ANDREI A. ORLOV

Heavenly Priesthood in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*

CAMBRIDGE

HEAVENLY PRIESTHOOD IN THE *APOCALYPSE OF ABRAHAM*

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* is a vital source for understanding both Jewish apocalypticism and mysticism. Written anonymously soon after the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple, the text envisions heaven as the true place of worship and depicts Abraham as an initiate of the celestial priesthood. Andrei A. Orlov focuses on the central rite of the Abraham story – the scapegoat ritual that receives a striking eschatological reinterpretation in the text. He demonstrates that the development of the sacerdotal traditions in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, along with a cluster of Jewish mystical motifs, represents an important transition from Jewish apocalypticism to the symbols of early Jewish mysticism. In this way, Orlov offers unique insight into the complex world of the Jewish sacerdotal debates in the early centuries of the Common Era. The book will be of interest to scholars of early Judaism and Christianity, Old Testament studies, and Jewish mysticism and magic.

ANDREI A. ORLOV is Professor of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity at Marquette University. His recent publications include *Divine Manifestations in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* (2009), *Selected Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* (2009), *Concealed Writings: Jewish Mysticism in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* (2011), and *Dark Mirrors: Azazel and Satanael in Early Jewish Demonology* (2011).

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107039070

First published 2013

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Orlov, Andrei A., 1960–
Heavenly priesthood in the Apocalypse of Abraham / Andrei A. Orlov.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-107-03907-0
1. Apocalypse of Abraham – Criticism, interpretation, etc. I. Title.
BS1830.A62074 2013
229′.913–dc23
2012049261

ISBN 978-1-107-03907-0 Hardback

For Fr. Alexander Golitzin

[A]nd as the priest casts lots below so the Priest casts lots above; and just as below one is left for the Holy One and one is thrust out to the wilderness, so above one remains with the Holy One, blessed be He, and one goes forth into the supernal wilderness.

The Zohar 3.63a

Contents

Preface

Several chapters of this book were written during spring and summer of 2011, when I was a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. At that time I greatly benefited from the hospitality and intellectual companionship of Daniel Abrams, Rachel Elior, Michael Greenberg, Moshe Idel, Reuven Kiperwasser, Menachem Kister, James Kugel, Alexander Kulik, Lara Kulik, Sergey Minov, Serge Ruzer, Michael Schneider, Dan Shapira, Michael Stone, Nira Stone, Danna Taube, Moshe Taube, and Michael Tuval.

I would like to express my appreciation to Deirdre Dempsey, Erin Kidd, Israel Knohl, Oleg Makariev, and Sharon Pace, who read various parts of the book and offered numerous valuable suggestions.

I am especially grateful to my research assistant Tim Gabrielson, who worked very hard through different versions of the manuscript to help improve the text in both style and substance.

As always, I am indebted to my colleagues at the Department of Theology of Marquette University for their continued human and scholarly support and encouragement.

Sincere thanks are also due to Laura Morris, Anna Lowe, and the editorial team of Cambridge University Press for their help, patience, and professionalism during preparation of the book for publication.

I am grateful to the Byzantine and Christian Museum (Athens, Greece) for permission to use a fourteenth-century icon of the archangel Michael as the cover image. I am also grateful to Konstantinos Zarras for his help during my negotiations with the Byzantine and Christian Museum.

This work is dedicated to my dear friend and colleague Fr. Alexander Golitzin, in whose company I enjoyed countless hours discussing the heavenly priesthood traditions.

ANDREI ORLOV
Milwaukee
Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, 2012

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AGAJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJSR	*Association for Jewish Studies Review*
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
ArBib	Aramaic Bible
AS	*Asiatische Studien*
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ASTI	*Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
Bib	*Biblica*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BSac	*Bibliotheca sacra*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*
EB	*Eichstätter Beiträge*
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
Ekstasis	Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages
ET	*Église et théologie*

FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
HR	*History of Religions*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
Imm	*Immanuel*
JATS	*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBT	*Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie*
JCPS	Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*
JSJSS	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period: Supplement Series
JSOTSS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JSP	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
JSQ	*Jewish Studies Quarterly*
JSPSS	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
JSSSS	Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement Series
JU	Judentum und Umwelt
JZWL	*Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
MARI	*M.A.R.I. Annales des Recherches Interdisciplinaires*
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
ÖBS	Österreichische biblische Studien
PVTG	Pseudepigraha Veteris Testamenti Graece
RB	*Revue biblique*
RevQ	*Revue de Qumrân*

RHPR	*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*
RVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten
SANE	Sources from the Ancient Near East
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	*Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBLTT	Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions (supplement to Numen)
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	*Studia patristica*
SPB	Studia Post-biblica
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TCS	Text-Critical Studies
ThZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
TED	Translations of Early Documents
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TSMEMJ	Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
UBL	Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
VC	*Vigiliae christianae*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WZKM	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ŹM	Źródła i monografie
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums*

Introduction

The *Apocalypse of Abraham*, a Jewish work composed in Palestine in the early centuries of the Common Era, strikes its readers with a panoply of sacerdotal motifs. Already the first lines of this apocalyptic work portray Abraham as a sacerdotal servant in the idolatrous cult of his father Terah. Scholars have previously noted that cultic ordinances taking place in the "house" of Terah are reminiscent of the services practiced in the Jerusalem Temple. Later, as the story develops and the polluted sanctuary is destroyed by the fire of God's wrath, Abraham meets a heavenly instructor named Yahoel, who initiates him in the rites of celestial priestly praxis culminating in the heavenly Holy of Holies. These cultic settings once again allude to Jewish Temple rituals. By the end of the book Abraham becomes envisioned as an archetypal sacerdotalist to whom God reveals the "idea of priesthood."

This powerful unfolding of the patriarch's sacerdotal profile is rather unusual in comparison to biblical portrayals of Abraham, where he is never openly labeled as a priest. Still, scholars have noted in biblical materials several subtle allusions to Abraham's possible involvement in cultic practices. One of these sacerdotal allusions is Abraham's encounter with an enigmatic priest Melchizedek in Gen. 14. In later rabbinic materials (*Gen. Rab*. 43:6; 46:5; 55:6; *Lev. Rab*. 25:6; *Num. Rab*. 4:8; and *b. Ned*. 32b) this encounter has been often interpreted as transmission of the priestly tradition from the mysterious priest to the hero of faith. These materials view Melchizedek as Noah's son Shem,[1] who surrenders the prominent legacy of the priestly Noachic tradition to Abraham, making him a priest.

Melchizedek's encounter, however, is not the only instance of the patriarch's possible sacerdotal associations in biblical sources. As Abraham's story develops in the Bible, he is often depicted as one who

[1] On the identification of Melchizedek as Shem, see F. L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition*, SNTSMS 30 (Cambridge University Press, 1976), 116–19.

brings sacrificial offerings to God. One such portrayal is found in Gen. 15, when Abraham receives sacrificial instruction from the Deity and then makes animal offerings. Later interpreters,[2] including a tradition found in *Jubilees* 14:9–19, often construe the patriarch's offering as a sacrifice on the altar.[3]

The Akedah story in Gen. 22, in which Abraham binds his son Isaac in preparation for a sacrifice, represents another portentous conceptual nexus laced with important liturgical and priestly markers. Jewish exegetes often thought that the patriarch's actions allude to his involvement in priestly praxis. For example, Philo in *De Abrahamo* 198 reflects on the priestly role of the patriarch during the Akedah encounter arguing that "here we have the most affectionate of fathers himself beginning the sacrificial rite as priest with the very best of sons for victim."[4] Later rabbinic traditions also interpret the event on Mount Moriah as an important testimony to Abraham's priestly credentials.[5] Thus, both *Genesis Rabbah* 55:7[6] and *Pesiqta Rabbati*[7] recount that God himself affirmed Abraham's priestly status during the binding of Isaac – in one text (*Genesis Rabbah*) directly and in the other (*Pesiqta Rabbati*) through the promise.

One can see that, similar to the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, later rabbinic materials dramatically enhance the sacerdotal profile of the patriarch. What is striking is that these two interpretive streams develop the priestly profile of the patriarch in different directions. While the rabbinic tradition attempts to secure the legacy of Abraham's earthly priesthood through the sacerdotal elaboration of his encounter with Melchizedek and his binding of

[2] On later Jewish interpretations of Abraham sacrifices in Gen. 15, see C. T. Begg, "Rereadings of the 'Animal Rite' of Genesis 15 in Early Jewish Narratives," *CBQ* 50 (1988), 36–46.

[3] *Jubilees* 14:11: "He built an altar there and sacrificed all of these. He poured out their blood on the altar and divided them in the middle. He put them opposite one another, but the birds he did not divide." J. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 2 vols.; CSCO 510–11, Scriptores Aethiopici 87–8 (Louvain Peeters, 1989), 2.84.

[4] *Philo*, trs. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, 10 vols., LCL (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929–64), 6.97.

[5] For an analysis of these traditions in rabbinic and patristic literature, see E. Kessler, "The Exegetical Encounter between Greek Church Fathers and the Palestinian Rabbis," *SP* 34 (2001), 395–412, at 404–6.

[6] "R. Judah said: He [Abraham] said to Him: 'Sovereign of the Universe! Can there be a sacrifice without a priest?' 'I have already appointed thee to be a priest,' replied the Holy One, blessed be He: thus it is written, 'Thou art a priest forever' (Ps. CX, 4)". *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon, 10 vols. (London: Soncino, 1961), 1.488.

[7] "Another comment on Moriah: Abraham said to God: 'Master of universes, am I fit to offer Isaac up? Am I a priest? Shem is High Priest. Let him come and take Isaac for the offering.' God replied: When thou reachest the place, I will consecrate thee and make thee a priest. Accordingly, the term Moriah suggests that Abraham was to be a substitute for Shem, his replacement." *Pesikta Rabbati*, tr. W. G. Braude, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 2.714–15.

Isaac, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* completely ignores these events and focuses on his early life in the house of Terah and the story of his sacrifices and trance, as described in Gen.15. Further, in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the development of the patriarch's priestly profile appears to reach an entirely new conceptual level. Here Abraham is depicted not merely as an important link in the long chain of earthly priests but as a priest *par excellence* – a kind of sacerdotal archetype, an exemplar of heavenly sacerdotal praxis.

Why did the apocalyptic writers decide to enhance the patriarch's cultic profile in terms of heavenly priesthood? The reasons for this radical paradigm shift might be found in the peculiar circumstances of Jewish religious life at the time of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*'s composition. The text was written soon after the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple amid the challenging efforts to preserve and perpetuate priestly praxis in the absence of the terrestrial sanctuary. The idea of heavenly priesthood and the celestial Temple gave the Slavonic apocalypse authors conceptual resources to maintain the sacerdotal tradition when the earthly Temple was no longer standing. This idea, of course, was not novel and was employed by various priestly groups during religious crises linked to the destruction or defilement of the Jerusalem Temple. The conceptual roots of this powerful sacerdotal alternative can be traced to some biblical materials, including the vision of the celestial Chariot in the Book of Ezekiel, where the catastrophic destruction of the terrestrial sanctuary is given meaning through the celestial sacerdotal abode. In this formative narrative, the vision of the Merkabah is surrounded by a set of distinctive cultic markers that picture the divine throne as the upper prototype of the earthly sanctuary.[8]

[8] On heavenly Temple/heavenly priesthood traditions, see J. L. Angel, *Otherworldly and Eschatological Priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 86 (Leiden: Brill, 2010); B. Ego, *"Im Himmel wie auf Erden"*, WUNT 2.34 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1989); R. Elior, "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines: Prayer and Sacred Song in the Hekhalot Literature and Its Relation to Temple Traditions," *JSQ* 4 (1997), 217–67; R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, "The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic," *VT* 20 (1970), 1–15; M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); C. R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature and the New Testament*, CBQMS 22 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989); J. D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64 (1984), 275–98; J. D. Levenson, "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience," in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Green (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 32–59; C. R. A. Morray-Jones, "The Temple Within: The Embodied Divine Image and Its Worship in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Jewish and Christian Sources," *SBLSP* 37 (1998), 400–31; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Apocalyptic Construction of Reality in 1 Enoch," in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. J. J. Collins, JSPSS 9 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 51–64; C. Rowland, "The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature," *JSJ* 10 (1979), 137–54; C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982); M. S. Smith, "Biblical and Canaanite Notes to the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice from Qumran," *RevQ* 12 (1987), 585–8.

This idea that the earthly sanctuary serves as a replica of the heavenly one appears implicitly and explicitly in a variety of biblical texts and has its origins in early Mesopotamian traditions.[9] There, the earthly temples are repeatedly portrayed as counterparts to the heavenly realities.[10] This notion is also developed in the formative biblical revelation of the sacerdotal settings given to Moses on Mount Sinai. While recounting this sacerdotal disclosure, several important biblical passages[11] insist that "the earlier pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture was made after the [heavenly] pattern ... which was shown ... on the mountain."[12] A passage from 1 Chr. 28:19 further affirms the idea that the plan of the earthly sanctuary came from God.[13] Extra-biblical pseudepigraphical accounts (*The Book of the Watchers*, *Jubilees*, *Aramaic Levi Document*) and some Qumran materials (*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, 4QInstruction*, *4QVisions of Amram*, *11QMelchizedek*) also develop the concept of the heavenly Temple and associate it with the notion of the heavenly priesthood. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* too can be seen as a specimen of this interpretive tradition. Indeed the idea of a correspondence between earthly and heavenly sacerdotal realities plays a vital role in the apocalypse when the destroyed sanctuary of Abraham's father Terah – polluted by idolatrous worship – is juxtaposed with the true place of worship in the celestial realm. Still, the parallelism of the sanctuaries existing simultaneously in various realms receives a more dramatic and elaborate treatment in the Slavonic pseudepigraphon than in other apocalyptic writings. The cultic parallelism there seems to encompass not only the earthly and celestial Temples but also the demonic realm.

[9] On Mesopotamian traditions of the heavenly sanctuaries, see Smith, "Biblical and Canaanite Notes."

[10] G. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 32, footnote 5.

[11] Cf. Ex. 25:8–9: "And have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them. In accordance with all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall make it." Ex 25:40: "And see that you make them according to the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain." Ex. 26:30: "Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to the plan for it that you were shown on the mountain." Ex. 27:8: "You shall make it hollow, with boards. They shall be made just as you were shown on the mountain." Num. 8:4: "Now this was how the lampstand was made, out of hammered work of gold. From its base to its flowers, it was hammered work; according to the pattern that the Lord had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand."

[12] Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 32. Beale and Ego also drew attention to the later rabbinic elaborations of this idea of correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary found in *Targum Onqelos* on 2 Chr. 6:2; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Exod. 15:17; *Num. Rab.* 4:13; 12:12; Midrash on Psalms 30:1. Cf. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 32, footnote 7; B. Ego, *"Im Himmel wie auf Erden."*

[13] 1 Chr. 28:19: "All this, in writing at the Lord's direction, he made clear to me – the plan of all the works."

This paradoxical correspondence between divine and demonic sacerdotal realms is tied in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* to the main antagonist of the story, the fallen angel Azazel, who is portrayed as a possessor of his own "glory" or *Kavod*, a central sacerdotal symbol of the Merkabah tradition. All these developments point to the continual prevalence of cultic symbolism in the Slavonic apocalypse and its significance for the conceptual core of the text.

A close investigation of the sacerdotal symbolism, which affects so many narrative dimensions of the Slavonic apocalypse, may serve as an important key for unlocking the text's mysteries. Some previous studies have already shown the importance of sacerdotal traditions for understanding the complex theological universe of the Slavonic apocalypse. Martha Himmelfarb's research demonstrates the significance of the priestly traditions in the second apocalyptic part of the text, where Abraham becomes an apprentice of the heavenly high priest Yahoel who initiates him into the details of celestial priestly praxis. Himmelfarb was one of the first scholars to comment extensively on the high-priestly features of Abraham's celestial guide, noting that Yahoel's wardrobe has strong priestly associations.[14] She also argued that the apocalypse authors envision the heavenly realm as a temple[15] and that Abraham's sacrificial routines are crucial to the heavenly priestly praxis: "Abraham sacrifices in order to ascend to heaven, then ascends by means of the sacrifice, and joins in the heavenly liturgy to protect himself during the ascent."[16] In a similar vein, April DeConick viewed Abraham's ascent as a visitation of the heavenly Temple, noting that "although the *Apocalypse of Abraham* does not explicitly equate its seven heavens with chambers of the celestial Temple, it alludes to this."[17] Like Himmelfarb, she views Abraham's sacrifices as part of the heavenly sacerdotal praxis, arguing "that just as priests make sacrifices on the altar outside the Jerusalem Temple, Abraham must perform sacrifices before ascending into the heaven (9–16). In addition, he must recite the proper liturgy before he is allowed access to the highest heaven."[18]

Scholars have observed priestly motifs not only in the second, apocalyptic section of the text, when the partriarch ascends to the heavenly sanctuary, but also in the first, haggadic section, which depicts some members of Terah's family as deeply involved in sacerdotal routines. Alexander Kulik

[14] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 62. [15] *Ibid.*, 66. [16] *Ibid.*, 66.

[17] A. D. DeConick, "Heavenly Temple Traditions and Valentinian Worship: A Case for First-Century Christology in the Second Century," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, eds. C. C. Newman, J. R. Davila, G. S. Lewis; JSJSS 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 308–41 at 314–15.

[18] DeConick, "Heavenly Temple Traditions and Valentinian Worship," 314–15.

noted that the account of rituals in the household of Terah[19] is reminiscent of the order of the Second Temple daily morning *tamid* service as it is depicted in the Mishnah.[20]

The association of sacerdotal routines in the text with a particular cultic setting or festival in the Jewish liturgical year also drew substantial scholarly attention. Ryszard Rubinkiewicz proposed that Abraham's priestly initiations could be connected with the feast of *Shavuot* or Pentecost, which commemorates the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.[21] In support of this hypothesis, Rubinkiewicz pointed to the "Mosaic" details of Abraham's priestly initiations, including references to his forty-day fast and the naming of the place for the patriarch's sacrifices as Horeb. A substantial group of researchers speculated that the presence of cultic settings may be connected with another important liturgical marker, the Yom Kippur ordinance.[22]

Recently, Daniel Harlow hypothesized that the whole conceptual framework of the text is affected with priestly concerns.[23] His research suggests that all the main characters of the story appear to be endowed with priestly credentials, including not only the positive priestly figures like Yahoel and Abraham but also the chief antagonists depicted as corrupted sacerdotal servants, who cause the pollution of heavenly and earthly sanctuaries.

All these scholarly findings call for the thorough reexamination of the sacerdotal traditions in the Slavonic apocalypse. It is possible that the

[19] Already *Jubilees* 12:6 affirms Terah's priestly credentials.

[20] A. Kulik, "Apocalypse of Abraham. Towards the Lost Original" (Ph.D. diss.; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2000), 70.

[21] R. Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et commentaire*, ŹM 129 (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1987), 58–60.

[22] C. Fletcher-Louis, "The Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man: The Genre, History of Religions Context and the Meaning of the Transfiguration," in *Auferstehung-Resurrection*, ed. F. Avemarie and H. Lichtenberger, WUNT 135 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck), 282; L. L. Grabbe, "The Scapegoat Tradition: A Study in Early Jewish Interpretation," *JSJ* 18 (1987), 165–79, at 167; R. Helm, "Azazel in Early Jewish Literature," *AUSS* 32 (1994), 217–26, at 223; B. Lourié, "Propitiatorium in the Apocalypse of Abraham," in *The Old Testament Apocrypha in the Slavonic Tradition: Continuity and Diversity*, ed. L. DiTommaso and C. Böttrich; TSAJ 140 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2011), 267–77; D. Stökl Ben Ezra, "Yom Kippur in the Apocalyptic Imaginaire and the Roots of Jesus' High Priesthood," in *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions*, ed. J. Assman and G. Stroumsa, SHR 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 349–366; D. Stökl Ben Ezra, "The Biblical Yom Kippur, the Jewish Fast of the Day of Atonement and the Church Fathers," *SP* 34 (2002), 493–502; D. Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century*, WUNT 163 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2003), 94.

[23] D. Harlow, "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," in *The "Other" in Second Temple Judaism. Essays in Honor of John J. Collins*, ed. D. C. Harlow, M. Goff, K. M. Hogan, and J. S. Kaminsky (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 302–30.

prevalence of cultic concerns may provide an essential key for understanding the theological universe of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. In this vivid priestly vision various realms appear to be viewed as sacerdotal domains with corresponding cultic celebrants – celestial, earthly, and demonic.

The importance of this threefold nature of the sacerdotal vision will be underlined in the structural organization of our investigation as we explore various aspects of the text pertaining to the various sacerdotal realms with their respective servants and sanctuaries. Since the apocalypse begins with the portrayal of the earthly sanctuary, the first chapter of our investigation will deal with these developments found in Chapters 1–8 of the text, which describe the idolatrous worship of the household of Terah. The second chapter of the book will deal with traditions of the heavenly Temple found in the second part of the apocalypse. The third chapter will investigate Abraham's vision of the infernal abode found in the last part of the Slavonic apocalypse. These revelations unveil some enigmatic traditions about the sacerdotal practices exercised by demonic creatures of the lower realm. The second part of the book, which includes Chapters 4, 5, and 6, will examine the details of the sacerdotal routines found in the apocalypse. Chapter 4 will deal with the central cultic ordinance of the story – the scapegoat ritual that receives a striking eschatological reinterpretation in the text. Chapter 5 will examine the peculiar dynamics of exaltation and denigration associated with the cultic celebrants of the sacerdotal story and their infamous antagonistic counterparts. Finally, Chapter 6 will investigate the sacerdotal dimension of the mysteries received by the seer in the upper realm.

PART I

Sanctuaries

CHAPTER 1

The anthropomorphism of the earthly Temple: the idols of Terah's family

Various scholars have noted the peculiar cultic routines and concerns that permeate the story of Abraham in the Slavonic *Apocalypse of Abraham*, a writing that often depicts this hero of the faith preparing sacrifices, delivering praise to the Deity, and entering the heavenly throne room.[1] All these events are surrounded by distinctive sacerdotal markers that point to the paramount significance of cultic traditions within the text. Indeed, the intensity of the sacerdotal instructions given by Abraham's celestial guide Yahoel and the enthusiastic participation of the patriarch in the cultic routines both hint at the importance of priestly praxis for the work's overall conceptual framework. It also appears that the visionary mold of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, as in many other Jewish accounts e.g., *1 Enoch* 14 and *Testament of Levi* 8, is affected by its sacerdotal framework. In this framework the entrance of a seer into the celestial realm reveals the cultic dimension and is envisioned as a visit to the heavenly Temple.[2] The priestly traditions play an especially important role in the second part of the work, which can be viewed as a manual for celestial priestly praxis. Nonetheless, they are not absent in the first, haggadic section of the apocalypse, which concerns the idolatrous practices of Abraham's father.

Indeed, priestly concerns permeate not only the second, apocalyptic section of the work, the patriarch's transition into the heavenly realm, but

[1] See Harlow, "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," 302–30.

[2] In this respect Martha Himmelfarb observes that "the heaven of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* is clearly a temple. Abraham sacrifices in order to ascend to heaven, then ascends by means of the sacrifice, and joins in the heavenly liturgy to protect himself during the ascent … The depiction of heaven as a temple confirms the importance of the earthly temple. The prominence of the heavenly liturgy lends importance to the liturgy of words on earth, which at the time of the apocalypse provided a substitute for sacrifice, a substitute that in the apocalypse's view was to be temporary." Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 66.

the fabric of the entire pseudepigraphon.[3] It has also been previously noted that besides Yahoel, whom the text envisions as the heavenly high priest *par excellence*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* offers an extensive roster of priestly characters, including "fallen" priests culpable for perverting true worship and polluting the heavenly and terrestrial shrines. Thus, Daniel Harlow observes that besides the two "positive" priestly servants represented by the high priest Yahoel and his priestly apprentice Abraham, the apocalypse also offers a gallery of negative priestly figures, which include the "idolatrous priests" – Terah and Nahor.[4]

The story of these fallen priests occupies the first chapters of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, and they deal with Abraham's early years in the house of his father Terah. The plot of this section revolves around the family business of manufacturing idolatrous divine statues. Terah and his sons are portrayed as craftsmen carving religious figures out of wood, stone, gold, silver, brass and iron. The zeal with which the family pursues its idolatrous craft suggests that Terah's household is involved in more than just another family business, one of producing religious handiwork.

Although the sacerdotal status of Abraham's family remains clouded in obscure imagery, the Slavonic apocalypse's authors seem to present them as cultic celebrants whose "house" serves as a metaphor for the sanctuary polluted by idolatrous worship. From the very first lines of the apocalypse, the reader learns that Abraham and Terah are involved in sacrificial rituals in temples.[5] Moreover, the practices are reminiscent of the priestly routines in Jerusalem's temple. 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)."[6] The haggadic section of the text, which

[3] Thus, for example, Daniel Harlow views the whole structure of the work as the composition which includes five sacerdotal steps or "movements": "Abraham's separation from false worship (Chapters 1–8); his preparation for true worship (Chapters 9–14); his ascent for true worship (Chapters 15–18); his vision of false worship (19:1–29:13); and his vision of true worship restored (29:14–31:12)." Harlow, "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," 305–6.

[4] *Ibid.*, 306.

[5] *Apoc. Ab.* 1:2–3: "at the time when my lot came up, when I had finished the services of my father Terah's sacrifice to his gods of wood, stone, gold, silver, brass and iron, I, Abraham, having entered their temple for the service." A. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, TCS 3 (Atlanta: Scholars, 2004), 9.

[6] *Ibid.*, 86.

narrates Terah's and Abraham's interactions with the "statues," culminates in the destruction of the infamous "house" of worship along with its idols in a fire sent by God.

It is possible that the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which was written in the first centuries of the Common Era,[7] when Jewish communities were facing a wide array of challenges – not least the loss of the Temple – was herein drawing on metaphors familiar to Jews from the Book of Ezekiel, which construes idolatry as the main reason for the destruction of Solomon's Temple. Similar to that prophetic account, the hero of the Slavonic apocalypse is then allowed to behold the true place of worship – the heavenly Temple with its divine throne. Yet despite the fact that Ezekiel significantly shapes the Abrahamic pseudepigraphon,[8] there is a profound conceptual difference between the two visionary accounts. While in Ezekiel the idolatrous statues of the destroyed temple are contrasted with the true form of the Deity enthroned on the divine Chariot, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* denies its hero a vision of the anthropomorphic glory of God. When in the second part of the apocalypse Abraham travels to the upper heaven to behold God's throne, which evokes memories of the classic Ezekelian description, he does not see any divine figure on the Chariot. Scholars have noted that, while preserving some features of Ezekiel's angelology, the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse appear to be carefully avoiding the anthropomorphic description of the divine *Kavod*, substituting it with a reference to the divine Voice.[9]

While the anti-corporeal tendencies discernible in the second, apocalyptic part of the work have often been noted in previous studies, no sufficient explanation has been offered of how the first, haggadic part of the pseudepigraphon (Chapters 1–8), which depicts the patriarch as a fighter against the human-like, idolatrous statues of his father Terah, fits into the

[7] On the date and provenance of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, see: G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham. Edited, with a Translation from the Slavonic Text and Notes*, TED 1.10 (London, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918), xv–xix; B. Philonenko-Sayar and M. Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham. Introduction, texte slave, traduction et notes*, Semitica 31 (Paris: Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1981), 34–5; R. Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth; (New York: Doubleday, 1985 [1983]), 1.681–705, at 683; R. Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 70–73; A. Kulik, "K datirovke 'Otkrovenija Avraama,'" *In Memoriam of Ja. S. Lur'e*, ed. N. M. Botvinnik and Je. I. Vaneeva (St. Petersburg: Fenix, 1997), 189–95; A. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 2–3.

[8] Scholars previously noted that the seer's vision of the divine throne found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* "draws heavily on Ezekiel and stands directly in the tradition of Merkabah speculation." J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd edn. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 183. See also I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, AGAJU 14 (Leiden: Brill 1980), 55–7; Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 86–7.

[9] Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 87.

anti-anthropomorphic agenda of the Slavonic apocalypse. Also, a sufficient explanation of how it fits into the sacerdotal paradigm of the pseudepigraphon as a whole has not been offered.

This haggadic portion of the apocalypse may, in fact, play a pivotal role in the overall anti-anthropomorphic conceptual vision of the pseudepigraphon. It hardly seems coincidental that arguments against divine body traditions were couched in a story about Abraham, the patriarch known in Jewish pseudepigraphical and rabbinic sources for his distinctive stand against idolatrous figures. For example, the *Testament of Abraham*, another major Abrahamic pseudepigraphon, also denies the possibility that God has a human-like form. Philip Munoa notes, "the *Testament of Abraham* studiously avoids physical description of God when describing Abraham's heavenly ascent and tours of heaven explicitly identifying God with invisible."[10] Munoa further argues that the *Testament of Abraham* clearly exhibits anti-anthropomorphic tendencies in highlighting God's invisibility,[11] repeatedly emphasizing his unseen (ἀόρατος) nature.[12] Consider another example: the *Book of Jubilees* gives Abraham's story a distinctly iconoclastic thrust. Thus, the Abrahamic pseudepigrapha offer an ideal literary setting for polemics against traditions of divine corporeality.[13]

Notice also that the features of the idolatrous, anthropomorphic figures manufactured by Terah are strikingly reminiscent of the corporeal portrayals of the Deity found in Ezekiel and other biblical and pseudepigraphical accounts. In view of this, one can once again detect ongoing

[10] P. Munoa in *Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism. A Collage of Working Definitions* (forthcoming).

[11] Here the constraints on the visual representation of the Deity are even more demanding than in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, since the authors of the *Testament of Abraham* render the Deity completely invisible, lacking even the slightest visible representation.

[12] Munoa illustrates these tendencies by referring to the passage from Chapter 16 where the following tradition about the invisibility of God can be found: "When Death heard, he shuddered and trembled, overcome by great cowardice; and he came with great fear and stood before *the unseen Father*, shuddering, moaning and trembling, awaiting the Master's demand. Then *the unseen God* said to Death" (*Testament of Abraham* 16:3–4). P. Munoa, *Four Powers in Heaven: The Interpretation of Daniel 7 in the Testament of Abraham*, JSPSS, 28 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 141.

[13] Mary Dean-Otting also notices the theophanic peculiarities of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and its similarity with the *Testament of Abraham*. She observes that in the Slavonic Apocalypse "the role of Deity is somehow a combination of *the Testament of Levi* (where Deity is revealed in a throne-vision) and the *Testament of Abraham* (where Deity controls the action and speaks, albeit only once, directly with Abraham, but remains behind the scenes). It appears that the trend toward removing Deity altogether from an appearance in a heavenly journey was already established at the time of the writing of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*; however, a need to reveal God was also strong, and thus a kind of compromise is accomplished in the depiction of Deity as a voice emerging from the fire surrounding the divine throne." M. Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys: A Study of the Motif in Hellenistic Jewish Literature*, JU 8 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), 253–4.

polemics with the divine body traditions.[14] The first portion of the text serves thus as the negative reaffirmation of incorporeal priestly theology of the Slavonic apocalypse. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to explore the anti-anthropomorphic sacerdotal settings found in the first, haggadic portion of the pseudepigraphon.

Abraham the iconoclast: the background of the imagery

As has been previously noted, the first eight chapters of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* take the form of a midrashic exposition dealing with the early years of Abraham's life. This portion of the text depicts the young protagonist as a reluctant witness of the idolatrous practices of his immediate family. Such haggadic elaboration of Abraham's story is not entirely novel, created from scratch by the authors of the pseudepigraphon. Rather, it is an important link in the chain of a long-standing interpretive tradition attested already in the *Book of Jubilees* and further developed by other pseudepigraphical and rabbinic sources.

Although the Genesis account of the early years of Abraham does not elaborate his struggles with idolatry in his father's house,[15] the story found in the *Book of Jubilees* provides a rather lengthy narration of such activities. *Jubilees* 11:16–12:14 portrays the child Abram fiercely resisting the problematic religious practices of his relatives:

> The child [Abram] began to realize the errors of the earth – that everyone was going astray after the statues and after impurity. His father taught him (the art of) writing. When he was two weeks of years [= 14 years], he separated from his father in order not to worship idols with him. He began to pray to the creator of all that he would save him from the errors of mankind and that it might not fall to his share to go astray after impurity and wickedness . . . During the sixth week, in its seventh year, Abram said to his father Terah: "My father." He said: "Yes, my son?" He said: "What help and advantage do we get from these idols before which you worship and prostrate yourself? For there is no spirit in them because they are dumb. They are in error of the mind. Do not worship them. Worship the God of heaven who makes the

[14] For the discussion of the divine body traditions in biblical, pseudepigraphical, and rabbinic materials see A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, TSAJ 107 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2005), 143–6, 211–52; A. Orlov, "'Without Measure and Without Analogy': The Tradition of the Divine Body in *2 (Slavonic) Enoch*," in *From Apocalypticism to Merkabah Mysticism: Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, ed. A. Orlov, JSJSS 114 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 149–74.

[15] Joshua 24:2 provides a brief statement about the idolatry of Terah's household: "Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors – Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor – lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods'" (NRSV).

> rain and dew fall on earth and makes everything on earth. He created everything by his word; and all life (comes) from his presence. Why do you worship those things that have no spirit in them? For they are made by hands and you carry them on your shoulders. You receive no help from them, but instead they are a great shame for those who make them and an error of the mind for those who worship them. Do not worship them." Then he said to him: "I, too, know (this), my son. What shall I do with the people who have ordered me to serve in their presence? If I tell them what is right, they will kill me because they themselves are attached to them so that they worship and praise them. Be quiet, my son, so that they do not kill you." When he told these things to his two brothers and they became angry at him, he remained silent . . .
>
> In the sixtieth year of Abram's life (which was the fourth week in its fourth year), Abram got up at night and burned the temple of the idols. He burned everything in the temple but no one knew (about it). They got up at night and wanted to save their gods from the fire. Haran dashed in to save them, but the fire raged over him. He was burned in the fire and died in Ur of the Chaldeans before his father Terah. They buried him in Ur of the Chaldeans.[16]

This text depicts the young hero involved in extensive disputations with his father in an attempt to persuade Terah to abandon his abominable practices of manufacturing and serving idols. Although Abram's arguments seem to convince his father, they anger his two brothers. The account ends with Abram setting fire to the temple of idols, an event which leads to the death of Haran, who perishes in flames while attempting to save the statues. Although *Jubilees* provides a less elaborate account of the story compared to the one found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, it attests to a formative initial core of the story that would be expanded or altered by subsequent pseudepigraphical and rabbinic developments.[17]

One of the prominent lines of interpretation here is that Abraham finds the true God through his meditation on natural phenomena. As one can see already in *Jubilees*, the young hero of the faith tries to persuade his father not to worship idols by explaining that it is "the God of heaven who makes the rain and dew fall on earth and makes everything on earth." This method of persuasion will become a prominent trend in the subsequent Abrahamic accounts. In these later stories the patriarch often offers lengthy arguments

[16] VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 2.67–70.

[17] It should be noted that the subtle allusions to the traditions of the divine form might already be hinted at in the account found in *Jubilees*, which attempts to depict Terah as the priestly figure serving in the "presence of the statues." One of the intriguing parallels here is that, similar to the living creatures (the *Hayyot*) that are predestined to carry on their shoulders the divine, anthropomorphic form in the classic Ezekelian account, Terah too carries the idolatrous statues on his shoulders.

against idolatry in which the futility of idols is illustrated by the fact that even natural elements are liable to decay. This same motif occurs in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 7: the patriarch attempts to persuade his father Terah to abandon idolatry by delivering a lengthy address about the impermanence of natural elements. Several early Jewish sources, including Philo and Josephus,[18] also attest to the tradition that Abraham discovered the true faith by contemplating nature, including meditation on the celestial bodies.[19] Hence we read in Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 1.154–6):

> He [Abraham] was a man of ready intelligence on all matters, persuasive with his hearers, and not mistaken in his inferences. Hence he began to have more lofty conceptions of virtue than the rest of mankind, and determined to reform and change the ideas universally current concerning God. He was thus the first boldly to declare that God, the creator of the universe, is one, and that, if any other being contributed aught to man's welfare, each did so by His command and not in virtue of its own inherent power. This he inferred from the changes to which land and sea are subject, from the course of sun and moon, and from all the celestial phenomena; for, he argued, were these bodies endowed with power, they would have provided for their own regularity, but, since they lacked this last, it was manifest that even these services in which they cooperate for our greater benefit they render not in virtue of their own authority, but through the might of their commanding sovereign, to whom alone it is right to render our homage and thanksgiving."[20]

Likewise Philo, in *De Abrahamo* 15, tells about the importance of the young hero's contemplation of the planets as a part of his discovery of the true God:

> For the Chaldeans were especially active in the elaboration of astrology and ascribed everything to the movements of the stars. They supposed that the course of the phenomena of the world is guided by influences contained in numbers and numerical proportions. Thus they glorified visible existence,

[18] See also *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* 1.32: "From the first this same man, being an astrologer, was able, from the account and order of the stars, to recognize the Creator, while all others were in error, and understood that all things are regulated by His providence." T. Smith, "Recognitions of Clement," in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1867), 3:136–485, at 3:165.

[19] See L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 5.210, n. 16. Louis Ginzberg discerns six versions of this tradition that later played a prominent role in the rabbinic materials. In his opinion the oldest form can be found in *Genesis Rabbah* 38:13, "where we are told that Abraham, by observing how one element subdues another, becomes convinced of the error of worshipping the elements." Yet, it seems that this tradition is already present in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and maybe even in *Jubilees*.

[20] *Josephus*, tr. H. S. H. J. Thackeray and R. Marcus, 10 vols., LCL (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926–65), 4.77–9.

> leaving out of consideration the intelligible and invisible. But while exploring numerical order as applied to the revolution of the sun, moon and other planets and fixed stars, and the changes of the yearly seasons and the interdependence of phenomena in heaven and on earth, they concluded that the world itself was God, thus profanely likening the created to the Creator. In this creed Abraham had been reared and for a long time remained a Chaldean. Then opening the soul's eye as though after profound sleep, and beginning to see the pure beam instead of the deep darkness, he followed the ray and discerned what he had not beheld before, a charioteer and pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work and of all such parts of it as are worthy of the divine care.[21]

An analysis of later testimonies to the motif of Abraham's fight with idolatry demonstrates that this story was reshaped by its interpreters, who oftentimes would even introduce new characters into the account by merging it with other protological biblical events. These characters are either endowed with novel roles or take on functions that were previously assigned to Terah or members of his family.

For example, in later accounts Nimrod often takes the place of Terah. These traditions depict the evil king as the idolater *par excellence*, sometimes associating him with that most conspicuous symbol of idolatry – the Tower of Babel. In these accounts Abraham is often engaged in disputes with Nimrod, trying to persuade the cruel ruler to abandon idolatry. The patterns of argumentation used in dialogues between two characters are reminiscent of the discussions between Abraham and Terah in earlier pseudepigraphical accounts. To give an example, *Genesis Rabbah* 38.13 attests to the following exchange between Abraham and Nimrod:

> "Let us worship the fire!" Nimrod proposed. "Let us rather worship water, which extinguishes the fire," replied Abraham. "Then let us worship water!" "Let us rather worship the clouds which bear the water." "Then let us worship the cloud!' "Let us rather worship the winds which disperse the clouds." "Then let us worship the wind!" "Let us rather worship human beings, who withstand the wind." "You are just bandying words," he exclaimed; "we will worship naught but the fire. Behold, I will cast you into it, and let your God whom you adore come and save you from it."[22]

The first part of this passage is reminiscent of some details found in chapter 7 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* – one of the concluding chapters of the haggadic section wherein Abraham discusses the futility of idolatry with his father

[21] Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 6.39–41. [22] Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 1.311.

Terah. He illustrates this by water and fire, which, however enduring they may be, are still not eternal. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 7:1–10 reads:

> This I say: Fire is the noblest [element] in the image [of the world], since even the things which are [otherwise] unsubdued are subdued in it, and since] it mocks with its flames the things which perish easily. But I would not call it a god either, since it is subjugated to water. Water is indeed nobler, since it overcomes fire and soaks the earth.

In *Genesis Rabbah* 38, however, it is Nimrod who poses as Abraham's main disputant on this topic. Their dispute thus forms a novel interpretive framework that has reworked and developed early traditions.

Likewise, the motif of the fiery annihilation of Terah's household and idols, which looms large in *Jubilees* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, receives further elaboration and reshaping in later pseudepigraphical and rabbinic accounts. Not only do Terah, Haran and their idols endure fiery challenges, Abraham himself is depicted as being tested by the fiery trials[23] of Nimrod or by the infamous builders of the Tower of Babel, who attempt to kill the patriarch by throwing him into the furnace.[24] Yet, unlike the other members of Terah's household who, in *Jubilees* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, meet their final demise in the fire, the patriarch miraculously escapes that fate. One of the early, formative accounts[25] that develops this theme is a passage found in the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo. In 6:1–18 the story tells of Abraham's refusal to participate in the building of the Tower of Babel:

[23] One of the early hints to Abraham's fiery test might be contained in the passage from Judith 8. Judith 8:25–7 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).

[24] Scholars previously suggested that "the legend of Abraham in a furnace is based on the interpretation of the place-name Ur (Gen. 15:7) as 'fire.'" *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, tr. M. Maher, ArBib 1B (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 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. Cf. *Pirke de Rabbi 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)." *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, ed. G. Friedlander (London: Bloch, 1916), 188.

[25] Augustine in *De Civitate* XVI. 15 also shows the familiarity with the traditions of fiery tests of Abraham when he says that the patriarch was delivered from the fire of the Chaldeans.

> 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 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.[26]

It is no coincidence that the authors of this account attempted to combine the early story about the builders of the idolatrous tower with Abraham's story by having the paradigmatic opponent of idolatry listed among those who refused to participate in the construction of the Tower of Babel. The novelty of this narrative notwithstanding, the reader can detect the subtle connections it has with earlier pseudepigraphical accounts with little difficulty.

One of the notable symbols here is that of fire – the symbol that plays such a pivotal role both in *Jubilees* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. In these early accounts, the idols and their makers must face a fiery furnace, often perishing in its flames. In Pseudo-Philo this is extended to the opponent of idolatry, Abraham himself, who must now pass through a fiery ordeal, a crucial challenge that tests his faith and the power of his God. Another important transition is the move from local to universal; the manufacturing of idols in the protological time transcends the boundaries of Terah's household and is extended to all the people of the earth.

Such interpretive developments are not coincidental. They substitute Abraham's father with an evil king and invoke the imagery of the Tower of

[26] 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.

Babel. One can see a paradigm shift: Abraham's mission to oppose idols now leaves the framework of his personal story and receives a new ideological and, one might say, *international* significance. To resist idolatry is now to resist idolatrous nations and their leaders. Although in Pseudo-Philo's account Joktan throws the patriarch into the fire,[27] in later rabbinic accounts this treacherous task will routinely be performed by Nimrod.[28] These rabbinic accounts tell of Nimrod putting Terah's household through various tortures, with only Abraham surviving. Some scholars see in the imagery of these fiery tests, performed by the evil king, a subtle allusion to the story of Nebuchadnezzar[29] 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.[30] Although in earlier accounts the parallel between Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar is rather veiled, in some later rabbinic versions this connection becomes clearer. This parallel is found in a number of midrashic passages, including *Genesis Rabbah* 34:9 and *Genesis Rabbah* 44:13,[31] where the patriarch's escape from fire is explicitly compared to the deliverance of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.[32]

[27] Although Nimrod is also mentioned in Pseudo-Philo.

[28] Sometimes in rabbinic accounts Nimrod poses under the name of Amraphel. Cf., for example, *Pesikta Rabbati* 33:4: "Of course you may not know what I did to all who engaged with the three Patriarchs – to Amraphel who first engaged with Abraham by casting him into a fiery furnace." Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati*, 2.637.

[29] In Vermes' opinion the influence of Nebuchadnezzar's 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.

[30] The already mentioned interpretation of אור as "fire" in Gen. 15:7 seems to have also helped to secure the link between Abraham's rescue from the fire of the Chaldeans and the deliverance of the three Jewish youths in Daniel. Vermes points to 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? In the case of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah." Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 1.369. Vermes 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.

[31] Cf. also *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:56: "R. Eliezer said: While the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, was still at His table in the firmament, Michael the great prince had already descended and delivered our father Abraham from the fiery furnace. The Rabbis, however, say that God Himself came down and delivered him, as it says, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. XV, 7). And when did Michael come down? In the time of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah." Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 9.78; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 2:16 "Stay ye me with dainties: with many fires – with the fire of Abraham, and of Moriah, and of the bush, with the fire of Elijah and of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah." *Ibid.*, 9.104.

[32] *Gen. Rab*. 34:9: "And the Lord smelled the sweet savour. He smelled the savour of the Patriarch Abraham ascending from the fiery furnace; He smelled the savour of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah ascending from the fiery furnace." Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 1.273; *Gen. Rab*. 44:13: "Michael descended and rescued Abraham from the fiery furnace . . . And when did Michael descend? In the case of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah." *Ibid.*, 1.369.

