hand.

373 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17.

374 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 18.

375 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22.

The Garment of Abraham

We have already shown that clothing metaphors often played an important role in the eschatological reinterpretations of the scapegoat imagery. Within this symbolism, the crimson band of the infamous animal was envisioned as his garment of sin. While the symbolism of the scapegoat's attire of sins received enormous attention from rabbinic and patristic authors, the imagery of the immolated goat's garments did not receive the same prominent treatment. There are, however, some rabbinic sources that indicate that the immolated goat was also endowed with its own piece of clothing—a band that was placed around his neck. For example, *m. Yoma* 4:2 notes that the ribbons were placed on both cultic animals during the ritual of the goats' selection:

He bound a thread of crimson wool on the head of the scapegoat and he turned it towards the way by which it was to be sent out; and on the he-goat that was to be slaughtered [he bound a thread] about its throat.³⁷⁶

The Jerusalem Talmud contains a similar tradition of a ribbon's placement onto the immolated goat. *Y. Yoma* 4:2 reads: "He tied a shiny strip on the head of the he-goat to be sent away and put it next to its departure gate, and on the one to be slaughtered around the place of its slaughter."³⁷⁷

These passages portray the high priest marking two chief cultic animals for the Yom Kippur ordinance, designating one as the goat for YHWH and the other as the goat for Azazel. This is done by placing the differing bands on them. The locations where the ribbons were tied onto the goats differed, and this appears to underline the disparate cultic function of each animal. In the scapegoat's case, on the one hand, the band was tied around the animal's head, marking the area where the transference of sins through hand laying would later take place. On the other hand, the thread is tied onto the immolated goat at the place of its future slaughtering, namely around the animal's neck.³⁷⁸

376 Danby, *The Mishnah*, 166.

377 Guggenheimer, *The Jerusalem Talmud. Tractates Pesahim and Yoma*, 494. Heinrich Guggenheimer comments on this passage, noting that the strip was put around the immolated goat's "neck, so it clearly would be distinguished from the he-goat chosen for the *musaph* sacrifice at the end of the service." Guggenheimer, *The Jerusalem Talmud. Tractates Pesahim and Yoma*, 494.

378 Stemberger, "Yom Kippur in Mishnah Yoma," 126. On this tradition see also Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke*, 118–119; J. Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonia. An American Translation. Yoma* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994) 5.2, 58.

Placing bands on both of the goats also further reaffirms their symmetry. This was a cultic requirement that is attested to in a variety of rabbinic and patristic materials, which all prescribe that the two animals must be alike.³⁷⁹

There is a long-lasting scholarly dispute as to whether the immolated goat was indeed wearing the ribbon, or whether the ribbon was only required of the scapegoat. These debates are as early as the rabbinic materials themselves. For example, *b. Yoma* 41b represents this heated discussion concerning the immolated goat's band:

They raised the question: And the he-goat that was to be slaughtered at the place of the slaughtering—does this refer to the tying [of the strap] or to the placing [of the animal]? Come and hear: For R. Joseph learned: He bound a crimson-coloured strap on the head of the he-goat which was to be sent away and placed it against the gate whence it was to be sent away; and the he-goat which was to be slaughtered at the place where it was to be slaughtered, lest they become mixed up one with the other, or with others. It will be quite right if you say it refers to the binding [of the strap], but If you say it refers to the placing [of the animal], granted that it would not be mixed up with its fellow [he-goat] because the one had a strap, whilst the other had none, but it could surely be mixed up with other he-goats? Hence we learn from here that It refers to the tying [of the strap]. This proves it. R. Isaac said: I have heard of two straps, one in connection with the [red] heifer, the other with the he-goat-to-be-sent-away, one requiring a definite size, the other not requiring it, but I do not know which [requires the size]. R. Joseph said: Let us see: The strap of the he-goat which required division, hence also required a definite size, whereas that of the heifer which does not need to be divided, does not require a definite size, either. Rami b. Hama demurred to this: That of the heifer also requires weight?—Raba said: The matter of this weight is disputed by Tannaim. But does the strap of the heifer not have to be divided? [Against this] Abaye raised the following objection: How does he do it? He wraps them together with the remnants of the strips [of scarlet wool]! Say: with the tail of the strip.

Modern scholars are likewise skeptical about a ribbon being placed on the immolated goat and whether or not it played a central role in the atoning ritual. But even if the ribbon was never tied around the neck of the immolated

379 *M. Yoma* 6:1 argues that the two goats have to be equal in appearance, height, and value. They also must be purchased at the same time. The descriptions of the goats in the *Epistle of Barnabas* and Justin Martyr also emphasize that the two goats must be alike.

goat during the actual ritual, the presence of such interpretive tradition is still important for our investigation of various Yom Kippur typologies and their afterlife in Jewish and Christian traditions. Whether or not the ribbon was actually present in the original ritual, the motif of the immolated goat's band, documented in a number of sources, played an important role in eschatological reinterpretations of the atoning ritual. In this respect, the themes of Azazel's and Abraham's garments that are attested in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* provide additional proof for the early existence of this interpretive trend that concerns the accoutrement of both goats of Yom Kippur.