Later rabbinic materials testify to the intense development of the tradition of Nimrod's fiery tests. Thus, the already mentioned *Genesis Rabbah* 38:13 provides the following lengthy account of Abraham's descent into the fire:

> And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah (xi, 28). R. Hiyya said: Terah was a manufacturer of idols. He once went away somewhere and left Abraham to sell them in his place. A man came and wished to buy one. "How old are you?" Abraham asked him. "Fifty years," was the reply. "Woe to such a man!" he exclaimed, "you are fifty years old and worship a day-old object!" At this he became ashamed and departed. On the other occasion a woman came with a plateful of flour and requested him, "Take this and offer it to them." So he took a stick, broke them, and put the stick in the hand of the largest. When his father returned he demanded, "What have you done to them?" "I cannot conceal it from you," he rejoined. "A woman came with a plateful of fine meal and requested me to offer it to them. One claimed, 'I must eat first,' while another claimed, 'I must eat first.' Therefore the largest arose, took the stick, and broke them." "Why do you make sport of me," he cried out; "have they then any knowledge!" "Should not your ears listen to what your mouth is saying," he retorted. Thereupon he seized him and delivered him to Nimrod. "Let us worship the fire!" he [Nimrod] proposed. "Let us rather worship water, which extinguishes the fire," replied he. "Then let us worship water!" "Let us rather worship the clouds which bear the water." "Then let us worship the cloud!" "Let us rather worship the winds which disperse the clouds." "Then let us worship the wind!" "Let us rather worship human beings, who withstand the wind." "You are just bandying words," he exclaimed; "we will worship nought but the fire. Behold, I will cast you into it, and let your God whom you adore come and save you from it." Now Haran was standing there undecided. If Abram is victorious, [thought he], I will say that I am of Abram's belief, while if Nimrod is victorious I will say that I am on Nimrod's side. When Abram descended into the fiery furnace and was saved, he [Nimrod] asked him, "Of whose belief are you?" "Of Abram's," he replied. Thereupon he seized and cast him into fire; his inwards were scorched and he died in his father's presence. Hence it is written, and Haran died in the presence of (*ʿal pene*) his father Terah."[33]

[33] *Ibid.*, 1.310–11. Several talmudic passages are also cognizant about this tradition. Thus, *b. Eruvin* 53a reads; "One holds that his name was Nimrod and why was he called Amraphel? Because he ordered our father Abraham to be cast into a burning furnace." I. Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Eruvin* (London: Soncino, 1935–52), 53a. Another passage from the Babylonian Talmud found in *b. Pesahim* 118a also tells about the patriarch's test in the fiery furnace: "[For] when the wicked Nimrod cast our father Abraham into the fiery furnace, Gabriel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Sovereign of the Universe! Let me go down, cool [it], and deliver that righteous man from the fiery furnace.' Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: "I am unique in My world, and he is unique in his world: it is fitting

The account contains some familiar motifs known from early pseudepigraphical narratives, including the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, where the young protagonist is sent by his father to sell manufactured idols. Yet, the midrash also brings forward a set of new developments. Haran is the novel feature here, in comparison with the account found in Pseudo-Philo. He becomes a spectator of the dispute between Nimrod and Abraham. His reluctance and unbelief serve as a foil to the faith and strength of Abraham. Eventually both characters are thrown into the furnace, but, unlike his brother, Haran is not able to survive. It is noteworthy that the motif of Haran's death overshadows the entire account, forming an *inclusio* around the section.

The authors of the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* are also cognizant of the patriarch's fiery ordeal and provide a very similar story to the account found in *Bereshit Rabbah* 38.[34] Here too Haran awaits the result of the match between Abraham and Nimrod and is then destroyed by fire. The difference between the targumic and midrashic account is that, while in *Midrash Rabbah* Haran is destroyed by God, or more precisely the fire sent from heaven, in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* he is destroyed by man – King Nimrod, who throws him into the furnace. It should be noted that the story of Nimrod testing Abraham by fire is a quite popular *topos* in rabbinic literature. Later variants of the story found in Chapters 7–15 of *Sefer ha-Yashar*,[35] and Chapters 33–5 of *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* show the dramatic expansion of the story.

It is time to return to the Slavonic apocalypse. The rendering of the story found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* appears to constitute one of the early

for Him who is unique to deliver him who is unique. But because the Holy One, blessed be He, does not withhold the [merited] reward of any creature, he said to him, 'Thou shalt be privileged to deliver three of his descendants.'" Epstein, *Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud. Pesahim* 118a.

[34] The form of the story found in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* 11:28 reads: "It came to pass, when Nimrod cast Abram into the furnace of fire because he would not worship his idol, the fire had no power to burn him. Then Haran was undecided, and he said: "If Nimrod triumphs, I will be on his side; but if Abram triumphs, I will be on his side." And when all the people who were there saw that the fire had no power over Abram, they said to themselves: "Is not Haran the brother of Abram full of divination and sorcery? It is he who uttered charms over the fire so that it would not burn his brother." Immediately *fire fell from the heavens on high* and consumed him; and Haran died in the sight of Terah his father, being burned in the land of his birth in the furnace of fire which the Chaldeans had made for Abram his brother." Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 51. Cf. also *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* 14:1: "In the day of Amraphel – he is Nimrod who ordered Abram to be thrown into the fire. . .." *Ibid.*, 55. *Targum Neofiti* (11:28) also knows the tradition of the death of Haran in the fire of the Chaldeans: "And Haran died during the lifetime of Terah his father in the land of his birth, in the furnace of fire of the Chaldeans." *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, tr. M. McNamara, ArBib 1A (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 85. Cf. also *Targum Rishon of Esther* 5:14: "Into the fire you cannot cast him [Mordecai], for his ancestor Abraham was saved from it." *The Two Targums of Esther*, ed. B. Grossfeld, ArBib 18 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 67.

[35] For the detailed analysis of this account, see Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, 68–90.

attempts to elaborate extensively on the account of Abraham's fight with idolatry. The uniqueness of this lengthy narrative in comparison with the versions preserved in other pseudepigraphical and rabbinic materials is that the many peculiar details of the Slavonic text, such as the references to the opaque names of various idols manufactured by Terah and their elaborate portrayals, appear to be preserved only here. Yet, behind the enigmatic details one can see a persistent ideological tendency. Readers attuned to the theological reluctance to endorse traditions of the divine form in the second, apocalyptic section of the pseudepigraphon can also detect traces of the same anti-anthropomorphic tendency in the first section of the pseudepigraphon. There, in distinctive depictions of the idols Bar-Eshath, Mar-Umath, and other human-like figures, whose features are reminiscent of the familiar attributes of the anthropomorphic portrayals of the Deity in the Book of Ezekiel and some other biblical and pseudepigraphical accounts, one can discern subtle polemics with the divine body traditions.

Bar-Eshath, the son of fire

One of the striking features of the text is the author(s)' extensive elaboration of idolatrous figures who appear as independent characters in fierce rivalry with the human heroes of the story. In depictions of these idols, some of which become known to the readers by their proper names, one can detect subtle allusions to the imagery prominent in the divine body traditions. The story involving one such idol, Bar-Eshath (Slav. Варисать), appears to stand at the center of the haggadic account of Abraham's fight against idolatry. It may well constitute one of the most important polemical interactions with the divine body traditions that are found in the first part of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. The story of this enigmatic figure begins in Chapter 5, when Terah orders his son to gather wooden splinters left from the manufacturing of idols in order to cook a meal. In the pile of wooden chips Abram discovers a small figure whose forehead is decorated with the name Bar-Eshath.[36] Since he already doubts the power of idols, his curiosity is piqued, and he decides to test the supernatural abilities of the wooden statue by putting Bar-Eshath near the "heart of the fire." While leaving the idol near the heat. Abram wryly orders him to confine the flames and, in case of emergency, to "blow on the fire to make it flare up."[37] Yet the powers of the wooden idol fail to overcome the flames, as it is not able to survive the fire. Upon his return the future patriarch discovers the idol fallen, with his

[36] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 12. [37] *Ibid.*, 12–13.

feet enveloped in the fire and terribly burned. Abram then sees the demise of the idolatrous statue as the flames turn Bar-Eshath into a pile of dust.

Several details in this ironic account of the destroyed anthropomorphic figure that fails the test of the blazing furnace seem to point not only to a stance against idolatry but also to subtle polemics with the divine body ideologies. The first important detail is that the graphic portrayal of the burning of the human-like statue recalls to memory familiar depictions found in the biblical theophanic accounts. In this respect it is intriguing that the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse portray the statue of a deity with his feet enveloped in fire. In *Apocalypse of Abraham* 5:9, Abram conveys that when he returned he "found Bar-Eshath fallen backwards, *his feet enveloped in fire* (нозѣ его обятѣ огнемь)[38] and terribly burned."[39] This detail evokes an important theophanic feature often found in several visionary accounts, where the anthropomorphic figure of the Deity is depicted with fiery feet or a fiery lower body.

For example, in the paradigmatic vision recounted in Ezekiel 1, where the seer beholds the anthropomorphic *Kavod*, he describes the fiery nature of the lower body of the Deity. Ezekiel 1:27 reads:

> I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and I saw that from what appeared to be his waist down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him.

A similar depiction can be also found in Ezekiel 8:2; there the prophet again encounters the celestial anthropomorphic manifestation with a fiery lower body:

> I looked, and there was a figure that looked like a human being; below what appeared to be its loins it was fire, and above the loins it was like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming amber.

Another important testimony to this prominent motif can be found in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, a text which is possibly contemporaneous with the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and which in many aspects shares the theophanic paradigm of the Book of Ezekiel and the Book of Daniel.[40] Revelation 1:15 reads:

[38] Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 46.

[39] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 13.

[40] It should be noted that the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation refer to fiery feet of not only divine but also angelic manifestations: Dan. 10:5–6: "I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen, with a belt of gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and *legs like the gleam of burnished bronze*, and the sound of his

> His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, and his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters.[41]

It is apparent that the tradition found in the Book of Revelation is related to the one found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* since it refers to the feet of the Deity – or, more precisely, Christ, who is divinized in Revelation – as "refined as in a furnace," a feature that might implicitly point to the theophanic traditions of the fiery test, which will be explored in detail later.

For now, we will focus on another significant detail in the aforementioned passage in Revelation, which might also be linked to the conceptual developments found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. This feature concerns the title of the anthropomorphic divine manifestation with fiery feet, a figure who is referred to as "like a son of man" (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου) in 1:13. This enigmatic designation deserves special attention. It is no secret that the Son of Man figure represents an important conceptual locus in Second Temple anthropomorphic ideologies. The title, which is well known from Daniel, the *Similitudes of Enoch*, *4 Ezra* and New Testament materials, often labeled a luminous, anthropomorphic manifestation of a supra-human entity, especially the Messiah. Although the exact relation of the Son of Man to the Deity varies, and is debated, one can at least say that the Son of Man is not far off from the Deity in most of these works. It is possible that this title invokes subtle allusions to the name of the wooden idol of the Slavonic apocalypse.

One should recall that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 5:5 mentions that the idol the patriarch discovered among the wooden chips in the house of his father was labeled on his forehead as "god Bar-Eshath."[42] Scholars have proposed a Semitic background for this enigmatic name, tracing it to the Aramaic expression (א)בר אשת – "the son of fire." This connection was first noticed by Louis Ginzberg[43] and recently was supported and investigated in depth by Alexander Kulik. Kulik links the origin of the title בר אשת to Mesopotamian traditions about the deities of fire, noting that their names were rendered in Greek in several ways, including the word φως.[44]

words like the roar of a multitude." Rev. 10:1: "And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire."

[41] This tradition is then reaffirmed in Rev. 2:18 "These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze."

[42] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 12.

[43] L. Ginzberg, "Abraham, Apocalypse of," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. I. Singer, 10 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–6), 1.91–2.

[44] A. Kulik, "The Gods of Nahor: A Note on the Pantheon of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," *JJS* 54 (2003), 228–32; A. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 63.

Kulik's reference to the Greek term φως is intriguing. The term was often used in Jewish theophanic traditions to designate the glorious manifestations of the Deity and his anthropomorphic "icons," including the luminous protoplast[45] who is often depicted in such accounts as the celestial Anthropos. These traditions often play on the ambiguity of the term which, depending on accent, can designate either "a man" (φώς) or "light" (φῶς), pointing to both the luminous and the anthropomorphic nature of the divine body.[46] It seems that the authors of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* might also be cognizant of this correlation of man/light when in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23:10 they choose to label the protoplast as the *light of men* (свѣть чл[о]в[ѣ]чь).[47] The play on φως terminology might again be manifested in this enigmatic expression from the Slavonic apocalypse, whose Semitic original many scholars have argued underwent a Greek stage of transmission. In view of these peculiar terminological correlations, might the name Bar-Eshath (the "Son of Fire") in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* play on the ambiguous meaning of φως? If so, how does one explain this hypothetical correspondence within its original Semitic framework? In previous studies some scholars of Jewish theophanic traditions propose the possibility of a Semitic pun on אישׁ\איש (fire/man),[48] one that might already be manifested in Ezekiel 8:2.[49] The Ezekelian terminology apparently intensifies the connections between the fiery and anthropomorphic characteristics of the divine extent. In view of these links, it is possible that, by naming the anthropomorphic idol as "the Son of Fire" (בר אשת), the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse sought an interplay with another prominent Aramaic designation, "the Son of Man" (בר אנש). Our ongoing research will demonstrate that the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse were familiar with Adamic lore,[50] the mediatorial stream where the correlations between light/man or fire/man were first developed. In view of these developments

[45] The word "protoplast" (from Gk. πρῶτος – "first" and πλάσσω – "to mold") is a term that designates an original condition, a form or a "mold" of humanity before the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

[46] On the φως traditions see G. Quispel, "Ezekiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis," *VC* 34 (1980), 1–13, at 6–7; J. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Mediation Concepts and the Origin of Gnosticism*, WUNT 36 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1985), 280; J. Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology*, NTOA 30 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz; Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 16–17; S. N. Bunta, "Moses, Adam and the Glory of the Lord in Ezekiel the Tragedian: On the Roots of a Merkabah Text" (Ph.D. diss.; Marquette University, 2005), 92ff.

[47] Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 88.

[48] Bunta, "Moses, Adam and the Glory of the Lord in Ezekiel the Tragedian," 111–12.

[49] For the discussion of the terminological interplay אישׁ\איש in Ezek. 8:2, see Bunta, *ibid.*, 111.

[50] One such development is the repeated portrayal of Terah fashioning idols in the manner similar to the Genesis' depictions of the Deity fashioning the protoplast.

the possibility of the pun on words "fire" and "man" in the title of Bar-Eshath cannot be excluded.

Testing by the fire

It is time to return to the motif of the fiery test that turned our wooden idol into a pile of dust. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 7:2 reminds its readers that fire "mocks with its flames the things which perish easily."[51] It appears that the early biblical and extra-biblical testimonies to this tradition of the fiery test hint that this motif may have originated within anthropomorphic currents. From them one learns that the divine body traditions have their own use of the fiery testing: its purpose is to underline the distinction between true and false representations of the Deity, where the divine form's endurance against the element of fire testifies to its authenticity. This theological conviction that the celestial bodies are somehow not consumed by fire and may even be composed of the fiery substance can be found in several places in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, where the fiery imagery is often employed in portrayals of divine and angelic manifestations.[52]

Moreover, it appears that the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse believe that fire represents the substance that surrounds the very presence of God.[53] Here the authors of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* are drawing on an established visionary tradition manifested in several biblical accounts, including Exodus' theophany of the burning bush. There Moses encounters a bush that burns but is not consumed, a manifestation of the divine. The motif of the celestial form embraced by fire also brings to mind the aforementioned account found in the first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel, where the seer beholds the Deity enveloped by fire or perhaps even composed of it.

It is also intriguing that in some Second Temple apocalyptic materials a corporeal representation of the Divine endures a test of a blazing furnace very similar to the one that destroys the wooden "body" of Bar-Eshath in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. A distinctive example of such a tradition is Daniel 3, a composition well known for its promulgation of anthropomorphic ideologies. There one can find an elaborate account depicting the appearance of a divine corporeal manifestation in a blazing furnace. In Daniel the story of the fiery test finds its place, as it does in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, in the midst of debates about the essence of true and false (that is, idolatrous) representations of the Deity. There, Nebuchadnezzar gives

[51] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 15.
[52] See *Apoc. Ab.* 18:2; 18:3; 18:12; 19:4; 19:6.
[53] See *Apoc. Ab.* 8:1; 18:2.

orders to put into the furnace of the blazing fire three Israelite youths – Shadrach, Mashach, and Abednego – who refused to worship the king's golden idol. While in the furnace, these three men are rescued by the divine manifestation,[54] which miraculously appears in the midst of fire. Commentators of this tradition have noted that the Aramaic text preserves the mystery of the divine presence in the furnace and does not reveal the identity of the divine manifestation. However, the authors of the Greek version of Daniel 3 fill the exegetical lacunae by recounting the story of the angel of the Lord descending into the furnace in order to rescue the three faithful Jews.[55] It is clear that this divine "body" unharmed by the fiery test is polemically juxtaposed in the text with the idolatrous "image" of the king and appears to be understood as a "statue" superior to the idol created by Nebuchadnezzar.

The fiery test of the human bodies of Shadrach, Mashach, and Abednego, who endure the deadly flames along with the divine form, is also noteworthy. The imagery of the blazing furnace in Daniel 3 appears to represent an important theophanic locus wherein human bodies are able to encounter the divine in the midst of fire. Choon Leong Seow underlines this important theophanic aspect of the passage when he remarks that "the Jews do not only survive the ordeal, they even encounter divine presence in the fire ordeal."[56] He further notes:

> the narrator does not say that the four individuals are walking in the furnace, but that they are walking amid the fire . . . the story is that they are with a divine being *in the midst* of the fire. They encounter divine presence in the middle of the fire. Here, as often in the Old Testament, fire is associated with the presence of God. On Mount Sinai, the presence of God was accompanied by, perhaps even made manifest by, the appearance of fire (Exod. 19:16, 19; 20:18, 21) and in Israel's hymnody fire is often associated with the manifestation of God (e.g., Pss. 18:8–16; 77:17–20).[57]

In this respect Daniel 3 appears to represent a link in a long-lasting development within the divine body traditions in which several distinguished individuals, such as the patriarch Enoch or the prophet Moses, are depicted as enduring the fiery test of an encounter with the divine substance, dangerous though it may be, as it emits light and fire. In the course of this deadly encounter these human exemplars often undergo a radical transformation,

[54] Dan. 3:25: דמה לבר אלהין ("like a son of the gods").
[55] C. L. Seow, *Daniel*, Westminster Bible Companion (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 2003), 59.
[56] *Ibid.*, 60. [57] *Ibid.*, 59, emphasis mine.

acquiring for themselves fiery luminous bodies or "faces."[58] The traditions thus envision these figures as representations of the Deity, even as closely associated with the divine *Kavod* itself.

With their use of the story of Bar-Eshath, the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse appear to be cognizant of these theophanic currents when they choose fire as the testing ground for the authenticity of the anthropomorphic figure that represents a deity. The Danielic background of the fiery test's motif[59] seems also to be implicitly reaffirmed in the final destiny of Terah (or, in *Jubilees*, Haran) who in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 8 perishes in the fire along with his household and idols.[60] These members of Abraham's family, unlike Shadrach, Mashach and Abednego, share the same destiny as idolatrous anthropomorphic figures that God also turns into piles of ashes.

It has already been noted that, despite the apparent anti-anthropomorphic thrust of the pseudepigraphon, the symbolism of fire, so prominent in the biblical theophanies, was not completely abandoned by the authors of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, who repeatedly choose to portray the divine presence through the imagery of the Voice coming in a stream of fire. Here one can see the formative influence of the Deuteronomic tradition with its preference for a vocal, rather than corporeal, manifestation of the Deity.

[58] *2 Enoch* 22 serves as an early attestation to this tradition. We can find a detailed description of this process in another "Enochic" text, *Sefer Hekhalot*, which describes the transformation of Enoch-Metatron, the Prince of the Divine Presence, into the fiery representation that serves as a replica of the divine corporeality: "R. Ishmael said: The angel Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence, the glory of highest heaven, said to me: When the Holy One, blessed be he, took me to serve the throne of glory, the wheels of the chariot and all needs of the Shekhinah, at once my flesh turned to flame, my sinews to blazing fire, my bones to juniper coals, my eyelashes to lightning flashes, my eyeballs to fiery torches, the hairs of my head to hot flames, all my limbs to wings of burning fire, and the substance of my body to blazing fire." *3 Enoch* 15:1. P. Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983–5), 1.223–315, at 1.267.

[59] Another example that the fiery test in the apocalyptic account of Abraham's fight against idols might be informed by the Danielic traditions can be supported by the pseudepigraphical and rabbinic testimonies attested in the already mentioned *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo 6:5–18; *Genesis Rabbah* 38:13; *Tanna debe Eliyyahu* 2:25; *Seder Eliyyahu Rabba* 33. Here, similar to Bar-Eshath and Daniel, the patriarch himself undergoes the fiery test which he, unlike the wooden idol, successfully passes. *The Zohar* 3.57a connects Abraham's fiery test with the testing of Shadrach, Mashach, and Abednego, using their Hebrew names – Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Cf. also *b. Avodah Zarah*, 3a: "Let Nimrod come and testify that Abraham did not [consent to] worship idols; let Laban come and testify that Jacob could not be suspected of theft"; 9: "let Potiphar's wife testify that Joseph was above suspicion of immorality; let Nebuchadnezzar come and testify that Hanania, Mishael and Azariah did not bow down to an image." Epstein, *Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud. Avodah Zarah* 3a.

[60] *Apoc. Ab*. 8:6: "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. *Jubilees* 12:14 "Haran dashed in to save them, but the fire raged over him. He was burned in the fire and died in Ur of the Chaldeans before his father Terah. They buried him in Ur of the Chaldeans." VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 2.70.

Nevertheless, the symbolism of fire does not remain entirely unambiguous in the Slavonic apocalypse, and it is possible that there one encounters subtle polemics even against this theophanic element prominent in the divine body ideologies. Thus, although the *Apocalypse of Abraham* also reaffirms the language of fire in its theophanic depiction of the divine Voice, in the patriarch's speech about the hierarchy of natural elements found in Chapter 7 the fire occupies the lowest grade, being easily "subdued" by water, the next element in the hierarchy.[61]

Mar-Umath, the one who is "heavier than stone"

Our study has suggested that the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse appear to be involved in polemics against the divine body traditions by consciously deconstructing theophanic imagery and even technical vocabulary distinctive to the classic anthropomorphic developments. Further support for this hypothesis can be found in the peculiar conceptual elaborations involving another problematic figure of the story – a statue of the stone idol Mar-Umath.

Although the idols produced by Terah are said to be made of gold, silver, copper, iron, wood, stone, and other unanimated materials, the authors of the text refer to them as the "bodies" (Slav. тѣла). In view of our previous research pointing to the possibility of polemics against the divine body traditions, this use of "corporeal" terminology does not appear coincidental. It is also intriguing that the context where this corporeal terminology is applied in the apocalypse implicitly invokes the account of creation, an important biblical locus that advances an anthropomorphic priestly ideology. This creational *topos* shaped by the corporeal motifs also appears to be polemically refashioned by the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse. In this new polemical framework, Abraham's father Terah now assumes the place of God and poses as a "creator" of the idolatrous "bodies," a role reminiscent of the archetypical position of the Deity who once shaped the body of the first human after the likeness of his own image. Thus in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 6:2–3 the following can be found:

> And I [Abraham] said, "How can the creation of the body (створеніе тѣла) (of the idols) made by him (Terah) be his helper? Or would he have subordinated his body (тѣло) to his soul, his soul to his spirit, then his spirit – to folly and ignorance?"[62]

[61] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 15.
[62] Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 114.

It is remarkable that the text tells about the "creation of the body" (створеніе тѣла) of the idols, thus applying human-like terminology to the inanimate objects. More intriguing is that the bodies of the idols, similar to the Genesis account, are placed in an unambiguous connection to the corporeality (тѣло) of their master and creator – the craftsman Terah. As is common in the divine body traditions, the passage also makes an explicit terminological connection between the body of the Master and its replica. The terminological choice involving the word "creation" (створеніе) likewise does not seem coincidental; rather, it serves as an important pointer to the prototypical biblical counterpart. In *Apocalypse of Abraham* 6:7, this term is used again in relation to the idol Mar-Umath.[63]

It has already been noted that, like the account of Bar-Eshath, the story of the stone idol Mar-Umath appears to represent another important nexus in the text where polemical interactions with the divine body traditions unfold in the midst of already familiar imagery. In *Apocalypse of Abraham* 1:3–4 the following description of this stone idol is found:

> I, Abraham, having entered their temple for the service, found a god named Mar-Umath, carved out of stone, fallen at the feet of an iron god, Nakhon. And it came to pass, that when I saw this, my heart was troubled. And I fell to thinking, because I, Abraham, was unable to return him to his place all by my self, since he was *heavier* (тяжекъ) than a great stone.[64]

It is possible that the description of Mar-Umath in this passage evokes the technical terminology of the *Kavod* paradigm. This terminological link with the divine body traditions pertains to the designation of Mar-Umath as "being *heavier* than a great stone." The Slavonic term used here for the word "heavy," тяжекъ, appears to be an allusion to the technical terminology reserved for the designation of the divine Glory (*Kavod*) in Ezekelian and priestly materials. There the quality of "heaviness" serves as one of the meanings of the Hebrew word *Kavod*.[65] It appears that the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse know this facet of the term's meaning and even

[63] See also 6:18: "Today I shall create (сътворю) another one." *Ibid.*, 116.

[64] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 9.

[65] The term כבוד can be also translated as "substance," "body," "mass," "power," "might," "honor," "glory," "splendor." In its meaning "glory," כבוד usually refers to God, his sanctuary, his city, or sacred paraphernalia. The Priestly tradition uses the term in connection with God's appearances in the tabernacle. The Priestly Source and Ezekiel describe כבוד as a blazing fire surrounded by radiance and a great cloud. M. Weinfeld, "כבוד," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. J. Botterweck *et al.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 7.22–38.

use it interchangeably for *Kavod* in another passage found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.

Ryszard Rubinkiewicz has argued that the Slavonic term for "heaviness"[66] (Slav. тягота) found in another passage, *Apocalypse of Abraham* 14:13, serves as a technical term for rendering the Hebrew *Kavod*. That passage reads: "Since God gave him [Azazel] the *heaviness* (тяготоу) and the will against those who answer him."[67] Rubinkiewicz notes that the original text most likely had כבוד, which has the sense of "gravity" but also of "glory," and the meaning of the verse would be: "the Eternal One . . . to him he gave the glory and power." According to Rubinkiewicz, this ambiguity lies at the basis of the Slavonic translation of the verse.[68]

If the term "heaviness" is indeed associated in the mind of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*'s authors with the *Kavod* terminology, it is intriguing that this notion was used solely in the description of the negative protagonists of the text – the stone idol Mar-Umath and the fallen angel Azazel. Such usage might again point to the polemical stance of the authors of the pseudepigraphon against the *Kavod* tradition with its peculiar theophanic imagery.

"A likeness of a craftsman's work"

Another important facet of the anti-anthropomorphic thrust of the Slavonic apocalypse pertains to its polemical appropriation of the "likeness" language that often permeates the conceptual core of corporeal theophanic traditions. One will recall that in the paradigmatic theophanic priestly template reflected in the Book of Ezekiel and the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, the language of "likeness" comes to the fore. The authors of the Book of Ezekiel repeatedly strive to describe their vision of the divine and angelic phenomena through the language of "likeness." The same tendency is discernable in Genesis 1, where the Deity creates humans in the likeness of his image.

The formula of "likeness" also looms large in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, but the text's authors use it in a distinctively polemical way. Thus in Chapter 25 of the apocalypse, God offers to the seer a vision of the future

[66] The Slavonic noun "тягота" (*Apoc. Ab*. 14:13) is derived from the same root as the adjective "тяжекъ" (*Apoc. Ab*. 1:4).

[67] Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 150.

[68] Rubinkiewicz points to the presence of the formulae in Lk. 4:6 "I will give you all their authority and splendor."

temple polluted by an idol of jealousy, an appearance that is conveyed through the language of likeness:

> I saw there *the likeness of the idol of jealousy* (*подобие идола ревнования*), as *a likeness* (*подобие*) of a craftsman's [work] such as my father made, and its statue was of shining copper, and a man before it, and he was worshiping it; and [there was] an altar opposite it and youth were slaughtered on it before the idol. And I said to him, "What is this idol, and what is the altar, and who are those being sacrificed, and who is the sacrificer, and what is the beautiful temple which I see, art and beauty if your glory that lies beneath your throne?" And he said: "Hear Abraham! This temple and altar and the beautiful things which you have seen are my image of *the sanctification of the name of my glory* (*святительства имени славы моея*), where every prayer of men will dwell, and the gathering of kings and prophets, and the sacrifice which I shall establish to be made for me among my people coming from your progeny. And the statue you saw is my anger, because the people who will come to me out of you will make me angry. And the man you saw slaughtering is he who angers me. And the sacrifice is the murder of those who are for me a testimony of the close of judgment in the end of the creation (*Apoc. Ab*. 25:1–6).[69]

In this pivotal passage earlier motifs are explicitly invoked, ones that readers of the apocalypse encountered in the first section of the pseudepigraphon that dealt with the idolatrous practices of Abraham's father. The statues similar to those made in the house of Terah ("a likeness [подобие] of a craftsman's [work] such as my father made") are now installed in God's Temple. This idolatrous practice of worshiping the statue of shining copper, labeled in the story as "a likeness (подобие) of a craftsman's work," seems to cautiously invoke the language of "likeness" known from the priestly theophanic paradigm exemplified in Genesis 1:26 and Ezekiel 1. This reference to "craftsman" invokes again the story of Terah and his creation of the idols. The tendency to label the idolatrous figures as "bodies," already detectable in the early chapters, is again reaffirmed here. The idolatrous practices are then contrasted to true worship, which is described in the now familiar language of aurality: the divine Name denies that the Deity can possess a body. Thus the future eschatological temple[70] is portrayed as a dwelling place, not for the idolatrous shining statue, but for "the image of the sanctification of the name."[71] It is apparent that the authors try to

[69] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 29, emphasis mine. Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 92.

[70] Himmelfarb underlines the importance of the Temple in eschatology of the text. She notes that "in this vision of history the temple plays a central role." Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 65.

[71] Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 92.

reinterpret the technical terminology of the divine Glory tradition by merging it with formulae borrowed from the ideology of the divine Name. There is also no doubt that the authors' attitude to the anthropomorphic ideology remains polemical, which is unabashedly shown in labeling the shining statue as the idol of jealousy.

Divine body traditions and anti-corporeal polemics

Our previous analysis has already demonstrated that the Book of Ezekiel and the Book of Daniel have exercised considerable influence on the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. In the view of these paramount connections, it is important to explore in depth how the Slavonic apocalypse polemically appropriates these biblical texts.

For this we must now return to the story of the infamous idol Bar-Eshath. We have previously explored this narrative, arguing that it represents a polemical variation on the divine body traditions. In the following section of our study we will continue to probe the polemical features of the Bar-Eshath account by focusing on the symbolic dimension of his story, as reflected in Chapter 6 of the Slavonic apocalypse. There the story of the "fall" of the wooden idol is poetically retold again, this time in mythological language reminiscent of depictions in Ezekiel and Daniel, two central biblical writings where the ideology of the divine body comes to its most emphatic, developed articulation.

The biblical background of the tale of the fallen tree

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* 6:10–17 offers the following poetic tale about the origin and the final destiny of the wooden statue, conveyed through primordial mythological imagery:

> But Bar-Eshath, your god, before he was made has been rooted in the ground. Being great and wondrous (великъ сы и дивен), with branches, flowers and [various] beauties (похвалами). And you cut him with an ax, and with your skill the god was made. And behold, he has dried up, and his sap (*мукота его*) is gone. He fell from the heights to the ground, and he went from greatness to insignificance, and his appearance has faded. [Now] he himself has been burned up by the fire, and he turned into ashes and is not more.[72]

[72] *Ibid.*, 48; Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 14.

This description of the wondrous tree found in the Slavonic apocalypse appears to draw on the biblical arboreal metaphors reflected in Ezekiel 31 and Daniel 4. It is no happenstance that the Slavonic apocalypse's authors bring into play these two theophanic accounts.[73] As has been already noted in our investigation these two biblical texts, permeated with corporeal imagery, exercise a formative influence on the theophanic and angelological imagery found in various parts of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. To better understand its appropriation in the pseudepigraphon we must explore the ideological background of the arboreal portrayals in Ezekiel and Daniel.

As noted above, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* draws on a cluster of motifs from the Book of Ezekiel, while at the same time reshaping them by eliminating their anthropomorphic details.[74] The authors' peculiar use of the Ezekelian Chariot imagery in Abraham's vision of the upper heaven has been investigated in detail in previous studies.[75] Although the anthropomorphic thrust of Ezekiel understandably comes to its fore in the account of the vision of the divine Chariot where the seer beholds the human-like *Kavod*, other parts of the book also contain implicit and explicit reaffirmations of the corporeal ideology of the priestly tradition. It is noteworthy for our investigation that the corporeal ideology of both Ezekiel and the priestly source is shaped by the tenets of the Adamic tradition and its technical terminology.[76] One of the examples of these corporeal developments involving Adamic imagery might be in Ezekiel 31, wherein one finds a portrayal of a wondrous tree that at first flourishes in the Garden of God and then is doomed by the Deity and destroyed by foreigners.

[73] Alexander Kulik (*Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 72) also points to the similarities with Isa. 44:14–20.

[74] On the author's use of the Ezekelian traditions, see: Rubinkewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 1.685. Rubinkiewicz in his monograph provides a helpful outline of the usage of Ezekelian traditions in *Apocalypse of Abraham*. He notes that "among the prophetic books, the book of Ezekiel plays for our author the same role as Genesis in the Pentateuch. The vision of the divine throne (*Apoc. Ab*. 18) is inspired by Ezek. 1 and 10. Abraham sees the four living creatures (*Apoc. Ab*. 18:5–11) depicted in Ezek. 1 and 10. He also sees the wheels of fire decorated with eyes all around (*Apoc. Ab*. 18:3), the throne (*Apoc. Ab*. 18:3; Ezek. 1:26), the chariot (*Apoc. Ab*. 18:12 and Ezek. 10:6); he hears the Voice of God (*Apoc. Ab*. 19:1 and Ezek. 1:28). When the cloud of fire raises up, he can hear 'the voice like the roaring sea' (*Apoc. Ab*. 18:1; Ezek. 1:24). There is no doubt that the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* takes the texts of Ezek. 1 and 10 as sources of inspiration." Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 87.

[75] Rowland, "The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature," 137–54; *The Open Heaven*, 86–7.

[76] In recent years scholars have become increasingly aware of the formative value of the Adamic traditions in the shaping of the corporeal ideologies about the anthropomorphic body of the Deity. Already in the Book of Ezekiel the imagery of the human-like *Kavod* is connected with the prototypical developments reflected in the Genesis account, wherein humanity is said to be created in the image of God.

As with any multivalent religious symbol, this arboreal metaphor can be understood in a number of ways. This passage was often interpreted as a reference to the destruction of nations or their arrogant rulers. There is, however, another, more individualistic reading of the story, one that alludes to an Adamic tale. The peculiar reference to the location of the wondrous tree in the Garden of Eden (עדן) and its expulsion from this ideal place exhibits parallels with the story of the protoplast, who at one time also enjoyed exalted status in the Garden but was later expelled by the Deity from his heavenly abode. Like the mysterious trees in the Ezekelian and Danielic accounts, the protoplast once possessed a gigantic and wondrous statue. Several passages found in Philo, as well as several pseudepigraphical accounts (not least among them *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23:4–6), describe the protoplast's body as great in height, terrible in breadth and incomparable in aspect.[77] This great body of the first human was also said to be luminous in nature and clothed with a "garment of glory," per some Jewish traditions.[78]

Yet according to the Adamic traditions, the original condition of the protoplast's body was dramatically changed after the Fall when he lost his

[77] Several early Jewish sources attest to the lore about the enormous body of Adam that the protoplast possessed before his transgression in Eden. Thus, Philo in *Quaestiones et solutions in Genesin* 1.32 mentions a tradition according to which the first humans received at their creation bodies of vast size reaching a gigantic height: "[the first humans] were provided with a very great body and the magnitude of a giant." *Philo. Questions and Answers on Genesis*, tr. R. Marcus (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), 19. Moreover, in some pseudepigraphic accounts the body of the protoplast is portrayed, not simply as gigantic, but even as comparable with the dimensions of the divine corporeality. Thus, in several pseudepigraphic materials the depictions of Adam's statue are often linked to the imagery of the enthroned Deity's anthropomorphic substance, known from the priestly and Ezekelian sources as God's *Kavod*. The pseudepigraphical and rabbinic sources also refer to the luminosity of the original body of the protoplast, which, like the divine body, emits light.

[78] Thus, the Targums attest to the prelapsarian luminosity of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The biblical background for such traditions includes the passage from Gen. 3:21, where "the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them." The Targumic traditions, both Palestinian and Babylonian, read "garments of glory" instead of "garments of skin." For example, in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Gen. 3:21, the following tradition can be found: "And the Lord God made garments of glory for Adam and for his wife from the skin which the serpent had cast off (to be worn) on the skin of their (garments of) fingernails of which they had been stripped, and he clothed them." Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 29. *Targum Neofiti* on Gen. 3:21 displays a similar tradition: "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife *garments of glory*, for the skin of their flesh, and he clothed them." McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, 62–3; A. Díez Macho, *Neophiti 1: Targum Palestinense MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968), 1.19. The *Fragmentary Targum* on Gen. 3:21 also uses the imagery of glorious garments: "And He made: And the *memra* of the Lord God created for Adam and his wife *precious garments* [for] the skin of their flesh, and He clothed them." M. I. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch According to Their Extant Sources*, 2 vols., AnBib 76 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 1.46; 2.7. *Targum Onqelos* on Gen. 3:21 reads: "And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife *garments of honor for the skin of their flesh*, and He clothed them." *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, tr. B. Grossfeld, ArBib 6 (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 46; *The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts*, ed. A. Sperber, 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1959–73), 1.5.

great beauty, stature, and luminosity. In view of these parallels to the Adamic developments, scholars have argued that in Ezekiel 31 and Daniel 4 one might have the symbolic rendering of the protoplast story. The metaphor of the fallen tree forewarns of the demise of the original condition of humanity.[79]

The memory of the protoplast story as a metaphor for the Fall of the exalted, "divine humanity" has a pronounced place in the conceptual framework of the Book of Ezekiel and the Book of Daniel, furthering their corporeal ideologies. Previous studies have noted that the divine body traditions often juxtapose antithetically the exaltation and the demotion of mediatorial figures, thereby simultaneously promoting and limiting the divinization of humanity.[80] The demise of the wondrous trees fits well into this dialectical interplay of reaffirming and deconstructing various corporeal ideologies.[81]

These conceptual developments bring us back to the arboreal imagery in Chapter 6 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. In the already mentioned passage from *Apocalypse of Abraham* 6:10–11, the authors seem cautiously to invoke the aforementioned biblical accounts when Bar-Eshath is compared with the wondrous tree. All three accounts emphasize the beauty of the prototypical tree. All three accounts recount the tree's eventual demise using the imagery of a fall from a great height to the ground.[82]

[79] See, for example, C. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam. Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 101–3; S. N. Bunta, "The Mēsu-Tree and the Animal Inside: Theomorphism and Theriomorphism in Daniel 4," in *The Theophaneia School: Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism*, ed. B. Lourié and A. Orlov, Scrinium III (St. Petersburg: Byzantinorossica, 2007), 364–84.

[80] D. Arbel, "'Seal of Resemblance, Full of Wisdom, and Perfect in Beauty': The Enoch/Metatron Narrative of *3 Enoch* and Ezekiel 28," *HTR* 98 (2005), 121–42.

[81] Another example of such dialectical interplay of reaffirmation and deconstruction can be found in Ezek. 28:1–19, where one can find the symbolic depiction of judgment against the prince of Tyre. This account also appears to be informed by the Adamic traditions. As will be shown later, Ezek. 28 contributes to the background for the imagery found in the *Apoc. Ab*. since in both texts the idolatrous statues are destroyed by fire.

[82] The *Apocalypse of Abraham*'s concept of the cosmic tree as the building material for the divine figure, which is found in the arboreal hymn, appears reminiscent of traditions beyond those of Ezek. 31 and Dan. 4. Take, for example, various Mesopotamian traditions about a cosmic tree known as the Mēsu-Tree. Some scholars have argued that the tradition about the wondrous tree reflected in Ezekiel 31 draws on the Mesopotamian traditions about the Mēsu-Tree, a cosmic plant envisioned as the building material for divine statues. The traditions about the mythological tree are documented in several sources, including the *Book of Erra*, a Mesopotamian work dated between the eleventh and the eighth century BCE. On the Mesopotamian traditions about the Mēsu-Tree and their connection with Ezek. 31 and Dan. 4, see A. Berlejung, "Geheimnis und Ereignis: Zur Funktion und Aufgabe der Kultbilder in Mesopotamien," *JBT* 13 (1998), 110–11; Bunta, "The Mēsu-Tree and the Animal Inside," 364–84; L. Cagni, *The Poem of Erra,* SANE 1/3; Malibu: Undena, 1977), 32; G. Conti, "Incantation de l'eau bénite et de l'encensoir et textes connexes," *MARI* 8 (1997), 270–1; M. B. Dick, "The

In highlighting similarities between biblical and pseudepigraphic accounts of the great tree, it is also important to compare the distinctive purposes that arboreal imagery plays in Ezekiel and Daniel on one hand and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* on the other. While the imagery in Ezekiel and Daniel is employed to advance the ideology of divine corporeality, in the Slavonic apocalypse it unambiguously rejects traditions of divine corporeality. One detail in particular illuminates the ideological divide. In the biblical stories the symbolic tree-statue of exalted humanity is diminished by the will of the Creator,[83] and both of the biblical trees are cut by celestial beings – in Ezekiel by God and in Daniel by the heavenly envoy. In contrast, in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the tree is cut down not by the Deity but by Abraham's idolatrous father Terah. Throughout the narrative Terah is portrayed as a "creator" of his idols in a manner ironically reminiscent of God's role in the biblical account of creation.[84] In *Apoc. Ab.* 4:3 Abraham tells Terah that he is a god to his idols since he made them. Here again, like the accounts found in Ezekiel and Daniel, the subtle presence of Adamic motifs can be discerned. Yet, unlike the prophetic books where the Adamic currents reaffirm the possibility of a human-like body of the Deity, who fashions his beloved creatures in his own image, in the Slavonic apocalypse these currents work against such a possibility.

The demoted Cherub

The arboreal hymn of the demise of Bar-Eshath in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 6:10–17, which defines him as a god, brings us to another important passage, Ezekiel 28:1–19. This passage contains two oracles about an enigmatic celestial figure, an anointed Cherub (כרוב ממשח), whom the text defines as the prince of Tyre and who, like Bar-Eshath, appears to be envisioned as a demoted idol.

It is noteworthy that, like the wooden idol, the main character of this Ezekelian passage is also repeatedly described in ironic fashion as a "god." Furthermore, it is intriguing that both the hymn from the Slavonic

Mesopotamian Cult Statue: A Sacramental Encounter with Divinity," in *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East*, ed. N. H. Walls, ASOR 10 (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2005), 59–60.

[83] The motif of the Deity demoting or diminishing the original gigantic statue of the protoplast is a dialectical device of reaffirmation widespread in the pseudepigraphical and rabbinic materials. It is connected to the divine body traditions. Cf. J. Fossum, "The Adorable Adam of the Mystics and the Rebuttals of the Rabbis," in *Geschichte-Tradition-Reflexion. Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger, and P. Schäfer, 3 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1996), 1.529–30.

[84] Thus, for example, *Apoc. Ab.* 6:2 tells about Terah's "creation" of the bodies of the idols.

apocalypse and the account from Ezekiel 28 describe their "idols," so to speak, as wondrous creatures decorated with "beauties." Although the Slavonic text does not elaborate on the nature of Bar-Eshath's beauties (Slav. похвалы),[85] the passage from Ezekiel describes the Cherub as "the model of perfection" (חותם תכנית), "perfect in beauty" (וכליל יפי), and embellished with precious stones. It appears that in both accounts references to the characters' beauties serve to indicate their exalted status.[86]

Scholars have observed that the attribution of these beauties invokes the memory of another important representation of the Deity – the supreme angel Metatron – who according to *Sefer Hekhalot* was also "enhanced" with various "beauties" in the form of precious stones.[87] In this context the reference to the protagonist of the Merkabah tradition does not seem out of place, given that he himself might also be viewed as a conceptual nexus reflecting both the dynamics of exaltation and demotion of humanity. In this capacity he could be envisioned as a sort of idol who serves as a source of confusion for Elisha b. Abuyah, who according to *b. Hag.* 15a takes Metatron as the second Deity in heaven that leads him to the heretical conclusion about two "powers" in heaven. The passage from *Hagigah* then depicts the demotion of the dangerous idol: Metatron is punished in front of angels with sixty fiery lashes in order to prevent future confusions between the Deity and his angelic replica.

Returning to the similarities between the stories of the anointed Cherub and Bar-Eshath, it should be noted that both of them seem to contain traces of a corporeal ideology in their symbolic rendering of the Adamic story, that is, the exaltation and fall of the protoplast.[88] Thus the Cherub in Ezekiel,

[85] This Slavonic word can be literally translated as "praises." For the discussion of the translation of Slavonic "похвала" as "beauty," see Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 73, n. 6.

[86] Thus, Daphna Arbel observes that "the bejeweled garb covered with precious stones that adorns the primal figure further highlights his state of exaltation." Arbel, "'Seal of Resemblance, Full of Wisdom, and Perfect in Beauty,'" 131.