Some early Christian testimonies also provide evidence for this interpretive tradition of the immolated goat's ribbon. As we have already demonstrated, some early Christian texts envisioned the ribbon as Christ's garment. One of the earliest instances of this tradition can be found in the Gospel of Matthew 27:27–31, which speaks about the scarlet robe (χλαμὺς κοκκίνη) of Jesus. This Matthean passage follows the Barabbas episode in which Jesus is depicted as the eschatological immolated goat, while Barabbas is portrayed as the scapegoat, as both ancient and modern interpreters have suggested. If Jesus is depicted as the immolated goat, which is indicated by a number of other details that we have already explored, it is possible that Jesus's scarlet robe in Matthew 27 might correspond not to the red ribbon of the go-away goat, but to the band belonging to the goat for YHWH.

Another important, this time rabbinic, piece of evidence that might be related to the immolated goat's ribbon is the tradition regarding the ribbon that is tied to the door of the Holy of Holies.³⁸⁰ *M. Yoma* 6:8 relates this tradition:

R. Ishmael says: Had they not another sign also?—a thread of crimson wool was tied to the door of the Sanctuary and when the he-goat reached the wilderness the thread turned white; for it is written, Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow.³⁸¹

B. Yoma 68b, in the name of R. Ishmael, transmits a similar tradition:

R. Ishmael said: But they had another sign too: A thread of crimson wool was tied to the door of the temple, and when the goat reached the

380 For further discussion see Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 131.

381 Danby, *The Mishnah*, 170. Stemberger notes that this passage is “not to be found in the best manuscripts Kaufmann and Parma.” Stemberger, “Yom Kippur in Mishnah Yoma,” 133. See also Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 131.

wilderness the thread turned white, as it is written: Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow.³⁸²

And *b. Yoma* 67a further elaborates the motif:

What did he do? He divided the thread of crimson wool: But let him tie the whole [thread] to the rock?—Since it is his duty [to complete his work with] the he-goat, perhaps the thread might become fast white, and he would be satisfied. But let him tie the whole thread between its horns?—At times its head [in falling] is bent and he would not pay attention. Our Rabbis taught: In the beginning they would tie the thread of crimson wool on the entrance of the Ulam without: if it became white they rejoiced; if it did not become white, they were sad and ashamed. Thereupon they arranged to tie it to the entrance of the Ulam within. But they were still peeping through and if it became white, they rejoiced, whereas, if it did not become white, they grew sad and ashamed. Thereupon they arranged to tie one half to the rock and the other half between its horns. R. Nahum b. Papa said in the name of R. Eleazar ha-Kappar: Originally they used to tie the thread of crimson wool to the entrance of the Ulam within, and as soon as the he-goat reached the wilderness, it turned white. Then they knew that the commandment concerning it had been fulfilled, as it is said: If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white wool.³⁸³

Similar traditions are also found in the Palestinian Talmud. Thus, *y. Yoma* 6:5 reads:

Originally they were tying it to their windows; some of them were turning white and some turning red; these were ashamed in front of the others. They changed and tied it to the door of the Sanctuary. Some years it was turning white, in others turning red. They changed and tied it to the rock.³⁸⁴

According to these passages, the crimson thread was tied to the door of the sanctuary, and would turn white as soon as the scapegoat had reached the wilderness. The band tied to the sanctuary's door is a perplexing motif. In some passages it is not entirely clear to whom this ribbon belongs: it may be the scapegoat's ribbon, or it may belong to the immolated goat. Scholars routinely

382 Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Yoma*, 68b.

383 Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Yoma*, 67a.

384 Guggenheimer, *The Jerusalem Talmud. Tractates Pesahim and Yoma*, 566.

assume that the band belongs to the scapegoat.³⁸⁵ But it seems more logical to suggest that this ribbon was taken from the slaughtered goat for YHWH, whose blood was brought into the Holy of Holies. If the band indeed belonged to the immolated goat, its binding to the door of the sanctuary would represent a symmetrical counterpart to the band of the scapegoat that was tied to the rock in the wilderness. In this case, both bands are situated near each goats' respective final destination. In this respect, it is intriguing that both Abraham and Azazel are stripped and then re-clothed in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* immediately before their entrances into their respective habitats that have been prepared for them because of their respective destinies. The fact that the immolated goat's band was stripped from the animal and tied to the door of the sanctuary then constitutes an intriguing parallel to the garments of Abraham, which are stripped from the patriarch before his entrance into the celestial Holy of Holies.