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] On the Adamic background of Ezek. 28, see J. Barr, "'Thou Art the Cherub': Ezekiel 28.14 and the Postexilic Understanding of Genesis 2–3," in *Priests, Prophets and Scribes. Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp*, ed. E. Ulrich, J. W. Wright, R. P. Caroll, P. R. Davies, JSOTSS 149 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 213–23; N. C. Habel, "Ezekiel 28 and the Fall of the First Man," *CTM* 38 (1967), 516–24; K. Jeppesen, "You Are a Cherub, but No God!" *SJOT* 1 (1991), 83–94; D. Launderville, "Ezekiel's Cherub: A Promising Symbol or a Dangerous Idol?" *CBQ* 65 (2004), 165–83; O. Loretz, "Der Sturz des Fürsten von Tyrus (Ez 28,1–19)," *UF* 8 (1976), 455–8; H. G. May, "The King in the Garden of Eden: A Study of Ezekiel 28:12–19," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, eds. B. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York: Harper, 1962), 166–76; J. E. Miller, "The Maelaek of Tyre (Ezekiel 28, 11–19)," *ZAW* 105 (1994), 497–501; A. J. Williams, "The Mythological Background of Ezekiel 28:12–19?" *BTB* 6 (1976), 49–61; K. Yaron, "The Dirge over the King of Tyre," *ASTI* 3 (1964), 28–57.

similar to Bar-Eshath, falls from "the heights to the ground," being cast out as a profane thing from the mountain of God.

It is noteworthy that both texts, like the protoplast traditions, envision the process of demotion as the loss of the original condition of the characters. Ezekiel 28 hints that the Cherub was originally installed like the divine *Kavod* on the holy mountain in the midst of fire: "you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked." The story continues with the exalted figure expelled from the exalted place by its guardians: "I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and the guardian cherub drove you out from the midst of the stones of fire." According to the text, when the Cherub was expelled from his original lofty abode he was "cast to the ground" and "exposed" before the spectators' gaze. In light of the possible Adamic background for the Ezekelian oracles, demotion to the lower realm and exposure to the gazing public can be understood as references to the loss of the original luminous garment of the protoplast after the Fall.

A similar tradition about the loss of the shining attire of the protoplast seems present in the Slavonic apocalypse, which describes the "fall" of Bar-Eshath as the "fading" of his primordial condition. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 6:14–15 reads: "He fell from heights to the ground, and he went from greatness to insignificance, and his appearance has faded."[89]

It is also intriguing that in both stories the characters share the same final destiny: their "bodies" turn into ashes by fire. As has been previously noted, in Ezekiel the demoted Cherub is clearly envisioned as an idolatrous statue destroyed by fire. Further, it is pointed out that the "cremation of the king of Tyre resembles the burning of a statue and the scattering of its ashes on the ground or in the underworld. If the king of Tyre is identified as a cherub, represented as a statue, and punished for claiming to be a god, then the burning of this statue can be seen as the rite of disposal of the impurity of idolatry."[90]

The divine body traditions – especially their use of fire as a test that adjudicates between false and true representations of the Deity – appear to be present in both the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and in the Ezekelian oracles. Thus, the anointed Cherub is first depicted as passing the fiery test ("in the midst of the stones of fire you walked") and then failing it ("I brought forth fire from the midst of you; it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes").

[89] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 14.
[90] Launderville, "Ezekiel's Cherub: A Promising Symbol or a Dangerous Idol," 173–4.

The divine Face

There is no doubt that the symbolism of various Adamic currents permeates the story of Bar-Eshath. In this respect it is especially interesting to examine the aforementioned passage from *Apocalypse of Abraham* 6, where one finds some peculiar details accompanying the "fall" of the wooden idol. The text says that Bar-Eshath fell from the heights to the ground and that his condition was changed "from greatness to smallness" (отъ великиства пріиде в малость).[91] Although in the course of narration the wooden statue literally fell to the ground, it appears that the reference to the idol's fall has an additional symbolic dimension. The account of the infamous idol's "fall" once again apparently alludes to the story of the protoplast. Another important Slavonic pseudepigraphon can further clarify the Adamic aspect of the terminology in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 6:15. In *2 Enoch* the two conditions of Adam's corporeality – one original before the Fall, and the other fallen after the transgression – are conveyed through these same notions, greatness and smallness.

In the longer recension of *2 Enoch* 30:10, the Lord reveals to the seventh antediluvian hero the mystery of the two conditions or "natures" of Adam, one original and the other fallen. It is striking that these conditions are rendered in the text through the familiar formulae of "greatness and smallness":

> From visible and invisible substances I created man.
> From both his natures come both death and life.
> And (as my) image he knows the word like (no) other creature.
> But even at his greatest he is small,
> and again at his smallest he is great.[92]

Both recensions of the Slavonic text further invoke this terminology in *2 Enoch* 44:1: "the Lord with his own two hands created mankind; in a facsimile of *his own face*, both small and great (мала и велика),[93] the Lord created [them]."[94]

It is intriguing that both the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *2 Enoch* use identical Slavonic terminology in their description of Bar-Eshath and

[91] Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 116.

[92] F. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985), 1.91–221, at 1.152.

[93] M. I. Sokolov, "Materialy i zametki po starinnoj slavjanskoj literature. Vypusk tretij. VII. Slavjanskaja Kniga Enoha Pravednago. Teksty, latinskij perevod i izsledovanie. Posmertnyj trud avtora prigotovil k izdaniju M. Speranskij," *Chtenija v Obshchestve Istorii i Drevnostej Rossijskih* 4 (1910), 1.44; 1.96.

[94] Andersen, "2 Enoch," 1.170.

Adam, respectively. This unambiguously points to the Adamic "flavor" of the story of the wooden idol. The description of the fall of Bar-Eshath as the transition "from greatness to smallness" in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 6:14 further reinforces this connection with Adamic developments, in that it recalls the tradition about the diminution of the protoplast's statue after his transgression in Eden in *2 Enoch*.[95]

Apocalypse of Abraham 6:15 depicts Bar-Eshath as the one whose "face" (Slav. лицо) has faded: "He fell from the heights to the ground, and he went from greatness to insignificance, and *the appearance of his face* (взор лица его)[96] has faded."[97] The notion of Bar-Eshath's fading face is striking. It invokes once more conceptual developments found in *2 Enoch*, which widely operates within the imagery of divine and human "faces" and views *panim* not simply as a part of human or divine bodies but as a reference to their entire corporealities. The "fading of the face" in this context seems related to the adverse fate of the original body of the first human(s), which literally "faded" when their luminosity was lost as a result of the transgression in Eden. These lexical affinities demonstrate that the authors of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* were cognizant of the divine Face terminology and its prominent role in the divine body traditions.

In conclusion of this chapter of our study we must note that the elaboration of the story of Abraham's struggle against idols found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* provides unique insight into the complex world of the Jewish sacerdotal debates in the early centuries of the Common Era. It was a time when Jewish pseudepigraphical accounts attempted to offer their explanation for the loss of the terrestrial sanctuary by invoking the familiar imagery of idolatry found in prophetic accounts. At the same time these Jewish works often tried to embrace other theological alternatives for preserving and perpetuating traditional priestly practices.[98] One option was to view the celestial sanctuary as represented by the divine Chariot.

Of course the concept of the heavenly Temple as the locus of liturgical and mystical experience was not an entirely novel development. Rather, it was the legacy of the complex theological climate of the Second Temple period, a time when various priestly groups competed for the primacy and

[95] Cf. *2 Enoch* 30:10.

[96] Kulik traces this Slavonic expression to the Hebrew expression דמות פניו. See Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 14, n. 30; 72–3.

[97] Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 116; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 48.

[98] On this issue see R. Elior, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004).

authority of the priestly legacy by looking for various alternative practices, including the option of the otherworldly, celestial priesthood. This contention-ridden sacerdotal environment created a veritable gallery of ideal priestly figures, including Michael, Enoch, Melchizedek, and Levi, who were depicted as distinguished servants of celestial sanctuaries. In this respect the story of the young Abraham who travels from the destroyed terrestrial sanctuary polluted by the idols of his father to the heavenly Temple is not an invention of the authors of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. It rather represents one of the links in an established literary and mystical tradition, attested already in the early sections of *1 Enoch* as the seventh antediluvian patriarch ascends to the heavenly Temple to behold the divine *Kavod*.[99]

However, the difference here is that, while embracing the liturgical and sacerdotal significance of the journey to the heavenly sanctuary, the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse at the very same time display a pronounced reluctance. Specifically, they seem to demur at embracing the visual discipline of the Enochic paradigm and its anthropomorphic tenets. Instead, another, aural practice unfolds, involving revelation of the divine Voice and veneration of the divine Name. We should now proceed to a close investigation of this alternative apocalyptic worldview.

[99] For a discussion of this tradition, see Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 70–6.

CHAPTER 2

The aniconism of the celestial Temple: the abode of the divine Voice

The first chapter of our study explored the anti-anthropomorphic polemics found in the initial chapters of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. There we witness a set of elaborate depictions of anthropomorphic statues that vividly illustrate the futility of idolatry, at the same time helping to unfold the authors' polemical stand against the divine body traditions. Although the second, apocalyptic part of the text also demonstrates an intense presence of such polemics, the symbolic expression of this polemical strategy is strikingly different. The second section of the pseudepigraphon brings the reader into a different symbolic world, one filled with the details of the patriarch's celestial trip and his encounters with the various spiritual beings – angelic, demonic, and divine. Thus, the polemical thrust of this part of the Slavonic apocalypse unfolds, in the main, apophatically, through the peculiar depictions of the celestial beings stripped of their usual anthropomorphic attributes.

In this respect some details of Abraham's heavenly journey depart significantly from mainstream Second Temple apocalyptic accounts. In the work's elaborate description of the patriarch's spectacular visitation of an upper realm, which depicts Abraham's initiation into the heavenly mysteries, important details often found in other apocalyptic texts are missing. The authors of the Slavonic work seem deliberately to eschew anthropomorphic depictions of the Deity and angels that often mark pivotal points in other early Jewish apocalyptic accounts. This reluctance to endorse traditions of the celestial anthropomorphic forms appears to be quite unusual, given that other features of this portion of the pseudepigraphon exhibit explicit allusions to motifs and themes of the Merkabah tradition. It has been already mentioned that several distinguished scholars of early Jewish mysticism have noted that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* might represent one of the earliest specimens of Merkabah mysticism, the Jewish

tradition in which the divine form imagery receives some of its most advanced articulation. Yet despite many suggestive allusions in their depiction of the heavenly realities, the authors of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* appear very reluctant to endorse one of the most crucial tenets in the divine chariot lore: the anthropomorphic depiction of the Glory of God. The reluctance is particularly puzzling in view of the close similarities in angelological imagery that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* shares with the first chapter of the book of Ezekiel. And this initial vision in Ezekiel is the formative account of the Merkabah tradition, where the ideology of the divine form looms large.

As has been noted already, the seer's vision of the divine throne found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* relies significantly on Ezekiel's account and stands in direct continuity with Merkabah tradition.[1] At the same time, however, scholars observe that the Slavonic pseudepigraphon departs from the overt anthropomorphism of this prophetic book. Christopher Rowland, for example, contends that the shift from anthropomorphism is apparent in the portrayal of the divine throne in Chapter 18 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.[2] Notwithstanding the many allusions to Ezekiel 1 in the depiction of the throne room in Chapters 18 and 19 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Rowland highlights a radical paradigm shift in the text's description of the Deity, noting "a deliberate attempt . . . to exclude all reference to the human figure mentioned in Ezek. 1."[3] For Rowland this shift implies that "there was a definite trend within apocalyptic thought away from the direct description of God."[4]

These observations about anti-anthropomorphic tendencies of the Slavonic apocalypse are intriguing and deserve further investigation. Even a cursory look at the text reveals that, despite an extensive appropriation of visionary motifs and themes, the authors appear to be avoiding anthropomorphic depictions of the Deity, as well as other celestial beings.[5] This tendency leads to the creation of a new apocalyptic imagery that combines traditional and novel elements. This chapter of our study will investigate these new conceptual developments in the *Apocalypse of*

[1] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 228–9. Collins also notes that Abraham's vision "stands in the tradition of *1 Enoch* 14, conveying a sense of the visionary's experience of awe and terror." *Ibid.*, 229.
[2] Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 86. [3] *Ibid.*, 87. [4] *Ibid.*
[5] It should be noted that an anti-anthropomorphic reinterpretation of Ezekiel's vision can also be detected in the Targums. For the extensive discussion on avoidance of anthropomorphism in the *Targum of Ezekiel* 1, see D. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision*, TSAJ 16 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1988), 120ff.

Abraham and seek to understand their place in the larger sacerdotal vision of the Slavonic pseudepigraphon.

Biblical background of the *Shem* tradition

Our previous investigation demonstrated that the first eight chapters of the pseudepigraphon take the form of a midrash and recount the early years of Abraham, who is depicted as reluctantly helping his idolatrous father Terah. The concepts developed in this section of the work, especially the depictions of the idolatrous statues, play an important role in the work's overall reaction against an anthropomorphic understanding of God. Given the broader extra-biblical context of Abraham's biography – to wit, his role resisting the idolatrous practices of his father Terah – the work's authors seem to be appropriating the patriarch's story for their anti-corporeal agenda. One can detect subtle polemics against the divine body traditions in the depictions of the idols Bar-Eshath and Mar-Umath, whose features are vividly reminiscent of the anthropomorphic portrayals of the Deity and other celestial beings in Ezekiel and in other biblical and pseudepigraphical accounts. We have already discussed in detail the scope and nature of these anti-anthropomorphic developments.

We now turn to the second, apocalyptic section of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* to continue the ongoing inquiry into its anti-anthropomorphic tendencies and their sacerdotal significance. The second portion of the Slavonic pseudepigraphon takes the form of a visionary account, and it deals with celestial and eschatological revelations given to Abraham after he openly renounces idolatry.

One of the important features of this section of the text is the authors' apparent anti-anthropomorphic attitude, as it is reflected in their peculiar portrayals of the Deity and the heavenly hosts in Chapters 8–19. It must be granted that the apocalyptic imagery found in this portion of the pseudepigraphon apparently stems from the theophanic paradigm of the early Merkabah speculations, similar to those found in Ezekiel 1, *1 Enoch* 14,[6] and the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian. Nonetheless, the authors of the Slavonic text exhibit consistent efforts to refashion this traditional theophanic imagery in accordance with a new anti-anthropomorphic template

[6] George Nickelsburg notices that "Abraham's ascent and throne vision stand in a tradition that stretches from *1 Enoch* 12–16 to the medieval mystical texts." G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction*, 2nd edn. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 288.

that insists on expressing the divine presence in the form of the Deity's Voice.[7] In his comparative analysis of the accounts from Ezekiel and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Christopher Rowland notes that, while preserving the angelology of Ezekiel's account, the author of the Slavonic apocalypse carefully avoids anthropomorphic descriptions of the *Kavod*, substituting them with references to the divine Voice.

These anti-anthropomorphic tendencies can be observed already in the very beginning of the apocalyptic section of the work. The very first manifestation of the Deity to the seer is found in Chapter 8, and it takes the form of a theophany of the divine Voice, depicted as coming from heaven in a stream of fire.[8] This peculiar expression of the Deity as the voice erupting in a fiery stream will subsequently become a customary theophanic expression, which appears multiple times in the apocalypse, including the climactic account of the revelation given to Abraham in the seventh firmament. There in his vision of the throne room, which evokes memories of Ezekelian ideology, Abraham sees the Deity's formless voice, not the human-like form of God.

This tendency to substitute the anthropomorphic depiction of the Deity with expressions of the divine Voice or Name is, of course, not a novel development of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, but a specimen of the long-lasting tradition whose roots can be found already in the biblical materials.

The Hebrew Bible reveals complicated polemics for and against an anthropomorphic understanding of God. Scholars argue that the anthropomorphic imagery found in biblical materials was "crystallized" in the Israelite priestly ideology, known to us as the Priestly source. Moshe Weinfeld points out that the theology of worship delineated in the Priestly source depicts God in "the most tangible corporeal similitudes."[9] In the Priestly tradition God is understood to have created humanity in his

[7] On the hypostatic Voice of God, see J. H. Charlesworth, "The Jewish Roots of Christology: The Discovery of the Hypostatic Voice," *SJT* 39 (1986), 19–41.

[8] Scholars have noted that the patriarch's vision reflected in the second part of the Slavonic apocalypse seems to be reminiscent not only of Ezek. 1 but also the visionary account in Gen. 15 ("with an allusion to Gen. 22 insofar as the sacrifice is located on a high mountain," Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 226). Thus, George Herbert Box notes that "the apocalyptic part of the book is based upon the story of Abraham's sacrifices and trance, as described in Gen. xv." Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, xxiv. Both in Gen. and *Apoc. Ab.* the patriarch is asked to prepare sacrifices, and the content of the sacrifices is also very similar. Yet, the theophanic tradition of the divine Voice does not play a prominent role in Gen. 15. Although it mentions the word of God given to Abraham, it does not say anything about the voice in the fire, a standard theophanic formula found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. It is also noteworthy that at the end of Genesis' account the patriarch sees the vision of a fiery phenomenon – a smoking fire pot with a blazing torch.

[9] M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 191.

own image (Gen. 1:27) and is thus frequently described as possessing a human-like form.[10] Scholars have shown that the anthropomorphism of the Priestly authors appears to be intimately connected with the place of divine habitation – the Deity possesses a human form and needs to reside in a house or tabernacle.[11] Weinfeld argues that the anthropomorphic position was not entirely an invention of the Priestly tradition, but derived from early pre-exilic sacral conceptions about divine corporeal manifestations found in Mesopotamian literature.[12] Scholars observe that the Priestly understanding of the corporeal representation of the Deity finds its clearest expression in the conception of the "Glory of the Lord" (כבוד יהוה).[13] This conception is always expressed in the Priestly tradition in the symbolism grounded in mythological corporeal imagery.[14] One of the paradigmatic accounts of the portrayal of the divine *Kavod* can be found in the first chapter of the book of Ezekiel, which amounts to a manifesto of the Priestly corporeal ideology. There the *Kavod* is portrayed as an enthroned human form enveloped by fire.[15]

While containing forceful anthropomorphic ideologies, the Hebrew Bible also attests polemical narratives contesting the corporeal depictions of the Deity. Scholars have long noted a sharp opposition of the book of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic school to early anthropomorphic developments. In fact, the Deuteronomic school is widely thought to have initiated the polemic against the anthropomorphic and corporeal conceptions of the Deity, which were subsequently adopted by the prophets Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah.[16] Seeking to dislodge ancient anthropomorphism, the book of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic school promulgated an anti-corporeal theology of the divine Name with its conception of the sanctuary or tabernacle as the exclusive dwelling abode of God's Name.[17] Gerhard von Rad argues that the Deuteronomic formula, "to cause his name to dwell" (לשכן שמו), advocates a new understanding of the Deity that challenges the popular ancient belief that God actually dwells

[10] Ludwig Köhler and Moshe Weinfeld argue that the phrase, "in our image, after our likeness" precludes the anthropomorphic interpretation that the human being was created in the divine image. L. Köhler, "Die Grundstelle der Imago-Dei Lehre, Genesis i, 26," *ThZ* 4 (1948), 16ff; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 199.

[11] Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 191. [12] *Ibid.*, 199. [13] *Ibid.*, 200–201.

[14] *Ibid.*, 201. [15] *Ibid.* [16] *Ibid.*, 198.

[17] Tryggve Mettinger observes that the concept of God in the *Shem* theology is "strikingly abstract . . . God himself is no longer present in the Temple, but only in heaven. However, he is represented in the Temple by his Name." T. N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, ConBOT 18 (Lund: Wallin & Dalholm, 1982), 124. See also Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 193.

within the sanctuary.[18] It is noteworthy that, while the Deuteronomic *Shem* ideology does not completely abandon the terminology pertaining to the concept of the divine Glory (*Kavod*),[19] it markedly empties it of any corporeal motifs. Weinfeld observes that "the expression כבוד, when occurring in Deuteronomy, does not denote the being and substantiality of God as it does in the earlier sources but his splendor and greatness," signifying "abstract and not corporeal qualities."[20]

One of the early examples of the polemical interaction between the corporeal ideology of the divine form (*Kavod*) or, what amounts to the same thing, the divine Face (*Panim*), and the incorporeal theology of the divine Name is possibly seen in Exodus 33, where, upon Moses' plea to behold the divine *Kavod*, the Deity offers an aural alternative by promising to reveal his Name to the seer:

> Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence . . . but," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

This account appears to highlight the opposition between visual and aural revelations: the Deity is encountered not only through the form but also through sound. One mode of revelation often comes at the expense of the other – the idea hinted at in Exodus 33 and articulated more explicitly in Deut. 4, "You heard the sound of words, but saw no form (תמונה)." Scholars point to a paradigm shift in Deuteronomy's move from the visual to the aural.[21] In this new, theo-aural, as opposed to theo-phanic, understanding, even God's revelation to Moses on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19, a seminal event for the visual anthropomorphic paradigm, is now reinterpreted along aural lines. Deuteronomy 4:36 describes the Sinai theophany as the hearing of the divine Voice: "Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you; and on earth he let you see his great fire and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire." Here the revelation is received not in the form of tablets, the medium that might implicitly underline the corporeality of the Deity; rather "the commandments were heard from out of the midst of the fire . . . uttered by the Deity from heaven."[22] This transcendent nature of the Deity's revelation, which now chooses to manifest itself as

[18] *Ibid.*, 193.

[19] This tendency for polemical reinterpretation of the imagery of the rival paradigm is also observable in the *Kavod* tradition, which in its turn uses the symbolism of the divine Voice and other aspects of the *Shem* symbolism.

[20] Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 206. [21] *Ibid.*, 207. [22] *Ibid.*

the formless voice in the fire, eliminates any need for its corporal representation in the form of the anthropomorphic glory of God.

The depiction of God's activity and presence as the voice in the fire thus becomes one of the distinctive features of the *Shem* theology.[23] The classic example of this imagery occurs in the account of God's appearance to Elijah on Mount Horeb in 1 Kings 19:11–13:

> He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

This passage is vividly similar to the description found in Chapter 8 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, where the Deity is described as "the voice of the Mighty One coming down from the heavens in a stream of fire." And although the fire is not mentioned directly in the account found in 1 Kings 19, the fiery nature of the divine Voice is implicitly affirmed through the portrayal of the seer wrapping his face in a mantle. He must shield himself from the dangerous nature of an encounter with the divine Voice.

The voice of the Mighty One

Keeping in mind the aforementioned biblical specimens relating to the *Kavod* and the *Shem* conceptual developments, we will next examine the imagery of the divine presence in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.

Depictions of theophanies of the divine Voice in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* reveal marked similarities with the traditions in Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic materials.[24] Already in Chapter 8, which marks a

[23] Mettinger notes that "it is not surprising that the Name of God occupies such central position in a theology in which God's words and voice receive so much emphasis." Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth*, 124.

[24] The affinities with the Deuteronomic materials can also be seen in the implicit and explicit connections between how the apocalypse envisions Abraham's encounter with God vis-à-vis how the Deuteronomist envisions Moses' Sinai encounter. In this respect David Halperin notes that the author of *Apoc. Ab.* "gives us several clues that he is modeling Abraham's experience after Moses' at Sinai. The most obvious of these is his locating the experience at Mount Horeb, the name that Deuteronomy regularly uses for Sinai." Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 109–10. Halperin also notices the allusion to the Deuteronomistic traditions including the story of Elijah.

transition to the apocalyptic section of the work and narrates the patriarch's response to the divine call in the courtyard of Terah's house, the divine presence is depicted as "the voice of the Mighty One" coming down in a stream of fire.[25] Rather than coming via some angelic or divine form, God's self-disclosure comes in the formless "voice" (Slav. глас), and this becomes a standard description adopted by the author(s) to convey manifestations of the Deity.[26]

The divine Voice appears continually in the narrative. Notably, in *Apocalypse of Abramham* 9:1 the Voice of "the primordial and mighty God" commands Abraham to bring sacrifices, and in Chapter 10 it appoints the angel Yahoel as a celestial guide of the exalted patriarch.[27]

Similar to the developments in the *Kavod* tradition, the aural expression of the Deity evokes veneration. The epiphany of the divine Voice is repeatedly accompanied by veneration from the seer, in a fashion that recalls veneration of the *Kavod* in the apocalyptic visionary accounts. Thus, in the dramatic portrayal of Abraham's aural encounter with the Deity in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 10:1–3, his spirit is said to have been frightened,[28] his soul to have fled him, and he "became like a stone (быхъ яко камыкъ), and fell down upon the earth (и падохъ [яко] ниць на земли)."[29]

It is not novel for a prophet to be veritably transformed when encountering divinity. Indeed, it is customarily found in theophanic narratives as

[25] *Apoc. Ab.* 8:1: "The voice (глас) of the Mighty One came down from heaven in a stream of fire, saying and calling, 'Abraham, Abraham!'" Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 16; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 54.

[26] See, for example, *Apoc. Ab.* 18:2: "And I heard a voice (*глас*) like the roaring of the sea, and it did not cease because of the fire." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 24; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 76.

[27] *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* 1.32 tells about the patriarch's *angelus interpres*: "Whence also an angel, standing by him in a vision, instructed him more fully concerning those things which he was beginning to perceive. He showed him also what belonged to his race and posterity, and promised him that those districts should be restored rather than given to them." Smith, "Recognitions of Clement," 165.

[28] Scholars have reflected on the fact that Abraham stumbles before the divine Voice in various parts of the pseudepigraphon. In relation to this, Martha Himmelfarb observes: "Further, remember that Abraham fainted the first time he heard the voice of the invisible God (ch. 9). Now he stands before the divine throne and again hears the Voice of God, who remains unseen, as Iaoel had warned Abraham he would (16:3), although he manifests himself through fire (17:1). Following his angelic guide, who bows his head in worship, Abraham wishes to prostrate himself, but he cannot since the ground rocks beneath him (17:2–3). Still, it appears that Abraham's desire to prostrate himself is a matter of etiquette rather than of fear." Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 64. "In two of the manuscripts the angel's response to Abraham's expression of fear singles out the noise as a cause: 'Do not let your spirit fail for the shouting.'" *Ibid.*, 63.

[29] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17; Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 126; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 58.

early as the Book of Ezekiel, which depicts Ezekiel falling prostrate while approaching the Glory of God.[30] There is, however, a significant difference between these two apocalyptic traditions. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the visionary's prostration occurs not before the divine form but before the divine Voice. Veneration of the divine sound can be found in other parts of the text, too. Not only Abraham but also his celestial companion, Yahoel, are depicted as worshiping an aural manifestation of the divine:

> 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. And the angel bowed with me and worshiped (и покляче съ мною ангелъ и поклонися). (*Apoc. Ab.* 17:1–2)[31]

The symbolism of fire paradoxically juxtaposed with water – "in the fire like a sound of many waters" – underscores the voice's significance by bringing together a cluster of familiar theophanic markers.

Ascent through the song: spatial dynamics of the aural mysticism

Throughout the second part of the work, there seems to be a peculiar emphasis on the aural revelation of God. Arguably, the text is dictating spatial aesthetics that strikingly differ from those of the visual paradigm. They permeate various symbolic features of the narrative and profoundly affect traditional apocalyptic imagery.

The spatial dynamics of the Slavonic apocalypse have puzzled generations of scholars. They often reflected on the unusual setup of the heavens found in the text and the peculiarities of the seer's ascent to the throne of God.[32] Abraham's entrance into the divine realm unfolds in Chapters 15 and 17. There the readers encounter intense liturgical traditions that emphasize the routine of prayer and praise. The aural praxis of the patriarch and his celestial guide reaches an important conceptual pinnacle there, demonstrating the decisive power of prayer in breaching the boundaries between heaven and earth.

Intriguingly, the work gives scant details about Abraham's ascent through various heavens. On the contrary, in the Slavonic apocalypse the seer achieves immediate access to the upper region of heaven through his recitation of a hymn. This could be quite puzzling for a reader accustomed

[30] See also *1 Enoch* 71; *2 Enoch* 22.

[31] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 72.

[32] Cf. J. C. Poirier, "The Ouranology of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," *JSJ* 35.4 (2004), 391–408.

to the visual *Kavod* paradigm, with its attention to the details of the various levels of heaven, each one encompassing a symbolic content all its own. Indeed, the apocalyptic narratives of the *Kavod* paradigm often stress the importance of "structured" space by demonstrating the gradual progress of its visionaries through the various echelons of heaven. The progression implicitly underlines the ideology of the divine form, since the heavens are understood as a structured house for the Deity's form.

In view of these conceptual peculiarities of the *Kavod* paradigm, it is not coincidental that in the rival aural framework of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the long song of Abraham in Chapter 17 – the aural medium of the patriarch's ascension – serves as a striking alternative to the usual ascent-through-heavens pattern. It is not happenstance, therefore, that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the references to levels of heaven will appear only after the patriarch arrives at God's abode, during his "vision" of primordial and eschatological events. This is when he is allowed to "behold" the structure of the heavens during the Deity's revelation. Yet, it is interesting that the content of this visual revelation is largely negative, as it is filled with an array of ominous markers – events and characters responsible for the corruption of creation and humanity, including disclosures about the abode of Leviathan, Azazel's corruption of the protoplasts and the defilement of the earthly temple by idolatry. Keeping in mind these conceptual developments, we should direct our attention to the song of Abraham, which plays such an important role in the patriarch's transition from the lower to the upper realm.

Scholars have noted that this song not only assists the seer in overcoming the fiery obstacles and his fear of ascending into the dwelling place of God – it actually serves as a medium of ascent. Thus, Martha Himmelfarb has suggested that "the *Apocalypse of Abraham* treats the song sung by the visionary as part of the means of achieving ascent rather than simply as a sign of having achieved angelic status after ascent."[33] However, though scholars have often noted the role of the song as the medium of Abraham's ascent, they have less often noted the uniqueness of this heavenly journey. There is a striking absence of the customary progress through the heavens as the seer travels to the divine abode. Yet it appears that the absence of any level-by-level ascent in the Slavonic apocalypse has an important conceptual significance. It emphasizes aural revelation, a tendency that attempts to substitute the traditional visual topology with its

[33] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 64.

aural counterpart. It is quite possible that Abraham's song stands at the crux of the rival aural paradigm, challenging that of the *Kavod* theophanic trend.

In this respect it is not coincidental that the song of Abraham disrupts the normative spatial dynamics, and therefore leads to the collapse of the previous topological order, which in the text coincides with the beginning of the song.[34] Thus, in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 17:3, immediately before Abraham ascends by means of the song, the visionary reports unusual changes affecting the spatial features of his surroundings.[35] When Abraham tries to prostrate himself, as is his wont, he suddenly notices that the surface escapes his knees: "And I wanted to fall face down to the earth. And the place of elevation on which we both stood <sometimes was on high,> sometimes rolled down."[36] This reference to the collapse of the spatial arrangement is then supported by further remarks from Abraham. A couple of verses later in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 17:5, the visionary reflects again on his unusual spatial situation: "Since there was no earth to fall to, I only bowed down and recited the song which he had taught me."[37] All of a sudden, there is no ground beneath Abraham's feet.

The accompanying angel's behavior during the ascension is also noteworthy. In Jewish apocalyptic accounts an *angelus interpres* normally serves as an important figure who affirms the traditional setting of the celestial topology. Thus, during the progress of a visionary the interpreting angel usually assists the visionary by explaining the contents of various heavens, gradually leading the seer through the divisions of the heavenly space.

But in the aural paradigm of the Slavonic apocalypse, the customary role of an *angelus interpres* undergoes some striking revisions. Yahoel, instead of showing and explaining the contents of various levels of heaven, prefers to

[34] It is necessary to bring attention to another important aural marker that occurs immediately before the patriarch's ascent through the song, that is, his encounter with the group of mysterious angels involved in the heavenly liturgical praxis. *Apoc. Ab*. 15:6–7 reads: "And behold, in this light a fire was kindled [and there was] of a crowd of many people in male likeness. They were all changing in appearance and likeness, running and being transformed and bowing and shouting in a language the words of which I did not know." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22. This tradition of the patriarch's encounter with the angelic liturgical praxis at the outset of his own recitation of the hymn to the Deity probably is not coincidental.

[35] Even earlier in the aforementioned passage from *Apoc. Ab*. 15:7 the seer reports strange disturbances, saying that he saw a crowd of men who were changing in aspect and size. This imagery of the human crowd changing in aspect and size can be an allusion to the builders of the Tower of Babel. The references to the fiery Gehenna and to Abraham passing the fiery threshold invoke the cluster of motifs often found in the later midrashic and targumic accounts already mentioned in this study. In these accounts the references to the patriarch's trials in the furnace often coincide with the imagery of the Tower of Babel and their infamous builders. For the conceptual background of this imagery, see Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, 56, n. 7; Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys*, 250.

[36] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22. [37] *Ibid*.

teach him how to be attentive to the aural means of ascent by urging the seer to participate fully in aural practices.[38] The apocalypse unveils his repeated insistence on the details of a new ascending routine: "And he [Yahoel] said, 'Only worship, Abraham, and recite the song which I taught you.' And he said, 'Recite without ceasing.'"[39] Here the aural theurgical praxis might in itself serve as the substance of the heavenly reality. The divine presence is literally invoked or constituted by a visionary through his actions. In this framework the practitioner himself must be initiated in the peculiar aural enterprise before he encounters the divine manifestation. In this respect Rowland and Morray-Jones remind us that "it may be no coincidence that we are told that Abraham learnt to recite [the song] *before* he came into the presence of God."[40] If the content of the practitioner's praise is somehow connected with the aforementioned practice of the invocation of the Deity, then the content of the song uttered by Abraham appears also to be noteworthy, especially its first part, which is filled with names and attributes.[41]

Divine names and attributes here, as in later Jewish mysticism,[42] not only serve as a sort of aural pass – representing the means by which the visionary can enter the divine realm – they also serve as the building blocks of the divine reality itself. Often, calling on the Deity brings together a cluster of motifs common to creation accounts, in which God himself calls the universe into existence. For this reason, it is noteworthy that the song of the patriarch contains references to the theme of creation. Moreover, it underlines the aural communication between the Creator and His creation.[43] Because of his invocation, Abraham is transported to the highest

[38] Nonetheless, it appears that in the beginning of the patriarch's ascent in Chapter 15 one can still find the "remnants" of the traditional celestial journey and traditional functions of the *angelus interpres*. There the text describes Abraham and his interpreting angel embarking on the wings of the pigeon and the turtledove. When the ascent starts, the seer reports a vision of a strong indescribable light. In this light the visionary then sees a fiery Gehenna and a great crowd of men changing aspect and shape. Puzzled, Abraham then interacts with his *angelus interpres* about this enigmatic vision. This is reminiscent of traditional progress through the celestial space, when a human seer asks his interpreting angel about puzzling events that occur during his progress.

[39] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22.

[40] C. Rowland and C. R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, CRINT 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 83.

[41] Rowland and Morray-Jones note that "the hymn in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* includes an extensive recital of the attributes of God." *Ibid.*, 83.

[42] Several scholars, including Gershom Scholem, have argued for parallels between the song of Abraham and the hymns found in the Hekhalot literature. Cf. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1954), 59–61. Mary Dean-Otting summarizes these arguments in her study. See Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys*, 252–3.

[43] Cf. *Apoc. Ab.* 17:16: "receiving the entreaties of those who honor you and turning away from the entreaties of those who besiege you by the siege of their provocation." *Apoc. Ab.* 17:20: "Accept my prayer, <and let it be sweet to you,>." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 23.

point of the heavenly realm, God's dwelling place, without encountering any elements to be expected, given other visionary accounts.

The seer's behavior in the throne room is also noteworthy. One of the features that catches the eye here is that Abraham, upon his arrival in the divine realm, first hears the divine Voice, and only then returns to the spatial dynamics typical of the visionary paradigm as he sees the realities of the throne room, such as the fiery seat of the Deity and its angelic wheels:

> <And> while I was still reciting the song, the edge of the fire which was on the expanse rose up on high. And I heard a voice like the roaring of the sea, and it did not cease because of the fire. And as the fire rose up, soaring higher, I saw under the fire a throne [made] of fire and the many-eyed Wheels . . .[44]

Scholars previously noted that here, "like the chants of the Merkabah literature, Abraham's hymn appears to have the force of bringing on the vision of the divine throne."[45] The aural and visual co-exist, and this stands at the heart of the apocalyptic enterprise.

A reminder is in order here. The symbol of fire plays a paramount role during the aural ascent of the seer and his angelic companion. As we remember, the beginning of the celestial journey of Abraham and Yahoel is depicted as an entrance into fire.[46] Thus, in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 17:1 the seer reports this fiery ordeal:

> 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.[47]

Later, in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 17:1, immediately before his ascent, Abraham again mentions approaching fire. This time fire envelops him and the great angel: "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."[48] The end of ascent, too, is highlighted through the similar imagery: "<And> while I was still reciting the song, the edge of the fire which was on the expanse rose up on high."[49]

It appears that in the Slavonic apocalypse the symbolism of fire serves as an important aural marker, reminding the reader of the aural theophanic manifestation of the Deity – that is, the Voice in the midst of fire, which

[44] *Apoc. Ab.* 18:1–3. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 23–4.
[45] Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys*, 253.
[46] Here the fire appears to embody a special substance that reshapes the mortal body of the seer.
[47] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22. [48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Apoc. Ab.* 18:1. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 23.

Abraham encountered already at his initiation. The fire here is the substance of God's dwelling place, surrounding the presence of the Deity. The visionary and his celestial guide step into the divine realm when they become enveloped by the fiery substance.

Already in Chapter 17 the seer's progress to the upper heaven is described as immersion into fire mixed with the theophanic voice. Thus, Abraham's transition into a fiery manifestation of God helps to solidify the main conceptual tenets of the aural ideology of the Slavonic apocalypse.

At the outset of this section, we discussed the unusual imagery of the patriarch's immediate access to heaven through the aural medium of the song. This symbolism is reiterated at the end of Abraham's vision, when he is returned at once to earth.[50] *Apocalypse of Abraham* 30:1 reads:

> And while he was still speaking, I found myself on the earth, and I said, "Eternal, Mighty One, I am no longer in the glory in which I was above, but what my soul desired to understand I do not understand in my heart."[51]

It is interesting that here, as in his paradoxical ascent, Abraham's return to earth has an aural accompaniment. But now it is not a song performed by Abraham, but the utterance of the divine Voice.

The singer of the Eternal One

It is important not to underestimate the role of Abraham's celestial guide in the theological framework of the Slavonic apocalypse. Indeed, Yahoel is a decisive symbol within the overarching theological thrust of the pseudepigraphon. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* defines him as the mediation of "my [God's] ineffable name (*неизрекомаго имени моего*)."[52] Even apart from this explanation of the guide's spectacular office, the peculiar designation "Yahoel" (Slav. *Иаоиль*) itself unequivocally reveals the angel as the representation of the divine Name. Since this work has similarities with the Deuteronomic *Shem* theology, it is no coincidence that the angelic guide is introduced as "the Angel of the Name." Many have noted the significant role the Angel of the Name (or the Angel of YHWH) plays in the conceptual framework of *Shem* ideologies. According to one hypothesis, the Angel of the Lord (or the Angel of the divine Name) in Exodus constituted

[50] Mary Dean-Otting underlines the uniqueness of this imagery. See Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys*, 255.

[51] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 34.

[52] *Ibid.*, 17; Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 128; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 58.

one of the conceptual roots of the *Shem* theology. Tryggve Mettinger observes: "it appears that when the Deuteronomistic theologians chose *shem*, they seized on a term which was already connected with the idea of God's presence. Exod. 23:21 tells us how God warned Israel during her wanderings in the desert to respect his angel and obey his voice, 'for my name is in him.'"[53]

Yahoel is both a manifestation and a non-manifestation of the divine Name.[54] He is a paradoxical figure, at once reaffirming the divine presence through mediation of the Tetragrammaton and challenging its overt veneration.[55] This ambiguity in his mediatorial role of the divine presence is very similar to the role the angel Metatron will later play in the Merkabah tradition. In that tradition, Metatron represents not only the divine Name but also the form of the Deity, his *Shi'ur Qomah*.[56] In this capacity the great angel finds himself in an awkward position. He becomes a stumbling block for the infamous visionary of the Talmud, Elisha b. Abuyah who in *b. Hag.* 15a takes Metatron as the second Deity in heaven. Yet in both accounts (talmudic and pseudepigraphical) the difference between the Deity and his angelic manifestation is properly reaffirmed. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Yahoel prevents Abraham from venerating him by putting the patriarch on his feet. In *b. Hag.* 15a, the distance between the Deity and his vice-regent, Metatron, is reaffirmed even more radically. The supreme angel is publicly punished in front of celestial hosts with sixty fiery lashes to prevent any future confusion between the Deity and his angelic representative. Despite these reaffirmations, however, the boundaries between God and his angelic manifestation, his *Shi'ur Qomah*, are somewhat ambiguous. The paradoxical nature of this angelic mediation of the divine Name is hinted at in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* through the depiction of Yahoel delivering a prayer to the Deity, a hymn that now paradoxically includes his own name, "Yahoel."[57]

[53] Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth*, 124–5.

[54] Martha Himmelfarb brings attention to the divine attributes of Yahoel's figure: "Iaoel's body of sapphire recalls the sapphire pavement beneath God's feet in Ex. 24:10 and Ezek. 1:26; it is worth noting that two manuscripts make Iaoel's feet sapphire, rather than his body. The hair of Iaoel's head is like snow, like God's hair in Dan. 7:9." Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 62.

[55] *Apoc. Ab.* 10:4: "he took me by my right hand and stood me on my feet." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17.

[56] On the formative influence of the Yahoel lore on the figure of Metatron, see G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1965), 51.

[57] *Apoc. Ab.* 17:7–13: "And I recited, and he [Yahoel] himself recited the song: O, Eternal, Mighty, Holy El, God Autocrat . . . Eternal, Mighty, Holy Sabaoth, Most Glorious El, El, El, El, Yahoel." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 23.

Theurgical means: ascension with the Name

In our study we have already mentioned the curious presence of the divine names and attributes invoked in Abraham's song during his ascent. While these names might be envisioned as the theurgical means of ascent, another important detail of the narrative must be mentioned. The aural ideology of the text takes a new step when it depicts the angelic companion of the patriarch, Yahoel, as the embodiment of the divine Name. Here one can see the important development of the "embodied" theurgy. The divine Name becomes not simply the aural medium of the transition to the upper realm; it becomes the angelic mediator who leads the seer into heaven.

Abraham's transition to the upper realm accompanied by the embodied Name provides a conceptual framework for future Jewish mystical developments, in which visionaries are transposed to the upper realm by the means of the divine Name. Ithamar Gruenwald underscores the formative value of this imagery. He brings attention to the depiction of the divine Voice ordering Yahoel to raise Abraham to heaven "by means of the ineffable name." Gruenwald observes that this practice of speaking holy names aloud in order to bring about a mystical experience is well known from the later testimonies reflected in the Hekhalot literature. He also directs attention to Rashi's commentary on *b. Hag*. 14b concerning the four visionaries who entered the Pardes. Rashi suggests that the heroes of this story ascended to heaven by means of a name.[58]

In this context it is important not only that Abraham's guiding angel is a representation of the divine Name, but that it is he who teaches the seer a hymn containing the cluster of divine names[59] that allow him to ascend into heaven. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, theurgical practices are executed by various means underlining the complexity of the mystical aural universe of the text.

Praxis of the Voice

The identification of divine manifestation with the voice or sound in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* highlights the importance of praise as a parallel process of the aural expression of creation in relation to its Creator. Also, the authors of the text seem to view praising God as a mystical act that in

[58] Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 52.

[59] Cf. *Apoc. Ab*. 17:13: "Eli {that is, my God,} Eternal, Mighty, Holy Sabaoth, Most Glorious El, El, El, El, Yahoel." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 23.

many ways mirrors the significance of a vision within the *Kavod* paradigm. In the *Shem* paradigm, an aural invocation of God actualizes his presence.[60] By invoking the Deity (or more precisely the divine Name) in praise, the practitioner brings the Deity into existence metaphorically speaking,[61] summoning him from non-being into being, thus replicating the prototypical event of creation recounted in Genesis 1, where God himself brings everything into being by invoking the divine Name.[62]

Time and again the angel Yahoel serves as a faithful guide of this mystical praxis of praise. The text defines him as the Singer of the Eternal One (*Apoc. Ab*. 12:4). He is exceptional both as a practitioner and as an instructor of this aural mysticism, conveying the teachings of the praxis to many of God's creatures, earthly as well as celestial. In *Apocalypse of Abraham* 10:8–9 he is described as the celestial choirmaster of the *Hayyot*:

> I am a power in the midst of the Ineffable who put together his names in me. I am appointed according to his commandment to reconcile the rivalries of the Living Creatures of the Cherubim against one another, and teach those who bear him [to sing] the song in the middle of man's night, at the seventh hour. (*Apoc. Ab*. 10:8–9)[63]

This role can be compared to the future office of Metatron, who often serves in the Hekhalot and *Shi'ur Qomah* accounts as the celestial choirmaster[64] conducting the liturgies of the Living Creatures.[65]

[60] Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth*, 125.

[61] The process of constituting the angelic or divine presence or reconstituting a human nature into a celestial one through the invocation of the divine Name can be seen in a couple of traditions. Moses is invested with the divine Name during his Sinai experience, and similarly Jesus is invested with the divine Name at his baptism. For a detailed discussion of these traditions, see Fossum, *The Name of God*, 76–112.

[62] In the Palestinian targumic tradition (*Targum Neofiti*, *Fragmentary Targum*) the divine command יהי uttered by God during the creation of the world is identified with the Tetragrammaton. For a detailed discussion of this tradition, see Fossum, *The Name of God*, 80.

[63] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 18. For an extensive discussion on the passages about the rivalries of the *Hayyot* in the *Apoc. Ab*. 10:8–9 and 18:8–10 see K. W. Whitney, Jr., *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism*, HSM 63 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

[64] On Metatron's role as the celestial choirmaster of the *Hayyot*, see A. Orlov, "Celestial Choirmaster: The Liturgical Role of Enoch-Metatron in 2 Enoch and Merkabah Tradition," in A. Orlov, *From Apocalypticism to Merkabah Mysticism: Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 197–221.