It is now appropriate to return to *Apoc. Ab. 12*, which portrays the heavenly high priest, Yahoel, standing between Abraham and Azazel and assigning special garments to the protagonist and the antagonist in the story. Azazel takes on the garment of Abraham's sins. The patriarch, in contrast, receives the former angelic garment of Azazel. In this way, the apocalypse exhibits parallelism between the attire of the protagonist and the antagonist. The accoutrement of each is interchangeable and can be suitable for either party. The exchange of garments between Abraham and Azazel again reaffirms the symmetry of the two goats, which were required to be similar in appearance and stature. This is why their eschatological garments can be used interchangeably.

385 Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 131.

The Antagonistic Movements of the Goats: Abraham's Entrance in the Celestial Holy of Holies

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Abraham's sacerdotal roles vis-à-vis Azazel's roles evoke themes and aspects of another influential dyad that was likewise connected to Yom Kippur symbolism: the antediluvian patriarch, Enoch, and the fallen angel, Asael—a binary opposition between the protagonist and the antagonist found in the Enochic tradition. In the case of Abraham and Enoch, the protagonists inversely mirror their respective negative counterparts, as both stories portray their characters exchanging attributes and roles with each other. Just as Enoch takes the celestial offices of Asael, and the fallen angel assumes some of Enoch's human roles, so also in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Azazel surrenders his angelic garment to Abraham. In this way, both parties accept certain duties of their counterparts as they enter into their opponents' realms.

What's more, in a manner similar to Enoch in the *Book of the Watchers*, in the Abrahamic pseudepigraphon, the hero progresses in the opposite direction of his negative counterpart. Abraham ascends into heaven, while his infamous fallen counterpart descends into the lower realms. In both texts, then, there are the mirroring themes of ascent and descent.

The apocalyptic drama of the Slavonic pseudepigraphon can thus be seen as a reenactment of the two spatial dynamics which are also reflected in the Yom Kippur ritual: there is both an entrance into the upper realm and an exile into the underworld. Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra has reflected extensively on the inverse nature of these two cultic progressions taking place during the Yom Kippur ritual.³⁸⁶

We should be reminded that the spatial dynamics that we previously explored affected not only the high priest and the scapegoat, but also the goat for YHWH whose blood was brought into the Holy of Holies in the Temple. In view of these symmetrical correspondences between Abraham and Azazel, it is possible that Abraham's progressive movement into the heavenly Holy of Holies can be interpreted not only as a priestly action, but also as possessing a sacrificial dimension. Since Azazel possesses the lot of the scapegoat, it naturally follows that Abraham would take the opposite lot associated with the sacrificial goat for YHWH.

386 Stökl Ben Ezra, "The Biblical Yom Kippur, the Jewish Fast of the Day of Atonement and the Church Fathers," 494.

The Slavonic text conceals many of the details of the patriarch's sacrificial role. The other variegated sacerdotal functions of the patriarch also contribute to this obfuscation of his sacrificial role. Some symbolic peculiarities of the text, however, assist us in clarifying these interpretive puzzles, and ascertaining Abraham's role as the sacrificial goat for YHWH.

From the biblical and rabbinic descriptions of the Yom Kippur ritual, we learn that the flesh of the goat³⁸⁷ for YHWH, on the one hand, was destroyed by fire during the ritual. On the other hand, the goat's blood, which, in Jewish tradition, symbolized the soul of the sacrificial animal,³⁸⁸ was brought into the Holy of Holies by the high priest and used for purification.³⁸⁹ In light of these traditions, it is reasonable to suggest that Yahoel's and Abraham's entrance into the heavenly throne room in chapter 18 can be understood as an allusion to the entrance of the high priest into the sanctuary on Yom Kippur. Moreover, the ascension of the angelic high priest with his apprentice's soul³⁹⁰ into the heavenly Holy of Holies might represent the counterpart to the entrance of the earthly high priest with the blood of the immolated goat into the adytum of the earthly temple, wherein the blood of the sacrificial animal symbolizes its soul—its *nefesh*.³⁹¹

The symbolism of *nefesh* is important for interpreting the Yom Kippur rite, and also for the re-appropriation of that rite, as we are suggesting in this study. William Gilders has correctly noted that, in Jewish cultic traditions, “blood is characterized as that which animates the flesh.”³⁹² He further argues that “in both Deuteronomy and Genesis 9:4, *nefesh* indicates the force of vitality, that which characterizes a body when it is alive. The vitality of the body is directly

387 Lev 16:27: “The bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be taken outside the camp; their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be consumed in fire.” (NRSV).

388 Lev 17:14: “For the life (נַפְשׁוֹ) of every creature—its blood (דַּמּוֹ) is its life; therefore I have said to the people of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.” (NRSV).

389 Milgrom notes that “the blood of the slain goat may have been brought into the adytum in its entirety.” Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1031.

390 The patriarch's “spiritual” feeding on the vision and speech of Yahoel during their shared journey to the celestial throne room may also indicate that the human seer travels to heaven not in a physical form, but rather in a spiritual form. His ascent through the song seems also affirm this possibility.

391 For the identification of blood with *nefesh*, a lower soul of a human being, see W.K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2004) 12–25.

392 Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, 17.

identified with the blood. In other words, blood is what keeps the body alive. As number of interpreters have noted, the identification of life with blood apparently was based on simple empirical observation that life ebbs with the loss of blood.³⁹³ That the blood was identified as the “soul” of the sacrificial animal in these contexts is reaffirmed by the alterations that this sacrifice exercises on the human soul. Scholars of the Jewish ritual have noted that there is a connection between the blood of the sacrificial animals and the changes to the soul of the human being who makes that offering. Regarding this, Guilders suggests that, “. . . when the life or ‘soul’ of the sacrificial animal was poured out with its flowing blood and sunk into death, it was just as if the soul of the person who brought it departed from him and likewise died away.”³⁹⁴

These connections between the soul of a creature and its blood point to the possibility that Abraham’s entrance into the celestial Holy of Holies in the company of the angelic heavenly priest was envisioned as the cosmic entrance of the sacerdotal servant with his accompanying purifying sacrifice.

393 Guilders, *Blood Ritual*, 18.

394 Guilders, *Blood Ritual*, 75.

Abraham's Fiery Trials

The present argument is that Abraham was likely envisioned as the immolated goat of Yom Kippur in the Slavonic *Apocalypse of Abraham*. This is corroborated by a number of symbolic features found in the text. One important motif that further supports this supposition is Abraham's testing by fire. This event is found in the second part of the Slavonic apocalypse. We have already noted that one significant aspect of the immolated goat ritual was the destruction of the sacrificial animal's body by fire.³⁹⁵ Lev 16:27 describes this ritual in the following way:

The bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be taken outside the camp; their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be consumed in fire. (NRSV).

A similar tradition concerning the destruction of the immolated goat by fire is found in the *Temple Scroll*. 11Q19 col. xxvi 3–9 reads:

[... The High] Pri[est will cast lots concerning the two] [he-goats:] o[ne] (will fall) by lot [to YHWH, the other to Azazel;] [and] they will slaughter the he-goat which [has fallen by lot to YHWH and the priest will receive] its blood in the golden sprinkling bowl which he has in [his] ha[nd and will tr]eat [its] bl[ood as he treated the blood of] the bullock which was for himself; and with it he will atone for all the people of the assembly. And its fat and the offering of its libation he will burn on the altar of burnt-offering; but its flesh, its hide and its entrails they shall burn next to his bullock.³⁹⁶

M. Yoma 6:7 also attests to the tradition of the fiery annihilation of the immolated goat:

395 Regarding this rite, Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra notes that “the carcasses of the bull and the sacrificial goat, whose blood was sprinkled in the holy of holies, are then burned by an adjutant at a special holy place outside the temple.” Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 32.

396 García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 1249.

[The High Priest] came to the bullock and the he-goat which were to be burnt. He cut them open and took away the sacrificial portions and put them on a dish and burnt them upon the Altar. He twisted [the limbs of the beasts] around carrying-poles, and brought them out to the place of burning. And from what time do they render garments unclean? After they have gone outside the wall of the Temple Court. R. Simeon says: When the fire has caught a hold on the greater part of them.³⁹⁷

This fiery ordeal of the goat for YHWH during the atoning rite is reinterpreted in the Slavonic apocalypse as the fiery trials of the patriarch. The presence of these fiery tests of Abraham looms large in the second part of the pseudepigraphon: the seer must pass through several flaming thresholds on his way to the celestial Holy of Holies. While these fiery trials—and the cultic significance they carry—are prominent in the second portion of the apocalypse, they are also hinted at in the initial chapters of the apocalyptic section of the book. For example, the first warning about Abraham's possible fiery annihilation comes from the mouth of Azazel. In *Apoc. Ab.* 13:4–5, Azazel warns the patriarch, who represents the “divine” lot, that he will be destroyed by fire along with the other sacrificial animals. It is important for our study of Abraham's cultic office that, here, the patriarch is openly compared with the sacrificial animals that will be consumed by fire.³⁹⁸ As we have already suggested, the last sentence of the demon's address attempts to connect his ascent with the fiery destruction that is to come. The motif of fiery trials during the seer's ascent is also later invoked repeatedly while the patriarch journeys into the upper realm.