[65] "One *hayyah* rises above the seraphim and descends upon the tabernacle of the youth whose name is Metatron, and says in a great voice, a voice of sheer silence: 'The Throne of Glory is shining.' Suddenly the angels fall silent. The watchers and the holy ones become quiet. They are silent, and are pushed into the river of fire. The *hayyot* put their faces on the ground, and this youth whose name is Metatron brings the fire of deafness and puts it into their ears so that they could not hear the sound of God's speech or the ineffable name. The youth whose name is Metatron then invokes, in seven voices, his living, pure, honored, awesome, holy, noble, strong, beloved, mighty, powerful name." *Synopse zur Hekhaloth-Literatur*, eds. P. Schäfer *et al.*, TSAJ 2 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1981), 164. Another

Yahoel's expertise in praise does not seem to be limited to heavenly matters. In the apocalypse he is also depicted as the one who initiates a human visionary, Abraham, into this mystical praxis of praising the Deity, which serves as an alternative practice to vision mysticism:

> And he said, "Only worship, Abraham, and recite the song which I taught you." ... And he said, "Recite without ceasing." And I recited, and he himself recited the song. (*Apoc. Ab.* 17:5–7)[66]

Our previous remarks about the connections between the visionary and aural praxis make it intriguing that veneration of the Deity is described in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* through the paradoxical formulae of seeing/not seeing: "He whom you will see (его же узриши) going before both of us in a great sound of *qedushah* is the Eternal One who had loved you, whom himself you will not see (самого же не зриши)" (*Apoc. Ab.* 16:3).[67]

This ambiguous mixture of the paradigms of vision and voice can be seen in other parts of the text as well. For example, in the depiction of Abraham's fast in 12:1–2, two mystical practices appear to be mixed:

> And we went, the two of us alone together, forty days and nights. And I ate no bread and drank no water, because [my] food was to see the angel who was with me, and his speech with me was my drink (*Apoc. Ab.* 12:1–2).[68]

The first mystical practice is a traditional motif found in numerous visionary accounts – viz., the theme of nourishment through the beholding of a celestial being, often in the form of the *Kavod*. An especially famous example of this is the later interpretations of Moses' story, where he is often depicted as a being fed through the vision of God's *Shekhinah*. Yet this mystical practice is not alone. A second is the motif of nourishment through the *voice* of the heavenly being, the angel Yahoel.[69]

Hekhalot passage attested in *Synopse* §385 also elaborates the liturgical role of the exalted angel: "when the youth enters below the throne of glory, God embraces him with a shining face. All the angels gather and address God as 'the great, mighty, awesome God,' and they praise God three times a day by means of the youth." *Synopse zur Hekhaloth-Literatur*, 162–3. The designation of Yahoel as the Singer of the Eternal One in *Apoc. Ab.* 12:4 is also intriguing. It again recalls the description of Metatron in the aforementioned account, where he is depicted as the leading singer of the heavenly host, the one who is able to invoke the divine Name in seven voices.

[66] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22–3.

[67] *Ibid.*, 22. Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 70.

[68] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 19.

[69] David Halperin notices some similarities between the celestial nourishments of Abraham and Moses. He observes that "Moses also discovered that the divine Presence is itself nourishment enough. That is why Exod. 24:11 says that Moses and his companions beheld God, and ate and drank. This means, one rabbi explained, that the sight of God was food and drink to them; for Scripture also says, In the

Also noteworthy is that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the praise seems to be understood as a sort of garment that envelops the formless Deity, similar to the Merkabah tradition where the divine Form is enveloped in the garment known as the *Haluq* (חלוק),[70] an attribute that underlines there the anthropomorphic nature of the divine substance. In contrast, in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 16:2–4 the Deity is enveloped in the sound of angelic praise, a description that may serve to reaffirm the bodiless presence of the Deity:[71]

> And he [Yahoel] said to me, "Remain with me, do not fear! He whom you will see going before both of us in a great sound of *qedushah* is the Eternal One who had loved you, whom himself you will not see. Let your spirit not weaken <from the shouting>, since I am with you, strengthening you." (*Apoc. Ab*. 16:2–4)[72]

The importance of angelic praise is also highlighted in the depiction of the divine throne in Chapter 18, which draws on the imagery found in Ezekiel 1. One of the new details there, however, is the persistent emphasis on the symbolism of vocal praxis: in their portrayals of the Living Creatures (the *Hayyot*) and the Wheels (the *Ophannim*), the authors accentuate their role in praising the Deity:

> And as the fire rose up, soaring higher, I saw under the fire a throne [made] of fire and the many-eyed Wheels, and they are reciting the song. And under the throne [I saw] four singing fiery Living Creatures. (*Apoc. Ab*. 18:3)[73]

Thus, instead of emphasizing the role of the *Hayyot* as the foundation of the throne, which in the formative account found in the Book of Ezekiel holds the divine presence or form, the Slavonic apocalypse stresses the role the Living Creatures have in divine worship. They are depicted as "singing the divine Presence."[74]

light of the King's face there is life . . . We might assume that the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* had such midrashim in mind when he wrote that 'my food was to see the angel who was with me, and his speech – that was my drink.'" Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 111.

[70] On the imagery of *Haluq* see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 57ff; P. Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God. Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism*, tr. A. Pomerance (Albany: SUNY, 1992), 19, 133.

[71] The concept of praise as a garment seems to be connected to the tradition of investiture with the divine Name discussed earlier in our article.

[72] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22.

[73] *Ibid*., 24, emphasis mine.

[74] Christopher Rowland noticed in some Qumran materials a similar tendency to reform the functions of the Creatures of the Throne. He notes, "The *merkava* passage from Qumran Cave 4, like the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, is restrained about speaking of the form of God: 'The cherubim bless the image of the throne chariot above the firmament, and they praise the majesty of the fiery firmament beneath the seat of his glory' (4Q405 frag 20–21–22, lines 8–9)." Rowland and Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God*, 68.

As one can see, the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse attempt to reinterpret the prominent functions of the *Hayyot* according to the new aniconic template. They add some new details to the symbolism surrounding the creatures of the divine throne. It has already been mentioned that one of the novel conceptual developments here is the motif of the rivalry of the *Hayyot*. As we remember in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 10:8–9, Yahoel is described as a "pacifier" of the Living Creatures who, according to the text, are involved in rivalries against each other. The theme of the rivalry of the *Hayyot* is invoked again later in the text, when the patriarch sees how the celestial creatures are threatening each other. This motif of the *Hayyot*'s hostility has puzzled students of the Slavonic apocalypse for a long time. Martha Himmelfarb suggests that this theme can be related to the polemics against idolatry. She recalls the episode of Abraham's arrival to the divine throne when he sees the rivalry of the *Hayyot*. She notes:

> after his initial moment of terror Abraham shows no fear, even when confronted with sights that might be expected to produce fear. As he arrives before the divine throne, he observes a peculiar incident. When they have completed the song, the four creatures begin to look at each other threateningly, and Abraham's angelic guide must turn their faces away from each other and teach them the song of peace (18:8–10). That this rowdy behavior is habitual is clear from Iaoel's words as he introduces himself to Abraham before the ascent: "I am he who is appointed by [God's] command to appease the strife the cherubic creatures have with one another . . ." (10:10). The meaning of the creatures' behavior is not at all clear. It is quite different from the chaotic fiery worship that frightened Abraham during the ascent. The emphasis on the rejection of idolatry in the first section of the Apocalypse of Abraham might suggest that the incident is intended to guard against idolatrous worship of the creatures that stand closest to God."[75]

Himmelfarb's suggestion deserves careful attention in view of the fact that the function of the *Hayyot* is reformulated according to the new aural template. As we recall these angelic holders of the throne sing the divine presence instead of supporting it. This new conceptual framework dramatically changes old spatial dynamics in which the holders of the throne were envisioned to be static. Now the traditional static structural unity, urgent for this class of the "sustaining angels," has been shattered by their novel aural functions, which relieve them of their previous spatial duties. It leads in its turn to a paradoxical violation of the boundaries between the *Hayyot*, who are depicted now as fighting with one another.

[75] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 64.

"No other power of other form"

The most striking detail in the description of the divine throne in Chapter 18 is that, at the climactic moment of the seer's encounter with the divine chariot, the text does not give any indications of the presence of the anthropomorphic glory of God. Curiously, the chariot even appears to be missing a rider. This radically differs from the Ezekelian account, which in 1:26 describes the figure on the throne as דמות כמראה אדם. Instead, Abraham encounters the already familiar voice in the midst of fire surrounded by the sound of the *qedushah*:

> While I was still standing and watching, I saw behind the Living Creatures a chariot with fiery Wheels. Each Wheel was full of eyes round about. And above the Wheels there was the throne which I had seen. And it was covered with fire and the fire encircled it round about, and an indescribable light surrounded the fiery people. And I heard the sound of their *qedushah* like the voice of a single man.[76] And a voice came to me out of the midst of the fire. (*Apoc. Ab*. 18:12–19:1)[77]

Polemics against the divine body traditions is then further developed in Chapter 19. In fact, Chapter 19 can be considered the climax of the aniconic ideology of the apocalypse. Here the seer is allowed to take a final look at the upper firmaments so that he and (more importantly) his audience may be assured that no divine form is present there. The account detailing this final gaze is rather lengthy:

> And he [God] said, "Look at the levels which are under the expanse on which you are brought and see that on no single level is there any other but the one whom you have searched for or who has loved you." And while he was still speaking, and behold, the levels opened, <and> there are the heavens under me. And I saw on the seventh firmament upon which I stood a fire spread out and light, and dew, and a multitude of angels, and a power of the invisible glory from the Living Creatures which I had seen above. <But> *I saw no one else there*. And I looked from the altitude of my standing to the sixth expanse. And I saw there a multitude of *incorporeal spiritual angels*, carrying out the orders of the fiery angels who were on the eighth firmament, as I was standing on its suspensions. And behold, neither on this expanse was there *any other power of other form*, but only the spiritual angels, and they are the power which I had seen on the seventh firmament. (*Apoc. Ab*. 19:3–7)[78]

[76] Halperin noticed the paradigm shift from the visual plane to the aural plane when he observes that "Ezekiel's phrase 'like the appearance of a man,' becomes, in a concluding sentence, that plainly draws on the end of Ezek. 1:28, 'like the voice of a man.'" Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 108.

[77] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 24.

[78] *Ibid.*, 24–5, emphasis mine.

Intriguingly, the text repeatedly stresses the absence of any corporeal manifestation of the Deity, in one instance even using the term "form" (Slav. образ):[79] "and behold, neither on this expanse was there any other power of other form (образом силы иноя)."[80] Further, the text seems to deny even the presence of angelic "bodies" on the upper firmaments, constantly referring to angelic creatures found there as "incorporeal" (бесплотныхъ) or "spiritual" (духовныхъ) angels. Importantly for our ongoing inquiry, according to the *Apocalypse of Abraham* it is not a manifestation of the Deity but the incorporeal angels who now represent "the power" (Slav. сила) that the seer beholds on the seventh firmament.

As one can see the anti-anthropomorphic tendencies manifest themselves not only in the apocalypse's depictions of the Deity but also in its peculiar portrayals of the angels and supernatural creatures. This suggests that its authors' agenda goes beyond the distinctive aniconic depictions of the Deity and encompasses the imagery of other celestial beings, too. It is important to explore the anti-anthropomorphic features of the angelological developments in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.

Yahoel: the bird of heaven

The anti-anthropomorphic character of the text's angelology is something of an enigma. One of the possible clues to understanding it lies in the cryptic conceptual developments surrounding Abraham's celestial guide, Yahoel. This angelic character first appears in Chapter 10 as "the namesake of the mediation of God's ineffable name."[81] It has been already noted that the close association of the angel with mediating the divine Name does not seem coincidental in light of the work's aural symbolism in its depiction of the Deity. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 11:2–3 unveils further features of the angel's unique identity by providing a depiction of his physique:

[79] The Slavonic word образ can be also translated as a "type," an "image," an "icon," or a "symbol." See I. Sreznevskij, *Materialy dlja slovarja drevnerusskogo jazyka po pis'mennym pamjatnikam*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, Tipografija Imperatorskoj akademii nauk, 1912), 2.539–42.

[80] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 25; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 80.

[81] Scholars trace the origin of Yahoel's figure to the biblical imagery of the Angel of the Lord found in Exodus. On this connection, see Fossum, *The Name of God*, 318.

> The appearance of the griffin's (ногуего)[82] body was like sapphire, and the likeness of his face like chrysolite, and the hair of his head like snow, and a turban on his head like the appearance of the bow in the clouds, and the closing of his garments [like] purple, and a golden staff [was] in his right hand.[83]

The Slavonic word *ногуего*, used in the description of Yahoel's body, has puzzled scholars for a long time. It can be translated as "his leg" (ногу его), but this rendering does not fit in the larger context of Yahoel's description. Previous translators therefore preferred to drop the puzzling word and translated the first sentence of Yahoel's description as "the appearance of his body was like sapphire."[84] Recently Alexander Kulik offered a new hypothesis. The Slavonic term *ногуего* might derive from the Slavonic ногъ or ногуи, "a griffin."[85] Kulik proposes that the whole phrase can be translated as "the appearance of the griffin's (ногуева) body" and thus refers to the eagle-like body of Yahoel. He further suggests that Yahoel might be a composite creature, a man-bird, since he is sent to Abraham in "the likeness of a man" (*Apoc. Ab.* 10:4). Kulik argues that since Yahoel has "hair on his head" and also has hands (since he is able to hold a golden staff), it appears that "only the torso of Yahoel must be of griffin-like appearance, while his head is like that of a man."[86] To provide evidence of such puzzling angelic imagery, Kulik points to some examples of "griffin-like" angels in the Hekhalot writings.

Basil Lourié has recently supported Kulik's hypothesis about the avian features of Yahoel by providing references to the tradition of transporting angels, such as psychopomps or other angelic servants, in the form of griffins.[87] Both Kulik's and Lourié's findings are important for understanding the Yahoel imagery. That said, the primary angels in apocalyptic and Merkabah materials are usually depicted as anthropomorphic creatures.

[82] The reading is supported by mss. A, C, D, I, H, and K. It is omitted in mss. B, S, and U. For the sigla of the known manuscripts of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, see Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 97.

[83] *Ibid.*, 19. [84] *Ibid.*, 83.

[85] In his dictionary Izmail Sreznevskij traces the Slavonic terms ногъ and ногуи to the Greek word γρύψ. See Sreznevskij, *Materialy dlja slovarja drevnerusskogo jazyka po pis'mennym pamjatnikam*, 2.462. See also R. I. Avanesov, *Slovar' drevnerusskogo jazyka* (XI–XIV вв.), 10 vols. (Moscow: Russkij Jazyk, 1988), 5.429.

[86] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 83.

[87] Lourié points to "a medieval legend of the ascension of Alexander the Great, which goes back to the Hellenistic era. In the legend Alexander reaches the heaven (or even heavenly Jerusalem) transported by four griffins. This motif suggests that the griffins as the psychopomps transporting visionaries to heaven were not an invention of the authors of the Hekhalot literature but were a part of the early Jewish environment." B. Lourié, "Review of A. Kulik's *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*," *JSP* 15.3 (2006), 229–37, at 233.

Further, as has been already mentioned, these primary angels often serve as representations or even "mirrors" of the anthropomorphic glory of God.[88] The tendency of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* to depict the primary angel in the form of a bird looks quite unusual in this respect.

Even more intriguing, in Yahoel and his composite ptero-anthropomorphic corporeality one can possibly witness polemics against the anthropomorphic traditions of the divine Glory. After all the great angel serves as a representation of the Deity – the role that is hinted at through his endowment with the divine Name. Drawing on the account offered in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 10:4, which tells that God sent Yahoel to Abraham "in the likeness of a man,"[89] Jarl Fossum observes that the reference to "human likeness is a constant trait in the representation of the Glory."[90] He further notes that other depictions of Yahoel bring to memory various traditions of the divine Glory as well. Thus, for example, *Apocalypse of Abraham* 11:2–3 states that Yahoel's body was "like sapphire, and the likeness of his face like chrysolite, and the hair of his head like snow, and a turban on his head like the appearance of the bow in the clouds, and the closing garments [like] purple, and a golden staff [was] in his right hand."[91] Fossum suggests that

> this description contains adaptations of various portraits of the Glory. The radiant appearance of the body of the Glory is mentioned already in Ez. i.27. In the Book of Daniel, the angel Gabriel, who is represented as the Glory, is in one place described in the following way: "His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like gleam of burning bronze . . ." (x.6). In the *Shi'ur Qomah* texts, there is frequent reference to the shining appearance of the body of the Glory, and chrysolite is even used expressly to describe it: "His body is like chrysolite. His light breaks tremendously from the darkness [. . .]" The rainbow-like appearance of Yahoel's turban is reminiscent of Ez. i.28, which says that "the appearance of the brightness round about" the Glory was "like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain."[92]

It is noteworthy that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* these spectacular features of the anthropomorphic divine Glory became applied to the composite creature that combines anthropomorphic and avian features, which clearly demonstrates the polemical character of the text's angelology.

[88] On these traditions see Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 165–76; A. Orlov, "The Face as the Heavenly Counterpart of the Visionary in the Slavonic *Ladder of Jacob*," in Orlov, *From Apocalypticism to Merkabah Mysticism: Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 399–419.

[89] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17.

[90] Fossum, *The Name of God*, 319.

[91] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 19.

[92] Fossum, *The Name of God*, 319–20.

The turtledove and the pigeon: pteromorphic psychopomps

Suggestions about Yahoel's possession of a griffin body deserve careful attention since in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* pteromorphic imagery appears to be applied to other angelic beings as well. Another example can be found in Chapters 12 and 13, where Yahoel conveys to Abraham the following instructions about the sacrifices:

> And he said to me, "Slaughter and cut all this, putting together the two halves, one against the other. But do not cut the birds. And give them [i.e., the halves] to the two men whom I shall show you standing beside you, since they are the altar on the mountain, to offer sacrifice to the Eternal One. The turtledove and the pigeon you will give me, and I shall ascend (возиду) in order to show to you [the inhabited world] on the wings of two birds . . ." 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. (*Apoc. Ab.* 12:8–13:1)[93]

Although this description appears to rely on the Abrahamic traditions found in Genesis, it also contains some important additions to the biblical narrative.[94] Thus, the birds that in the Genesis account serve merely as sacrificial objects appear to have some angelic functions in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.[95] Yahoel, who requests two birds from Abraham, mentions that later the birds will serve as the psychopomps of the visionary and his celestial guide. Yahoel's prediction about the birds is fulfilled in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 15:2–4, where the seer and his angelic guide are depicted as traveling on the wings of the pigeon and the turtledove:

> 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

[93] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 19–20; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 64.

[94] Gen. 15:8–12 reads, "But he said, 'O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?' He said to him, 'Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him."

[95] Mary Dean-Otting notices the oddity of this apocalyptic imagery. She observes, "in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Abraham is set upon the right wing of the pigeon by the angel who himself sits upon the left wing of the turtledove (Chapter 15). This feature of the ascent is immediately striking for here the angel uses an 'artificial' means of transporting himself and Abraham into the heavens. In two of the four major ascents, the *Testament of Levi* and *3 Baruch*, the one ascending is merely guided or lifted into the heavens by an angel; in *1 Enoch* 14 Enoch ascends unassisted (cf. *1 Enoch* 71); but, in the *Testament of Abraham*, Abraham ascends on the divine chariot which is driven by angels (rec. A, 10)." Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys*, 249.

> both were neither slaughtered nor divided. And he carried me up to the edge of the fiery flame. And we ascended <like great winds to the heaven which was fixed on the expanses . . .> (*Apoc. Ab.* 15:2–4)[96]

In view of the established tradition of angelic psychopomps in the apocalyptic accounts, it appears that the pigeon and turtledove here fulfill functions traditionally performed by angels.

The fallen angel Azazel: the impure bird

There is further evidence for the hypothesis of Yahoel's pteromorphic, eagle-like body and for the polemical tendency of the text against anthropomorphic portrayals of celestial beings in general. The negative angelic protagonist in the text, the fallen angel Azazel, is also depicted as an avian creature, an impure bird (Slav. *птица нечистая*). Azazel enters the apocalypse at Chapter 13, when Abraham offers animal sacrifices to God. As in the case of the sacrificial birds refashioned into angelic psychopomps, the authors of the apocalypse expand the details of the biblical story of Abraham's sacrifices, particularly the point when the birds of prey come down on the carcasses of the patriarch's offerings. Genesis 15:11 informs us that the birds of prey came down on Abraham's sacrifices, and he drove them away. By contrast, in the Slavonic apocalypse the reference to the birds of prey becomes appropriated into the book's angelology. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* 13:2–6 reads:

> And I waited for [the time of] the evening offering. And an impure bird (*птица нечистая*) flew down on the carcasses, and I drove it away. And an 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." And it came to pass when I saw the bird speaking I said to the angel, "What is this, my lord?" And he said, "This is iniquity, this is Azazel!"[97]

Later on, during the story of the Fall of the protoplasts, Azazel is described as a composite creature – a serpent with human hands and feet and with wings on his shoulders:

[96] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22.
[97] *Ibid.*, 20; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 64.

> And behind the tree was standing, as it were, a serpent in form, but having hands and feet like a man, and wings on its shoulders: six on the right side and six on the left. And he was holding in his hands the grapes of the tree and feeding the two whom I saw entwined with each other. (*Apoc. Ab.* 23:5–8)[98]

Since the portrayal of the demon is given in the middle of the Adamic story, it is not entirely clear whether this composite physique represents Azazel's permanent form or whether it is just a temporary manifestation acquired during the deception of Adam and Eve. Yet the avian features of the fallen angel are again reaffirmed in this description.

As in the case of Yahoel and the pteromorphic psychopomps, the peculiar imagery used for depicting Azazel signals the authors' reluctance to identify unambiguously the celestial beings with the traditional human-like appearance. And this seems to reflect the pseudepigraphon's anti-anthropomorphic tendency.

Invisible angels

The general anti-corporeal thrust of the pseudepigraphon's angelology seems also to be reflected in the text's insistence on the invisibility of certain classes of angelic beings. The reader encounters this trend already in the beginning of the apocalyptic section of the work. Directly following a description of his avian features, Yahoel makes a cryptic statement. He reveals to Abraham that his strange composite body is merely a temporal manifestation that will not last long. To be invisible is his destiny:

> And he said, "Let my appearance not frighten you, nor my speech trouble your soul! Come with me and I shall go with you, visible until the sacrifice, but after the sacrifice invisible (невидим) forever." (*Apoc. Ab.* 11:4)[99]

The text deconstructs the visible form of the primary angel and insists on his eternal incorporeality. This reveals a persistent, deliberate tendency deeply connected with the notion of God's own incorporeality. It strikingly contrasts the visual ideology of the Merkabah tradition, wherein the body of the primary angel is often envisioned as God's *Shiʿur Qomah* – that is, the measurement and the visual reaffirmation of the Deity's own anthropomorphic corporeality. Yet in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* one can see a quite different picture.

[98] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 27.
[99] *Ibid.*, 19; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 62.

As the story unfolds and Abraham progresses in his celestial journey to the upper firmaments and the abode of the bodiless Deity, references to incorporeal or "spiritual" angels occur more and more often. This is hardly coincidental. In fact, the idea of the incorporeality of the angelic hosts inhabiting the upper firmaments looms large in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. In this regard, consider *Apocalypse of Abraham* 19:6–7; in the upper firmaments the seer beholds

> a multitude of incorporeal (бесплотное множество) spiritual (духовныхъ) angels, carrying out the orders of the fiery angels who were on the eighth firmament ... And behold, neither on this expanse was there any other power of other form, but only the spiritual angels. (*Apoc. Ab*. 19:6–7)[100]

Yet again, one can see the transitional nature of the pseudepigraphon's angelology. The new, incorporeal understanding of the celestial retinue mixes with the old, anthropomorphic understanding of the *Kavod* paradigm. For this reason, the authors occasionally designate angels as "men" – for example, the angels who received the sacrifices from Abraham – despite the fact that they usually insist on the incorporeality of angels. This bespeaks the fluidity of angelic imagery in the Slavonic apocalypse, which in many ways stands on the threshold of the *Kavod* and *Shem* traditions, sharing the two conceptual worlds.

The complex world of the apocalypse's angelology demonstrates its paradoxical nature, drawn from the complex dynamics of several apocalyptic streams interacting with each other. There is an insistence of the invisibility of certain classes of angels, not to mention the Deity himself. Yet side by side with this, the very dynamics of Abraham's trip unavoidably require physical angels. The protagonist must interact with other characters in the story, after all. The authors of the apocalypse, therefore, cannot keep the angelic figures in the narrative completely invisible. In this context avian angelic imagery seems to serve as a useful device for sustaining the anti-anthropomorphic agenda of the pseudepigraphon without interrupting the dynamics of the patriarch's celestial trip.

[100] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 25; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 80.

CHAPTER 3

The corporealism of the demonic Temple: the Kavod *of Azazel*

Our previous chapters on heavenly and earthly sanctuaries hinted at a peculiar parallelism between the heavenly and earthly Temples, which are often depicted as mirroring each other. Scholars have noted that such perspectives are based on the broader conceptual tendency that "envisions the universe as a horizontal duality in which the heavenly and earthly realms mirror one another. According to this perspective, there is a direct parallelism between the existence and actions of heavenly beings and those of their human counterparts on earth."[1] In this worldview the earthly sanctuaries, their sacerdotal content, and even their cultic servants, are considered predestined to be faithful imitators of their celestial counterparts. In this particular perspective even the etiology of these cultic rituals and settings is intimately connected with their origination after the patterns of heavenly prototypes. Further, the authenticity and effectiveness of the earthly cultic establishments are then tested on their faithful correspondence to the ultimate heavenly patterns according to which they were initially formed. As one scholar rightly observes, "the goal of history . . . is that the cultus will be 'on earth as in heaven.'" Indeed, as we already saw, visionaries are often depicted as either beholding or traveling to heavenly sanctuaries, especially in times when the earthly shrines become physically destroyed or polluted and thus no longer able to fulfill their cultic responsibilities.

It is true that the main thrust of the spatial symmetry found in apocalyptic literature is often expressed through the formula "on earth as in heaven." Yet it is not the human, earthly abode alone that betrays such spatial correspondence. The demonic underworld also strives to imitate heaven for its own, nefarious purposes. Scholars have noticed, for example, that in some Qumran documents the parallelism between the heavenly and

[1] Angel, *Otherworldly and Eschatological Priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 83.

earthly realms "is situated within an all-encompassing vertical duality between the forces of good (God, the beneficent angels, and the 'sons of light') on the one hand and the evil powers (Belial, the wicked spirits, and the 'sons of darkness') on the other."[2] In fact, demonic creatures try to mirror not only the features of angelic characters but also even the attributes of God himself.

Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings provide a plethora of illustrations of this strange and perplexing heavenly-infernal parallelism. One important example of this paradoxical relationship is found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. The antagonist of the story, the fallen angel Azazel, is portrayed as possessing his own "glory" or *Kavod*, the attribute that is reserved almost exclusively for the depiction of the Deity in apocalyptic accounts. And this is no isolated incident. Rather, Azazel's possession of his own counterfeit *Kavod* is part of a broader ideological tendency of the apocalypse to unveil the paradoxical symmetry of the good and evil realms. The most striking example of this symmetry is found in Chapter 23, where Abraham is spirited back to the beginning of time to watch the demon's corruption of Adam and Eve.

As noted before, Chapter 14 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* unveils an enigmatic tradition about the unusual power given to the fallen angel Azazel. In the text, Abraham's guide, the angel Yahoel, warns him that God endowed his chief eschatological opponent with a special will and with "heaviness" against those who answer him. The reference to the mysterious "heaviness" given to the demon has puzzled students of the Slavonic apocalypse for a long time. Scholars have previously suggested that the Slavonic term for "heaviness" (тягота) in this passage from *Apoc. Ab*. 14:13 might serve as a technical term to translate the Hebrew word *Kavod*.[3]

Given the formative influence the Book of Ezekiel exercises on the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, it would be no great surprise were the authors of the pseudepigraphon acquainted with the technical *Kavod* terminology. After all, it plays a central role in Ezekiel. Yet, if so, applying this theophanic imagery to such a notorious character is all the more puzzling. Elsewhere in Jewish biblical and pseudepigraphic traditions the *Kavod* symbolism represents a unique attribute reserved almost exclusively for God and his angels. Could this strange tradition about the glory of Azazel suggest that the

[2] *Ibid*. See also, J. Maier, "Religious Beliefs, Qumran Sect," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. L. H. Schiffman and J. C. VanderKam, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.754.

[3] *Apoc. Ab*. 14:13 reads, "Since God gave him [Azazel] the *heaviness* (тяготоу) and the will against those who answer him." Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 150.

authors of the Slavonic apocalypse sought to envision the fallen angel as a kind of negative counterpart of the Deity? Does Azazel enjoy his own "exalted" attributes that mimic divine attributes?

A closer look reveals that this antithetical symmetry is not confined to the description of the fallen angel. It also represents one of the main ideological tendencies of the pseudepigraphon. Several scholars have noted this peculiarity of the apocalypse's theological universe, this mirroring of the good and evil realms. The sheer volume of such antithetical symmetry permeating the fabric of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* is one of the most controversial and puzzling features of the text.[4] These dualistic currents are present mostly in the second, apocalyptic portion of the text, where Abraham receives an enigmatic revelation from the Deity about the unusual powers given to Azazel.

Scholars have explained this in various ways. Reflecting on these conceptual developments, Michael Stone draws attention to the traditions found in Chapters 20, 22, and 29, where the reference to Azazel's rule, which he exercises jointly with God over the world, coincides "with the idea that God granted him authority over the wicked."[5] Stone suggests that "these ideas are clearly dualistic in nature."[6] John Collins explores another cluster of peculiar depictions repeatedly found in the second part of the *Apocalypse*, in which humankind is divided into two parts, half on the right and half on the left – representing, respectively, the chosen people and the Gentiles. These portions of humanity are labeled in the text as the lot of God and the lot of Azazel. Collins argues that "the symmetrical division suggests a dualistic view of the world."[7] He further observes, "the nature and extent of this dualism constitute the most controversial problem in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*."[8]

[4] Cf. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 229.

[5] *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. M. E. Stone, CRINT, 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 418.

[6] *Ibid.*, 418. Stone makes a further connection between the dualistic tendencies found in *Apoc. Ab.* and the traditions from the Qumran documents. He observes that "the idea of joint rule of Azazel and God in this world resembles the doctrine of the Rule of Community, according to which there are two powers God appointed to rule in the world (cf. 1QS 2:20–1)." *Ibid.*, 418. It should be noted that the connections between the dualism of the Slavonic apocalypse and the Palestinian dualistic traditions have been recognized by several scholars. Already George Herbert Box, long before the discovery of the DSS, argued that the dualistic features of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* are reminiscent of the "Essene" dualistic ideology. Thus, Box suggested that "the book is essentially Jewish, and there are features in it which suggest Essene origin; such are its strong predestinarian doctrine, *its dualistic conceptions*, and its ascetic tendencies." Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, xxi.

[7] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 229.

[8] *Ibid.*

Ryszard Rubinkiewicz, while denying the presence of "absolute" or "ontological"[9] dualism in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, admits that the pseudepigraphon exhibits some dualistic tendencies in its ethical, spatial, and temporal dimensions.[10] In contrast to Rubinkiewicz's opinion, George Herbert Box sees in these spatial and temporal dimensions the main signs of the "radical dualism" of the apocalypse. He maintains that "the radical dualism of the Book comes out not only in the sharp division of mankind into two hosts, which stand for Jewry and heathendom respectively, but also in the clearly defined contradistinction of two ages, the present Age of ungodliness and the future Age of righteousness."[11]

Another distinguished student of the text, Marc Philonenko, analyzes the symmetrical nature of the positions of Yahoel and Azazel.[12] He notes the peculiarity of the interaction between these two spirits, one good and one malevolent. He observes that their battle does not occur directly, but rather through a medium of a human being, Abraham. Abraham is depicted in the pseudepigraphon as the locus where the battle between two spiritual forces unfolds.[13] Philonenko sees in this internalization a particular mold of dualism that is also present in Qumran

[9] "In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* there is no ontological dualism. The created world is good before the eyes of God (22:2). There is no other God in the universe, than 'the one whom' Abraham 'searched for' and 'who has loved' him (19:3). There is evil in the world, but it is not inevitable. God has full control over the world and he does not permit the body of the just to remain in the hand of Azazel (13:10). Azazel is wrong if he thinks he can scorn justice and disperse the secret of heaven (14:4). He will be banished in the desert forever (14:5)." Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 1.684.

[10] He observes that "dans l'Apocalypse d'Abraham il n'y a pas trace d'un dualisme absolu . . . Mais le monde révèle un certain dualisme. D'abord on découvre un dualisme spatial. Il y a la terre et l'Eden, la mer et les eaux supérieures, les hommes situés à gauche et les hommes situés à droite dans le tableau (XXI, 3–7). Il y a aussi un dualisme temporel: celui qui oppose le monde present (XXXII, 2) et le monde de la justice (XXIX, 18); le jour et les ténèbres (XVII, 22s.), l'humanité d'avant Abraham et l'humanité d'après Abraham (XXIV–XXV). L'humanité postérieure à Abraham est elle-même divisée entre le people de Dieu et les nations (XXII, 4–5; XXIV, 1). Il existe encore un dualisme éthique: on trouve des justes, mais aussi des méchants (XVII, 22; XXIII, 12); l'homme a le désir du mal (XXIII, 13), mais aussi celui des œuvres justes (XXVII, 9)." R. Rubinkiewicz, "La vision de l'histoire dans l'Apocalypse d'Abraham," *ANRW* 2.19.1 (1979), 137–151, at 149.

[11] Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, xxvi.

[12] Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 31.

[13] Philonenko also draws attention to the expression found in *Apoc. Ab.* 14:6: "Since your inheritance are those who are with you, with men born with the stars and clouds. And their portion is you, and they come into being through your being." Philonenko sees in this expression a connection with the astrological lore found in some Qumran horoscopes, which expresses the idea that the human beings from the time of their birth belong either to the "lot" of light or to the "lot" of darkness. Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 32. Philonenko also sees the dualistic opposition between the "age of justice" (въ вѣцѣ праведнемь) and the "age of corruption" (во тлѣннѣ вѣцѣ). In his opinion all these instances represent remarkable expressions of a dualistic ideology.

materials,[14] including the *Instruction on the Two Spirits* (1QS 3:13–4:26), where the Prince of Lights and the Angel of Darkness are fighting in the heart of man.[15]

What, then, are we to make of this antithetical symmetry between the divine and demonic realms, the worlds of God and of Azazel? The varied and intriguing suggestions offered by scholars deserve further investigation. This chapter of our study will explore the dualistic symmetrical patterns found in the Slavonic pseudepigraphon, concentrating mainly on the peculiar theophanic and sacerdotal imagery surrounding the figure of Azazel.

The inheritance of Azazel

The tradition that in the eschaton humanity will be divided into two lots, the blessed and the reprobate, is found in the second part of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. This has captivated the imagination of scholars for a long time. In these fascinating descriptions, students of the peudepigraphon have often tried to discern possible connections with the dualistic developments found in Qumran materials, where the imagery of the two eschatological lots play a significant role. Indeed, in the Dead Sea Scrolls one can find a broad appropriation of the imagery of the two portions of humanity that often are depicted in striking opposition to each other in a final decisive battle. The peculiar symbolism of the eschatological parties often takes the form of dualistic counterparts; these groups are repeatedly described in the Dead Sea Scrolls using various metaphoric dichotomies – darkness and

[14] On dualism in Qumran see J. H. Charlesworth, "A Critical Comparison of the Dualism in 1QS 3:13–4:26 and the 'Dualism' Contained in the Gospel of John," *NTS* 15 (1968/69), 389–418; *Dualism in Qumran*, ed. G. Xeravits, LSTS, 76 (London: T&T Clark International, 2010); J. Duhaime, "L'instruction sur les deux esprits et les interpolations dualistes à Qumrân (1QS III,13-IV,26)," *RB* 84 (1977), 566–94; J. Duhaime, "La rédaction de 1QM XIII et l'évolution du dualisme à Qumrân," *RB* 84 (1977), 210–38; J. Duhaime, "Dualistic Reworking in the Scrolls from Qumran," *CBQ* 49 (1987), 32–56; J. Duhaime, "Le dualisme de Qumrân et la literature de sagesse vétérotestamentaire," *ET* 19 (1988), 401–22; A. Dupont-Sommer, "Le problème des influences étrangères sur la secte juive de Qumrân," *RHPR* 35 (1955), 75–94; H. W. Huppenbauer, *Der Mensch zwischen zwei Welten. Der Dualismus der Texte von Qumran (Höhle I) und der Damaskusfragmente. Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte des Evangeliums*, ATANT 34 (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1959); M. Philonenko, "La doctrine qoumrânienne des deux esprits: ses origines iraniennes, et ses prolongements dans le judaïsme essénien et le christianisme antique," in *Apocalyptique Iranienne et Dualisme Qoumrânien*, ed. M. Philonenko *et al.* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1995), 163–211; P. von der Osten-Sacken, *Gott und Belial. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Dualismus in den Texten aus Qumran*, SUNT 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969); H. Wildberger, "Der Dualismus in der Qumranschriften," *Asiatische Studien* 8 (1954), 163–77; D. Winston, "The Iranian Component in the Bible, Apocrypha, and Qumran: A Review of the Evidence," *HR* 5 (1966), 183–216.

[15] Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 32.

light, good and evil, election and rejection. This dualistic "mirroring" is underscored by the leaders of the eschatological "lots," whose particular names often reflect, or even polemically deconstruct, the names of their respective eschatological rivals: Melchizedek and Melchireša^{c}, the Angel of Lights and the Prince of Darkness.

The imagery of the eschatological lots is also manifested in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. Graphic depictions of the two lots are dispersed throughout the second, apocalyptic, part of the pseudepigraphon. These portrayals are reminiscent not only of the eschatological terminology found in the Qumran materials,[16] but also of the imagery of sacrificial lots prominent in the Yom Kippur ritual, an ordinance described in detail in biblical and rabbinic accounts. Indeed, the word "lot" (Slav. часть) in the Slavonic text appears to be connected to the Hebrew גורל, a term prominent in cultic descriptions found in biblical[17] and rabbinic accounts, as well as in the eschatological developments attested in the Qumran materials.[18]

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* shares other similarities with the Qumran materials. At Qumran, the lots are linked to fallen angelic figures or translated heroes (like Belial or Melchizedek). In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the portions of humanity are now tied to the main characters of the story – the fallen angel Azazel[19] and the translated patriarch Abraham.[20] It is also noteworthy that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, similar to the Qumran materials,[21] the positive lot is at times designated as the lot of the Deity – "my [God's] lot":

[16] Thus, for example, Marc Philonenko notes that the word "lot" (Slav. часть) appears to be connected to the Hebrew גורל, a term attested multiple times in the Qumran materials. Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 33. On the two lots, see also B. Philonenko-Sayar and M. Philonenko, *Die Apokalypse Abrahams*, JSHRZ 5.5 (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1982), 413–460 at 418; Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 54.

[17] See Lev. 16:8–10.

[18] See, for example, 1QS גורל בליעל (the lot of Belial); גורל קדושים (the lot of the holy ones); 1QM גורל בני חושך (the lot of the sons of darkness); גורל חושך (the lot of darkness); 11Q13 צדק [כי] גורל מל אנש[י] (the men of the lot of Melchizedek).

[19] *Apoc. Ab.* 13:7: "And he said to him, "Reproach is on you, Azazel! Since *Abraham's portion* (часть Аврамля) is in heaven, and *yours* is on earth." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 66.

[20] *Apoc. Ab.* 10:15: "Stand up, Abraham, go boldly, be very joyful and rejoice! And I am with you, since *an honorable portion* (часть вѣчная) has been prepared for you by the Eternal One." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 18; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 60.

[21] This identification of the positive lot with the lot of God is also present in the Qumran materials. Cf. 1QM 13:5–6: "For they are the lot of darkness but the lot of God is for [everlast]ing light." *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, ed. F. García Martínez and E. Tigchelaar, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 135.

> And the Eternal Mighty One said to me, "Abraham, Abraham!" And I said, "Here am I!" And he said, "Look from on high at the stars which are beneath you and count them for me and tell me their number!" And I said, "Would I be able? For I am [but] a man." And he said to me, "As the number of the stars and their host, so shall I make your seed into a company of nations, set apart for me in my lot with Azazel."[22]

Suffice it to say, the similarities between the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the Qumran materials have been well noted. Their differences, however, have received less attention. Yet there are noticeable distinctions in the descriptions of the eschatological lots and their respective leaders, and it is quite possible that the dualistic imagery of the eschatological portions might receive an even more radical form in the Slavonic apocalypse than in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Indeed, it seems that the Slavonic pseudepigraphon transfers to Azazel and his lot attributes that are reserved solely for the positive portion of humanity in the Qumran materials. One such notion includes the concept of "inheritance," a term that plays an important role both in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Slavonic apocalypse.

The passage found in Chapter 14 of the pseudepigraphon unveils the following enigmatic tradition about the special "inheritance" given to the fallen angel Azazel:[23]

[22] *Apoc. Ab*. 20:1–5. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 25.

[23] On the Azazel traditions, see J. De Roo, "Was the Goat for Azazel Destined for the Wrath of God?" *Bib* 81 (2000), 233–41; C. L. Feinberg, "The Scapegoat of Leviticus Sixteen," *BSac* 115 (1958), 320–31; M. Görg, "Beobachtungen zum sogenannten Azazel-Ritus," *BN* 33 (1986), 10–16; Grabbe, "The Scapegoat Tradition," 165–79; Helm, "Azazel in Early Jewish Literature," 217–26; B. Janowski, *Sühne als Heilgeschehen: Studien zur Sühnetheologie der Priesterschrift und der Wurzel KPR im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, WMANT 55 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982); B. Janowski, "Azazel," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. K. van der Toorn *et al*. (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 240–8. B. Jurgens, *Heiligkeit und Versöhnung: Leviticus 16 in seinem Literarischen Kontext* (New York: Herder, 2001); H. M. Kümmel, "Ersatzkönig und Sündenbock," *ZAW* 80 (1986), 289–318; R. D. Levy, *The Symbolism of the Azazel Goat* (Bethesda: International Scholars Publication, 1998); O. Loretz, *Leberschau, Sündenbock, Asasel in Ugarit und Israel: Leberschau und Jahwestatue in Psalm 27, Leberschau in Psalm 74*, UBL 3 (Altenberge: CIS-Verlag, 1985); J. Maclean, "Barabbas, the Scapegoat Ritual, and the Development of the Passion Narrative," *HTR* 100 (2007), 309–34; J. Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*, SJL 36 (Leiden: Brill, 1983); D. Rudman, "A Note on the Azazel-goat Ritual," *ZAW* 116 (2004), 396–401; W. H. Shea, "Azazel in the Pseudepigrapha," *JATS* 13 (2002), 1–9; Stökl Ben Ezra, "Yom Kippur in the Apocalyptic Imagery and the Roots of Jesus' High Priesthood," 349–66; Stökl Ben Ezra, "The Biblical Yom Kippur, the Jewish Fast of the Day of Atonement and the Church Fathers," 493–502; Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*; A. Strobel, "Das jerusalemische Sündenbock-Ritual. Topographische und landeskundliche Überlegungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Lev. 16, 10.21f.," *ZDPV* 103 (1987), 141–68; H. Tawil, "Azazel the Prince of the Steepe: A Comparative Study," *ZAW* 92 (1980), 43–59; D. P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature*, SBLDS 101 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987).

> Since *your inheritance* (достояние твое) are those who are with you, with men born with the stars and clouds. And *their portion is you* (ихъже часть еси ты).[24]

The striking feature of this account is that in *Apoc. Ab*. 14:6 the concept of the eschatological "lot" or "portion" (Slav. часть)[25] of Azazel is used interchangeably with the notion of "inheritance" (Slav. достояние). This terminological connection is intriguing since the two notions, "inheritance" and "lot," are also used interchangeably in the Qumran passages that deal with the "lot" imagery. Thus, for example, 11Q13 speaks about "inheritance" referring to Melchizedek's lot, which will be victorious in the eschatological battle:

> and from the *inheritance* of Melchizedek, fo[r. . .] . . . and they are the *inherita[nce* of Melchize]dek, who will make them return. And the d[ay of aton]ement is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and] for the men [of] the lot of Mel[chi]zedek.[26]

In 1QS 3:13–4:26, in the fragment also known as the *Instruction on the Two Spirits*, the imagery of inheritance is tied to the concept of the lot of the righteous:

> they walk in wisdom or in folly. In agreement with man's *inheritance* in the truth, he shall be righteous and so abhor injustice; and according to his share in the lot of injustice, he shall act wickedly in it, and so abhor the truth.[27]

In 1QS 11:7–8 and CD 13:11–12 this concept of inheritance is once again connected with participation in the lot of light, also labeled in 1QS as "the lot of the holy ones":[28]

> To those whom God has selected he has given them as everlasting possession; and he has given them an *inheritance* in the lot of the holy ones. (1QS 11:7–8)[29]

[24] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 21; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 68.

[25] Although here and in *Apoc. Ab*. 10:15 the Slavonic word часть is used for designation of the "lots," *Apoc. Ab*. 20:5 and *Apoc. Ab*. 29:21 uses the Slavonic word жребий for their designation of the "lot." Cf. Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 82 and 102.

[26] *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 1207–9.

[27] *Ibid*., 75–79.

[28] In 1QM 14:9 the terminology of inheritance is invoked again. There the remnant predestined to survive is called "the rem[nant of your inheritance] during the empire of Belial." *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 137.

[29] *Ibid*., 97.

> And everyone who joins his congregation, he should examine, concerning his actions, his intelligence, his strength, his courage and his wealth; and they shall inscribe him in his place according to his *inheritance* in the lot of light. (CD-A 13:11–12).[30]

In these last two texts, the phrase "inheritance in the lot" (Heb. נחלתו בגורל) seems to imply that "inheritance" is the act of participation in one of the eschatological lots.[31] The same idea seems to be at work in the aforementioned passage from *Apoc. Ab*. 14:6, where "inheritance" is understood as participation in the lot of Azazel.

Yet despite the similarities, one striking difference is discernible: while in the Qumran materials the "inheritance" appears to be connected with the divine lot, in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* it is unambiguously tied to the lot of Azazel. This transference of the notion of inheritance to the lot of Azazel is striking. It brings the dualistic ideology of the Jewish pseudepigraphon to an entirely new conceptual level vis-à-vis the dualistic developments found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This more pronounced dualism also influences the portrait of Azazel. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, Azazel is just one character in a gallery of eschatological opponents, but here he is the adversary *par excellence*. Lester Grabbe suggests that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* refers to the arch-demon complex under the name of Azazel.[32] In his opinion, in the Slavonic apocalypse "Azazel is no longer just a leader among the fallen angels but *the* leader of the demons. Figures originally separate have now fallen together while the various names have become only different aliases of the one devil."[33]

The consolidation of myths about varied eschatological opponents into one infernal antagonist advances the dualistic thrust of the Slavonic apocalypse. It also secures Azazel's place as the archnemesis not only of Yahoel and Abraham, but of God himself.

The theophany of Azazel

The second section of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* begins with a series of strange portrayals depicting the striking appearance and the spectacular offices of Yahoel, Abraham's angelic guide. More ambiguous yet, however, are the enigmatic descriptions of Azazel. For unknown reasons – but perhaps precisely because the arch-demon provides a significant conceptual clue to understanding the theological framework of the text – the authors of

[30] *Ibid*., 573. [31] *Ibid*., 572. [32] Grabbe, "The Scapegoat Tradition," 158. [33] Ibid.

the pseudepigraphon appear very reluctant to unveil the exact status of their mysterious antihero. Instead, they offer to their readers a complex web of cryptic traditions and obscure imagery.

Despite the haze of concealment that envelops the profile of Azazel, the various details of the story provide glimmers of his cosmic significance. The very first lines of Chapter 13, which introduce Azazel to the audience, hint that he has special authority. His bold descent on Abraham's sacrifices is probably not coincidental. Likely, the authors want to signal to their readers that Azazel is not merely an abandoned, demoted creature, but rather an object of worship, veneration, and sacrificial devotion, who even possesses an exalted status that mimics the authority and position of the Deity.

Studies have shown conceptual links between Azazel and Abraham, as well as between Azazel and Yahoel.[34] Yet despite the significance of these comparative studies, scholars have often neglected another parallelism found in the text – that is, the antithetical symmetry in the roles and attributes between God and Azazel. The initial sign of this dualism is the depictions of the previously mentioned eschatological lots, where the portion of Azazel is explicitly compared with the lot of the Almighty. Yet this juxtaposition between the fallen angel and the Deity could, in theory, have relatively pedestrian implications. In these two portions of humanity one might see a merely functional distinction that does not intend to mirror the status of God with that of Azazel; rather it could simply hint at the demon's temporary role as the eschatological opponent. A closer analysis of the text, however, reveals that the comparisons between God and Azazel have much broader conceptual ramifications that transcend a merely functional level. The depictions of both characters include arresting and strikingly similar theophanic imagery. An important feature in this respect is the peculiar imagery related to their epiphanies, both of which unfold in fiery realms.

Recall that in the apocalypse the theophanic manifestations of the Deity are repeatedly portrayed as appearing in the midst of flames. Therefore, it is no small matter that the presence of Azazel is also conveyed through similar imagery. Fire is often envisioned as the substance that tests the authenticity and lasting status of things. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 7:2 relates, "the fire mocks with its flames the things that perish easily."[35]

[34] See Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 31; Harlow, "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," 310, 315.

[35] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 15.

Both animate and inanimate characters of the story, including the infamous idols and their blasphemous makers, are depicted in the text as undergoing fiery probes – ominous tests often leading to a fatal catastrophe. It is by means of fire, for example, that the young Abraham "tests" the wooden statue of his father, the idol Bar-Eshath, and the flames turn it into a pile of ashes. The craftsmen of the idolatrous figures themselves are not exempted from trials by fire. The first, haggadic, section of the text concludes with a scene in which the workshop of Terah is set ablaze as a judgment by God. Later, in the second, apocalyptic, section of the work, the patriarch Abraham himself undergoes multiple fiery tests as he progresses into the upper heaven. There is significance in who survives and who perishes in these fiery tests.

Scholars have noted that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, as in several other apocalyptic texts like Dan. 3 and Ezek. 28, fire serves as the ultimate test for distinguishing inauthentic and idolatrous representations of the Deity from the true counterparts. In accordance with this belief, the true God is portrayed time and again in the text as situated in a stream of fire. For example, in Chapter 8, where Abraham responds to the divine call in the courtyard of Terah's house, the divine presence is depicted as "the voice of the Mighty One" in a stream of fire.[36] This self-disclosure of God in the midst of flame becomes a standard description adopted by the authors of the apocalypse to convey manifestations of the Deity.[37]

In view of this distinctive theophanic imagery, it is highly significant that some eschatological manifestations of Azazel are likewise depicted with fiery imagery. Although in Chapter 13 the patriarch sees Azazel in the form of an unclean bird, the apocalypse makes clear that this manifestation does not reflect his true appearance. Now, Azazel's proper domain is subterranean,[38] and this is striking because the belly of the earth is understood in our text as a furnace. Both God and Azazel dwell in fire.

[36] *Apoc. Ab*. 8:1: "The voice (глас) of the Mighty One came down from heaven in a stream of fire, saying and calling, 'Abraham, Abraham!'" Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 16; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 54.

[37] See, for example, *Apoc. Ab*. 18:2: "And I heard a voice (глас) like the roaring of the sea, and it did not cease because of the fire." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 24; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 76.

[38] Box reflects on the peculiarities of Azazel's true abode, noting that "over against Jaoel stands Azazel, who here appears as the arch-fiend, and as active upon the earth (chap. xiii), though his real domain is in Hades, where he reigns as lord (chap. xxxi.)." Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, xxvi.

Hence, in Yahoel's speech found in Chapter 14, he designates the archdemon's abode as the furnace of the earth.[39] Moreover, Azazel himself is portrayed as the "burning coal" or the "firebrand" of this inferno.[40] This depiction of Azazel glowing in the furnace of his own domain is intriguing. It is reminiscent of the fiery nature of the divine abode that, in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, is portrayed as the upper furnace. The fiery nature of heaven is underlined multiple times in the text. It is notable that the seer's progress into the domain of the Deity is portrayed as his movement into the fiery realm. In *Apoc. Ab*. 15:3 Abraham and Yahoel cross the border into the heavenly realm, and this is portrayed as an entrance into fire: "and he carried me up to the edge of the fiery flame. And we ascended like great winds to the heaven which was fixed on the expanses."[41]

Then, in Chapter 17, the readers again encounter this terrifying presence, this celestial furnace, as the flames envelop the visionary and his celestial guide on their progress to God's abode: "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" (*Apoc. Ab*. 17:1).[42] In 18:1, upon his entrance into the celestial Holy of Holies, the visionary again passes another fiery threshold: "while I was still reciting the song, the edge of the fire which was on the expanse rose up on high."[43]

The fiery apotheosis reaches its pinnacle in Chapter 18 when Abraham sees God's heavenly throne room. There, in the most concealed of theophanic locations, the seer beholds the very seat of the Deity fashioned from the substance of fire: "And as the fire rose up, soaring higher, I saw under the fire a throne [made] of fire and the many-eyed Wheels" (*Apoc. Ab*. 18:3).[44] Yet, even at its climax, the fiery picture of the divine presence paradoxically parallels the fiery nature of Azazel's subterranean abode.

This striking imagery brings us back to the Azazel tradition found in *Apoc. Ab*. 14:5, where, according to some scholars, the demonic presence is

[39] Some time ago Box noticed the fiery nature of the demonological imagery found in the Slavonic apocalypse, wherein Azazel is portrayed as the fire of hell. Box reflects on this fiery theophany of Azazel, arguing that "in fact, according to the peculiar representation of our Apocalypse, Azazel is himself the fire of Hell (cf. chap. xiv. 'Be thou the burning coal of the furnace of the earth,' and chap. xxxi. 'burnt with the fire of Azazel's tongue')." Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, xxvi.

[40] See *Apoc. Ab*. 14:5 "Say to him, 'May you be the fire brand of the furnace of the earth! (главънею пещи земныя).'" Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 21; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 68.

[41] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 22. [42] *Ibid*.. [43] *Ibid*., 23.

[44] *Ibid*., 24. See also *Apoc. Ab*. 18:13: "And above the Wheels there was the throne which I had seen. And it was covered with fire and the fire encircled it round about, and an indescribable light surrounded the fiery people." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 24.

fashioned as the fire of hell.[45] Similar to the Deity who is depicted as the fire of heaven enthroned on the seat of flames, the demon is portrayed as the fire of the underworld. In this respect it is also noteworthy that, similar to the divine Voice, which comes admixed with fire, Azazel's aural expression is also conveyed through similar fiery symbolism. To give an example, *Apoc. Ab*. 31:5 speaks about "the fire of Azazel's tongue":

> And those who followed after the idols and after their murders will rot in the womb of the Evil One – the belly of Azazel, and *they will be burned by the fire of Azazel's tongue* (палими огнемъ языка Азазилова).[46]

It is also interesting that, just like the fire of God that destroys the idols and idolaters alike in its flames,[47] the fire issuing from Azazel has power to destroy those who "follow after the idols." Though it is not entirely clear, it may be that the fire of Azazel is, on a different level, the fire of God. In *Apoc. Ab*. 31:3, the Deity says that he has destined those who "mocked" him "to be food for the fire of hell, and ceaseless soaring in the air of the underground depths."[48]

The *Kavod* of Azazel

The previous exploration indicates that in the Slavonic apocalypse Azazel possesses theophanic attributes that mimic those of God. The impressive cluster of enigmatic themes reaches its paradoxical climax in Chapter 23, when Abraham receives a vision of Azazel corrupting the protoplasts at the beginning of time. Yet before examining this puzzling scene, something must be said about the peculiar arrangement of the patriarch's vision. In the vision Abraham gazes into the abyss of hell from the heights of heaven, near God's throne itself. This setting provides further support for the dualistic framework of the text.

In the beginning of this mysterious vision, the Deity orders the seer to look beneath his feet and "contemplate the creation." The apocalypse then portrays Abraham looking beneath the expanse at his feet and beholding what the text calls the "likeness of heaven."[49] This reference to the "likeness of heaven" (Slav. подобие неба)[50] has baffled many

[45] Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, xxvi.
[46] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 35; Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 202.
[47] Cf. *Apoc. Ab*. 31:2–3: "And I shall burn with fire those who mocked them ruling over them in this age and I shall commit those who have covered me with mockery to the reproach of the coming age." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 35.
[48] *Ibid*. [49] *Ibid*., 26. [50] Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 84.

scholars[51] because the authors situate a vision of the corrupted domain belonging to Azazel under the category of the "resemblance of heaven":

> And I looked beneath the expanse at my feet and I saw *the likeness of heaven* (подобие неба) and what was therein. And [I saw] there the earth and its fruits, and its moving ones, and its spiritual ones, and its host of men and their spiritual impieties, and their justifications, <and the pursuits of their works,> and the abyss and its torment, and its lower depths, and the perdition which is in it. And I saw there the sea and its island<s>, and its animals and its fishes, and Leviathan and his domain, and his lair, and his dens, and the world which lies upon him, and his motions and the destruction of the world because of him. (*Apoc. Ab.* 21:2–4)[52]

As it stands, this is a confusing account. Yet the most puzzling disclosure about the "likeness of heaven" comes later in Chapter 23, when the visionary beholds Azazel's appearance under the paradisal tree. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23:4–11 unveils the following enigma that draws on peculiar protological imagery:

> And I looked at the picture, and my eyes ran to the side of the garden of Eden. And I saw there a man very great in height and terrible in breadth, incomparable in aspect, *entwined* (съплетшася) with a woman who was also equal to the man in aspect and size. And they were standing under a tree of Eden, and the fruit of the tree was like the appearance of a bunch of grapes of the vine. And behind the tree was standing, as it were, a serpent in form, but having hands and feet like a man, and wings on its shoulders: six on the right side and six on the left. And he was holding in his hands the grapes of the tree and feeding the two whom I saw entwined with each other. And I said, "Who are these two *entwined* (съплетшася) with each other, or who is this between them, or what is the fruit which they are eating, Mighty Eternal One?" And he said, "This is the reason of men, this is Adam, and this is their desire on earth, this is Eve. And he who is in between them is the Impiety of their pursuits for destruction, Azazel himself."[53]

In this vision Abraham beholds Azazel's manifestation in the lower realm, and the demon's presence is placed in the midst of the protoplasts. The depiction also makes the tree in the Garden of Eden the abode of Azazel. Both are intriguing images, to be sure.

Now, no doubt this tree is the infamous Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil – the symbol of the corruption of the first human

[51] See, for example, Horace Lunt's comment in Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham," 1.699.
[52] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26.
[53] *Ibid.*, 27; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 88.

couple.[54] The peculiar features of the scene, and the reference to the "grapes of vine" as the fruit of the tree, bring to memory a cluster of familiar motifs in Jewish lore. While some features of the scene look familiar, others are not. One novel detail is particularly perplexing. Azazel is placed *between* the intertwined protoplasts under the tree.

This image has long puzzled students of the Slavonic apocalypse. Although the imagery of the intertwined protoplasts is known from Jewish and Christian lore about the serpentine Eve,[55] the depiction found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* unveils new and bizarre symbolism. Some scholars have suggested an erotic dimension in this portrayal, arguing that the demon and the intertwined protoplasts form here a sort of *ménage à trois*.[56] This raises not a few questions as to its theological significance.

Is it possible that in this scene one might have not merely a scandalous illustration of the protological corruption of the first humans, but also the disclosure of one of the most controversial epiphanies of Azazel? If it is indeed possible, then the erotic imagery of the conjugal union might be laden with theophanic significance. And, it might be noted, such significance would be in line with other biblical and pseudepigraphic accounts. Moreover, if the epiphanic angle is indeed present in the protological scene, the arboreal imagery would also contribute to this theological dimension. In this respect, the peculiar details of Azazel's position between the protoplasts *under the tree* might invoke the memory of a peculiar theophanic trend related to the other prominent tree in the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life.

In Jewish lore the Tree of Life often has theophanic significance. It is described as the very special dwelling place of God, and God is depicted as resting on the cherub beneath the Tree of Life. These traditions are found in a number of apocalyptic and mystical accounts. Thus, for

[54] Himmelfarb's research stresses the importance of protology and especially Adam's story for the conceptual framework of the Slavonic apocalypse. She observes that "for the Apocalypse of Abraham, as for 4 Ezra, the destruction of the temple is intimately connected to larger questions of God's expectations of humanity and human failure from the beginning of history. It is no accident that the sin of Adam figures prominently in both works, as it does also in 3 Baruch, another response to the destruction of the temple." Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 66.

[55] On these traditions in Jewish and Christian literature, see S. Minov, "'Serpentine' Eve in Syriac Christian Literature of Late Antiquity," in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic and Mysticism*, ed. D. Arbel and A. Orlov, Ekstasis 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 92–114.

[56] Thus, for example, reflecting on the imagery found in *Apoc. Ab*. 23:4–11, Daniel Harlow suggests that "the three of them appear in a *ménage à trois*, the man and woman entwined in an erotic embrace, the fallen angel in serpentine guise feeding them grapes." Harlow, "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," 320.

example, the Greek version[57] of *Life of Adam and Eve* 22:3–4 connects the theophany of the Deity with the Tree of Life: "As God entered [the Garden,] the plants of Adam's portion flowered but all mine were bereft of flowers. And the throne of God was fixed where the Tree of Life was."[58] A similar tradition is found in *2 Enoch* 8:3–4, where the Tree of Life again is described as the abode of God:

> And in the midst (of them was) the tree of life, at that place where the Lord takes a rest when he goes into paradise. And that tree is indescribable for pleasantness and fine fragrance, and more beautiful than any (other) created thing that exists. And from every direction it has an appearance which is gold-looking and crimson, and with the form of fire. And it covers the whole of Paradise. (*2 Enoch* 8:3–4, the longer recension)[59]

The tradition of the Divinity dwelling on the cherub under the Tree of Life was not forgotten in later Jewish mysticism, where God's very presence, his *Shekhinah*, is portrayed as resting on a cherub beneath the Tree of Life. *3 Enoch* 5:1 unveils the following tradition:

> R. Ishmael said: Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence, said to me: From the day that the Holy One, blessed be he, banished the first man from the garden of Eden, the *Shekhinah* resided on a cherub beneath the tree of life.[60]

A striking feature of this account is that here, like in the classic Ezekelian accounts, the cherubic creature represents the "angelic furniture" that functions as the seat of the Deity.

It is also intriguing that in the later Jewish mysticism the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil receives similar epiphanic reinterpretation. It has its own cherubic servants and its own symmetry between heaven and earth. For example, *The Zohar* 1.237a unveils the following tradition about the symmetry of the upper and lower cherubim, explicitly associating the former with the Tree of Sin and Corruption:

> Adam was punished for his sin, and brought death upon himself and all the world, and caused that tree in regard to which he sinned to be driven out along with him and his descendants for ever. It says further that God "placed the cherubim on the east of the garden of Eden"; these were the lower

[57] On various versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, see M. E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve*, EJL 3 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992); M. de Jonge and J. Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

[58] *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve. Second Revised Edition*, ed. G. Anderson and M. E. Stone, EJL 17 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 62E. The Armenian and Georgian versions of *Life of Adam and Eve* 22:4 also support this tradition: "He set up his throne clos[e] to the Tree of Life" (Armenian); "and thrones were set up near the Tree of Life" (Georgian).

[59] Andersen, "2 Enoch," 1.114.

[60] Alexander, "3 Enoch," 1.259.

> cherubim, for as there are cherubim above, so there are cherubim below, and *he spread this tree over them*.[61]

This passage is striking since it echoes the Tree of Knowledge found in the Slavonic apocalypse, which provided the shadow for the protological couple holding in their midst the presence of Azazel. It is noteworthy that in the passage from *The Zohar* the Tree of Knowledge is now unambiguously associated with the angelic servants, designated as the "lower cherubim." Keeping in mind this cryptic tradition about cherubim, it is now time to return to the protological scene found in the Slavonic apocalypse.

Subtle allusions to cherubic imagery may well be present in Azazel's epiphany in *Apoc. Ab*. 23:4–11, where he is depicted under the Tree of Knowledge in the midst of the protoplasts. It is of course odd that Azazel is found in the connubial union of the intertwined couple. It should be noted that the imagery of the intertwined primordial couple holding the presence of Azazel is quite unique in the Adamic lore. Yet it invokes the memory of another important theophanic tradition when God's presence is portrayed through the imagery of the intertwined cherubic pair in the Holy of Holies.

The treatise *Yoma* of the Babylonian Talmud contains two passages that offer striking, if not scandalous, descriptions of the intertwisted cherubim in the Holy of Holies. For example, *b. Yoma* 54a reads:

> R. Kattina said: Whenever Israel came up to the Festival, the curtain would be removed for them and the Cherubim were shown to them, whose bodies were intertwisted with one another, and they would be thus addressed: Look! You are beloved before God as the love between man and woman.[62]

Here the erotic union of cherubim holds, in some sense, the presence of the Deity. One might see in this description later rabbinic innovations which are far distant, or maybe even completely divorced, from the early biblical tradition of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies. Nevertheless, scholars have noted that even early biblical accounts hint at the ambiguous "proximity" of the famous cherubic pair. Rachel Elior notes that in some biblical materials "descriptions of them usually imply a posture characterized by reciprocity or contact: 'they faced each other,'[63] or also 'their wings touched each other'[64] or were even joined[65] together."[66] While the early traditions about the cherubim found "both in the Bible and elsewhere imply varying degrees of proximity and contact – later

[61] H. Sperling and M. Simon, *The Zohar*, 5 vols. (London and NewYork: Soncino, 1993), 2.355.
[62] Epstein, *Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud. Yoma* 54a. [63] Exod. 37:9.
[64] 1 Kings 6:27; Ezek. 1:9. [65] 2 Chr. 3:12.
[66] Elior, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism*, 67.

tradition was more explicit, clearly indicating the identity of the cherubim as a mythical symbolization of reproduction[67] and fertility, expressed in the form of intertwined male and female."[68]

In *b. Yoma* 54b the tradition of the intertwisted cherubim is repeated again:

> Resh Lakish said: When the heathens entered the Temple and saw the Cherubim whose bodies were intertwisted with one another, they carried them out and said: These Israelites, whose blessing is a blessing, and whose curse is a curse, occupy themselves with such things! And immediately they despised them, as it is said: All that honored her, despised her, because they have seen her nakedness.[69]

Elior argues that the description of the intertwined cherubim found in the Talmud suggests "a cultic, mystical representation of myths of *hieros gamos*, the sacred union or heavenly matrimony."[70] It is also apparent that this imagery of the cherubic union has sacerdotal and theophanic significance as it expresses in itself the manifestation of the divine presence – the feature

[67] In later Jewish mysticism the imagery of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies was interpreted as the conjugal union between male and female. Thus, in *The Zohar* 3.59b the following tradition can be found: "R. Simeon was on the point of going to visit R. Pinchas ben Jair, along with his son R. Eleazar. When he saw them he exclaimed: A song of ascents; Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps. CXXXIII, 1). The expression 'in unity,' he said, refers to the Cherubim. When their faces were turned to one another, it was well with the world – 'how good and how pleasant,' but when the male turned his face from the female, it was ill with the world. Now, too, I see that you are come because the male is not abiding with the female. If you have come only for this, return, because I see that on this day face will once more be turned to face." *The Zohar*, 5.41. Another passage from the *The Zohar* 3.59a also tells about the conjugal union of the cherubim: "Then the priest used to hear their voice in the sanctuary, and he put the incense in its place with all devotion in order that all might be blessed. R. Jose said: The word 'equity' (*mesharim*, lit. equities) in the above quoted verse indicates that the Cherubim were male and female. R. Isaac said: From this we learn that where there is no union of male and female men are not worthy to behold the divine presence." *The Zohar*, 5.41.

[68] Elior, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism*, 67.

[69] Epstein, *Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud. Yoma* 54b. *Zohar* III.67a, which describes the actions of the high priest on Yom Kippur, also attests to the same tradition when it portrays the "wrestle" of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies who are "beating their wings together." The passage then describes the high priest entering the Holy of Holies, bringing the incense that "pacifies" or "reconciles" the "wrestling" of the angelic creatures. Cf. *The Zohar*, 5.60. See also *The Zohar* 1.231a: "Now at sunset, the Cherubim which stood in that place used to strike their wings together and spread them out, and when the sound of the beating of their wings was heard above, those angels who chanted hymns in the night began to sing, in order that the glory of God might ascend from below on high. The striking of the Cherubim's wings itself intoned the psalm, 'Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord . . . lift up your hands to the sanctuary, etc.' (Ps. CXXXIII). This was the signal for the heavenly angels to commence." *The Zohar*, 2.340.

[70] Elior, *The Three Temples*, 158. In relation to this union of the angelic creatures in the Holy of Holies, Elior further notices that "the grammatical relationship between the Hebrew words for the Holy of Holies – *kodesh hakodashim* – and for betrothal – *kidushin* – suggests an ancient common ground of heavenly and earthly union."

especially evident in *b. Yoma* 54a, with its motifs of the removal of the curtain and the revelation of the cherubim on Yom Kippur. It is therefore clear that the tradition of the intertwined cherubim is envisioned here as a theophanic symbol.

In view of these developments, it seems that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* has taken hold of this cultic theme of the conjugal union and inverted it, applying it to Azazel rather than God. It is also possible that the erotic embrace of the protological couple holding Azazel in their midst serves as a negative counterpart of the cherubic couple holding the divine presence in the Holy of Holies. In some materials Adam and Eve are understood as the "lower cherubim" overshadowed by the Tree of Knowledge, the Adamic tradition explicitly articulated in *The Zohar* 1.237, and maybe already hinted at in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.

Also fascinating is that the mysterious shape of Azazel itself evokes the union of the cherubic couple, as his form combines some attributes of the two cherubim joined together.[71] The passage says that the demon has twelve wings – six on the right side of his body and six on the left side:[72] "And behind the tree was standing, as it were, a serpent in form, but having hands and feet like a man, and wings on its shoulders: six on the right side and six on the left."[73] It is noteworthy that earlier in the text, when Abraham sees the "Living Creatures of the Cherubim" in the heavenly throne room, he reports that each of them has six wings: "And under the throne [I saw] four singing fiery Living Creatures . . . and each one had six wings: from their shoulders, <and from their sides,> and from their loins" (*Apoc. Ab.* 18:3–6).[74]

All these passages and images are odd and difficult to interpret. Hence, there must be some tentativeness in discerning their meaning. Still, in view of the aforementioned sacerdotal and theophanic traditions, it is quite possible that in *Apoc. Ab.* 23 Azazel attempts to mimic the divine presence represented by the cherubic couple in the Holy of Holies by offering his own, now corrupted and demonic, version of the sacred union.[75] Recalling that Azazel

[71] Like the "Living Creatures of the Cherubim," Azazel is portrayed as a composite being who combines zoomorphic and human features – the body of a serpent with the hands and feet like a man.

[72] Cf. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 13: "Sammael was the great prince in heaven; the *Hayyot* had four wings and the Seraphim had six wings, and Sammael had twelve wings." Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 92. See also Georgian *Life of Adam and Eve* 12:1 "My [Satan's] wings were more numerous than those of the Cherubim, and I concealed myself under them." *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve. Second Revised Edition*, 15–15E.

[73] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 27. [74] *Ibid.*, 24.

[75] This imagery of Azazel positioned between Adam and Eve might also serve as a profound anthropological symbol signifying the division of the protoplast. Azazel might be envisioned here as the primordial knife separating androgynous proto-humanity and dividing it on the male and female sides.

appears to have his own *Kavod* given to him by God,[76] he possibly intends to fashion his own presence in an antithetical symmetry of the divine theophany that takes place between two intertwined angelic creatures.

In conclusion, one should note that although the epiphany of Azazel demonstrates some allusions to the divine theophany in respect of its fiery nature, at the same time the demonic manifestation is surrounded with the corporeal markers that undoubtedly have a negative overtone in the aniconic ideology of the author(s) of the Slavonic apocalypse. Azazel's body entwined with the human couple puts in great relief the divine incorporeality. It cannot be excluded that through the paradoxical epiphany of Azazel the authors engage in polemics with the corporeal ideology of the *Kavod* tradition.

Some have argued that the figure of Azazel is not connected with the theme of idolatry. Martha Himmelfarb, for example, contends that "the relationship between the two causes of evil – the figure of Azazel and the sin of idolatry – is not fully worked out: Azazel is entirely absent from the story of Abraham's rejection of idolatry."[77] Yet despite this absence, the theme of Azazel's corruption of Adam and Eve seems to become an important vehicle of polemics against idolatry in the second, apocalyptic, part of the text. Our research indicates that Abraham's vision of the corrupted protoplasts with Azazel in their midst represents a crucial point in the authors' polemical stance against anthropomorphic idols. Further, the corporeality of Azazel is tied through subtle allusions to two corrupted temples – the Temple of Terah, where idols were installed, and the Jewish Temple in Chapter 25, where the statue of shining copper was standing.

[76] In this respect it is intriguing that several versions of the *Primary Adam Books* attest a tradition about the "glory" of Satan that the antagonist had even before his demotion. Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* 12:1: "since on account of you I was expelled and alienated from my glory, which I had in heaven in the midst of the angels." Armenian *Life of Adam and Eve* 12:1: "because of you I went forth from my dwelling; and because of you I was alienated from the throne of the Cherubim who, having spread out a shelter, used to enclose me." Georgian *Life of Adam and Eve* 12:1: "through you that I fell from my dwellings; (it was) by you that I was alienated from my own throne." *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve. Second Revised Edition*, 15–15E.

[77] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 66.

PART II

Rituals

CHAPTER 4

The priestly settings of the text: the Yom Kippur ceremony

As we remember, in the second part of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* its hero, the patriarch Abraham, encounters an angelic being appointed by God to be his celestial guide. This creature, the angel Yahoel, baffles the seer's imagination with his enigmatic appearance. The text describes him as a composite avian-human being with a body shining like sapphire (Slav. сапфиръ) and a face resembling chrysolite (Slav. хрусолить). The wardrobe of the angel also appears wondrous. Dressed in purple garments, he wears a turban reminiscent of "the bow in the clouds."[1] Abraham also sees a golden staff in the right hand of his celestial companion.

There is sacerdotal significance to the angel's attire,[2] as Martha Himmelfarb has convincingly demonstrated. She argues that Yahoel's "wardrobe has strong priestly associations. The linen band around his head recalls Aaron's headdress of fine linen (Ex. 28:39)."[3] Nor is it just the headdress. Himmelfarb reminds us that the purple of Yahoel's robe betrays connections to the purple of the high-priestly garments described in Exodus 28.[4] The angel's golden staff also seems to have a priestly meaning, invoking the memory of Aaron's rod that miraculously sprouted in the wilderness after Korah's rebellion "to indicate the choice of Aaron and his descendants

[1] "[A]nd a turban (*кидарь*) on his head like the appearance of the bow in the clouds" Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 19; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 60.

[2] Daniel Harlow observes that "Yahoel's clothing . . . indicates that he is the heavenly high priest: he wears a 'turban on his head like the appearance of the bow in the clouds,' his garments are purple, and he has a golden staff in his hand (11:2). These elements evoke the wardrobe and accoutrement of Aaron (Exod. 28; Num. 17)." Harlow, "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," 313–14.

[3] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 62. Also, Aaron's "headdress" that Himmelfarb mentions deserves a note. Jacob Milgrom observes that the high priest's head covering was a turban (מצנפת) and not מגבעות, the simpler headdresses of the ordinary priests (Exod. 28:39–40). J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1016.

[4] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 62.

as priests (Num. 17:16–26)."[5] She also brings attention to the rainbow-like appearance of Yahoel's turban, which, in her opinion, "brings together the two central color schemes employed elsewhere in the description of God as high priest, whiteness and the multicolored glow."[6]

Indeed, the tradition about "the rainbow in the cloud" associated with the headgear of the high priest is known from several texts, including the description of the high priest Simon in the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira 50:7.[7] Later rabbinic traditions[8] describe the high priest's front-plate (ציץ), which he wore on his forehead.[9] Made of gold and inscribed with the divine Name, the plate shone like a rainbow.[10]

Yahoel's priestly accouterments are not coincidental. He appears at a crucial juncture in the story, when the young Abraham has just left his father's destroyed sanctuary, which had been polluted by idolatrous worship. God now calls Abraham "to set a pure sacrifice" in worship. In this way Yahoel's role extends beyond that of *angelus interpres* or a celestial guide. He also has a priestly role, initiating an apprentice into sacerdotal work of heaven. The cultic routine includes explanations of how to prepare the sacrifices, deliver praise to the Deity, and enter the heavenly throne room. All these details demonstrate the importance of priestly praxis in the conceptual framework of the Slavonic apocalypse. This is not surprising, since it was written after the destruction of the temple, a time overshadowed

[5] *Ibid.*, 62. Yahoel's role as a heavenly high priest is also hinted at later in the text (*Apoc. Ab.* 10:9) through his liturgical office as choirmaster of the Living Creatures, which is reminiscent of the liturgical office of Enoch-Metatron in the Merkabah tradition. See Orlov, "Celestial Choir-Master: The Liturgical Role of Enoch-Metatron in *2 Enoch* and the Merkabah Tradition."

[6] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 62.

[7] "Greatest of his brothers and the beauty of his people was Simeon the son of Johanan the priest . . . how honorable was he as he gazed forth from the tent, and when he went forth from the house of the curtain; like a star of light from among clouds, and like the full moon in the days of festival; and like the sun shining resplendently on the king's Temple, and like the rainbow which appears in the cloud." C. N. R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple: A Non-Biblical Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1996), 41–2.

[8] One of the extensive descriptions of ציץ is found in the *Book of Zohar*, which describes its unusual luminosity: "[Rabbi Simeon] began quoting: 'And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, [and wrote upon it a writing, like the engravings of a signet: Holy to the Lord]' (Exodus 39:30). Why was [this plate called] ציץ? It means 'being seen, to be looked at.' Since it was there to be seen by people, it was called ציץ. Whoever looked upon this plate was recognized by it. The letters of the holy name were inscribed and engraved upon this plate, and if the person who stood in front of it was righteous, the letters inscribed in the gold would stand out from bottom to top and would shine out from the engravings, and illuminate the person's face." (*The Zohar* 2.217b), 1. Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar. An Anthology of Texts*, 3 vols. (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1989), 3.920–1.

[9] Exod.39:30–1: "They made the rosette of the holy diadem of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription, like the engraving of a signet, 'Holy to the Lord.' They tied to it a blue cord, to fasten it on the turban above."

[10] *b. Yoma* 37a.

by the challenging quest for priestly and liturgical alternatives that could compensate for the loss of the terrestrial sanctuary.

Identifying *that* there are priestly concerns in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, then, is not the issue. Rather, what poses significant difficulties is trying to place these rituals at a particular cultic setting or festival. Might the order of Abraham's sacrifices indicate one particular festival? Several possibilities have been entertained. Ryszard Rubinkiewicz suggests that the priestly initiations of Abraham could be connected with the feast of *Shavuot* or Pentecost pointing to certain "Mosaic" details of Abraham's priestly initiation, including references to the seer's forty-day fast and the naming of the place of the patriarch's sacrifices as Horeb.[11]

While these hints of a *Shavuot* setting are valid, given the aforementioned complexity of the sacerdotal universe of the Slavonic apocalypse, it is possible that the priestly traditions found in the text are not limited to one particular setting or festival. They could reflect connections to several events of the liturgical year. And, in fact, some other symbolic features of the Slavonic apocalypse, including the figure of the main antagonist of the story Azazel as well as pervasive usage of the terminology of two lots, suggest the Day of Atonement. This holy day might play a significant role in the authors' theological worldview.

That is the concern of the present chapter. It examines the peculiar priestly traditions found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* that might reflect a Yom Kippur liturgical setting. The study will also try to show that some portions of the second, apocalyptic part of the pseudepigraphon can be seen as a reenactment of the Yom Kippur ritual, one of the most enigmatic cultic ceremonies of the Jewish tradition.

Mosaic background of Abraham's priestly initiations and the Day of Atonement

Chapters 9–12 describe the beginning of Abraham's priestly initiation, during which Yahoel teaches him how to prepare sacrifices in order to enter the presence of God. A number of scholars have observed that some details of this initiation recall the story of another remarkable visionary of the Jewish tradition, Moses.

As was already mentioned, the liturgical setting of Abraham's priestly initiation might be related to the Festival of Weeks – *Shavuot* or Pentecost.[12] This feast celebrates Moses' reception of revelation at Mount Sinai; hence, it

[11] Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 58–60. [12] *Ibid.*, 60.

is also known in Jewish tradition as the Festival of the Giving of Our Torah. Indeed, as many have noted, some motifs found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* appear to reflect the peculiar details surrounding the reception of the Torah at Sinai. One of the distinctive hints here for establishing the connection with the Mosaic traditions is the theme of Abraham's forty-day fast. This motif is first introduced in *Apoc. Ab*. 9:7, where God orders Abraham to hold a strict fast for forty days.[13] It is noteworthy that, as in the Mosaic traditions, so in the apocalypse this fast coincides with the promise of a divine revelation on a high mountain:

> But for forty days abstain from every food which issues from fire, and from the drinking of wine, and from anointing [yourself] with oil. And then you shall set out for me the sacrifice which I have commanded you, in the place which I shall show you on a high mountain.[14]

The theme of the forty day fast on the mountain receives an even more distinctly "Mosaic" shape in Chapter 12, where it coincides with another cluster of Mosaic traditions. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* has a reference to Horeb (an alternative name for Sinai in some biblical passages), and in both accounts the prophetic figure receives nourishment through the vision of a celestial being:

> And we went, the two of us alone together, forty days and nights. And I ate no bread and drank no water, because [my] food was to see the angel who was with me, and his speech with me was my drink. And we came to the glorious God's mountains – Horeb.[15]

Here is a likely allusion to Exodus 34:28,[16] which reports that Moses was with God forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai without eating bread or drinking water.[17] The reference to alternative sustenance through the

[13] David Halperin notes the Mosaic flavor of this passage, observing that "in preparation, Abraham must abstain from meat, wine, and oil (*Apocalypse of Abraham*, Chapter 9). The immediate source of this last detail seems to be Daniel 10:3. But, significantly, it recalls the abstentions of Moses and Elijah (Exodus 34:28, Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, 1 Kings 19:7–8); for like Moses and Elijah, Abraham is to have his experience on 'the Mount of God, the glorious Horeb.'" Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 105.

[14] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17. [15] *Ibid.*, 19.

[16] Daniel Harlow observes that "the patriarch's fasting 'for forty days and nights' marks one of several places in the apocalypse where the author models Abraham's experience on Moses's (Exod.34:28)." Harlow, "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," 312.

[17] Martha Himmelfarb observes that "the account in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* implicitly compares Abraham's ascent to Moses' experience at Sinai. Thus, for example, Abraham performs the sacrifice described in Genesis 15 at Mount Horeb (the name for Mount Sinai in some biblical sources) after forty days of fasting in the wilderness. The exegetical occasion for the association of Genesis 15 and Exodus 19–20 is the manifestation of the presence of God in smoke and fire in both passages." Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 62. For the Mosaic background of the patriarch's actions in Chapter 12, see also N. L. Calvert, "Abraham Traditions in Middle Jewish Literature: Implications

beholding of a celestial being again evokes the cluster of interpretive traditions associated in Second Temple and rabbinic literature with the figure of Moses.[18]

Although the biblical accounts of Moses' and Elijah's theophanic experiences often "mirror" each other in that they share similar imagery,[19] David Halperin argues that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* Mosaic traditions have greater formative value than traditions about Elijah. He notes that

> when the angel tells Abraham that he will see God "come straight towards us" (chapter 16), this reminds us that God "passes by" both Moses and Elijah (Exodus 33:22; 34:6; 1 Kings 19:11–12). But it is only Moses who is told in this connection that "you cannot see my face" and "my face shall not be seen" (33:20, 23), just as the angel goes on to tell Abraham that God "Himself thou shalt not see." Moses, not Elijah, "bowed down upon the earth and prostrated himself" when God passed (34:8) – which explains Abraham's frustrated urge to do the same thing (chapter 17).[20]

Studies have convincingly demonstrated the importance of Mosaic typology for the authors of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, who decided to transfer several important Mosaic motifs into Abraham's story. Yet despite scholars'

for the Interpretation of Galatians and Romans" (Ph.D. diss.; Sheffield University, 1993). Calvert observes that "the similarity between Abraham's actions in Chapter 12 and those of Moses are striking. He first travels to the mountain Horeb, known also in the Old Testament as Mt. Sinai, which is called 'God's mountain, glorious Horeb' in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 12:3. Like Moses when he receives the law, Abraham spends forty days and nights on the mountain. Abraham is said neither to eat bread nor to drink water because his food 'was to see angel who was with me, and his discourse with me was my drink.' (*Apoc. Ab*. 12:1–2). Philo reflects a Jewish tradition of Moses' time on the mount, saying that Moses neglected all meat and drink for forty days, because he had more excellent food than that in the contemplations with which he was inspired from heaven (*De Vita Mosis* II.69). Because Mt. Horeb and Mt. Sinai are names for the same mountain, Abraham receives his revelation from God in the same place that Moses received God's commandments. Finally, as the Lord 'was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain' in the Exodus account, so the fire on top of Mt. Horeb burns the sacrifices over which Abraham and the angel ascend to heaven where God also appears as fire." Calvert, "Abraham Traditions in Middle Jewish Literature: Implications for the Interpretation of Galatians and Romans," 274.

[18] Box notes the connection of this idea of alternative nourishment with the Mosaic tradition found in Philo. He observes that "there is a close parallel to our text in Philo, *Life of Moses*, III.1, where it is said of Moses in the Mount: 'he neglected all meat and drink for forty days together, evidently because he had more excellent food than that in those contemplations with which he was inspired from above from heaven.'" Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, 50.

[19] Christopher Begg observes that "making Mt. Horeb (*Apoc. Ab*. 12:3) the site of this incident (contrast *Jubilees*, where it takes place at Hebron) serves to associate Abraham with the figures of Moses and Elijah, both of whom received divine communications at that site." Begg, "Rereading of the 'Animal Rite' of Genesis 15 in Early Jewish Narratives," 44.

[20] Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 110.

thorough attention to the Mosaic background of the story, one suggestive detail has thus far escaped their notice: Moses' forty-day fast occurred immediately after his fight against idolatry, when he destroyed the Golden Calf, after which he returned to Sinai again to receive a second set of tablets from the Deity. It is during the preparation for receiving the new tablets that he fasts.

It is intriguing that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, as in the Exodus account, the forty-day fast follows the hero's fight against idolatry. One can see a certain parallelism between the stories of the two visionaries. Like Moses, who burns the Golden Calf (Exodus 32) and then fasts (Exodus 34), Abraham too is described earlier in the text as burning the idol of his father, a figurine bearing the name Bar-Eshath. It is important that in both cases the transition to the initiatory purifying fast occurs immediately after the account recording the destruction of idols.[21]

The tradition of the hero's fast that occurs after his fight against idolatry betrays distinctly priestly concerns and appears important for discerning the cultic background of Abraham's story and its possible connections with Day of Atonement traditions. Nevertheless, the main question remains open: how can a Yom Kippur setting be reconciled with the Mosaic details of Abraham's initiation, given that these details point unambiguously to motifs associated with the *Shavuot* festival, which celebrates Moses' reception of the tablets of the law?

In answering this question, it is of considerable significance that later rabbinic writers identify the day on which Moses received the tablets of the law for a second time with the Day of Atonement. Thus, *b. Baba Bathra* 121a records the following tradition:

> One well understands why the Day of Atonement [should be such a festive occasion for it is] a day of pardon and forgiveness [and it is also] a day on which the second Tables were given.[22]

[21] In this respect Martha Himmelfarb argues that "the connection between the ascent and the preceding story of Abraham's rejection of idolatry is made by Iaoel himself, when in his introduction to Abraham before the ascent he includes the information that he was the angel who set Terah's house on fire (10:13). But there are clear structural indications of unity as well. Idolatry, which is the central problem in the first section, plays a crucial role in the vision of the ascent, where it appears as the cause of the destruction of the temple. The burning of Terah's house, where idols are made and worshiped, precedes Abraham's ascent; it is matched in the vision by the burning of the temple, which has become the scene of idolatry. Sacrifice plays a central role in both sections. In the narrative, sacrifice to idols serves as the occasion for Abraham's discovery of the one God. Sacrifice to God later provides the means for Abraham's ascent; he and the angel travel to heaven on the backs of the birds they have sacrificed. Idolatrous sacrifices lead to the destruction of the temple, and God promises the restoration of the temple and its cult after the last judgment." Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 62.

[22] Epstein, *Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud. Baba Bathra* 121a.

An almost identical tradition is found in *b. Taanith* 30b:

> R. Simeon b. Gamaliel said: There never were in Israel greater days of joy than the fifteenth of Ab and the Day of Atonement. I can understand the Day of Atonement, because it is a day of forgiveness and pardon and on it the second Tables of the Law were given.[23]

It appears that this cluster of traditions about the "day of pardon and forgiveness" draws on biblical traditions similar to the one found in Exodus 32:30, where, after the idolatry of the Golden Calf, Moses tells the people that he will go to the Lord asking for atonement of their sin.

Several midrashic passages make even more explicit this connection between the repentance of the Israelites after the idolatry of the Golden Calf in Exodus 33 and the establishment of Yom Kippur. In these materials the Israelites' repentance serves as the formative starting point for observance of the Day of Atonement. Hence, *Eliyyahu Rabbah* 17 reads:

> When Israel were in the wilderness, they befouled themselves with their misdeeds, but then they bestirred themselves and repented in privacy, as is said, Whenever Moses went out to the Tent, all the people would rise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses. And when Moses entered the Tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the Tent . . . When all the people saw the pillar of cloud poised at the entrance of the Tent, all the people would rise and bow low, each at the entrance of his tent (Exod. 33:8, 9, 10), thus intimating that they repented, each one in the privacy of his tent. Therefore His compassion flooded up and He gave to them, to their children, and to their children's children to the end of all generations the Day of Atonement as a means of securing His pardon.[24]

It is noteworthy that this passage from *Eliyyahu Rabbah* invokes the memory of familiar events found in Exodus 33 which occurred immediately after the Golden Calf episode.[25] The midrashic evidence indicates that the

[23] *Ibid. Taanith* 30b.

[24] *Tanna Debe Eliyyahu: The Lore of the School of Elijah*, tr. W. G. Braude and I. J. Kapstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America), 190.

[25] As can be seen, some midrashic materials try to connect the establishment of the Day of Atonement festival with repentance of the Israelites after the idolatry of the Golden Calf. Later Jewish mysticism deepens this connection even further when it interprets the scapegoat ritual in light of the Golden Calf traditions. Thus some Jewish texts connect the Golden Calf episode with the beginning of the enigmatic practice of assigning a share to "the other side" in sacrificial ritual. Isaiah Tishby refers to the tradition found in the *Book of Zohar* according to which "one of the consequences of Israel's sin with the Golden Calf was that 'the other side' was assigned a share in the sacrificial ritual." Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 891. *The Zohar* 2.242b tells us that "from that day the only thing they could do was to give a portion of everything to 'the other side' through the mystery of the sacrifices, the libation, and the whole-offerings." Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 891. In the dualistic framework of the Zoharic tradition the goat that is dispatched to Azazel comes to be understood as "the

rabbinic tradition attempts repeatedly to place the institution of Yom Kippur's atoning rites into the framework of the traditions surrounding Moses' reception of the second set of the tablets of the law.