Azazel's cryptic warning concerning Abraham's future consumption by fire remains one of the most profound puzzles in the text as a whole. While attempting to solve this puzzle, it is important to keep in mind that the motif of the seer's encounter with fire is significant for the authors of this pseudepigraphon, who often portray fire as a theophanic substance surrounding the very presence of the deity. Thus, later in the text, Abraham's transition into the divine realm is described as entering into fire. Could the promise of a celestial garment to the patriarch in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* signify here, as in many

397 Danby, *The Mishnah*, 170.

398 It appears that, in some other parts of the text, Abraham is similarly depicted as the sacrifice. For example, in *Apoc. Ab.* 17:20, which is a prayer that comes from the mouth of the patriarch, he is envisioned as an offering: “Accept my prayer, <and let it be sweet to you,> and also the sacrifice which you yourself made to yourself through me who searched for you.” Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 23.

other apocalyptic accounts, that his “mortal” body must be “altered” through fiery metamorphosis?³⁹⁹

It is important to note that Abraham’s fiery trials in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* are not a novel motif to this text, since the theme of fiery destruction overshadows the patriarch’s story in numerous⁴⁰⁰ Jewish accounts.⁴⁰¹ Many of these testimonies are permeated with the distinctive cultic themes pertinent for our study. This indicates that it is not only within the *Apocalypse of Abraham* that Abraham’s testing by fire is symbolic of his role as the immolated goat for YHWH, but that some other Jewish texts depict him likewise. One of the early, formative accounts, that develops the theme of Abraham’s fiery ordeals is a passage found in the sixth chapter of Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*. This text tells of Abraham’s refusal to participate in the building of the Tower of Babel:

Then all those who had been separated while inhabiting the earth afterwards gathered and dwelled together. Setting out from the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylon. They dwelled there and said to

399 In this respect, it should be noted that the entrance of a visionary into the fire and the fiery transformation that ensues are both common apocalyptic motifs found in texts ranging from Daniel 3 to 3 *Enoch*. In 3 *Enoch*, Enoch undergoes the fiery metamorphosis that turns him into the supreme angel, Metatron.

400 One of the early hints at Abraham’s fiery test may be contained in a passage from Judith 8. Judith 8:25–27 reads: “In spite of everything let us give thanks to the Lord our God, who is putting us to the test as he did our ancestors. Remember what he did with Abraham, and how he tested Isaac, and what happened to Jacob in Syrian Mesopotamia, while he was tending the sheep of Laban, his mother’s brother. For *he has not tried us with fire, as he did them*, to search their hearts, nor has he taken vengeance on us; but the Lord scourges those who are close to him in order to admonish them.” (NRSV).

401 It has been previously suggested that “the legend of Abraham in the furnace is based on the interpretation of the place-name Ur (Gen 15:7) as ‘fire.’” Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 51, n. 17. Geza Vermes observes that “by interpreting אור as ‘fire,’ ancient commentators of Genesis 15:7 (‘I am the Lord who brought you out of אור of the Chaldees’) created a legend out of a pun.” G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism. Haggadic Studies* (SPB, 4; Leiden: Brill, 1973) 88. See also *Pirke de R. Eliezer* 26: “The second trial was when he [Abraham] was put into prison for ten years—three years in Kithi, seven years in Budri. After ten years they sent and brought him forth and cast him into the furnace of fire, and the King of Glory put forth His right hand and delivered him from the furnace of fire, as it is said, ‘And he said to him, I am the Lord who brought thee out of the furnace of the Chaldees’ (Gen. 15:7). Another verse (says), ‘Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of the furnace of the Chaldees’ (Neh. 9:7).” Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 188.

each other, "Behold, it will come about that we will be scattered from each other and in later times we will be fighting each other. Therefore, come now, let us build for ourselves a tower whose top will reach the heavens, and we will make for ourselves a name and a glory upon the earth." . . . They each took their own bricks, aside from twelve men who refused to take them. These are their names: Abram, Nahor, Lot, Ruge, Tenute, Zaba, Armodat, Jobab, Esar, Abimahel, Saba, Aufin. . . . When seven days had passed, the people assembled and spoke to their leader, "Deliver to us the men who refused to join in our plan, and we will burn them in fire." The leaders sent men to bring them, but they found no one except Abram alone. . . . They took him and built a furnace and lit it with fire. They threw the bricks into the furnace to be fired. Then the leader Joktan, dismayed, took Abram and threw him with the bricks into the fiery furnace. But God stirred up a great earthquake, and burning fire leaped forth out of the furnace into flames and sparks of flame, and it burned up all those standing around in front of the furnace. All those who were consumed in that day were 83,500. But there was not even the slightest injury to Abram from the burning of the fire. Abram arose out of the furnace, and the fiery furnace collapsed.⁴⁰²

In this passage, cultic concerns are evident, as the theme of idolatry, which is hinted at through the construction of an idol in the form of the infamous tower, overshadows the entire narrative. The patriarch's placement into the fiery furnace likely also possesses cultic significance. Scholars have noted that Abraham's fiery tests here, performed by the evil leader, are reminiscent of the story of Nebuchadnezzar⁴⁰³ found in the Book of Daniel. In that classic story, the evil foreign ruler tests the faith of three Jewish youths by throwing them into the fiery furnace.⁴⁰⁴ This connection is noteworthy, since the details of the

402 H. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, with Latin Text and English Translation* (2 vols.; AGAJU, 31; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 1.97–100.

403 In Vermes' opinion, the influence of the Nebuchadnezzar typology is especially strong in the tradition found in the *Book of Yashar*, because there, "like Nebuchadnezzar, Nimrod is forced to recognize for a time the God of Israel." Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, 90.

404 That אור was often interpreted as "fire" in Gen 15:7, as we saw above, further secures the link between Abraham's rescue from the fire of the Chaldeans and the deliverance of the three Jewish youths in Daniel. Vermes notes this connection in *Gen. Rab.* 44:13: "R. Liezer b. Jacob said: Michael descended and rescued Abraham from the fiery furnace. The Rabbis said: The Holy One, blessed be He, rescued him; thus it is written, 'I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees.' And when did Michael descend?"

three Jewish youths in this story were often overlaid with Yom Kippur motifs in later rabbinic traditions. Moreover, in some of these passages describing Abraham's fiery trials, he is depicted as the sacrificial animal offered in the fire.

Significantly, in one of the rabbinic passages that portrays the fiery trials of Abraham in the hands of Nimrod, it is reported that the patriarch is tied as a sacrificial animal—by foot and hand,—and is thrown into a furnace. *Eliyahu Rabbah* 27 offers the following description:

How did Abraham come in this world to merit a life with no distress, with no inclination to evil—a life, indeed, such as God bestows upon the righteous only in the world-to-come? Because for the sake of Heaven he was willing to give up his life in the fire of the Chaldees. . . . Keep in mind that the household of Abraham's father, idolaters all, used to make idols and go out to sell them in the marketplace. . . . He [Nimrod] sent men to fetch Abraham and had him appear before him. Nimrod then said to him, "Son of Terah, make a beautiful god for me, one which will be uniquely mine." So Abraham went back to his father's house and said, "Make a beautiful idol for Nimrod." When Terah's household got the idol finished, they put a cincture around it and painted it a variety of colors. [After Abraham brought the image to Nimrod, he said to him, "You are a king, and yet you are so lacking in a king's wisdom as to worship this thing which my father's household has just turned out!"] Thereupon Nimrod had Abraham taken out [to be consumed] in a fiery furnace. In tribute to Abraham's righteousness, however, the day turned cloudy, and presently rain came down so hard that Nimrod's men could not get the fire started. Next, as Nimrod sat [in his throne room], surrounded by the entire generation that was to be dispersed [for its transgressions], Abraham was brought in and put in their midst. He approached Nimrod and again voiced his contempt of the king's idol. "If not this idol, whom shall I worship?" Nimrod asked. Abraham replied, "The God of gods, the Lord of lords, Him whose kingdom endures in heaven and earth and in uppermost heaven of heavens." Nimrod said, "Nevertheless I will rather worship the god of fire, for behold, I am going to cast you into the midst of fire—let the god of whom you speak [of?] come and deliver you from fire." *At once his servants bound Abraham hand and foot and laid him on*

In the case of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah." Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 1.369. Vermes further observes that ". . . the exegetical association between Genesis 15:7 and Daniel 3 is not mere hypothesis, as *Genesis Rabbah* 44:13 demonstrates. . . ." Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, 90.

*the ground. Then they piled up wood on all sides of him, [but at some distance away], a pile of wood five hundred cubits long to the west, and five hundred cubits long to the east. Nimrod's men then went around and around setting the wood on fire. . . . At once the compassion of the Holy One welled up, and the holiness of His great name came down from the upper heaven of heavens, from the place of His glory, His grandeur, and His beauty and delivered our father Abraham from the taunts and the jeers and from the fiery furnace, as is said, I am the Lord that brought thee out of the fire of the Chaldees (Gen 15:7).*⁴⁰⁵

This depiction of the patriarch tied foot and hand surely evokes the Jewish accounts where the angelic characters are portrayed as sacrificial animals—characters such as Asael in the *Book of the Watchers* and Asmodeus in *Tobit*, who are both bound hand and foot.

All this indicates that in some Jewish materials Abraham's fiery tests were the means to envision him as the cultic offering for YHWH. This sacerdotal thrust concerning the patriarch's fiery trials is also present in the Slavonic apocalypse. In this respect, it is intriguing that Abraham's fiery trials occur outside of the heavenly Temple.⁴⁰⁶ This, again, represents a curious but telling parallel to the fiery ordeal of the immolated goat that also takes place outside of the Temple.