Similarly, a passage found in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 46 unveils the tradition connecting Moses' vision of the glory of God in Exodus 33 with the Day of Atonement:

> Moses said: On the Day of Atonement I will behold the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He, and I will make atonement for the iniquities of Israel. Moses spake before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of all the universe! "Shew me, I pray thee, thy glory" (Ex. xxxiii, 18). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Moses! Thou art not able to see My glory lest thou die, as it is said, "For men shall not see me and live" (ibid, 20).[26]

This tradition of Moses' quest to behold the *Kavod*, now placed in the liturgical setting of the Day of Atonement, anticipates the vision of the concealed Glory of God in the Holy of Holies by the high priest on Yom Kippur.

Even more important for our study, in view of the Mosaic traditions found in the apocalypse, several midrashic passages link Moses' forty-day fast on Sinai with the institution of the Day of Atonement. Thus, the passage found in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 46 preserves the following tradition:

> The Son of Bethera said: Moses spent forty days on the mount, expounding the meaning of the words of the Torah, and examining its letters. After forty days he took the Torah, and descended on the tenth of the month, on the Day of Atonement, and gave it as an everlasting inheritance to the children of Israel, as it is said, "And this shall be unto you an everlasting statute." (Lev. xvi. 34)[27]

It is also intriguing that the passage from *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* links the revelation given to Moses with the instructions about Yom Kippur in Leviticus 16. Another passage, *Eliyyahu Zuta* 4, goes even further by connecting the forty-day fast that preceded Moses' second reception of tablets with the establishment of the practice of self-denial on Yom Kippur:

> During the last forty days when Moses went up a second time to Mount Sinai to fetch the Torah, Israel decreed for themselves that the day be set aside for fasting and self-affliction. The last day of the entire period, the last of the forty, they again decreed self-affliction and spent the night also in such self-affliction as would not allow the Inclination to evil to have any power over them. In the morning they rose early and went up before Mount Sinai. They were weeping

principal offering that is destined in its entirety for 'the other side.'" *Ibid.*, 821. Tishby notes that "in many passages [of *The Zohar*] this is described, following a late midrash, as a bribe that is offered to Samael." *Ibid.*, 892.

[26] Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 364. [27] *Ibid.*, 362.

> as they met Moses, and Moses was weeping as he met them, and at length that weeping rose up on high. At once the compassion of the Holy One welled up in their behalf, and the holy spirit gave them good tidings and great consolation, as He said to them: My children, I swear by My great name that this weeping will be a joyful weeping for you because this day will be a day of pardon, atonement, and forgiveness for you – for you, for your children, and for your children's children until the end of all generations.[28]

In sum, rabbinic literature indicates that in later Jewish interpretation Moses' fight against idolatry, his forty-day fast, his vision of God, and his reception of the momentous revelation on Sinai were understood as a chain of formative events linked to the establishment of the Yom Kippur ceremony. Moreover, some of these traditions envisioned Moses' deeds as the cosmic prototype of the symbolic actions that, while the Temple still stood, were reenacted annually by the high priest in the Holy of Holies.

Now it is time to return to the Slavonic apocalypse, where a very similar constellation of motifs is found. It is possible that by evoking this particular cluster of Mosaic traditions the authors of the apocalypse were attempting to connect the patriarch's sacrificial practices on Mount Horeb with Moses' receiving the tablets of the law for the second time, the event which later rabbinic traditions interpreted as the inauguration of the Yom Kippur holiday. In that regard, it is intriguing that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, as in the aforementioned rabbinic accounts, the self-afflicting practice of the forty-day fast following the sin of idolatry is then connected to the Day of Atonement imagery. It is possible that in the Slavonic apocalypse, as in rabbinic accounts, a very similar combination of Mosaic motifs is permeated with Yom Kippur symbolism.

While several scholars have previously pointed to the existence of Yom Kippur imagery in the Slavonic apocalypse, no sufficient explanation has been offered for why this cluster of traditions surrounding the scapegoat Azazel and the two lots suddenly appears in the Abrahamic pseudepigraphon. In this respect it is noteworthy that other Abrahamic pseudepigrapha (for example, the *Testament of Abraham*), while sharing some other common conceptual tenets with the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, do not show any interest in appropriating the Day of Atonement symbolism. Such imagery is also absent from other early extra-biblical elaborations of the patriarch's story found in the *Book of Jubilees*, Josephus, and Philo, as well as in the later rabbinic materials (*Genesis Rabbah*, *Tanna debe Eliyyahu*, and *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah*). There too one fails to find any references to Azazel or the imagery

[28] *Tanna Debe Eliyyahu*, 385.

of the two lots, the very themes that play such a significant theological role in this apocalypse. The aforementioned Abrahamic materials also contain no references to the peculiar cluster of Mosaic traditions found in our text.

The uniqueness of this cluster of motifs opens up the possibility that in the Slavonic apocalypse Abraham might be patterned not according to a biblical Mosaic typology but instead according to a later version, found also in the aforementioned rabbinic accounts. The latter, as noted above, associate Moses' fight against idolatry and his practice of self-denial with the establishment of the observance of the Yom Kippur festival. In this respect the highly "developed" shape of certain Mosaic themes found in the apocalypse – such as, for example, the motif of the unusual nourishment of the seer during his forty-day fast – points to apparent departures from the early biblical blueprint.

From a sacrificial animal to a fallen angel

One of the challenges in arguing for a Yom Kippur setting in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* lies in the fact that the accounts of Abraham's sacrificial practices lack any explicit reference to the two goats of biblical and rabbinic traditions. These emblematic sacrificial animals played a distinctive role in the Yom Kippur rite, wherein one goat was sacrificed to God and the other was released into the wilderness for Azazel.

Yet in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, a writing which exhibits a great deal of influence from the Enochic tradition, allusions to the Yom Kippur ritual seem to be affected also by Enochic reinterpretation of the scapegoat imagery and especially the enhanced symbolism of its chief antagonist, the scapegoat Azazel, who is now envisioned not as a sacrificial animal but as a demoted celestial being. Scholars have noted that in the *Book of the Watchers* the scapegoat rite receives a striking, angelological reinterpretation. It incorporates details from the sacrificial ritual into the story of its main antagonist, a fallen angel Asael. For example, *1 Enoch* 10:4–7 reads:

> And further the Lord said to Raphael: "Bind Azazel by his hands and his feet, and throw him into the darkness. And split open the desert which is in Dudael, and throw him there. And throw on him jagged and sharp stones, and cover him with darkness; and let him stay there for ever, and cover his face, that he may not see light, and that on the great day of judgment he may be hurled into the fire. And restore the earth which the angels have ruined, and announce the restoration of the earth, for I shall restore the earth.[29]

[29] M. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch. A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 2.87–8.

As several distinguished scholars have noticed, a number of details of Asael's punishment are reminiscent of the scapegoat ritual.[30] Lester Grabbe points to a number of parallels between the Asael narrative in *1 Enoch* and the wording of Leviticus 16, including "the similarity of the names Asael and Azazel; the punishment in the desert; the placing of sin on Asael/Azazel; the resultant healing of the land."[31] Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra also observes, "the punishment of the demon resembles the treatment of the goat in aspects of geography, action, time and purpose."[32] Further, the place of Asael's punishment designated in *1 Enoch* as *Dudael* is reminiscent of the rabbinic terminology used for the designation of the ravine of the scapegoat (בית הדורו/הדודו) in later rabbinic interpretations of the Yom Kippur ritual. Stökl Ben Ezra remarks, "the name of place of judgment (*Dudael* – בית הדורו) is conspicuously similar in both traditions and can likely be traced to a common origin."[33]

Some Qumran materials also appear cognizant of this angelological reinterpretation of the scapegoat figure. They choose to depict Azazel as the eschatological leader of the fallen angels, incorporating him into the story of the Watchers' rebellion. Thus, 4Q180 1:1–10 reads:

> Interpretation concerning the ages which God has made: An age to conclude [all that there is] and all that will be. Before creating them he determined [their] operations [according to the precise sequence of the ages,] one age after another age. And this is engraved on the [heavenly] tablets [for the sons of men,] [for]/[a]ll/the ages of their dominion. This is the sequence of the son[s of Noah, from Shem to Abraham,] [unt]il he sired Isaac; the ten [generations . . .] [. . .] Blank [. . .] [And] interpretation concerning 'Azaz'el and the angels wh[o came to the daughters of man] [and s]ired themselves giants. And concerning 'Azaz'el [is written . . .] [to love] injustice and to let him inherit evil for all [his] ag[e . . .] [. . .] (of the) judgments and the judgment of the council of [. . .][34]

[30] R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1893); D. Dimant, "The Fallen Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Related Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha" (Ph.D. diss.; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1974) [in Hebrew]; D. Dimant, "1 Enoch 6–11: A Methodological Perspective," *SBLSP* 17 (1978), 323–39; A. Geiger, "Zu den Apokryphen," *JZWL* 3 (1864), 196–204; Grabbe, "The Scapegoat Tradition"; P. Hanson, "Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in *1 Enoch* 6–11," *JBL* 96 (1977), 195–233; Helm, "Azazel in Early Jewish Literature," 217–26; G. Nickelsburg, "Apocalyptic and Myth in 1 Enoch 6–11," *JBL* 96 (1977), 383–405; R. Rubinkiewicz, *Die Eschatologie von Henoch 9–11 und das Neue Testament*, tr. H. Ulrich, ÖBS 6 (Klosterneuberg, 1984), 88–9; Stökl Ben Ezra, "Yom Kippur in the Apocalyptic Imaginaire and the Roots of Jesus' High Priesthood," 349–66; Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 85–8.

[31] Grabbe, "The Scapegoat Tradition," 153.

[32] Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 87. [33] *Ibid*., 87–8.

[34] *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 371–3. On the similar traditions see also 4Q181.

Grabbe points to another important piece of evidence – a fragmentary text from the *Book of Giants* found at Qumran (4Q203).[35] In this document[36] the punishment for all the sins of the fallen angels is placed on Azazel.[37]

Later rabbinic materials also link the sacrificial animal known from the scapegoat ritual to the story of the angelic rebels. Thus, for example, *b. Yoma* 67b records the following tradition: "The School of R. Ishmael taught: Azazel – [it was so called] because it obtains atonement for the affair of Uza and Aza'el."[38] All these strands of evidence – from *1 Enoch*, Qumran, and later rabbinic sources – show that the conceptual link between the scapegoat and the fallen angel is documented in a number of important materials across a substantial span of history. A broad scholarly consensus now recognizes this connection.

It appears that this "angelological" pattern also operates in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*; Azazel, like the antagonist of the Enochic tradition, is envisioned as a fallen angelic being. It has already been noted that the Azazel story in the apocalypse reflects several peculiar details of the Enochic myth of the fallen Watchers.[39] For example, Rubinkiewicz argues thus:

> the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* follows the tradition of *1 Enoch* 1–36. The chief of the fallen angels is Azazel, who rules the stars and most men. It is not difficult to find here the tradition of Genesis 6:1–4 developed according to the tradition of *1 Enoch*. Azazel is the head of the angels who plotted against the Lord and who impregnated the daughters of men. These angels are compared to the stars. Azazel revealed the secrets of heaven and is banished to the desert. Abraham, as Enoch, receives the power to drive away Satan. All these connections show that the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* drew upon the tradition of *1 Enoch*.[40]

It is clear that here, as in the Enochic and Qumran materials, Azazel is no longer a sacrificial animal, but an angelic being. Even in his first appearance

[35] Grabbe, "The Scapegoat Tradition," 155.

[36] On this text see also L. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Giants from Qumran: Texts, Translation, and Commentary*, TSAJ 63 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1997), 79–101.

[37] 4Q203 7:1–7 reads: "[. . .] . . . [. . .] and [yo]ur power [. . .] Blank Th[en] Ohyah [said] to Hahy[ah, his brother . . .] Then he punished, and not us, [bu]t Aza[ze]l and made [him . . . the sons of] Watchers, the Giants; and n[o]ne of [their] be[loved] will be forgiven [. . .] . . . he has imprisoned us and has captured yo[u]." *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 411.

[38] Epstein, *Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud. Yoma* 76b. On the afterlife of the Asael/Azazel tradition see A. Y. Reed, "From Asael and Šemihazah to Uzzah, Azzah, and Azael: 3 Enoch 5 (§§7–8) and Jewish Reception-History of 1 Enoch," *JSQ* 8 (2001), 105–36.

[39] Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 31–3; Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 50.

[40] Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 1.685.

in Chapter 13:3–4,[41] he is depicted as an unclean (impure) bird (Slav. птица нечистая).[42] In the imagery of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which chooses to portray Yahoel with the body of a griffin, the bird-like appearance of Azazel points to his angelic form. The assumption that Azazel was once an angelic being is further supported by *Apoc. Ab.* 14, which tells about the celestial garment that the fallen angel once possessed: "For behold, the garment which in heaven was formerly yours has been set aside for him [Abraham]."[43]

Yet, in comparison with the early Enochic developments, the angelic profile of Azazel appears to be more advanced. Grabbe suggests that in the depiction of its main antagonist the *Apocalypse of Abraham* seems to be referring to the "basic arch-demon complex under the name of Azazel."[44]

The goat for YHWH?

Abraham's role vis-à-vis Azazel's in the apocalypse again evokes the memory of the Enochic tradition and its namesake hero, Enoch. In both cases the protagonists mirror their respective negative counterparts; both stories portray them exchanging attributes and roles with one another. Just as Enoch takes the priestly and celestial offices of Asael, while the fallen angel assumes some human roles, so also in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* Azazel surrenders his angelic garment to Abraham. Both parties accept the offices of their counterparts as they enter the realms of their opponents. In this respect it is noteworthy that Azazel's transition in the Slavonic apocalypse into the lower realm, as in the case of Asael of the Enochic tradition, encompasses two steps: his removal first to the earth,[45] then further, to the fiery abyss of the subterranean sphere.[46]

Further, similarly to the *Book of the Watchers*, in the Abrahamic pseudepigraphon the hero progresses in the opposite direction of his negative counterpart. He ascends into heaven, and as he does so he acquires a special

[41] *Apoc. Ab.* 13:3–4 "And an impure bird flew down on the carcasses, and I drove it away. And the impure bird spoke to me." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20.

[42] The reference to the impurity of the "bird" betrays the connection to the scapegoat figure who, in the materials pertaining to the Yom Kippur ritual, is understood as an impure entity, a sort of a "gatherer" of impurity which contaminates anyone who comes in contact with him, including his handlers, who must perform purification procedures after handling the goat. Milgrom observes that Azazel was "the vehicle to dispatch Israel's impurities and sins to wilderness/netherworld." Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1621.

[43] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20.

[44] Grabbe, "The Scapegoat Tradition," 158.

[45] "Reproach is on you, Azazel! Since Abraham's portion is in heaven, and yours is on earth, since you have chosen it and desired it to be the dwelling place of your impurity" (*Apoc. Ab.* 13:7–8).

[46] "May you be the fire brand of the furnace of the earth!" (*Apoc. Ab.* 14:5).

status and a celestial garment that allows him to enter the celestial sanctuary.[47] The progression of the patriarch into upper sancta has here, like in *1 Enoch*, a sacerdotal significance, as it betrays connections with the Yom Kippur ceremony of the high priest's entrance into the divine presence. Moreover, it is possible that Abraham's progressive movement into the heavenly Holy of Holies might be understood as encompassing not only priestly but also sacrificial dimensions, in view of the fact that Abraham and Azazel are opposites, and Azazel plays the role of celestial scapegoat. If Azazel drew the lot of scapegoat, that could imply that Abraham is to be pictured as a heavenly sacrificial goat for the Lord.

The Slavonic text conceals many details, however, so it remains unclear. But some cryptic traditions found in the text might hint at this possibility. As is known from the biblical and rabbinic descriptions of the Yom Kippur ritual, the flesh of the goat[48] for YHWH was destroyed by fire, while his blood (which in Jewish tradition represents the soul of the sacrificial animal) was then brought into the Holy of Holies by the high priest and used there for purification.[49] In light of these traditions, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Yahoel's and Abraham's entrance into the heavenly throne room in Chapter 18 is to be understood as an allusion to the entrance of the high priest who brings the purifying sacrifice into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur.

Interestingly, in *Apoc. Ab.* 13:4–5 Azazel warns his counterpart, who represents the "divine" lot, that he will be destroyed by fire[50] along with other sacrificial animals:

[47] The apocalyptic story thus can be seen as a reenactment of the two spatial dynamics which are also reflected in the Yom Kippur ritual – the entrance into the upper realm and the exile into the underworld. In this respect Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra notes that the Yom Kippur ritual "consisted of two antagonistic movements . . . centripetal and centrifugal: the entrance of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies and the expulsion of the scapegoat. As the first movement, the holiest person, the High Priest, entered the most sacred place, the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple, burned incense, sprinkled blood and prayed in order to achieve atonement and purification for his people and the sacred institutions of the Jewish cult. As a second movement, the scapegoat burdened with the sins of the people was sent with an escort to the desert." Stökl Ben Ezra, "The Biblical Yom Kippur, the Jewish Fast of the Day of Atonement and the Church Fathers," 494.

[48] 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."

[49] Milgrom observes, "the blood of the slain goat may have been brought into the adytum in its entirety." Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1031.

[50] It is intriguing that in one of the passages that portray the fiery trials of Abraham in the hands of Nimrod, the patriarch is depicted as being tied as a sacrificial animal and thrown into a furnace. Thus, for example, *Eliyyahu Rabbah* 27 reads: "Thereupon Nimrod had Abraham taken out [to be consumed] in a fiery furnace . . . At once his servants bound Abraham hand and foot and laid him on the

> 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."[51]

Azazel's cryptic warning remains one of the most profound puzzles of the text. In trying to solve this puzzle, it is helpful to note that the motif of a seer's encounter with fire appears significant for the authors of the pseudepigraphon, who envision 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 his entering into the fire.[52] Could the promise of a celestial garment to the patriarch in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* signify here, as in many other apocalyptic accounts, that his "mortal" body must be "altered" in the fiery metamorphosis?[53] Unfortunately, the text does not provide direct answers for such inquiries.

In order to better understand Abraham's connections with the "divine" lot, which might help us further clarify his eschatological role as the "goat for YHWH," we must now explore the imagery of the two lots found in the Slavonic apocalypse.

Eschatological lots

The remarkable angelic metamorphosis of the scapegoat, then, has had a long-lasting conceptual afterlife in Jewish apocalypticism. But there is another image from Yom Kippur that likewise exercised a formative influence on some Second Temple apocalyptic materials, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the Qumran writings one encounters a broad appropriation of the imagery of two lots, symbolism that has profound significance in 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)." *Tanna Debe Eliyyahu*, 62–3.

[51] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20.

[52] Cf. *Apoc. Ab*. 15:3: "And he carried me up to the edge of the fiery flame"; *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.

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

scapegoat ordinance. As with the figure of Azazel, who is enhanced with a new celestial profile, the imagery of the sacrificial lots also receives a novel eschatological reinterpretation. Thus, in a number of Qumran materials, such as 1QM, 1QS, 4Q544, and 11Q13, the two lots become associated not with two sacrificial goats but with celestial protagonists, both positive – like Melchizedek or the Angel of Lights – as well as negative – like Melchireša^{c}, Belial, or the Prince of Darkness. These characters are understood in the documents as the leaders of the "portions of humanity," associated with the lots of good and evil, darkness and light.[54] Repeated references occur in the Qumran documents to the eschatological lots that represent the good and evil portions of humanity, often designated as "the men of the lot of Melchizedek"[55] (11Q13 2:8) or "the men of the lot of Belial"[56] (5Q11 1:3).

Such eschatological reinterpretation of the lots looms large in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* as well. References to the two lots are widely dispersed in the second, apocalyptic part of the pseudepigraphon. Many have noted that the conceptual elaborations surrounding the imagery of the lots are reminiscent of the eschatological reinterpretations found in the Qumran materials.[57] In fact, the Slavonic word for "lot" (*часть*) is connected to the Hebrew גורל, a term prominent in Qumran materials. And the *Apocalypse of Abraham* follows the lead of Qumran in tying the lots to mediatorial figures, rather than sacrificial animals. At Qumran the mediatorial figures associated with the lots include Belial or Melchizedek; in the apocalypse they are Azazel[58] and the translated patriarch Abraham.[59]

However, in comparison with Qumran materials, connections to the underlying formative pattern of the scapegoat ritual appear even more distinctive,

[54] Paul Kobelski notes that each of these "lots" or "portions" of humanity is "characterized by one of the two spirits allotted by God – the spirit of truth and the spirit of perversity (1QS 3:18–21). Those belonging to the lot of God, of Melchizedek, of light, etc., are characterized by spirit of truth; they are the sons of righteousness whose leader is the Prince of Light (1QS 3:20). Those who belong to the lot of Belial, of darkness, etc., are characterized by the spirit of perversity; they are the sons of perversity whose leader is the Angel of Darkness (1QS 3:20–21)." P. J. Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchireša^{c}*, CBQMS 10 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), 57.

[55] אנש[י] גורל מל [כי] צדק. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 1206.

[56] אנשי גורל בליעל. *Ibid.*, 1132–3.

[57] E.g., Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 33; Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 54. On the two lots see also Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, "Die Apokalypse Abrahams," 418.

[58] *Apoc. Ab.* 13:7: "And he said to him, 'Reproach is on you, Azazel! Since *Abraham's portion* (часть Аврамля) is in heaven, and *yours* is on earth.'" Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 66.

[59] *Apoc. Ab.* 10:15: "Stand up, Abraham, go boldly, be very joyful and rejoice! And I am with you, since *an honorable portion* (часть вѣчная) has been prepared for you by the Eternal One." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 18; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 60.

and therefore more easily recognizable, in the Slavonic accounts of the lots.[60] In *Apoc. Ab*. 13, in one of the first passages in the text to invoke imagery of two "lots" or "portions," one can easily discern allusions to particular details associated with Yom Kippur observance. *Apoc. Ab*. 13:7–8 reads:

> And he [Yahoel] said to him, "Reproach is on you, Azazel! Since Abraham's portion is in heaven, and yours is on earth, since you have chosen it and desired it to be the dwelling place of your impurity. Therefore the Eternal Lord, the Mighty One, has made you a dweller on earth."[61]

Notice the scapegoat undertones present. The distinctive reference to the dwelling place of Azazel's "impurity" recalls the motif of the scapegoat removing the impurity of the community by travelling into an inhabited realm. Further connections can be seen in the description of the other lot, associated with Abraham. In the Day of Atonement ritual the lot of the goat for YHWH is called the lot for the Lord, and in *Apoc. Ab*. 20:5 the lot of Abraham is designated as the lot of God:

> And the Eternal Mighty One said to me, "Abraham, Abraham!" And I said, "Here am I!" And he said, "Look from on high at the stars which are beneath you and count them for me and tell me their number!" And I said, "Would I be able? For I am [but] a man." And he said to me, "As the number of the stars and their host, so shall I make your seed into a company of nations, set apart for me in my lot with Azazel."[62]

This identification of the positive lot with the lot of God is also present in Qumran materials.[63]

Given the above evidence, it is little surprise that the similarity of Yom Kippur imagery between the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and Qumran has often attracted scholars' attention. Less often have the apocalypse's parallels with rabbinic sources been noted. Yet the intriguing descriptions of the lots in the Slavonic apocalypse point to close connections with later rabbinic reinterpretations of Yom Kippur that are found in the Mishnah and the Talmud. A noteworthy parallel is the spatial arrangement of the lots on the left and right sides, found both in the Slavonic apocalypse and in rabbinic materials.

[60] The sacerdotal significance of the eschatological lots in the Slavonic apocalypse is underlined by the fact that the Slavonic term жребий, used for the designation of the "lots" of humanity in the *Apoc. Ab*. 20:5 and 29:21, is also used in 1:2 for designation of the priestly lot that Abraham shares in Terah's temple. Cf. Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 36, 82 and 102.

[61] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20.

[62] *Ibid.*, 25.

[63] Cf. 1QM 13:5–6: "For they are the lot of darkness but the lot of God is for [everlast]ing light." *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 135.

So *Apoc. Ab.* 22 portrays two portions of humanity arranged according to the two lots and situated on the left and right sides:

> 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."[64] (*Apoc. Ab.* 22:4–5)

In *Apoc. Ab.* 27:1–2 and 29:11 this division of the two lots arranged on the left and right is repeated:

> 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)

> 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)

While in the Qumran materials the spatial arrangement of the lots on the left and right sides does not play any important theological role, in rabbinic materials it very much does. Indeed, the spatial distinction receives its paramount cultic significance in the rabbinic descriptions of the Yom Kippur custom of the selection of the goats.[65]

Significantly, the spatial arrangement of the lots on the left and right sides in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* is reminiscent of the descriptions found in the mishnaic treatise *Yoma*, where the ritual selection of two goats – one for YHWH and the other for Azazel – also operates with the symbolism of the left and right sides.[66] In *m. Yoma* 4:1 the following tradition is found:

[64] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26–7.

[65] Besides mishnaic and talmudic materials, such topological arrangements of the lots on the left and right sides plays a significant role in later Jewish mysticism. Thus, for example, Box noticed that *Apoc. Ab.*'s distinction between the left and right side is reminiscent of some developments 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.

[66] Cf. *b. Sanhedrin* 108b: "He replied. 'The Holy One, blessed be He, took Abraham and placed *him at His right hand*, and they [God and Abraham] threw dust which turned to swords, and chaff which turned to arrows, as it is written, A Psalm of David. The Lord said unto my master, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool . . .'" Epstein, *Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud. Sanhedrin* 108b.

> 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."[67]

Although the passage from Mishnah does not openly identify the right side with the divine lot, as does the Slavonic apocalypse, the Babylonian Talmud makes this connection explicit. Thus *b. Yoma* 39a reads:

> 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.[68]

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 on the left side.[69]

The high priest and Azazel

In much of the Enochic tradition and in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* both protagonists[70] and antagonists[71] are envisioned as priestly figures. This emphasis on the sacerdotal is woven into the fabric of the entire

[67] H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 166.

[68] Epstein, *Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud. Yoma* 39a.

[69] In light of the passage from *b. Yoma* which talks about the right hand of the high priest in relation to the goat for YHWH, it is also noteworthy that in *Apocalypse of Abraham* Yahoel, who is portrayed as a high priest, is often depicted as putting his right hand on Abraham. *Apoc. Ab.* 10:4: "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." *Apoc. Ab.* 15:2: "And the angel took me with his right hand and set me on the right wing of the pigeon." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17 and 22.

[70] On Enoch's priestly roles, see M. Himmelfarb, "The Temple and the Garden of Eden in Ezekiel, the Book of the Watchers, and the Wisdom of Ben Sira," in *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, eds. J. Scott and P. Simpson–Housley (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 63–78; M. Himmelfarb, "Apocalyptic Ascent and the Heavenly Temple," *SBLSP* 26 (1987), 210–17. See also: J. Maier, "Das Gefährdungsmotiv bei der Himmelsreise in der jüdischen Apocalyptik und 'Gnosis,'" *Kairos* 5.1 (1963), 18–40, esp. 23; idem, *Vom Kultus zur Gnosis*, Kairos 1 (Salzburg: Müller, 1964), 127–8; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Enoch, Levi, and Peter: Recipients of Revelation in Upper Galilee," *JBL* 100 (1981), 575–600, esp. 576–82; Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 70–6.

[71] On the priestly traditions related to the fallen Watchers, see D. Suter, "Fallen Angel, Fallen Priest: The Problem of Family Purity in 1 Enoch 6–16," *HUCA* 50 (1979), 115–35.

pseudepigraphon, in which all main characters are endowed with cultic roles. The most spectacular cultic attributes are, of course, given to Yahoel, who is presented in the text as the heavenly high priest and the celestial choir-master. Yahoel shows himself to be the most distinguished cultic figure in the story by his repeated instructions to Abraham about sacrificial rites and proper liturgical procedures. It is possible that, in his role as instructor and revealer of cultic mysteries, Yahoel discloses his teachings to the patriarch not only in speech but also through hands-on instruction, so to speak. Hints of this occur at various points. One such instance is found in Chapters 13 and 14, where Yahoel appears to perform one of the central ordinances of the Yom Kippur atoning ceremony, in which impurity is transferred onto Azazel and the scapegoat is dispatched into the wilderness. In *Apoc. Ab.* 13:7–14 this mysterious encounter between the high priest Yahoel and the scapegoat Azazel is found:

> Reproach is on you, Azazel! Since Abraham's portion is in heaven, and yours is on earth. Since you have chosen it and desired it to be the dwelling place of your impurity. Therefore the Eternal Lord, the Mighty One, has made you a dweller on earth. And because of you [there is] the wholly-evil spirit of the lie, and because of you [there are] wrath and trials on the generations of impious men. Since the Eternal Mighty God did not *send* the righteous, in their bodies, to be in your hand, in order to affirm through them the righteous life and the destruction of impiety . . . Hear, adviser! Be shamed by me, since you have been appointed to tempt not to all the righteous! Depart from this man! You cannot deceive him, because he is the enemy of you and of those who follow you and who love what you desire. For behold, the garment which in heaven was formerly yours has been set aside for him, and the corruption which was on him has gone over to you.[72]

In view of the cultic affiliations of Yahoel, it is possible that his address to the scapegoat has a ritual significance, since it bears resemblance to several actions of the high priest on Yom Kippur. The first thing that draws attention is that Yahoel's speech contains a command of departure: "Depart from this man!" Crispin Fletcher-Louis has noted a possible connection between this command found in *Apoc. Ab.* 13:12 and the dispatching formula given to the scapegoat in *m. Yoma* 6:4: "Take our sins and go forth."[73] Secondly, scholars have also pointed out that some technical terminology found in Chapter 13 appears to be connected with Yom Kippur terminology. Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra notes the terminology of

[72] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20.
[73] Fletcher-Louis, "The Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man," 282.

"sending" things to Azazel in *Apoc. Ab.* 13:10,[74] which Alexander Kulik traces to the Greek term ἀποστέλλω or Hebrew שלח.[75] Stökl Ben Ezra proposes that this terminology "might allude to the sending out of the scapegoat."[76]

The phrase "dwelling place of your impurity" is a third noteworthy connection, since it alludes to the "purgation" function of the scapegoat ceremony, the rite that centered on removing the impurity heaped on the sacrificial animal to the "dwelling" place of the demon in the wilderness. Putting reproach and shame on Azazel in *Apoc. Ab.* 13:7 and 13:11 may also relate to the ritual curses bestowed upon the scapegoat. Another pertinent detail of Yahoel's speech is his statement that Abraham's corruption has now been transferred to Azazel. Reflecting on this, Robert Helm sees its connection to the Yom Kippur settings by proposing that "the transference of Abraham's corruption to Azazel may be a veiled reference to the scapegoat rite."[77] Similarly, Lester Grabbe also argues that the phrasing in the statement that "Abraham's corruption has 'gone over to' Azazel suggest[s] an act of atonement."[78] It is possible that the high priest Yahoel is performing here the so-called "transference function" – the crucial part of the scapegoat ritual – when the high priest conveys the sins of Israel onto the head of the goat through confession and laying-on of hands.[79]

Abraham and the scapegoat

It is quite clear that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* Yahoel functions as a senior priest explaining and demonstrating rituals to an apprentice, Abraham.[80] The parallelism between the instructions of the master and the actions of the apprentice manifests itself early in the apocalyptic section of the text, when the patriarch faithfully follows the orders of his angelic

[74] *Apoc. Ab.* 13:9–10: "And because of you [there is] the wholly-evil spirit of the lie, and because of you [there are] wrath and trials on the generations of impious men. Since the Eternal Mighty God did not *send* the righteous, in their bodies, to be in your hand, in order to affirm through them the righteous life and the destruction of impiety." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20.

[75] Kulik, "Apocalypse of Abraham. Towards the Lost Original," 90.

[76] Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 94.

[77] Helm, "Azazel in Early Jewish Tradition," 223.

[78] Grabbe, "The Scapegoat Tradition: A Study in Early Jewish Interpretation," 157.

[79] Lev. 16:21–2: "Then Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and sending it away into the wilderness by means of someone designated for the task. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness." On the "transference" function see also Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1041.

[80] Harlow, "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," 314.

guide about how to prepare the sacrifices.[81] The same pattern of cultic training is also discernible in the depiction of the ritual of dispatching the scapegoat.

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, after Yahoel's own "handling" of Azazel, the angel then verbally instructs Abraham on how to deal with the scapegoat:

> Say to him, "May you be the fire brand of the furnace of the earth! Go, Azazel, into the untrodden parts of the earth. Since your inheritance are those who are with you, with men born with the stars and clouds. And their portion is you, and they come into being through your being. And justice is your enmity. Therefore through your own destruction vanish from before me!" And I said the words as the angel had taught me. (*Apoc. Ab.* 14:5–8)[82]

In this narrative the dispatching formulas appear to be even more decisive and forceful than in the previously investigated passage from Chapter 13, now including such commands to the scapegoat as: "Go" (Slav. иди)[83] and "Vanish from before me" (Slav. буди от мене исчезлъ).[84]

Another significant detail from the dispatching formula "Go, Azazel, into the untrodden parts of the earth" is where the demon is forced to go, "the untrodden parts of earth." The word "untrodden" (Slav. беспроходна)[85] is significant since it designates a place uninhabitable (lit.: impassable) to human beings. The language of Lev. 16, where the scapegoat is dispatched "to the solitary place" (אל ארץ גזרה) "in the wilderness" (במדבר),[86] suggests to Jacob Milgrom that "the purpose of dispatching the goat to the wilderness is to remove it from human habitation."[87]

These observations indicate that a further aspect of the scapegoat ritual is alluded to. In the so-called "elimination" aspect of the scapegoat ritual, impurity is removed from the inhabitable world into an uninhabitable (or, in the language of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, "untrodden") realm. Stökl Ben Ezra also observes that the language of "untrodden parts of the earth" is reminiscent of the Septuagint version's translation of Leviticus 16:22

[81] Harlow observes that "in chap. 12 Yahoel acts like a senior priest showing a junior priest the ropes; he instructs Abraham: 'Slaughter and cut all this, putting together the two halves, one against the other. But do not cut the birds.'" *Ibid.*, 314.

[82] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 21.

[83] Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 68. [84] *Ibid.* [85] *Ibid.*

[86] Lev. 16:22: "The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness."

[87] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1045.

(εἰς γῆν ἄβατον)[88] and the expression chosen by Philo in *De Specialibus Legibus* 1:188 in his description of Yom Kippur.[89]

The concluding phrase of the passage from Chapter 14, which reports that Abraham repeated the words he received from the great angel, adds validity to the suggestion that Abraham is depicted as a sort of a priestly apprentice, receiving instructions from Yahoel and then applying this knowledge in dispatching the scapegoat.[90]

To conclude, there is an important structural similarity to point out: there are a number of possible connections between the Yom Kippur imagery in the second part of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the cultic traditions and conceptual developments in the first, haggadic section of the pseudepigraphon. As has already been mentioned, the first part of the text is also permeated with cultic concerns, as it depicts the idolatrous worship of the household of Terah, envisioned there by the metaphor of the polluted sanctuary. The section ends with the demise of the infamous house of worship and the death of two priestly servants – Abraham's father Terah and his brother Nahor – who perish in the fire.

Note how the same motif is evident in the Day of Atonement traditions. The description of the Yom Kippur ritual found in Leviticus 16 also begins with a reference to two priests who have perished, namely, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu. They, like Terah and Nahor in the Slavonic apocalypse, were killed by the fire proceeding from God because their improper priestly practice defiled the sanctuary. This reference to priests who have perished and caused a contamination (now requiring purgation) serves well the cultic agenda of Leviticus 16, which then offers the description of the purification rite of Yom Kippur.[91] As noted before, later rabbinic materials link the Golden Calf episode with the establishment of Yom Kippur, thereby hinting at this correspondence between sacerdotal transgression and the need for its cultic repair.

[88] Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham. Towards the Lost Original*, 90.

[89] Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 94.

[90] Daniel Harlow notes that "Yahoel teaches Abraham a kind of exorcistic spell to drive Azazel away." Harlow, "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," 315.

[91] In this respect Jacob Milgrom reminds us that in the beginning, before becoming an annual festival, Yom Kippur was understood as an "emergency rite" for purgation of the sanctuary. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1070. James Scullion also observes that "the purpose of the feast is purgation. The sins of the Israelites, inadvertent and advertent, defile the land and the temple, and even the holy of holies. Leviticus anachronistically projects back into pre-settlement times a feast to purify the tent/temple and camp/city to protect them from the buildup of impurity." J. P. Scullion, "A Traditio-historical Study of the Day of Atonement" (Ph.D. diss.; Catholic University of America, 1990), 83.

This brings us to the point of connection. In light of the aforementioned traditions, the reenactment of the Yom Kippur observances in the second part of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* fits nicely into the overall structure of the Slavonic pseudepigraphon. The hero's transition from the polluted and destroyed sanctuary, depicted in the first part of the story, to the true place of worship shown him by the Deity, in the second part of the story, is mediated by the atoning ritual.

CHAPTER 5

The transformation of the celebrants

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* challenges its readers' imaginations with a plethora of priestly motifs. Veiled symbolism, partially revealing apocalyptic and priestly realities, accompanies the seer's cultic entrance into heaven. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, as in many Jewish pseudepigraphical narratives, the hero's access to the sacred realm coincides with his metamorphosis as a celebrant of the heavenly liturgy. This translation, hinted at symbolically via the change in Abraham's garments, was often taken to mark the transition from the earthly to the celestial. Here, as in the Yom Kippur ordinance, the changes affecting the celebrant's wardrobe are the climax of the transformation.

Our previous analysis has already drawn attention to many facets of the Yom Kippur imagery in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. The task of the present chapter is to explore further the transformational aspects of this enigmatic celebration by focusing on the metamorphoses that the story's protagonists and antagonists, be they human or angelic, experience in the course of their participation in the drama of the eschatological rite.

Transformation of the protagonist

The lost attires

The second, apocalyptic section of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* unveils one of the most important dynamics found in Jewish apocalyptic accounts when both positive and negative characters of the story progress into the (erstwhile) realms of their opponents, frequently assuming the roles and offices of their counterparts.[1] Given these overlapping trajectories, a seer and

[1] This dynamic of apocalyptic accounts is already present in early Enochic materials, where the antagonists represented by the fallen angels assume a wide array of human roles on earth, while a human protagonist – specifically, Enoch – assumes their celestial and priestly offices in the heavenly realm.

his demoted opponent(s) often meet as they exchange dwellings. Such interaction often becomes a pivotal crux of the story.[2]

Chapter 13, where Abraham encounters the antagonist Azazel, represents such a point of intersection and confrontation in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. In the course of this encounter, Abraham's *angelus interpres* Yahoel informs both parties that the celestial garment of Azazel must now be transferred to a new owner – to the translated Abraham. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 13:7–14 reads:

> Reproach is on you, Azazel! Since Abraham's portion is in heaven, and yours is on earth, since you have chosen it and desired it to be the dwelling place of your impurity . . . For behold, the garment which in heaven was formerly yours has been set aside for him, and the corruption which was on him has gone over to you. (*Apoc. Ab.* 13:7–14)[3]

The promise of new attire to the translated hero signifies not merely a rather unusual expansion of the patriarch's wardrobe; instead it denotes a pivotal ontological transition from the human to the celestial. Endowments of heavenly attire are not unusual in apocalyptic literature; seers often receive angelic garments. In *2 Enoch* 22, for example, Enoch is clothed with a luminous angelic garment, which makes his body similar to the glorious bodies of the angelic servants. Such a metamorphosis is of great anthropological significance: it signals a return to the original luminosity the first humans lost after their transgression in Eden.

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the hero's transition likewise invokes the protological story, in which the luminous clothes of the heavenly beings were exchanged for garments of skin. Abraham's bestowal with angelic garments may, therefore, signal an eschatological return to the protoplasts' original condition. Several scholars have, in fact, noted this possibility. Louis Ginzberg, for one, suggested the possible Adamic background and pointed to parallels in the targumic materials and in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 20.[4] Indeed, the transference of a garment from the demoted angelic antagonist to an exalted human protagonist is an important theme throughout the Adamic lore.

Some of the currents within this tradition entertain the notion, unusual though it may be, that even the original luminous garments of the first humans had come from a demoted celestial being. A witness to this

[2] One of the instances of such an encounter between an exalted hero and demoted antagonists is found in *2 Enoch*. On his celestial journey, Enoch meets a group of imprisoned Watchers in the second heaven. On this tradition see A. Orlov "The Watchers of Satanail: The Fallen Angels Traditions in *2 (Slavonic) Enoch*," in A. Orlov, *Selected Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, SVTP 23 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 134–64.

[3] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20.

[4] See Ginzberg, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 92.

interpretation is the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Gen. 3:21, a passage that treats the etiology of the first humans' luminous attire. According to this targumic interpretation, the original humans were endowed with luminous garments that had been stripped from the serpent:

> And the Lord God made garments of glory for Adam and for his wife from the skin which the serpent had cast off (to be worn) on the skin of their (garments of) fingernails of which they had been stripped, and he clothed them.[5]

Later midrashim are also aware of the enigmatic provenance of the protoplasts' luminous garments; hence *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 20:

> Rabbi Eliezer said: From skins which the serpent sloughed off, the Holy One, blessed be He, took and made coats of glory for Adam and his wife, as it is said, "And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife coats of skin, and clothed them."[6]

These passages unveil the dynamic of exaltation and demotion noted above; they suggest that the protagonist's apotheosis, signaled by his acquisition of luminous attire, comes as a result of the denigration of the erstwhile favorite now stripped of his exalted status. The newly exalted are drawn, by the will of God, to their dignified abodes. Their antagonistic counterparts are forced into exile from their elevated dwelling places.

This tradition of the first humans' clothes of glory, mentioned in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, is important for our study. Indeed, the motif of Abraham's endowment with a garment stripped from the fallen angel cannot be properly understood without exploring the array of traditions associated with Adamic "clothing metaphors," a conceptual development whose roots can be traced to biblical materials.[7] In order to fully grasp these roots, a short excursus into several biblical and extrabiblical texts is necessary.

The garments of light

Genesis 1:26–27 and 3:21 are pivotal starting points for subsequent Jewish and Christian reflection on the glorious garments of Adam and Eve. Genesis 1:26 describes the creation of humanity after the likeness (דמות) of the image

[5] Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 29. Later rabbinic traditions also hold that the glorious garments of Adam and Eve were made from the skin of the female Leviathan.

[6] Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 144.

[7] One potential allusion to the protoplasts' glorious garments occurs in Ezekiel 28, which might tell of a glorious angelic being, originally installed in the Garden of Eden but then forcefully expelled from this lofty location. The garment of this being is decorated with precious stones and gold.

(צלם) of God. Notably Gen. 1:26–27 refers to the צלם (*tselem*) of Adam, the luminous image of God's glory according to which Adam was created.[8] Adam's *tselem* was created after God's own *tselem* (בצלמנו, literally "in our *tselem*") – a kind of luminous "imitation" of the glorious *tselem* of God. Later rabbinic interpretations often argue that the likeness that Adam and God shared was not physicality, in the usual sense of having a body, but rather luminescence.[9] The first humans' clothing in garments of glory was often taken by later interpreters as mirroring the state of the Deity, who, according to some biblical passages, was also clothed in glory and majesty.[10]

Consequently, it is especially noteworthy that amidst such major conceptual developments Gen. 3 contains a cluster of motifs pertaining to the first humans' attire. According to Genesis 3:21, God fashioned for his beloved creatures a set of clothes – enigmatically called "garments of skin." Typically, this is thought to be clothing for Adam and Eve *after* the Fall. Some scholars, however, argue that sufficient evidence exists to suggest another interpretation of Gen. 3:21. According to this alternative reading, the verbs in Gen. 3:21 are to be taken as pluperfects that refer to the status of Adam and Eve at their creation *before* the Fall.[11]

Several extra-biblical materials also show familiarity with these traditions.[12] The motif is evident, for example, in the elaborations of the protoplast story found in the *Books of Adam and Eve*. Some versions of

[8] For discussions about the luminous body of Adam, see: D. H. Aaron, "Shedding Light on God's Body in Rabbinic Midrashim: Reflections on the Theory of a Luminous Adam," *HTR* 90 (1997), 299–314; S. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, ed. M. Schmidt, Eichstätter Beiträge 4 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1982), 11–40; A. D. DeConick and J. Fossum, "Stripped before God: A New Interpretation of Logion 37 in the Gospel of Thomas," *VC* 45 (1991), 141; N. A. Dahl and D. Hellholm, "Garment-Metaphors: The Old and the New Human Being," in *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy: Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on His 70th Birthday*, eds. A. Yarbro Collins and M. M. Mitchell (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2001), 139–58; A. Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature," *HTR* 87 (1994), 171–95; S. N. Lambden, "From Fig Leaves to Fingernails: Some Notes on the Garments of Adam and Eve in the Hebrew Bible and Select Early Postbiblical Jewish Writings," in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden*, ed. P. Morris and D. Sawyer, JSOTSS 136 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 74–90; B. Murmelstein, "Adam, ein Beitrag zur Messiaslehre," *WZKM* 35 (1928), 255; N. Rubin and A. Kosman, "The Clothing of the Primordial Adam as a Symbol of Apocalyptic Time in the Midrashic Sources," *HTR* 90 (1997), 155–74; J. Z. Smith, "The Garments of Shame," *HR* 5 (1965/1966), 217–38.

[9] Aaron, "Shedding Light on God's Body," 303.

[10] See, for example, Ezek. 1; Ps. 101:1; Job 40:10.

[11] Brock, "Clothing Metaphors in Syriac Tradition," 14.