405 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna Debe Eliyyahu*, 62–63.

406 *Apoc. Ab.* 15:3: "And he carried me up to the edge of the fiery flame . . ." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22; *Apoc. Ab.* 17:1: "And while he was still speaking, behold, a fire was coming toward us round about, and a sound was in the fire like a sound of many waters, like a sound of the sea in its uproar." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22.

Abraham as the Purification Offering for the Polluted Sanctuary

That Abraham is being depicted as the immolated goat can be further demonstrated by the dominant subject that runs throughout the entire apocalypse: the restoration of the cultic settings that have been polluted by idolatrous worship. The narrative begins by depicting the idolatrous cultic routines of Terah's household. This introduction serves as a cryptic allusion to the improper rituals and services of the defiled terrestrial sanctuary. The polluted shrine is then destroyed in the fiery storm that is sent by the deity. This calamity kills the infamous guild of idol makers.⁴⁰⁷ After the polluted house of worship is destroyed, Abraham travels to heaven where he beholds the true heavenly Temple. It is in this upper heaven that he is then given the vision of the restored earthly sanctuary.

These initial chapters of the apocalypse and their portrayal of the polluted sanctuary and the demise of two of its cultic servants is noteworthy, because they are reminiscent of the death of Nadab and Abihu. Their ordeal is mentioned in the initial verses of Leviticus 16,⁴⁰⁸ and this connection points to the cultic contamination that now requires a purgation ritual. In this respect, Leviticus 16 and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* share an almost identical structure. It is doubtful that this arrangement of cultic traditions is merely coincidental.

The main concerns of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which begins with the depiction and then the destruction of the polluted earthly shrine, therefore revolve around restoration of the cultic settings and reestablishing the purity of the sanctuary.⁴⁰⁹ In this portentous task of purification, Abraham is predestined to fulfill several cultic functions that the ritual assigns to various sacerdotal subjects. Thus, in *Apoc. Ab.* 9, where God sets the future tasks for the

407 *Apoc. Ab.* 8:5–6: “And I went out. And it came to pass as I was going out, that I had not even gotten as far as going beyond the doors of the courtyard when the sound of thunder came forth and burned him and his house and everything in the house, down to the ground [to a distance of] forty cubits.” Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 16.

408 Lev 16:1: “The Lord spoke to Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord and died. . . .” (NRSV).

409 There are a number of related sacerdotal elements found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where Jesus is likewise envisioned as the immolated goat who purifies the cult. On this see Berenson Maclean, “Barabbas, the Scapegoat Ritual, and the Development of the Passion Narrative,” 330.

patriarch, he orders Abraham to set for him a pure sacrifice.⁴¹⁰ This forceful demand for pure sacrifice might not be limited only to “external,” conventional cultic routines, which are embodied by the animal offerings of the patriarch, but they may also require more radical decisions from the former idolater. In this respect, it is intriguing that in *Apoc. Ab.* 6:4 the young hero of faith, who is offended by the idolatrous pollution of the Temple, decides “to risk his life for *purity*.”⁴¹¹ Scholars have correctly noted the cultic significance of this notion of “purity” that appears in the Slavonic apocalypse.⁴¹²

Scholars of Yom Kippur traditions have previously noticed the peculiar role of the immolated goat that appears to be predestined to atone for the sanctuary, thus securing purification and rededication of the earthly shrine.⁴¹³ Regarding this, while reflecting on the respective functions of the two goats, Jacob Milgrom suggests that the purposes of the two goats were different and related respectively to the sanctuary and to the people. He notes that “the sacrificed goat purges the sanctuary⁴¹⁴ . . . of Israel’s impurities (Lev 16:16), whereas the scapegoat carries off . . . ‘all of Israel’s transgressions’ (Lev 16:21).”⁴¹⁵ Milgrom’s conclusion clearly distinguishes between the purifying objectives of

410 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17.

411 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 13.

412 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 72, note 4.

413 Thus, Berenson Maclean notes that “according to Leviticus, the purpose of the immolated goat is to make atonement for the sanctuary, the tent of the meeting, and the altar (Lev 16:16, 18, 20). This three-fold atonement purifies the entire sanctuary complex from the pollution caused by the sins of Israel.” Berenson Maclean, “Barabbas, the Scapegoat Ritual, and the Development of the Passion Narrative,” 330.

414 In relation to the blood of the immolated goat, Milgrom also observes that “the *hattat* blood . . . is the purging element, the ritual detergent. Its use is confined to the sanctuary, but it is never applied to a person.” J. Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary: The Priestly ‘Picture of Dorian Gray,’” in: *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* (SJLA, 36; Leiden: Brill, 1983) 76.