[12] The Qumran materials appear to be aware of the motif of the glorious condition of Adam. Several texts invoke the tradition of the glory of the protoplast: *1QS* 4:15 22–3: "For those God has chosen for an everlasting covenant and to them shall belong all the glory of Adam (כבוד אדם)"; *1QH* 4:9 15:

the *Primary Adam Books* allude to the story of the original garments of light once possessed by the first humans. In the Armenian version of the *Primary Adam Books* (at 20:1) a testimony about the tragic loss of the garments comes directly from the mouth of one of the protoplasts, when Eve recollects the dramatic moment of the garments' disappearance: "At that hour I learned with my eyes that I was naked of the glory with which I had been clothed."[13] This passage tells not only of the protoplasts' original possession of the glorious clothes, but also of their tragic stripping after the Fall.[14]

Despite this unhappy memory, humanity's return to the glorious garments of the protoplasts is foreshadowed already in the *Primary Adam Books*.[15] A suggestive hint appears at the scene of Adam's burial, found in the section dealing with Adamic funerary rites. His body is covered with linen vestments brought from paradise, imagery that serves as a sign of the eschatological reclothing of humanity and its return to the protoplasts' original attire:

> After this, God spoke to Michael and said, "Go to the Garden of the [third] heaven and bring [me] three linen cloths." When he had brought them, God said to Michael and to Ozel and to Gabriel, "Bring these linen cloths and cover Adam's body, and bring sweet oil." They brought them and set them around him and wound him in that garment. (Armenian version)[16]

"giving them as a legacy all the glory of Adam (כבוד אדם)"; *CD-A* 3:20: "Those who remained steadfast in it will acquire eternal life, and all the glory of Adam (כבוד אדם) is for them." *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 78–9; 148–9; 554–5.

[13] *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 58E. See also the Armenian *Life of Adam and Eve* 10.1: "When Eve came forth from the water, her flesh was like withered grass, for her flesh had been changed from the water, but the form of her glory remained brilliant." *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 12E. On the Armenian version of the *Primary Adam Books*, see also M. E. Stone, *The Penitence of Adam*, CSCO 429–30 (Louvain: Peeters, 1981); M. E. Stone, *Texts and Concordances of the Armenian Adam Literature*, EJL 12 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 70–81.

[14] See also the Armenian *Life of Adam and Eve* [44]21.2–5: "Then Adam came to me with his great glory . . . and I gave him to eat of the fruit, and I made him like me." Later rabbinic traditions also speak about the loss of Adam's glory after the Fall. *Genesis Rabbah* 12.6 contains the following elaboration: "the six things . . . were taken away from Adam, viz. his lustre, his immortality . . . Adam did not retain his glory for a night . . . He deprived him of his splendor and expelled him from the Garden of Eden." Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 1.91.

[15] Marinus de Jonge and Johannes Tromp note that in the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* the "promise of the eschatological restoration to glory does not postpone the divine grace to the end of times. Immediately after Adam's death, the angels and the sun and the moon offer incenses and prayers to God, that he may have mercy on Adam (33.4–36.1). Their efforts succeed, and trumpets announce the favorable outcome of God's gracious verdict on Adam (37.1–2). A Seraph washes Adam in the Acherusian lake (37.3), a ritual known from Greek mythology as the post mortem cleansing from guilt of the dead. Then God hands him over to Michael, who is to bring Adam to the third heaven, where he is to remain until the day of visitation (37.4–6)." De Jonge and Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve and Related Literature*, 51.

[16] *A Synopsis of the Books Adam and Eve*, 86E–87E. Cf. the Georgian version: "They seized three folded shrouds of [cloth] and God told Michael and Gabriel, 'Unfold these shrouds and envelop Adam's body and take the ointment from the olive tree and pour it upon him.' And three angels dressed him (in it) and when they had dressed Adam's body (in it) . . ." *Ibid.*, 87E.

The rabbinic materials reaffirm the tradition of the first humans' glorious garments. The targumic traditions, both Palestinian and Babylonian, while retaining the concept of "garments of skin" from Gen. 3:21, also add "garments of glory" to the description. This targumic interpretation is supported by a wide array of midrashic sources. In fact, the midrashim often go further, replacing skin with glory. As an example, *Genesis Rabbah* 20:12 says that the scroll of Rabbi Meir read "garments of light" (כתנות אור) instead of "garments of skin" (כתנות עור):

> In R. Meir's Torah it was found written, "Garments of light: this refers to Adam's garments, which were like a torch [shedding radiance], broad at the bottom and narrow at the top."[17]

Another midrashic compilation, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 14, also knows the motif of the protoplast's glorious garment:

> What was the dress of the first man? A skin of nail and a cloud of glory covered him. When he ate of the fruits of the tree, the nail-skin was stripped off him and the cloud of glory departed from him, and he saw himself naked.[18]

Indeed, this motif continued to be developed in the rabbinic context for millennia. In one of the later Jewish mystical compendiums, *The Zohar* 1.36b, one finds an echo of the same tradition about the luminous garments. As was the case at *Genesis Rabbah* 20, this Zoharic passage also uses the same word play, עור/אור:

> At first they had had coats of light (אור), which procured them the service of the highest of the high, for the celestial angels used to come to enjoy that light; so it is written, "For thou hast made him but little lower than the angels, and crowns him with glory and honor" (Ps. viii, 6). Now after their sins they had only coats of skin (עור), good for the body but not for the soul.[19]

[17] Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 1.171.

[18] Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 98. Other midrashic passages also speak about the luminosity of Adam's body. For example, in *Leviticus Rabbah* 20.2 the following tradition is found: "Resh Lakish, in the name of R. Simeon the son of Menasya, said: The apple of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun; how much more so the brightness of his face!" Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 4.252. *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 8:1 reads: "R. Levi said: 'The ball of Adam's heel outshone the sun . . . so was it not right that the ball of his heel should outshine the sun, and how much more so the beauty of his face!'" Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 8.213–14. A similar tradition is also found in *b. Bava Batra* 58a.

[19] Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 1.136.

The glory of the fallen angel

The Adamic tradition represents the formative bedrock of the later apocalyptic and mystical developments centering on the eschatological reclothing of the translated patriarchs and prophets, who change the "attire" of their ontological conditions – often at their opponents' expense.

In the Adamic lore one also finds the roots of the peculiar etiology, noted above, according to which the first humans themselves received their unique status, manifested in luminous garments, as a result of the demotion of an exalted angelic being who fell out of favor with God. In these traditions, the protoplast literally takes the place, glory, and garments of the demoted angelic antagonist. One of the early specimens of such a tradition can be found in the *Primary Adam Books*, where Satan's removal from his special glorious place is set in antithetical symmetry with the creation and exaltation of Adam. Moreover, the very fact of the first human's entrance into the world serves, in this text, as the reason for Satan's dismissal: several versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve* connect Satan's removal from his exalted dwelling with his refusal to bow down before Adam, the Deity's newly created favorite.

In the Armenian version of the *Life of Adam and Eve* 12:1–16:2, the infamous celestial rebel himself describes the reason for his dramatic exile from the throne of the cherubim and the dwelling of light:

> Satan also wept loudly and said to Adam. "All my arrogance and sorrow came to pass because of you; for, because of you I went forth from my dwelling; and because of you I was alienated from the throne of the cherubs who, having spread out a shelter, used to enclose me; because of you my feet have trodden the earth ... Thereupon, God became angry with me and commanded *to expel us from our dwelling* and to cast me and my angels, who were in agreement with me, to the earth; and *you were at the same time in the Garden*. When I realized that because of you I had gone forth from *the dwelling of light* and was in sorrows and pains."[20]

This passage explains the origins of the long-lasting drama of competition and revenge that will later overshadow the whole history of humankind. Yet it also hints at mysterious dynamics in heaven, a hierarchical world where the rise of the Deity's new favorite almost inevitably leads to demise of the old, who now must surrender his unique status, reflected in his garment, to his replacement. It would seem that this unique wardrobe,

[20] *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 15E–18E.

which signifies the distinctive status of the servant before God, cannot be divided amongst many.

In the *Life of Adam and Eve*, Satan repeatedly describes his original condition through metaphors of glory and light. These are precisely the formulae often used in the *Primary Adam Books* to describe the first humans' celestial attire. Thus, in the Latin version of the aforementioned text (12.1–16:2), the adversary describes his lost condition through the symbolism of glory:

> O Adam, all my enmity, jealousy, and resentment is towards you, since on account of you I was expelled and alienated from my glory (*gloria mea*), which I had in heaven in the midst of the angels. Then the Lord God grew angry with me and sent me forth with my angels from our glory (*gloria nostra*). On account of you we were expelled from our dwelling into this world and cast out upon the earth. Immediately we were in grief, since we had been despoiled of so much glory (*gloria*), and we grieved to see you in such a great happiness of delights.[21]

The demoted antagonist's alienation from his former glorious state is several times set in parallel to the exaltation and gifts given to the protoplast: "since we had been despoiled of so much glory (*gloria*), and we grieved to see you in such a great happiness of delights."[22] Later rabbinic traditions also seem to know this motif, as they too find explanations for the provenance of the first humans' luminous attire in the stories of demoted antagonists.

The cultic significance of the clothing metaphors

So the enigmatic exchange of conditions and garments between hero and anti-hero is already familiar from the stories of the first humans. In the accounts of exalted patriarchs and prophets – who attempt to regain the protoplast's lost attire – the antagonist's demotion receives a new, *atoning* significance via its frequent connection to priestly and liturgical traditions. Viewed through a cultic lens, the demotion of the antagonist plays two roles: it frees the exalted place intended for a new hero, and it also (more importantly) fulfills a purifying function. The demoted figures act as cosmic scapegoats, who take upon themselves humanity's impurity and sins, carrying this heavy burden into a remote place of exile. This reflects a fundamental symbol of Yom Kippur, when humanity's entrance into God's presence is put in conspicuous correspondence with the removal of human sins into the wilderness by the means of a scapegoat.

[21] *Ibid.*, 15–18E. [22] *A Ibid.*, 18–18E.

This Yom Kippur imagery plays a significant role in the conceptual framework of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. Yahoel's promise regarding the transference of the celestial garment to the patriarch coincides with the angel's testimony that Abraham's sins – literally "his corruption" – are transferred to Azazel: "For behold, the garment which in heaven was formerly yours has been set aside for him, and the corruption which was on him has gone over to you" (*Apoc. Ab.* 13:7–14).[23] Scholars have argued that this striking nexus of motifs is not just coincidental, as it betrays a subtle link to the Yom Kippur ordinance. Hence there is *prima facie* evidence that the motif of the patriarch's clothing also bears priestly significance and is related to the cultic symbolism of the Day of Atonement. On this view, the text envisions the vestments Abraham receives from Azazel as priestly garments transferred from the demoted celestial priest to his replacement. To further clarify the sacerdotal dimension of the celestial garment that Azazel begrudgingly cedes to Abraham, a short introduction to the traditions of clothing and reclothing the high priest on Yom Kippur is required.

Even a cursory review of the role attire plays in the atonement ritual demonstrates that the symbolism of the heavenly garments looms large in this rite. Indeed, it is one of the most pivotal symbols of transformation in the entire Yom Kippur ceremony. Given the wealth of biblical and rabbinic material in support of the point, it hardly needs to be said that this festival reached its climax in the high priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies. This strongly resembles certain dynamics of Jewish apocalyptic accounts, where the seer's entrance into the Deity's abode often coincides with the metamorphosis of his earthly body. A new member of the celestial community has arrived, one who now needs new "clothing" to secure his safety in heaven. In these accounts, as in the Yom Kippur ceremony, the change of "garments" occurs upon the seer's entrance into the celestial Holy of Holies, often represented by the divine throne room.

The origins of these striking resemblances remain shrouded in mystery: especially possible apocalyptic roots of the Yom Kippur symbolism. Did the ritual described in Leviticus develop as a dialogical reaffirmation of the practices of heavenly ascent, that is to say, as the earthly complement to the visionary's eschatological entrance into the celestial Holy of Holies? Or, quite otherwise, did the Levitical ritual arise as a polemical response to such practices? That is, did it originate as an attempt to discourage the praxis of the heavenly priesthood by establishing an alternative cultic framework,

[23] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20.

thereby restricting access to the divine presence on earth to the members of certain priestly clans?[24] There is no clear answer to these questions. Yet while the origins of this correlation between apocalyptic symbolism and Yom Kippur imagery remain unclear, it is noteworthy that the imaginations of the earliest interpreters were no less baffled by this striking parallelism. Let us now revisit some of these early exegetical efforts to grapple with the protological and apocalyptic dimensions of Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur and the Garden of Eden

There are a few suggestive links between Yom Kippur and the Garden of Eden. As in the narratives of apocalyptic ascent, the transformation of a human person upon entering God's domain stands at the very center of the Yom Kippur ritual. As the apocalyptic literature often casts the visionary's ascent in terms of return to the protological abode lost at the Fall, so too the Yom Kippur ritual seems to entertain an important ontological transition, tied at once to the story of the original sin and to humankind's eschatological restoration. In this respect, the Day of Atonement's cultic drama, which culminates in breaching the boundary separating human and divine realms, brings us to a very peculiar nexus of eschatological as well as protological motifs. More precisely, this ritual is not only a reenactment of the drama of humankind's demotion and expulsion beyond the boundaries of the celestial garden. It speaks also of the exiled creature's eschatological joy; for he is now permitted, by means of this ritual, to reenter his lost abode and regain his abandoned domain and status.

This explains why several early Jewish texts identify the Holy of Holies with the Garden of Eden. One instance of this identification can be found in the *Book of Jubilees*. Jacques van Ruiten notes that in *Jubilees*, "the Garden of Eden is seen as a Temple, or, more precisely as a part of the Temple:[25] the

[24] On the question of rivalry between various priestly clans in the Second Temple period, see G. Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism. Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); G. Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

[25] At the same time, van Ruiten cautiously warns that "it is possible that the Garden of Eden is not seen as identical with the Temple, for sometimes Eden and the Temple are conceived as different entities. The author might see the relationship of the two as a sort of symbolic representation of one by the other. In any event, the author of Jubilees subscribes to the conception that Eden is related to the Temple, and this has important consequences for the rewriting of Genesis in the Book of Jubilees." J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, "Eden and the Temple: The Rewriting of Genesis 2:4–3:24 in the Book of Jubilees," in *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. G. P. Luttikhuizen, TBN 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 76. For the identification of the Garden of Eden with the macrocosmic temple in Qumran literature and Jewish Merkabah mysticism, see J. R. Davila, "The Hodayot Hymnist and the Four Who Entered Paradise," *RevQ* 17 (1996), 457–78.

room which is in the rear of the Temple, where the ark of the covenant of the Lord is placed, and which is often called 'Holy of Holies.'"[26] Moreover, understanding Eden as the temple presupposes the protoplast's role as a sacerdotal servant. In relation to this van Ruiten suggests that, according to the author of *Jubilees*, Adam is acting as a prototypical priest. He burns incense at the gate of the Garden of Eden.[27] Van Ruiten puts this description in parallel with a tradition found in Exodus: "the incense is burned in front of the Holy of Holies. The burning of incense is a privilege given to the priests, namely the sons of Aaron."[28] Van Ruiten also calls to the readers' attention another important detail related to the function of Adam as priest, namely, the covering of nakedness. He reminds that covering one's nakedness is a condition for offering since the priests are explicitly bidden to cover their nakedness. The author of *Jubilees* likewise lays emphasis on covering nakedness.[29]

Robert Hayward also supports this concept of Eden as the temple in *Jubilees*. He argues,

> Jubilees states that Eden is holier than all the rest of the earth (3:12). According to 8:19, Noah knew that the Garden of Eden is the holy of holies, and the dwelling of the Lord, and Mount Sinai the centre of the desert, and Mount Zion – the centre of the navel of the earth: these three were created as holy places facing each other. It would appear, then, that Adam and Eve were brought into the Holy of Holies prior to their disobedience: their expulsion from Eden thus signifies their removal from the place where God's Presence on the earth is most immediate for Israel.[30]

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] Van Ruiten offers additional arguments for seeing Adam fulfilling priestly duties. He does so by directing attention to the incense sacrifices of Enoch, which also took place in Eden. In another article he observes, "Another indicator in the book that shows that the writer conceived Eden as a temple is the fact that also Enoch who was led from among the children of men, was brought by the angels into the Garden of Eden for his greatness and honour. There he is not only 'writing down the judgment and condemnation of the world,' but also he is burning incense, probably inside, maybe at the gate of the garden, on the mountain of incense. Whereas Adam burned incense in the morning, Enoch is burning the incense of the evening of the sanctuary. The motif of Enoch as a priest is not attested prior than Jubilees. It fits in with the tendency of Jubilees that makes all the important patriarchs in the line of Seth priests." J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, "Visions of the Temple in the Book of Jubilees," in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel/Community without Temple: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, ed. B. Ego *et al.*, WUNT 118 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1999), 215–28, at 220.

[28] Van Ruiten, "Eden and the Temple," 77–8.

[29] Ibid., 78. Van Ruiten also notes that because of the conception of Eden as a sanctuary in *Jubilees*, its author "has difficulties with the view that the consummation of the sexual relationship of Adam and Eve took place inside the garden." Van Ruiten, "Visions of the Temple," 219.

[30] Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 89.

Hayward goes on to suggest that, in these traditions, "the high priest's entry into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur might, then, in some manner typologically correspond to the first man's return to Eden, for a season, to be reconciled with his Maker face to face."[31]

It is important to note that the theme of the first humans' peculiar attire, and its sacerdotal significance, does not escape the attention of the author of *Jubilees*. Hayward observes that the protoplast's garments were possibly understood as priestly robes.[32] He points especially to *Jubilees* 3:26–7, where Adam is clothed by the Deity prior to his entrance into the Garden of Eden, and then offers sacrifice to God.[33] Noting the subtle detail that Adam made his offering *after* God had clothed him, Hayward suggests, "*Jubilees* possibly held that God had made for Adam priestly vestments."[34] He thus proposes that, for the *Book of Jubilees*, Adam is "constituted the first priest in a succession which will lead to Levi,[35] and then to Aaron and his sons."[36]

[31] *Ibid*.

[32] Some rabbinic materials similarly understand the garments of the protoplasts to be priestly garments. Gary Anderson draws our attention to a passage from *Midrash Abkir* where the attires of the protoplast is envisioned as the priestly robes: "What was written above? – 'the Lord God made for Adam . . .' This teaches that the Holy One blessed be He had made for him priestly garments just as it says in the text, 'Behold the man adorned in linen . . .' (Dan 10:5) [This is similar] to a king who loved his slave and made for him a tunic of gold. [When] he transgressed [the king] took it from him and he put on chains. So the Holy One Blessed be He, made for him priestly garments. When he sinned he removed them from him and he put on fig leaves. As scripture says, 'They sewed fig-leaves.'" G. Anderson, "The Punishment of Adam and Eve in the Life of Adam and Eve," in *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays*, ed. G. Anderson *et al.*, SVTP 15; Brill: Leiden, 2000), 57–82, at 66.

[33] "And He made for them coats of skin, and clothed them, and sent them forth from the Garden of Eden. And on that day on which Adam went forth from the Garden, he offered as a sweet savour an offering, frankincense, galbanum, and stacte, and spices in the morning with the rising of the sun from the day when he covered his shame." Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 90.

[34] *Ibid*.

[35] This tradition of the priestly garments of Adam transferred to protological and Israelite heroes had not been forgotten in the later midrashim. *Numbers Rabbah* 4.8 reads: "Adam was the world's firstborn. When he offered his sacrifice, as it says: And it pleased the Lord better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs (Ps. LXIX, 32) – he donned high priestly garments; as it says: And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them (Gen. III, 21). They were robes of honor which subsequent firstborn used. When Adam died he transmitted them to Seth. Seth transmitted them to Methusaleh. When Methusaleh died he transmitted them to Noah." Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 5.101. A similar tradition is also found in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 24: "Rabbi Jehudah said: The coats which the Holy One, blessed be He, made for Adam and his wife, were with Noah in the ark." Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 175.

[36] Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 90.

Ontological robes

The motif of the protoplast's sacerdotal vestments, received from the Deity upon his entrance into the Garden of Eden, reaffirms the ideological tenets of the Yom Kippur ritual, with its keen attention to cultic attire and its suitability for particular realms. Yet here as in other cases, clothing metaphors have anthropological meaning, too. They suggest a change in the ontological state of the priest, not only in his sacerdotal wardrobe.

In several late Second Temple Jewish texts, the ontological dimension of the celebrant's sacerdotal clothes on Yom Kippur receives special attention. Philo, for example, understands the exchange of the high priest's garments not merely as symbolic steps of the cultic routine, but as symbols of transition between two ontological conditions, one earthly and another celestial. In *De Mutatione Nominum* 43–4, he reflects on the peculiar symbolism of the high priest's two robes, seeing them as the distinctive "attires" befitting divine and human realms:

> It was this thought which prompted Moses when he wove the tabernacle, dividing its precincts into two, and set a curtain between the parts to distinguish the inner from the outer; when too he gilded the sacred ark which holds the laws both within and without, and gave the high priest two robes, the linen robe to be worn within, the many-colored one with the long skirt to be worn outside. These and the like are symbols of a soul which in inward things is undefiled towards God and in outward things is pure towards the world of our senses and human life.[37]

In this passage, the linen robe of the high priest (the garment worn by the celebrant in the Holy of Holies) and his multi-colored vestment (worn outside the inner Sanctum) are understood as divine and human dimensions of the soul.[38]

[37] Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 5.165.

[38] Later rabbinic authors also take the linen garments of the high priest to signal a transition from a human to an angelic nature. The change of the garment of the High Priest to white linen often signifies a prerequisite for the expert's entrance into heaven. The "celestial" nature of the Yom Kippur ritual looms large, e.g., in the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 46: "He said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of all the universe! Thou hast one people like the ministering angels who are in heaven. Just as the ministering angels have bare feet, so have the Israelites bare feet on the Day of Atonement. Just as the ministering angels have neither food nor drink, so the Israelites have neither food or drink on the Day of Atonement. Just as the ministering angels have no joints, in like wise the Israelites stand upon their feet. Just as the ministering angels have peace obtaining amongst them, so the Israelites have peace obtaining amongst them on the Day of Atonement. Just as the ministering angels are innocent of all sin on the Day of Atonement, so are the Israelites innocent of all sin on the Day of Atonement." Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 364.

In *De Specialibus Legibus* 1.84 Philo returns to the theme of the sacerdotal clothing and comments on the materials from which both garments are fashioned. The fine linen of the sacerdotal garment worn in the Holy of Holies signifies the immortality of the one who wears it, in contrast to the priestly clothes worn outside the inner shrine, which are made of wool – a material taken from the hair of a mortal creature.

> The high priest is bidden to put on a similar dress when he enters the inner shrine to offer incense, because its fine linen is not, like wool, the product of creature subject to death, and also to wear another, the formation of which is very complicated.[39]

There is only a hint of the celestial status of the priest in this text, but several places in *De Somniis* (2.28 §189; 2.34 §231)[40] affirm unambiguously the unique ontological status of the Yom Kippur celebrant by envisioning him to have a more-than-human nature during his stay in the Holy of Holies. He is "a being whose nature is midway between [man and] God, less than God, superior to man. 'For when the high priest enters the Holy of Holies he shall not be a man.'"[41] Moreover, Philo views the high priest as a mediator who breaches the boundary separating earthly and heavenly realms as he enters the Holy of Holies. Hence in *De Somniis* 2.231 he unveils the following tradition:

> The good man indeed is on the border-line, so that we may say, quite properly, that he is neither God nor man, but bounded at either end by the two, by mortality because of his manhood, by incorruption because of his virtue. Similar to this is the oracle given about the high priest: "when he enters," it says, "into the Holy of Holies, he will not be a man until he comes out." And if he then becomes no man, clearly neither is he God, but God's minister, through the mortal in him in affinity with creation, though the immortal with the uncreated, and he retains this midway place until he comes out again to the realm of body and flesh.[42]

It is clear, then, that Philo envisions the Yom Kippur ritual as a transformational cultic event that anticipates and proleptically celebrates the eschatological restoration of humankind to its original immortal condition.[43]

[39] Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 7.149.
[40] Cf. *Her.* 16 §84.
[41] Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 5.529.
[42] Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 5.547.
[43] Later rabbinic traditions also envision the high priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies as his entrance into heaven. Jacob Milgrom notes that white linen as the garment of a high priest was understood in some traditions as an angelic garment. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1016. He refers to the passage found in *y. Yoma*, which compares the action of the high priest on Yom Kippur with the ministration of a celestial being: "like the ministration on high so was the ministration below."

Clothes of ascent

We have seen that biblical and rabbinic accounts of the Yom Kippur ritual demonstrate striking similarities to a cluster of motifs also prominent in Jewish apocalyptic and mystical texts. Constructing a genealogy of these correspondences, however, is very difficult since the Yom Kippur symbolism betrays its distinctive visionary mold as early as some biblical accounts.

Now, while the full extent of the apocalyptic influence on the Yom Kippur ritual remains shrouded in mystery, it is clear that this ritual's imagery has captivated the imagination of apocalypticists over many generations. The earliest Jewish visionary accounts reenvision the atonement ritual along apocalyptic lines. This propels its distinctive symbolism in an entirely new eschatological dimension. The striking potential for humankind's metamorphosis is symbolized by more than a change of the celebrant's garments. It receives further elaboration by an account common to the apocalyptic tradition: the initiate's daring eyes behold an array of transformational possibilities, which – till that very moment – had remained deeply concealed under the veil of the cultic ritual.

In extra-biblical pseudepigraphical accounts, this transformational thrust of the Yom Kippur ritual reaches its apex. The protagonist of this apocalyptic narrative is not merely dressed in the priestly linen clothing upon his entrance into the divine Presence. Rather, the profound and often terrifying changes he experiences far surpass his lofty wardrobes: his very flesh and bones are suddenly annihilated by the divine fire and then refashioned by that same fire into an angelic or even divine corporeality. The metamorphoses affect not only the protagonist of the apocalyptic narrative, but also his nefarious counterparts. Demoted subjects, including fallen angels, are drawn into an overarching drama of transformation, thereby becoming part of the cosmic ordeal mysteriously outlined in the Yom Kippur ritual. Like its sacerdotal celebrants, the other actors in the ritual – including the scapegoat, its infamous sacrifice – are reinterpreted eschatologically and cosmically in the apocalyptic tradition.

As has been already noted in our study, one remarkable example of such apocalyptic reformulation of an antagonist is found in the *Book of the Watchers*, an early Enochic work stemming from the early Second Temple period. In this text, the scapegoat rite is reinterpreted angelologically, via the incorporation of details from the Yom Kippur ritual into the history of its rebel, the fallen angel Asael.The cosmic tragedy of the angelic servant's demotion unfolds in the midst of the exaltation of the patriarch Enoch. Notably for our investigation, the profiles of both characters are overlaid

with liturgical connections both explicit and implicit. Thus Asael, who is envisioned as the sacrificial agent of the atoning ritual, is juxtaposed with Enoch, who is understood as the celestial high priest entering the heavenly Holy of Holies. While Asael and other Watchers abandon their stations and attempt to assume a variety of human roles – including familial duties of husbands and fathers[44] – Enoch progresses into the upper realm and assumes various angelic roles. As in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the offices of the fallen angels are transferred to a human being *en route* to the divine Presence. And with the roles come unique celestial status. This exchange of gifts between positive and negative characters is reciprocal: the angelic antagonist too receives a "gift," though a rather unpleasant one, in the form of the defilement associated with the human condition.

This dynamic mimics the processions of protagonist and antagonist on the Day of Atonement. The high priest enters the divine presence while the scapegoat is exiled into the wilderness. The *Book of the Watchers* follows the same pattern, its hero, Enoch, moving in the opposite direction of his negative counterpart Asael. Several scholars have noted this point.[45] *1 Enoch* 14:9–18 reads:

> And I proceeded until I came near to a wall which was built of hailstones, and a tongue of fire surrounded it, and it began to make me afraid. And I went into the tongue of fire and came near to a large house which was built of hailstones, and the wall of that house (was) like a mosaic (made) of hailstones, and its floor (was) snow. Its roof (was) like the path of the stars and flashes of lightning, and among them (were) fiery Cherubim, and their heaven (was like) water. And (there was) a fire burning around its wall, and its door was ablaze with fire. And I went into that house, and (it was) hot as fire and cold as snow, and there was neither pleasure nor life in it. Fear covered me and trembling, I fell on my face. And I saw in the vision, and behold, another house, which was larger than the former, and all its doors (were) open before me, and (it was) built of a tongue of fire. And in everything it so excelled in glory and splendor and size that I am unable to describe to you its glory and its size. And its floor (was) fire, and above (were) lightning and the path of the stars, and its roof also (was) a burning fire. And I looked and I saw in it a high throne, and its appearance (was) like ice and its surroundings like the shining sun and the sound of Cherubim.[46]

[44] Cf. Suter, "Fallen Angel, Fallen Priest: the Problem of Family Purity in 1 Enoch 6–16," 115–35.

[45] Himmelfarb, "The Temple and the Garden of Eden in Ezekiel, the Book of the Watchers, and the Wisdom of ben Sira," 63–78; Himmelfarb, "Apocalyptic Ascent and the Heavenly Temple," 210–17. See also H. S. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man*, WMANT 61 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 101–2; Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 81.

[46] Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 1.50–52; 2.98–99.

In commenting on this passage, Martha Himmelfarb draws attention to the peculiar description of the celestial edifices that Enoch encounters in his approach to the throne. The Ethiopic text reports that, in order to reach God's Throne, the patriarch passes through three celestial constructions: a wall, an outer house, and an inner house. The Greek version mentions a house instead of a wall. As Himmelfarb observes, "more clearly in the Greek, but also in the Ethiopic, this arrangement echoes the structure of the earthly temple with its vestibule (אולם), sanctuary (היכל), and the Holy of Holies (דביר)."[47] God's throne is located in the innermost chamber of this heavenly structure and is represented by a throne of cherubim (14:18). It can be seen as a heavenly counterpart to the cherubim found in the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple.

Himmelfarb also suggests that in the *Book of the Watchers* the patriarch himself becomes a priest in the course of his ascent,[48] similar to the angels.[49] In this light Enoch's angelic status and priestly role appear to be interconnected.[50] Himmelfarb stresses that "the author of the *Book of the Watchers* claims angelic status for Enoch through his service in the heavenly Temple," since "the ascent shows him passing through the outer court of the temple and the sanctuary to the door of the Holy of Holies, where God addresses him with his own mouth."[51] The seer's entrance into the divine throne room, and vision of the Glory of God, suggests strongly that the *Book of the Watchers* elaborates an apocalyptic version of the Yom Kippur celebration that, like its earthly cultic counterpart, culminates with the celebrant's entrance into the divine Presence.

Although the apocalyptic re-enactment of the Yom Kippur ritual in the *Book of the Watchers* does not openly invoke the imagery of the celebrant's garments, other pseudepigraphical accounts often do. For example, in the depiction of the initiation of a heavenly priest reflected in the *Testament of*

[47] Himmelfarb, "Apocalyptic Ascent and the Heavenly Temple," 210.

[48] David Halperin's research also stresses the "apocalyptic" priestly function of Enoch in the *Book of the Watchers*. He observes that "Daniel and Enoch share an image, perhaps drawn from the hymnic tradition of merkabah exegesis (think of the Angelic liturgy), of God surrounded by multitudes of angels. But, in the Holy of Holies, God sits alone . . . The angels, barred from the inner house, are the priests of Enoch's heavenly Temple. The high priest must be Enoch himself, who appears in the celestial Holy of Holies to procure forgiveness for holy beings." Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 81–2.

[49] Himmelfarb, "Apocalyptic Ascent and the Heavenly Temple," 213.

[50] Enoch's sacerdotal duties in the *Book of the Watchers* also involve his intercession and transmission of the judgment against Asael. Crispin Fletcher-Louis observes, "Enoch's intercession and transmission of the judgment against Asael is thoroughly priestly and related closely to that of the high priest on the Day of Atonement whose ministry involves the sending of a scapegoat into the wilderness to Azazel (Lev 16)." Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 40.

[51] Himmelfarb, "Apocalyptic Ascent and the Heavenly Temple," 212.

Levi 8 and *2 Enoch* 22, sacerdotal clothing symbolism looms large.[52] Moreover, as in the aforementioned Adamic developments, these descriptions also betray distinctive protological connections. In both *Testament of Levi* 8 and *2 Enoch* 22, the priestly investitures of the hero appear to be understood as the glorious garments of the first humans. *Testament of Levi* 8:2–10 offers the following depiction of Levi's celestial investiture:

> And I saw seven men in white clothing, saying to me: Arise, put on the robe of the priesthood and the crown of righteousness and breastplate of understanding and the garment of truth and the plate of faith and the turban of (giving) a sign and the ephod of prophecy. And each of them carried these things and put them on me, and said: From now on become a priest of the Lord, you and your seed for ever. And the first anointed me with holy oil and gave a staff of judgment. The second washed me with pure water and fed me with bread and wine, most holy things, and put round me a holy and glorious robe. The third clothed me with a linen vestment like an ephod. The forth put round me a girdle like a purple (robe). The fifth gave me a branch of rich olive. The sixth put a crown on my head. The seventh put on me a diadem of the priesthood. And they filled my hands with incense that I might serve as a priest to the Lord.[53]

In this stunning passage, the visionary is clothed with a glorious robe – an event tied to a host of subtle allusions to the actions and attributes of the high priest. The vestment's glorious nature invokes the memory of the first humans' garments, and a series of other protological markers reinforce this connection. The olive branch offers suggestive hints, as it is reminiscent of both a menorah and the Tree of Life. Thus, it might provide an important bridge to unify the narrative's protological and sacerdotal dimensions.

The case is similar with *2 Enoch* 22. This text depicts Enoch's arrival in the Deity's abode. This entrance into the divine Presence necessitates an adjustment in Enoch's wardrobe. The archangel Michael extracts Enoch from his clothes and anoints him with delightful oil. This oil is "greater than the greatest light and its ointment is like sweet dew, and the fragrance [like] myrrh; and it is like rays of the glittering sun."[54] The anointing transforms the patriarch. His garments of skin are replaced by the luminous garment of an immortal angelic being. He becomes one of the glorious ones. As in the *Testament of Levi*, the unity of the story's sacerdotal and protological

[52] A sacerdotal dimension in relation to the change of garments might also be present in *Joseph and Aseneth*. See 13:3; 14:12; 15:10.

[53] H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. A Commentary*, SVTP 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 149.

[54] Andersen, "2 Enoch," 1.138.

dimensions is secured through the pivotal arboreal symbol, for it appears that that the oil used in Enoch's anointing comes from the Tree of Life. This connection is reinforced elsewhere in the work, in 8:3–4, in which the tree is depicted similarly:

> the tree [of life] is indescribable for pleasantness and fine fragrance, and more beautiful than any (other) created thing that exists. And from every direction it has an appearance which is gold-looking and crimson, and with the form of fire.[55]

The shorter recension refers to a second olive tree, near the first, which is"flowing with oil continually."[56] Here, as in the *Testament of Levi*, the adept's initiation and redressing coincides with his anointing, which tries to unify several theological dimensions, sacerdotal as well as protological. In this respect, Enoch's investiture with celestial garments and anointing with shining oil represents not only his priestly initiation, but the restoration of fallen humanity.

The *Primary Adam Books* also attest to a very similar anointing tradition and underscore its significance in the eschatological restoration of the protoplast. The tradition surfaces, for example, in the Armenian version's depiction of Adam's burial. The protoplast is clothed with linen garments from paradise that are brought by archangels, and then he is anointed with oil:

> After this, God spoke to Michael and said, "Go to the Garden of the [third] heaven and bring [me] three linen cloths." When he had brought them, God said to Michael and to Ozel and to Gabriel, "Bring these linen cloths and cover Adam's body, and bring sweet oil." They brought them and set them around him and wound him in that garment.[57]

In light of this Adamic passage, it seems rather clear that the anointing of Enoch in the Slavonic apocalypse signals the return of fallen humankind to the original condition of the protoplast, replete with his garments of light.

Yet distinctly sacerdotal symbolism also permeates the scene of restoration in *2 Enoch*. Himmelfarb observes, "the combination of clothing and anointing suggests that the process by which Enoch becomes an angel is a heavenly version of priestly investiture."[58] Crispin Fletcher-Louis also discerns a cultic dimension in Enoch's newly acquired garments, suggesting that

[55] *Ibid.*, 1.114. [56] *Ibid.*, 1.117.

[57] Armenian version of the *Life of Adam and Eve* 40:2 in *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 86E–87E.

[58] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 40.

> Enoch's transformation in *2 Enoch* is greatly indebted to priestly practice and its understanding of investiture. The myrrh fragrance of the oil of Enoch's anointing recalls the sacred oil of anointing prescribed by Moses for the tabernacle in Exodus 30:22–23. The comparison of the oil with sweet dew is perhaps a reflection of Psalm 133:2–3 where there is a parallelism between the oil running down the head of Aaron and the dew of Mount Hermon. The reference to the glittering rays of the sun is yet one more witness to the theme of priestly luminescence. The specific comparison of the oil of anointing with the sun's rays is ultimately dependent on the priestly tradition within the Pentateuch since there the oil of anointing is placed in God's fourth speech to Moses in Exodus 25–31 as a parallel within the Tabernacle instructions to the creation of the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day of creation (Genesis 1:14–19). In general terms Enoch's investiture is indebted to the scene in Zechariah 3 where the high priest's old clothes are removed and replaced with new ones. In that scene too the priest is attended by angels, just as Michael acts as Enoch's attendant in *2 Enoch* (see *Testament of Levi* 8). In *2 Enoch* 22:6 Enoch is granted permanent access to God's throne room, just as Joshua is given rights of access to the heavenly realm in Zechariah 3:7. The concluding chapters of *2 Enoch* (chs. 69–73) are devoted to the priestly succession after Enoch's ascension."[59]

Scholarly attention has focused on the cultic and protological significance of Enoch's anointment and investiture.[60] Nevertheless, interpreters of *2 Enoch* have often been remiss in recognizing the synthetic nature of this imagery. Yet in the Slavonic account priestly and protological details are seamlessly interwoven.

Priestly garments of Abraham

It is now time to return to the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, where the transference of Azazel's angelic garment to the patriarch has similar sacerdotal associations. Scholars have noted that the details in the enigmatic story of Abraham's changing wardrobe seem to invoke traditions from several biblical prophetic texts. Recall that, in *Apoc. Ab.* 13, Abraham is caught up in a strange interaction between the demon Azazel and the angel Yahoel. Azazel attempts to discourage Abraham from ascending into the celestial realm, warning him that he will be destroyed there by fire. Meanwhile, Yahoel strengthens the will of Abraham and rebukes the demon.

[59] Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 23–4.

[60] Thus, Moshe Idel suggests that Enoch's luminous metamorphosis, attested in *2 Enoch* 22, might also belong to the same tradition which views Enoch as the one who regained Adam's lost status and luminosity. M. Idel, "Enoch is Metatron," *Imm* 24/25 (1990), 220–40, at 224.

That fact that Abraham stands between two celestial figures, a good angel and his evil counterpart,[61] is reminiscent of the account in Zechariah 3, where the high priest Joshua is depicted as standing between two spirits.[62] In Zechariah, as in the Slavonic apocalypse, distinctive priestly concerns are conflated with the motif of the change of garments. Zechariah 3:1–4:3 reads:

> Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this man a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was dressed with filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." And to him he said, "See, I have taken your guilt away from you, and I will clothe you with festal apparel." And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with the apparel; and the angel of the Lord was standing by. Then the angel of the Lord assured Joshua, saying "Thus says the Lord of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. Now listen, Joshua, high priest, you and your colleagues who sit before you! For they are an omen of things to come: I am going to bring my servant the Branch. For on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven facets, I will engrave its inscription, says the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day. On that day, says the Lord of hosts, you shall invite each other to come under your vine and fig tree." The angel who talked with me came again, and wakened me, as one is wakened from sleep. He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it; there are seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. And by it there are two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." (NRSV)

In this striking passage we find a description of the priestly initiation in which a high priest receives a pure garment, and a number of Jewish apocalyptic texts have a cultic initiation resembling it, the *Testament of Levi* 8 and *2 Enoch* 22 among them. As in Zechariah 3, these texts allude to the anthropological significance of priestly initiation, which symbolizes return to the original condition of the protoplast by stripping the filthy garments of fallen humanity. All three accounts are unified by the motif of

[61] The unique position of Abraham, standing between Azazel and the Name of God (Yahoel), evokes the memory of the Yom Kippur ritual, where the high priest stood between two earthly counterparts of these celestial realities – the scapegoat (Azazel) and the goat for the Name of the Lord (Yahoel).

[62] See Rubinkiewicz, *Die Eschatologie von Henoch 9–11 und das Neue Testament*, 101–2; 110–13; Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 94.

the tree of life, which points at once to the Garden of Eden and to the Temple, its earthly counterpart.

The parallels between Zechariah 3–4 and the *Apoc. Ab.* 13–14 allow us to better understand the priestly context of the Slavonic account, and its connection with the Day of Atonement. Indeed, as Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra has observed, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* goes further than Zechariah: "compared to Zechariah 3, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* embellishes the Yom Kippur imagery."[63] In Zechariah the soiled garment of the priestly figure is simply exchanged for a pure one. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the transformational pattern is radicalized. The priestly initiate's "soiled" garments are not simply exchanged for pure ones; they are transferred to Azazel, recalling the Yom Kippur ritual, in which the sin of humanity is transferred to the scapegoat. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 13:7, 14 forcefully portrays this exchange:

> And he said to him, "Reproach is on you, Azazel! Since Abraham's portion is in heaven, and yours is on earth . . . For behold, the garment which in heaven was formerly yours has been set aside for him, and the corruption which was on him has gone over to you."[64]

For this reason, David Halperin sees Azazel's actions as a last-ditch effort to retain his privileged place in heaven:

> we see here the theme, which we have already met in the stories of Enoch in the Book of the Watchers and of Adam in the "Apocalypse of Moses," of the exaltation of the human and the degradation of the angel corresponding to each other and to some extent depending on each other. If Azazel can persuade Abraham not to make his ascent, he will perhaps be able to keep his own privileged status.[65]

The importance of these connections between the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and Zechariah is that they illumine the priestly nature of the heroes' transitions as they prepare to enter the sacred realms.

It is true that there is no decisive priestly transformation in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, a fact lamented by a number of scholars.[66] Yet Martha Himmelfarb very plausibly suggests that the promise of a garment given

[63] Stökl, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 94.
[64] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20. [65] Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 111.
[66] Yet the repeated references to a seer's encounter with fire appear to be significant for the authors of the pseudepigraphon, who envision 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 his entering into the fire. See, for example, *Apoc. Ab.* 15:3: "And he carried me up to the edge of the fiery flame"; *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." Could

to Abraham immediately before his entrance into heaven fulfils the function of the actual reclothing. Although "Abraham does not undergo a transformation as explicit as that of Enoch, Isaiah, or Zephaniah" and "is never actually provided with a garment," nonetheless "he has been promised one."[67]

Transformation of the antagonist

Garments of descent

On the basis of our previous investigation it seems that the transformation of the patriarch in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* depends in many ways on the peculiar changes affecting his antagonistic counterpart – the fallen angel Azazel. The exaltation of the one depends on the demotion of the other. As with entrance into the upper realm, removal too is laden with profound changes in the spiritual and physical states of the characters. Just as the heroes of the apocalyptic accounts undergo spectacular metamorphoses to prepare them for heaven, so also the refashioning of the antagonists have ontological significance, foreshadowing the fate of the Deity's former favorites. By the will of the Creator, the antagonists are now doomed to wander lower realms.[68] This transformation common to various pseudepigraphical accounts gives insight into the significance of the novel garments of the demoted antagonists. Further, some investigation into the negative transformation allows the reader to ferret out the logic of changes that befall the antihero.[69] Indeed, this process plays an important role in apocalyptic stories as an apophatic reaffirmation of the hero's transformative motifs.

The perplexing complexity of the alteration endured by the demoted agents should not be underestimated. The new ontological garments given to the antagonist are often surrounded with the most puzzling imagery to be found in the apocalyptic accounts. These accounts offer to the eyes of their beholders a stunning plethora of cryptic depictions, in which the composite physiques of the demoted heroes often represent a bizarre mixture of

the promise of a celestial garment to the patriarch in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* signify here, as in many other apocalyptic accounts, that his "mortal" body must be "altered" in the fiery metamorphosis?

[67] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 64.

[68] Scholars have noted connections with Mesopotamian counterparts, where celestial beings lose garments of light during their descent into lower realms. Thus Sebastian Brock points to the tradition about Ishtar's "robe of splendor," the garment the goddess lost at the seventh gate during her descent to the underworld. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors," 14.

[69] On transformational mysticism, see C. R. A. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition," *JJS* 43 (1992), 1–31.

demonic and heavenly attributes. This hybrid nature of the antiheroes' visible manifestations suggests that, despite their exile into the lower realms, these formerly celestial creatures were never intended to inhabit their new environments. Rather, they were predestined to become the agents of a foreboding, corrupting change – a fall as tragic to the realms of their exile as it is to the antagonists themselves.

It is, therefore, no coincidence that in the Slavonic apocalypse so much attention is spent on depictions of Azazel's various transitional shapes. These are portrayals that represent creative improvisations on the theme of the corruption of an antagonist's original celestial form. Already in his debut in *Apoc. Ab.* 13, Azazel is designated as an "impure bird" – the sobriquet that, in the peculiar symbolic code of the apocalypse's avian angelology, points to the corruption of his celestial form. Interestingly, the fallen angel's "celestial" attributes appear repeatedly in many other portrayals of Azazel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, serving throughout as pointed reminders of his forfeited heavenly status.