415 Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary: The Priestly ‘Picture of Dorian Gray,’” 81. Elsewhere, Milgrom observes that “the ritual in the sanctuary concerns itself with removing its pollution (also caused by Israel’s wrongs); while the rite with the Azazel goat, by contrast, focuses not on pollution, the *effects* of Israel’s wrongs, but exclusively on the *wrongs themselves*.” Milgrom, *Leviticus. A Book of Ritual and Ethics*, 170.

the two cultic agents of the Yom Kippur ritual: the slain goat was predestined to purge the sanctuary,⁴¹⁶ and the live goat was intended to purge the people.⁴¹⁷

Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra also points to the respective functions of the two goats, noting, however, that this distinction was not always iron-clad in all Jewish materials. Thus, he notes that, according to the *Temple Scroll*, the sacrificial goat atones for the people, too.⁴¹⁸ Stökl Ben Ezra's nuanced reflection represents a valuable contribution. Yet, for the purposes of our investigation, it is important that, while the immolated goat might be able to atone in some tradition for the people, the scapegoat is not able to function as the purification offering for the polluted sanctuary. As James Scullion rightly observes, the scapegoat "cannot be a purification offering because it was not ritually slaughtered, nor was its blood poured out on the altar or any sancta, all elements of the purification offering as prescribed in 4:1–5:13."⁴¹⁹

Another important detail that might point to Abraham's role as a sacrifice is the enigmatic phrase uttered by Yahoel at the very beginning of the angel's encounter with Abraham in chapter 11. Here, the great angel tells the young hero of faith that he will be visible *until* the sacrifice, and will be invisible after it: "Come with me and I shall go with you, visible *until* the sacrifice, but after

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- 416 The destruction of the goat's carcass by fire was another significant aspect of the ritual. This again underlines the purifying nature of the offering. In this respect, we should again underline the parallelism between the purifying fire that destroys the polluted sanctuaries (in *Apoc. Ab.* 8 and in *Apoc. Ab.* 27) and the purifying fire of Abraham's trials.
- 417 Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly 'Picture of Dorian Gray,'" 81. Stökl Ben Ezra notes that "the first chapter of *Mishnah Shevu'ot* distinguishes sharply between the sprinkling of the sacrificial goat's blood and the scapegoat ritual. The former rite purges the sanctuary from the impurities caused by sins and then reconsecrates it; the latter expiates the sins of the people. The very next saying in *Mishnah Shevu'ot* states that the confession over the scapegoat and the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrificial goat atone for the sins of Israel, while the confession over the calf and the sprinkling of its blood atone for the priests." Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 127.
- 418 He observes that "some scholars have written highly stimulating works trying to understand early Christian Yom Kippur imagery by applying an alleged distinction between the purposes of the two goats: (1) the sacrificial goat atones for the Sanctuary, purifies and rededicates it; (2) the scapegoat atones for the sins of the people (Kraus 1991). While such an understanding may perhaps be read in Lev 16 and/or *Mishnah Shevuot*, the *Temple Scroll* (*11QT* Temple xxvi 5–7) proves that this strict distinction was far from being the only ancient Jewish understanding of the two-goats-ritual as, according to the *Temple Scroll* the sacrificial goat atones for the people, too (Ginsburskaya, forthcoming, cf. Körting 2004)." Stökl Ben Ezra, "Fasting with Jews, Thinking with Scapegoats," 166–167.
- 419 Scullion, *A Traditio-historical Study of the Day of Atonement*, 41. On this see also Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen*, 210.

the sacrifice invisible forever.”⁴²⁰ This statement of the angelic high priest must not be related to the animal sacrifices of the patriarch, since Yahoel remains visible after Abraham offered these sacrifices. The angel disappears only after the patriarch and Yahoel enter into the heavenly Holy of Holies—the event that seems, once again, to affirm Abraham’s role as the sacrificial offering.

Finally, there is one last important feature that pertains to Abraham’s role as the sacrifice for ҮНҠН. This detail is situated in his prayer that is uttered during his ascent into the heavenly Holy of Holies, wherein he offers himself as the sacrifice chosen by the deity:

Accept my prayer, and also the sacrifice which you yourself made to yourself through me who searched for you (прими молитву мою и такоже и жертву юже себе сам створи мною взискающим тебе).⁴²¹

In the verse that immediately follows this one, the patriarch’s self-definition as a sacrifice is also noteworthy. In this verse, the patriarch asks the deity to “receive” him favorably. The formula used, as we have already noted, is likely related to the patriarch’s role as the purification offering.⁴²²

420 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 19.

421 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 23; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham. Introduction, texte slave, traduction et notes*, 76.

422 See *Апoc. Аb. 17:21*: “Receive me favorably . . .” Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 23.