Hence, when Abraham later sees a protological manifestation of the demoted angel in the heavenly throne room, his vision combines both angelomorphic and theriomorphic attributes. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23:4–11 reads:

> And I looked at the picture, and my eyes ran to the side of the garden of Eden. And I saw there a man very great in height and terrible in breadth, incomparable in aspect, entwined with a woman who was also equal to the man in aspect and size. And they were standing under a tree of Eden, and the fruit of the tree was like the appearance of a bunch of grapes of vine. And behind the tree was standing, as it were, a serpent in form, but having hands and feet like a man, and wings on its shoulders: six on the right side and six on the left. And he was holding in his hands the grapes of the tree and feeding the two whom I saw entwined with each other. And I said, "Who are these two entwined with each other, or who is this between them, or what is the fruit which they are eating, Mighty Eternal One?" And he said, "This is the reason of men, this is Adam, and this is their desire on earth, this is Eve. And he who is between them is the Impiety of their pursuits for destruction, Azazel himself."[70]

In this text, Azazel has a composite physique which combines features of a serpent ("a serpent in form") and an angel ("wings on its shoulders"). This unusual combination of two forms – animal and angelic – in the appearance of the seducer during his corruption of the protoplasts brings to mind a peculiar cluster of traditions about Satan's appearance found in the *Primary*

[70] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 27.

Adam Books. There too, in the course of the seduction of the first human couple, the antagonist is endowed with a polymorphic shape that combines features of a serpent and an angel.[71] In light of these similarities, a short excursus on the traditions of Satan's appearances in the *Primary Adam Books* is necessary.

Satan's angelic garment

In some versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, its chief antagonist – Satan – undergoes enigmatic transformations into angelic and theriomorphic manifestations: he acquires, temporarily, the shape of either a serpent or a glorious angel. In this respect, it is intriguing that the two forms manifested in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*'s depiction of Azazel also appear in the *Primary Adam Books*, in the narratives dealing with the seduction or temptation of the first humans. These temporary appearances are envisioned as "garments" of Satan, representing the disposable clothes that the Deceiver can easily switch over in the course of executing his evil plans.

It is not without design that one of the most intense conceptual crossroads dealing with Satan's transformations should be situated amidst scenes of the protoplasts' seduction, for the Adversary tries to disguise his identity by posing in the guise of an angelic messenger or an animal. Moreover, he enjoys the ability to clothe himself again in the "garments" he had already used for deception in the past; hence he wears angelic "garments" not once but several times in the *Life of Adam and Eve*.[72]

The *Primary Adam Books* openly portray Satan as formerly possessing an exalted and even glorious status in the heavenly realm. Yet he forfeited this position because of his refusal to venerate the newly created protoplast. Unlike some other demoted agents – including the protoplasts themselves, who quietly obey their sentence of exile to the lower realms – Satan retained the power needed to entertain the hope of return and exacted vengeance against his enemies, the first humans. This paradoxical ability to be topologically present in the upper regions despite his demotion may constitute an important prerequisite for his power to take multiple forms, as befits his evil schemes.

[71] In light of the uncertainty of the date of the traditions contained in the *Primary Adam Books*, it is often quite difficult to establish the priority of these mutual influences.

[72] The tradition of Satan's use of an angelic form for the deception of the protoplasts is also attested in various versions of the so-called *Cheirograph of Adam*. On these developments, see M. Stone, *Adam's Contract with Satan. The Legend of the Cheirograph of Adam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 17, 18, 65, 75, 84, 88.

The Armenian version of the *Primary Adam Books* 17:1–2a attests Satan's ability to temporarily assume the shape of an angelic being:

> When the angels ascended to the worship of the Lord, at that time Satan took on the form of an angel and began to praise God with angelic praises. I knelt down by the wall and attended to his praises. I looked and saw him in the likeness of an angel; when I looked again, I did not see him.[73]

Although Satan's angelic appearances are only temporary,[74] this passage suggests that they are not for that reason merely illusory. They have functional potential. It is curious that, along with his imitation of the angelic form, Satan also attempts to imitate the functions of angels by participating in their liturgy. This ability to act as an angel grants more credibility to his transformation, as other characters in the story are depicted as attending to his praises.

The *Life of Adam and Eve* goes on to say that Satan appears as an angel once more to Eve during the second temptation. This time his manifestation is even loftier; the text repeatedly identifies him as a cherub endowed with a special luminous vestment. The Armenian version of the *Primary Adam Books* 9:1–2 provides further details:

> When eighteen days of their weeping were completed, then Satan *took on the form of a cherub with splendid attire*, and went to the Tigris River to deceive Eve. Her tears were falling on her attire, down to the ground. Satan said to Eve, "Come forth from the water and rest, for God has hearkened to your penitence, to you and Adam your husband."[75]

[73] *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 51E. The Georgian version offers a very similar tradition: "Then the devil changed himself into the image of an angel; he praised the praises of the angels. And I was gazing in the direction of the enclosure to hear the praises. I stared and I saw him like an angel and at once he became invisible for he had gone forth to bring the serpent" (*ibid.*, 51E). The Greek version also attests the angelic transformation, but does not mention Satan's transition into an invisible condition: "And instantly he hung himself from the wall of paradise, and when the angels ascended to worship God, then Satan appeared in the form of an angel and sang hymns like the angels. And he bent over the wall and I saw him, like an angel. And he said to me: 'Are you Eve?' And I said to him, 'I am'" (*ibid.*, 51E–52E). The Slavonic *Vita* also lacks a motif of invisibility, but adds a new intriguing detail by emphasizing the luminous nature of Satan's angelic form: "The serpent believed that it was an angel, and came to me. And *the devil had changed to the form of an angel* and *came here with radiance*, singing an angel's song, just like an angel, and said to me: 'Do you eat from everything in Paradise?' And at that time I took him for an angel, because he had come from Adam's side, so I said to him, 'From one tree the Lord commanded us not to eat, the one which stands in the middle of Paradise'" (*ibid.*, 51E–53E).

[74] Michael Stone's research underlines the temporary dimension of Satan's acquisition of the angelic form. He notes that "Satan, who once had heavenly glory and luminosity, put it back temporarily in order to deceive Eve and Adam ... Provided with the σχῆμα "form" of an angel, he becomes externally angelic." Stone, *Adam's Contract with Satan*, 19.

[75] *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 11E. The tradition about Satan's transformation into an angel is also supported by the Greek, Slavonic, and Latin versions. Greek: "But the Devil, not finding a place

It is striking that, in this second temptation, Satan appears in angelic form – indeed, as a cherub. Cherubic imagery also looms large in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, where Azazel combines the attributes of two cherubim.[76] In *Apoc. Ab*. 23, for example, the demon has twelve wings, six on each side of his body:[77] "And behind the tree was standing, as it were, a serpent in form, but having hands and feet like a man, and wings on its shoulders: six on the right side and six on the left."[78] Earlier in the apocalypse, when Abraham sees the "Living Creatures of the Cherubim" in the heavenly throne room each of them has six wings. As 18:3–6 has it, "And under the throne [I saw] four singing fiery Living Creatures . . . and each one had six wings: from their shoulders, <and from their sides,> and from their loins."[79] An Azazel with twelve wings, then, is masquerading as a double cherub.

Satan's luminosity is another intriguing detail of the temptation accounts in the *Primary Adam Books*. The first temptation has Satan come "with radiance." Eve's second temptation refers again to his splendid attire. This detail may indicate that assuming an angelic form is understood as wearing a garment, and the attire might also parallel the first humans' luminous vestments. Such an understanding of a luminous angelic form as a garment is especially evident in the Georgian version of the second temptation:

> When the twelve days of his weeping were completed, the devil trembled and changed his shape and *his clothes* by his artful deceit. He went close to Eve, on the Tigris River, and stood beside the bank. He was weeping and had his false tears dripping (trickling) down on *his garment* and from *his garment* down to

with respect to Adam, came to the Tigris River to me. And assuming the form of an angel he stood before me" (*ibid*.). Slavonic: "The devil came to me *in the form and radiance of an angel*, there where I stood in the water, letting passionate tears fall to the ground, he said to me, 'Come forth, Eve, out of the water, God has heard your prayer and also we angels, we who prayed for you, and the Lord has sent me to you, that your should emerge from this water.' And I discerned that he was the devil, and answered him nothing at all. But when after forty days, Adam emerged from the Jordan, he noticed the footprints of the devil and was very afraid lest the devil had duped me. But when he saw me standing in the water, he was very happy. And he took me and led me out of the water" (*ibid*., 11E–13E). Latin: "Eighteen days passed. Then Satan grew angry and transfigured himself into the brilliance of an angel and went off to the Tigris River to Eve. He found her weeping, and then, the Devil himself, as if mourning with her began to weep and said to her: 'Come out of the water and rest and weep no longer. Cease now from your sadness and lamenting. Why are you uneasy, you and your husband Adam?'" (*ibid*., 11E).

[76] See *Apoc. Ab*. 23. Similar to the "Living Creatures of the Cherubim," the demon is also portrayed as a composite being, combining zoomorphic and human features: the body of a serpent with the hands and feet of a man.

[77] Cf. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 13: "Sammael was the great prince in heaven; the *Hayyot* had four wings and the Seraphim had six wings, and Sammael had twelve wings." Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 92. Cf. also Georgian *Life of Adam and Eve* 12:1: "My [Satan's] wings were more numerous than those of the Cherubim, and I concealed myself under them." *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 15–15E.

[78] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 27. [79] *Ibid*., 24.

> the ground. Then he told Eve, "Come out of that water (where you are) and stop your tribulations, for God has hearkened to your penitence and to Adam your husband."[80]

The equation of the angelic form and clothing is explicit here.

Satan's theriomorphic garment

Without doubt, one of the most intense conceptual crossroads manifesting the transformational capacities of the antagonist is the first temptation of the protoplasts. Hence it is little surprise that, similar to Satan's first dissembling in angelic garments – which first occurred during the seduction of the protoplasts – the transition to an animal garment is also found here.

Primary Adam Books 44 has Satan abandoning his angelic manifestation and taking on the form of a serpent[81] in order to deceive the protoplasts. Yet Satan's new identity is somewhat ambiguous, and pseudepigraphical and rabbinic accounts often dispute the serpent's gender. Some of these sources seem to understand the serpent as an androgynous creature, whose skin God later used to create the garments of both Adam and Eve. The tradition of clothing the first humans in the attire of the serpent is especially intriguing in light of Satan's acquisition of the same garments in the *Primary Adam Books*. Does Satan's clothing as serpent anticipate the future reclothing of the protoplasts in garments of skin?

Satan's assumption of a serpentine form is the "anti-paradigm" of transformation: the antagonist's transition from an upper (angelic) to a lower (animal) form mirrors the glorious metamorphosis of the apocalyptic visionary, who undergoes a transition from garments of skin into garments of light. The Armenian version of the *Primary Adam Books* offers the following account of Satan's transformation:

> The serpent said, "In what way or how can we expel him from the Garden?" Satan said to the serpent, "Be you, in your form, a lyre for me and I will pronounce speech through your mouth, so that we may be able to help." Then the two of them came to me and hung their feet around the wall of the Garden. When the angels ascended to the worship of the Lord, at that time Satan took on the form of an angel and began to praise God with angelic praises. I knelt down by the wall and attended to his praises.

[80] *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 11E.

[81] All versions of the *Primary Adam Books* clearly envision the serpent as an animal or a "wild beast." See Armenian, Georgian, and Greek versions of the *Primary Adam Books* 16:2 in *ibid.*, 49E.

> I looked and saw him in the likeness of an angel; when I looked again, I did not see him. Then he went and summoned the serpent and said to him, "Arise, come to me so that I may enter into you and speak through your mouth as much as I will need to say." At that time the serpent became a lyre for him, and he came again to the wall of the Garden. He cried out and said, "Oh, woman, you who are blind in this Garden of delight, arise come to me and I will say some words to you."[82]

Satan's animal manifestation is not merely a phantom; he inhabits the actual living creature. The serpent is possessed by Satan.[83]

In another passage from the *Primary Adam Books*, Satan might again assume a theriomorphic shape – this time that of a wild beast. When Eve and Seth journey to paradise in order to obtain the oil of resurrection needed to heal the dying Adam, they encounter a mysterious creature labeled, in the narrative, as a wild beast. In the Greek version of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, the story takes the following form:

> Then Seth and Eve went toward the direction of the Garden. [And while they were going,] Eve saw her son, and a wild beast assailing him. And Eve wept and said: "Woe is me; if I come to the day of the Resurrection, all those who have sinned will curse me saying: 'Eve has not kept the commandment of God.'" And she spoke to the beast: "You wicked beast, Do you not fear to fight with the image of God? How was your mouth opened? How were your teeth made strong? How did you not call to mind your subjection? For long ago you were made subject to the image of God." Then the beast cried out and said: "It is not our concern, Eve, your greed and your wailing, but your own; for (it is) from you that the rule of the beasts has arisen. How was your mouth opened to eat of the tree concerning which God commanded you not to eat of it? On this account, our nature also has been transformed. Now therefore you cannot endure it, if I begin to reprove you." Then Seth spoke to the beast, "Close

[82] *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 50E–52E. The tradition of Satan's metamorphosis into the living form of the serpent is also present in the Georgian version: "And the serpent told him, 'How can we have them excluded?' The devil replied and told the serpent, 'Be a sheath for me and I will speak to the woman through your mouth a word by which we will trick (them).' And the two of them came together and they allowed their heads to hang on the wall of the paradise at the time where the angels had ascended to bow down to God. Then the devil changed himself into the image of an angel; he praised the praises of the angels. And I was gazing in the direction of the enclosure to hear the praises. I stared and I saw him like an angel and at once he became invisible for he had gone forth to bring the serpent. And he told him, 'Arise and come and I will be with you and I will speak though your mouth that which it is proper for you to say.' He took on the form of the serpent (to go) close to the wall of paradise and the devil slipped inside the serpent and he allowed his head to hang on the wall of paradise. He cried out and said, 'Shame on you, woman, you who are in the paradise of Delight (and) who are blind! Come to me and I will tell you a certain secret word'" (*ibid.*, 50E–52E).

[83] Pseudepigraphical and rabbinic accounts depict this process of "possession" of a living form as Satan's "riding" of the serpent. This tradition will be explored in detail later in our study.

> your mouth and be silent and stand off from the image of God until the day of Judgment." Then the beast said to Seth: "Behold, I stand off from the image of God." [And the beast fled and left him wounded] and went to his hut.[84]

An important detail in this encounter between the primordial humans and a hostile animal is the peculiar terminology of the "image of God." This formula evokes the memory of Satan's rebellion, when he refused to worship the image of God. As Seth and the animal struggle, the wild beast does not fear to fight with the image of God. This nexus of motifs alludes to Satan's original protological opposition to Adam, the original bearer of the divine image. Here is the second instance of a rebellious stand against the *imago*. The two instances have much in common, as many scholars have noted. When commenting on Seth's rebuke, "Get away from the image of God," Gary Anderson suggests,

> this rebuke has some rather clear resonances with another key moment in the Vita's story-line. It sounds very much like the instructions Satan and the other angels received at the moment of Adam's creation, "Prosternez vous devant le semblable et l'image de la divinité" (14:1).[85]

This ominous connection between the Adversary and the animal seems to be at play in the various versions of the *Primary Adam Books*.[86] Although the Greek, Georgian, and Latin versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve* do not name the wild beast Satan but allow for that reading, the Armenian *Penitence of Adam* takes that next step:

> Thereafter, Seth and Eve went in the direction of the Garden. As they were going, Eve saw that a wild beast was fighting with [her son] Seth and was biting him. Eve began to weep and she said, "[When] the day of Judgment came; all sins will be blamed upon me and (men) will say, 'Our mother did not hearken to the commandment of the Lord God!'" Eve called out against the wild beast and said, "O wild beast, how do you [not] fear the image of God, that you dared to fight with the image of God? How was your mouth open[ed] and your fangs bared, and your hair stood on end? How did you not remember the obedience which you formerly displayed, that your mouth

[84] *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 41E–43E.

[85] G. Anderson, "The Penitence Narrative in the Life of Adam and Eve," in *Literature on Adam and Eve. Collected Essays*, 34.

[86] It appears that the Slavonic version underlines the cosmic profile of the beast. Gary Anderson draws attention to the fact that in the Slavonic version "the beast declares his intention not simply to harm Seth, but to destroy Eve and all her children (11–15)." Anderson, "The Penitence Narrative in the Life of Adam and Eve," 35. The cosmic profile of the final judgment of the beast attested in several versions is also noteworthy, as it best suits the final destiny of the Adversary rather than the destiny of an animal.

> was opened against the image of God?" Then the wild beast cried out and said to Eve, "In truth, our insolence is because of you, for the example came from you. How was your mouth opened to dare to eat of the fruit concerning which God commanded you not to eat of it? [Until he will change all of our natures, henceforth you are unable to resist that which I speak to you, or if I begin to rebuke you.]" Then Seth said to the wild beast, "Close your mouth, O Satan. Get away from the image of God until [[the day will come]] on which God will bring you to rebuke.]" Then he said to Seth, "Behold, I am standing apart from you, the image of God." The beast fled from him.[87]

Much like the first temptation of the protoplasts, in this text Satan appears to take the form of an animal in order to challenge humanity.

Vessels of evil: the antagonist's possession of the living form

The *Primary Adam Books* demonstrate the perplexing fluidity of forms Satan can take. In some episodes he assumes not one, but several shapes. These texts often depict the antagonist's rapid transition from one manifestation to another. Such a speedy change is especially notable during Eve's first temptation. In this scene, Satan takes the form of both an angel and a serpent, and even assumes another, invisible condition[88] between these two. The Armenian version of 17:1–5 reads this way:

> Then the two of them came to me and hung their feet around the wall of the Garden. When the angels ascended to the worship of the Lord, at that time *Satan took on the form of an angel* and began to praise God with angelic praises. I knelt down by the wall and attended to his praises. I looked and saw him in the likeness of an angel; *when I looked again, I did not see him*. Then he went and summoned the serpent and said to him, "Arise, come to me so that I may enter into you and speak through your mouth as much as I will need say." At that time *the serpent became a lyre for him*, and he came again to the wall of the Garden. He cried out and said, "Oh, woman, you who are blind in this Garden of delight, arise come to me and I will say some words to you." When I went to him, he said to me,

[87] *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 41E–43E.

[88] Michael Stone notes that in the *Primary Adam Books* Satan becomes invisible on several occasions. He observes, "at various junctures of the story in the primary Adam books, Satan becomes invisible. The assumed form is not permanent. In *Apocalypse of Moses* 20:3, the Greek text relates that when Satan had succeeded in seducing Eve and Adam, he descended from the tree (here as the snake) καὶ ἄφανατος ἐγένετο, 'and vanished' (literally: 'became invisible'). When Adam in the river recognizes Satan, he asked him why he was so hostile. Satan responded with the story of his fall (12:1–17:3). At the end of the conversation between Adam and Satan, we read *et statim non apparuit diabolus ei*, 'immediately the devil was not visible to him' (Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* 17:2)." Stone, *Adam's Contract with Satan*, 19.

> "Are you Eve?" I said, "Yes, I am." He replied and said, "What do you do in [the Garden]?" I said to him, "God set us to guard the Garden," Satan replied and said to me through the mouth of the serpent, "This work is good, but come, do you eat of [all] the trees which are in the Garden?" I said to him, "Yes, we eat of all of them except only of that one tree which is in the very middle of the Garden, concerning which God commanded us, 'Do not eat of it, for if you eat you will surely die.'"[89]

The Georgian version maintains the same transformational pattern; it too attests the fluidity of Satan's manifestations, describing his transitions into invisible, angelic, and theriomophic states:

> And the two of them came together and they allowed their heads to hang on the wall of the Garden at the time where the angels had ascended to prostrate before God. Then *the Devil changed himself into the image of an angel*; he sang the praises of the angels. And I was gazing in the direction of the wall to hear the praises. I stared and I saw him like an angel and at once *he became invisible* for he had gone forth to bring the serpent. And he told him, "Arise and come and I will be with you and I will speak though your mouth that which it is proper for you to say." *He took on the form of the serpent* (to go) close to the wall of the Garden and the Devil slipped inside the serpent and he allowed his head to hang on the wall of the Garden.[90]

Michael Stone suggests that the invisible condition Satan often assumes between taking other visible shapes is intended to underline the fact that these visible forms are temporal illusions or mirages. As Stone astutely observes, when "challenged, he disappears from sight."[91] Another important transformational feature (already mentioned above) is that Satan is able to possess the living forms of existing characters. This is clear from the case of the serpent. Satan is able to enter existing bodies and function alongside their genuine personalities. "The devil answered," the text says, "through the mouth of the serpent."

According to Michael Stone, in these transformational accounts Satan comes into possession of certain characters in the story, who thus become Satan's instruments.[92] In the *Primary Adam Books*,

[89] *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 51E–53E [90] *Ibid.*, 51E–52E.

[91] Stone, *Adam's Contract with Satan*, 20.

[92] Even Eve may be among the living forms that Satan possesses in the *Primary Adam Books*. De Jonge and Tromp argue that she is. They note that "the character of Eve is comparable to that of the serpent. Both are instruments of the devil (16.5; 21.3), who uses them to reach his eventual goal: to have Adam evicted from Paradise (16.3)." De Jonge and Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve and Related Literature*, 54. Yet, unlike the case of the serpent where Satan unambiguously enters the body of the creature, Satan's possession of Eve is less than certain. The Georgian version of the *PAB* 10:1–2 relates: "And Eve came up out of the water and her flesh was withered like rotten vegetables because of the coldness of the water. *All the form of her beauty had been destroyed*. And when she had come up out of the water,

> Satan says to the serpent, according to the Greek, "be my vessel and I will speak through your mouth words to deceive them." The word "vessel" seems to imply the idea of possession . . . Satan is identical for all practical purposes with the serpent; Satan enters or possesses the serpent and speaks through its mouth; the serpent is Satan's instrument or tool.[93]

Stone discerns a similar development in the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 13, where Samael "rides" the serpent as a camel.[94] He notes that *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 13 opens with

> the theme of angelic jealousy of Adam and Adam's superiority to the angels in his ability to name the animals. The fall of the archangel Samael is described, together with his host. He found the serpent, and "its likeness was like a sort of camel and he mounted it and rode it." This relationship is likened to that of a horse and a rider. (cf. Exod. 15:1, 21)[95]

The Zohar 1.35b, attesting a similar tradition, also understands Samael/Satan as the "rider" of the serpent:

> R. Isaac said: "This is the evil tempter." R. Judah said that it means literally a serpent. They consulted R. Simeon, and he said to them: "Both are correct. It was Samael, and he appeared on a serpent, for the ideal form of the serpent is the Satan. We have learnt that at that moment Samael came down from heaven riding on this serpent, and all creatures saw his form and fled before him."[96]

The same mystical compendium depicts Azazel as the "rider" on the serpent:

> Now observe a deep and holy mystery of faith, the symbolism of the male principle and the female principle of the universe. In the former are

she fell on the face of the earth in great weakness and remained lying (on the ground) without moving for two days. And after two days she arose and *the devil led her to where Adam was*" (*Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 12E). One of the important details here is that Eve is depicted as being led by Satan. It looks like the adversary animates her body, taking her to Adam. A second intriguing detail is that, after succumbing to Satan, Eve's form was changed. Although the Armenian version says that "the form of her glory remained brilliant," scholars believe that the Georgian version preserves the original reading. In this respect, Gary Anderson notes, "As Eve comes out of the water, having succumbed a second time to the temptation of the devil, her flesh is transformed for the worse: 'All the form of her beauty had been destroyed.'" Anderson, "The Punishment of Adam and Eve in the Life of Adam and Eve," *Literature on Adam and Eve. Collected Essays*, ed. G. Anderson *et al.*, SVTP 15 (Brill: Leiden, 2000), 57–82, at 79.

[93] M. E. Stone, "'Be You a Lyre for Me': Identity or Manipulation in Eden," *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, ed. E. Grypeou and H. Spurling, JCPS 18 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 87–99, at 96.

[94] "[The serpent] appearance was something like that of the camel and he (Sammael) rode upon it." Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 92.

[95] Stone, "'Be You a Lyre for Me,'" 96.

[96] Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 1.133–4.

> comprised all holinesses and objects of faith, and all life, all freedom, all goodness, all illuminations emerge from thence; all blessings, all benevolent dews, all graces and kindnesses – all these are generated from that side, which is called the South. Contrariwise, from the side of the North there issue a variety of grades, extending downwards, to the world below. This is the region of the dross of gold, which comes from the side of impurity and loathsomeness and which forms a link between the upper and nether regions; and there is the line where the male and female principles join, forming together the rider on the serpent, and symbolized by Azazel. (*The Zohar* 1.152b–153a)[97]

This description strikingly recalls the portrayal of Azazel's corruption of the protoplasts in *Apoc. Ab.* 23:4–11, which situates the archdemon beneath the Tree of Knowledge in the midst of the intertwined protological couple. Azazel and Satan's transitions from a celestial to an animal form are not novelties here but rather an improvisation on a theme with ancient roots in Enochic tradition. Already in the *Book of the Watchers* its main antagonist Asael is depicted as a sacrificial animal whose hands and feet are bound by a celestial priest Raphael: "And further the Lord said to Raphael: 'Bind Azazel by his hands and his feet, and throw him into the darkness.'" (*1 Enoch* 10:4).[98] Moreover Asael's transformation into an animal is not limited solely to the *Book of the Watchers*. The same imagery also occupies an important place in the *Animal Apocalypse*, which depicts the fall of the Watchers as the mutation of stars into animals.[99] In this Enochic account, the theriomorphism of the erstwhile angels is juxtaposed with the angelomorphism of Noah[100] and Moses.[101] These biblical heroes undergo an inverse transformation: they are refashioned from animals into humans, and within this apocalyptic work such imagery signals that Noah and Moses have acquired angelic bodies.

[97] *Ibid.*, 2.89–90. [98] Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 87–8.

[99] Cf. *1 Enoch* 86:1–4: "And again I looked with my eyes as I was sleeping, and I saw heaven above, and behold, a star fell from heaven, and it arose and ate and pastured amongst those bulls . . . And again I saw in the vision and I looked at heaven, and behold, I saw many stars, how they came down and were thrown down from heaven to that first star, and amongst those heifers and bulls; they were with them, pasturing amongst them. And I looked at them and saw and behold, all of them let out their private parts like horses and began to mount the cows of the bulls, and they all became pregnant and bore elephants and camels and asses." Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.196–7.

[100] Cf. *1 Enoch* 89:1: "He was born a bull, but became a man, and built for himself a large vessel and dwelt on it." Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.199.

[101] Cf. *1 Enoch* 89:36: "And I looked there at the vision until that sheep became a man, and built a house for the Lord of the sheep, and made all the sheep stand in that house." Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.206.

The garment of darkness

In the aforementioned passage about the binding of Asael during the sacrificial ritual in the desert in *1 Enoch* 10 we find an intriguing tradition about clothing the demon with darkness:

> And throw on him jagged and sharp stones, and cover him with darkness; and let him stay there for ever, and *cover his face*, that he may not see light, and that on the great day of judgment he may be hurled into the fire.[102]

The antagonist's covering with darkness is pertinent for our investigation, as it represents the conceptual inverse of the hero's clothing with light. It deprives the antagonist of receiving divine light – the source of life for all God's creatures.

That it is the face of the demon which is thus clothed with darkness may recall a series of transformational motifs involving, respectively, God's *Panim* and the *panim* of the visionary. This terminology is quite well known in Jewish apocalyptic literature. It does not merely designate the protagonist's or Deity's visage *per se*, but symbolizes their complete covering with luminous attire.

Conclusion

What lesson might we draw from the motif of the special celestial garment in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*? It is no coincidence that the promise to Abraham of a mysterious garment comes in the most cultic-laden chapters of the apocalypse – the conceptual crux that immerses the readers into the depths of the apocalyptic Yom Kippur ritual. In this climactic point of the eschatological Yom Kippur ceremony, Abraham's infamous opponent, stripped of his lofty celestial clothes, acquires a new, now sacrificial role by taking on the attire of darkness – the garment of Abraham's sins. By assuming the office of the cosmic scapegoat who is predestined to carry the celebrant's impurity into the netherworld he thus fulfills the principal purifying ordinance of the Jewish tradition.

[102] *Ibid.*, 2.87–8.

CHAPTER 6

The mysteries of the throne room

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the seer receives an enigmatic vision encompassing the span of the entire creation from its protological beginnings to its eschatological end. The patriarch's vision occupies a substantial part of the pseudepigraphon stretching from Chapter 19 to the end of the apocalypse. It includes the vision of the several "levels" of created order – including the structure of the celestial realm, the earth, and the underworld. This portentous revelation begins in Chapter 19, where the Deity's voice orders the seer to behold the heavenly "levels,"[1] situated under his feet, while opening earthly and subterranean realms to the gaze of the visionary.[2]

It appears that Abraham's vision encompasses two distinctive dimensions – one spatial and another temporal. Although it is difficult sometimes to separate the contents of these two dimensions, it is possible that the first part of the disclosure occupying Chapters 19–23 emphasizes the "vertical" spatial aspect of the vision – when the seer gazes from the highest point of creation to its lowest level – while the remaining chapters starting with Chapter 24 emphasize the "horizontal" temporal aspect – when the content of the vision unfolds from the protological to the eschatological points. The initial verses of Chapter 24 underline this transitional switching point between the spatial and temporal aspects of the disclosure. Thus in *Apoc. Ab.* 24:1–5 both protological and eschatological markers are invoked when the Deity promises the hero of the faith to tell him "what and how it will be in the last days" and the visionary sees "what had been in the world before."[3]

[1] Cf. *Apoc. Ab.* 19:4 "And while he was still speaking, and behold, the levels opened, <and> there are the heavens under me." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 25.

[2] Cf. *Apoc. Ab.* 21:1–2: "And he said to me, 'Look now beneath your feet at the expanse and contemplate the creation which was previously covered over. On this level there is the creation and those who inhabit it and the age that has been prepared to follow it.' And I looked beneath the expanse at my feet and I saw the likeness of heaven and what was therein." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26.

[3] "And he said to me, 'Such is the near future of the nations of peoples which are set apart for you after you from your progeny, as you will see in the picture, what is destined to be with them. And I shall tell

Background of Abraham's vision

In order to fully comprehend the scope of the patriarch's vision, we now must recall some of the traditions narrated earlier in the text. As we remember, the apocalyptic portion of the Slavonic apocalypse begins with the Deity ordering the hero to prepare sacrifices. It is important that this command for sacrifices coincides in the text with the promise of vision and the revelation of secrets. Thus in *Apoc. Ab*. 9:5–9 the Deity promises "to set ages" before the patriarch:

> Go, take for me a heifer in her third year, and a she-goat in her third year, and ram in his third year, and a turtledove, and a pigeon, and set out for me a pure sacrifice. And in this sacrifice I shall set before you the ages and make you know secrets . . . And there shall I show you the ages: things built and firmed, made and renewed by my word.[4]

It has been previously noticed that the order of the sacrifices offered by Abraham is reminiscent of the account found in Genesis 15 "with an allusion to Gen.22 insofar as the sacrifices are located on a high mountain."[5] These sacrifices of the patriarch appear to play an important part in his transition to the heavenly realm, where he later will receive the vision of history and its climactic end. Some sacrificial items even play an unusual technical role in his ascent, serving as psychopomps for the seer and his celestial guide Yahoel.[6]

But what are the exegetical roots of this paramount connection between the sacrifices of the hero and his visions? Already in the biblical account found in Gen. 15 it is hinted that Abraham's sacrifice coincides with the visionary experience in the "dream": "As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him" (v. 12); "then a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces" (v. 17).

you what and how it will be in the last days. Look now at everything in the picture.' And I looked and saw there what had been in the world before. And I saw, as it were, Adam, and Eve with him, and with them the Evil Adversary and Cain, who acted lawlessly because of the Adversary, and the murdered Abel, the perdition brought and given to him through the Lawless One." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 28.

[4] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17. [5] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 226.

[6] "And he said to me, 'Slaughter and cut all this, putting together the two halves, one against the other. But do not cut the birds. And give them [halves] to the two men whom I shall show you standing beside you, since they are the altar on the mountain, to offer sacrifice to the Eternal One. The turtledove and the pigeon you will give me, and I shall ascend (*возиду*) in order to show to you [the inhabited world] on the wings of two birds . . .' And I did everything according to the angel's command. And I give to the angels who had come to us the divided parts of the animals. And the angel took the two birds" (*Apoc. Ab*. 12:8–13:1). Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 19–20; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 64.

In this respect George Herbert Box in his study underlines the initial "visionary" background of the biblical account, noting that "the apocalyptic part of the book is based upon the story of Abraham's sacrifices and *trance*, as described in Gen. xv."[7]

Some early extra-biblical Jewish accounts elaborate the patriarch's trance as a vision. Thus, authors of Jewish pseudepigraphical writings appear to be cognizant of the revelatory context associated with the patriarch's sacrifices in Gen. 15. The author of *2 Baruch* 4:2–4 affirms the visionary thrust of the biblical account by saying that God showed Abraham some protological events including the creation of paradise at night between the pieces of the slain animals:

> And the Lord said to me: . . . On the palms of my hands I have carved you? It is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with me, that already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. And I showed it to Adam before he sinned . . . All these things I showed to my servant Abraham in the night between the portions of the victims. And again I showed it also to Moses on Mount Sinai.[8]

The interesting feature of this account is its sacerdotal dimension since the patriarch's visionary experience is mentioned here in the context of the disclosure of the idea of the true sanctuary. The tradition of the revelation of the pattern (תבנית) of the temple to Moses and David is well known from biblical accounts. Here in *2 Baruch* Abraham along with Adam is listed in the chain of distinguished seers to whom the temple was revealed. It affirms the sacerdotal thrust of Abraham's vision between the pieces, which in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* receives such an extensive and profound elaboration.

Another Jewish pseudepigraphical account, *4 Ezra* 3:15, again affirms the reception of the divine mysteries by the hero of the faith during his night vision:

> And when they were committing iniquity before you, you chose for yourself one of them, whose name was Abraham; and you loved him and to him only you revealed the end of the times, secretly by night.[9]

[7] Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, xxiv.

[8] A. F. J. Klijn, "2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1985 [1983]), 1.622.

[9] B. M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1985 [1983]), 1.528.

This emphasis on the eschatological dimension of the disclosures is intriguing here since in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the seer too sees the end of everything.[10]

Pseudo-Philo's *Jewish Antiquities* 23:6–7 also appear to deal with eschatological subjects as it provides a vivid description of the grim eschatological destiny of the wicked through the reference to the specific fiery "place" of punishment – symbolism which might represent a veiled reference to Gehenna:

> And I said to him, "Take for me a three-year-old calf and a three-year-old she-goat and a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a dove." He took them as I commanded him. I cast upon him a deep sleep and encompassed him with fear and <set> before him the place of fire wherein will be expiated the deeds of those who commit iniquity against me, and I showed him the torches of fire by which the righteous ones who have believed in me will be enlightened."[11]

Targumic and rabbinic interpretations of the Genesis account further unfold the hidden revelatory thrust of the patriarch's dream, bringing some traditions found in the pseudepigrapha to a new symbolic and conceptual level. Thus, *Targum Neofiti* on Gen. 15:17 elaborates the vision of Gehenna, a revelation received by the hero of faith between the parts of the sacrificial animals:

> And behold the sun set and there was darkness, and behold Abram looked while seats were being arranged and thrones were erected. And behold, Gehenna which is like a furnace, like an oven surrounded by sparks of fire into the midst of which the wicked fall, because the wicked rebelled against the Law in their lives in this world. But the just, because they observed it, have been rescued from the affliction. *All was thus shown to Abram* when he passed between these parts.[12]

The important feature of this description pertinent to our study is that according to the targumic interpretation, Abraham sees both "thrones" and

[10] It is possible that the early Christian accounts might also be cognizant of Abraham's visions and revelation of the upcoming events to him. Thus, Louis Ginzberg suggests that some New Testament materials like the Gospel of John 8:56 and Acts 7:7 might also allude to the fact that the future course of Israel's history was revealed to Abraham. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 5.228–9.

[11] Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 1.129–130. In the same text, Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* 18:5, Abraham is raised "above the firmament" and is shown "the arrangements of all the stars": "And I said to him, 'Was it not concerning this people, that I spoke to Abraham in a vision, saying, 'Your seed will be like the stars of the heaven,' when I lifted him above the firmament and showed him the arrangements of all the stars.'" Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 1.118.

[12] McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, 96–7.

"Gehenna" – a peculiar constellation of the revelatory subjects which will play such a portentous role in the paradoxically dualistic framework of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, where the patriarch beholds a vision of Gehenna while standing next to the divine throne. As in the Slavonic apocalypse it reaffirms the spatial, vertical axis of the vision of the patriarch, who is able to see the highest and lowest points of creation. The horizontal, temporal axis also seems to be invoked in *Neofiti*. Thus, in this Targum, as in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the Deity shows to Abraham the destiny of the wicked and the righteous in the eschatological age.

The already familiar cluster of the distinctive visionary motifs, including the revelation of Gehenna and fiery annihilation of the wicked appear also in another Palestinian Targum, the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Gen. 15:17:

> When the sun had set and it was dark, *behold, Abram saw* Gehenna sending up smoke and coals of fire, and sending forth sparks of fire with which to judge the wicked. And *behold it passed between these parts*.[13]

In the *Fragmentary Targum* on Gen. 15:17 the patriarch again sees the vision of Gehenna and the upcoming eschatological judgment of the wicked and salvation of the righteous:

> And it was: And the sun was about to set, and there was a darkness; and Abram watched as seats were arranged and thrones were set up, and there was Gehenna which was prepared for the wicked in the world to come, like a furnace surrounded by sparks of fire and a flame of fire, into which [all] the wicked fell because they rebelled against the Torah during their lives; but the righteous will be saved, because they observed it [even when] under oppression; all of this was shown to Abraham when he passed between these pieces.[14]

The theme of the arrangements of the seats and thrones here invokes the memory of peculiar symbolism found in Daniel 7 and hints at the peculiar settings often associated with the imagery of the divine court at the time of the eschatological judgment.

It is also noteworthy that all three aforementioned Palestinian Targumim attest also to the patriarch's vision of the "four kingdoms" rising against the people of Israel, the feature which is reminiscent of Abraham's vision of the entire history in the Slavonic apocalypse:

[13] Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 61. On Abraham's vision between pieces see also *Targum of Isaiah* 43:12: "I declared to Abraham your father what was about to come; I delivered you from Egypt, as I swore to him between the pieces." *The Targum of Isaiah*, ed. J. F. Stenning (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953), 146.

[14] Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch According to Their Extant Sources*, 2.13.

> When the sun was about to set, a deep sleep was cast upon Abram, and behold four kingdoms were rising to enslave his children: "Dread" – that is Babylon; "Dark" – that is Media; "Great" – that is Greece; "Fell" – that is Edom, which is destined to fall and for which there will be no rising; from there the people of the house of Israel will come up. (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Gen. 15:12)[15]

Yet, unlike in the Slavonic apocalypse, where the seer beholds visions of the history and the end after his bodily ascent into heaven, here the patriarch sees his disclosures in a dream. Still, the reinterpretation of biblical story found in the targumic accounts betrays several important conceptual connections with the apocalyptic elaborations of Abraham's vision found in the pseudepigraphical writings, including the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. While in Genesis 15 the patriarch receives aural revelation from God about the upcoming events, in the Targums, like in the Slavonic apocalypse, the visionary aspect of the revelation is emphasized as the patriarch is now able to behold these historical or eschatological realities.

Mysteries of the *Pargod*

We have already noticed in the course of our investigation the fact that some aforementioned pseudepigraphical and rabbinic accounts attempt to emphasize the sacerdotal thrust of Abraham's vision. It seems to be not a deliberate and unusual exegetical move since even the original biblical account tries to put emphasis on the sacerdotal settings by telling its readers that the patriarch's trance occurred *during* his sacrificial practice. Subsequent pseudepigraphical and rabbinic elaborations of the story preserve this initial cultic emphasis by insisting that the patriarch's vision occurred while *passing* the pieces of the sacrificial animals. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the sacerdotal elaboration of Abraham's trance comes on a new, one might say cosmic, level which now envisions the patriarch's visionary experience as an eschatological reenactment of the central sacerdotal rite of the Jewish religious tradition, the Yom Kippur

[15] Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 60–1. *Targum Neofiti* on Gen. 15:12: "and behold Abram saw four kingdoms rising against him: dread: that is Babylon; darkness: that is Media; great: that is Greece; fell upon him: this is Edom, the wicked which will fall and will not rise again." McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, 96. The *Fragment Targum* on Gen. 15:12: "And it was: And the sun was about to set; and a deep, pleasant sleep fell upon Abram, and Abram saw the four kingdoms that were to rise up and enslave his children: A Great Dark Dread Descended Upon him: dread is Babylon; Dark is Media; Great is Greece; Descended upon him is the wicked Edom which is the fourth kingdom that is destined to fall and will not have any revival forever." Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch*, 2.13.

ordinance. Our previous investigation already explored some of the details of this complex sacerdotal setting including Abraham's participation in the scapegoat ritual. We have been able to see that another important aspect of this rite, namely, entrancing a human celebrant into the realm of the divine presence, has not been forgotten by the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse. In this respect it is not coincidental that the scapegoat rite has occurred right before the seer's entrance into the heaven, which is understood in our text as the temple.

As we are already able to see, in our text the symbolism of the heavenly Temple is shrouded in the paradoxical and often puzzling metaphors which attempt to bring the traditional Ezekelian imagery onto a new conceptual level through its radical reformulation with the language of the aural paradigm. It leads to the formation of the novel symbolic features which will become so important for the later Jewish mysticism.

Many features of the heavenly sanctuary's depictions therefore appear to anticipate the future peculiar cultic traits prominent in the Merkabah and Hekhalot traditions, the esoteric lore where the sacerdotal concerns were not only not forgotten but further extensively elaborated. Thus, these traditions often strive to endow their angelic and human protagonists with high priestly credentials, depicting them as the cultic servants in the heavenly sanctuary. Furthermore, like in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, these later Jewish traits are permeated with the stories of the sacerdotal initiations in which the angelic guides reveal to human visionaries mysteries of the heavenly worship, preparing them for the service in the celestial sanctuary. Moreover, some of the emblematic sacerdotal symbols associated with both the terrestrial and the heavenly sanctuaries themselves become a focus of intense attention and elaboration. Thus, in one of the prominent Hekhalot accounts, the heavenly priest Metatron reveals to his human apprentice R. Ishmael several peculiar features of the heavenly Temple – including the marvelous curtain *Pargod* – a portentous celestial boundary, which like the veil in the terrestrial sanctuary intends to separate the holy abode of the Deity from the profane realm of the rest of creation. In *3 Enoch* this cosmic curtain serves as the medium of revelation by unfolding before the eyes of the seer the whole picture of the human history. It is possible that this tradition of the revelatory instrument represented by the boundary between various realms is already present in its rudimentary form in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. We should now proceed to a close investigation of this imagery.

It already has been noted that the peculiar arrangement of the patriarch's acquisition of revelations in the heavenly throne room is reminiscent of the

vision of the *Pargod*,[16] an enigmatic entity that in later Jewish mystical accounts is often depicted as the mystical textile that miraculously reflects the history of all creation. In this respect some perceptive students of the Slavonic apocalypse previously commented on the fact that the unique way in which Abraham receives the vision of the ages is reminiscent of disclosures often revealed to the Hekhalot mystics on the celestial curtain and by the apocalyptic seers on the heavenly tablets.[17]

Thus Gershom Sholem in his seminal work *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* drew attention to a connection between the vision of the end time given to Abraham in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the revelation of *Pargod* which Metatron discloses to R. Ishmael in *Sefer Hekhalot*,[18] seeing the imagery found in the Slavonic apocalypse as a crucial formative step which anticipated these later Jewish mystical developments. He writes,

> Among the most important objects which Metatron describes to Rabbi Ishmael is the cosmic veil or curtain before the throne, which conceals the glory of God from the host of angels. The idea of such a veil appears to be very old; references to it are to be found already in Aggadic passages from the second century. The existence of veils in the resplendent sphere of the aeons is also mentioned in a Coptic writing belonging to the Gnostic school, the *Pistis Sophia*. Now, this cosmic curtain, as it is described in the Book of Enoch, contains the images of all things which since the day of creation have their pre-existing reality, as it were, in the heavenly sphere. All generations and all their lives and actions are woven into this curtain; he who sees it penetrates at the same time into the secret of Messianic redemption, for like the course of history, the final struggle and the deeds of the Messiah are already pre-existently real and visible. As we have seen, this combination of knowledge

[16] On the *Pargod* traditions, see: Alexander, "3 Enoch," 1.296; D. Arbel, *Beholders of Divine Secrets: Mysticism and Myth in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 39, 100; H. Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1951), 73ff.; F. T. Fallon, *The Enthronment of Sabaoth*, NHS 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 55; D. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven, American Oriental Society, 1980), 169, note 99; O. Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes*, WUNT 14 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1972), 17ff.; G. MacRae, "Some Elements of Jewish Apocalyptic and Mystical Tradition and Their Relation to Gnostic Literature," 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss.; University of Cambridge, 1966), 1.49–78; C. R. A. Morray-Jones, *A Transparent Illusion: The Dangerous Vision of Water in Hekhalot Mysticism: A Source-critical and Tradition-historical Inquiry*, JSJSS 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 164ff.; Rowland and Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God*, 372; H. Obederg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* (New York: KTAV, 1973), 141; S. Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994), 5.

[17] Cf. Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 417, n. 190. B. Philonenko-Sayar and M. Philonenko, "Apocalypse d'Abraham," in *La Bible. Écrits intertestamentaires*, ed. A. Dupont-Sommer *et al.* (Paris: La Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1987), 1691–1730, esp. 1720, n. 9.

[18] For the *Pargod* traditions in rabbinic literature see also; *b. Yoma* 77a; *b. Ber.* 18b; *b. Hag.* 15a–b; *b. Sanh.* 89b; *b. Sota* 49a; *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 4.6; *The Zohar* 1.47a; 2.149b–150a; *Maseket Hekhalot* 7.

> relating to the Merkabah and the Hekhalot with a vision of the Messianic end – the inclusion, that is to say, of apocalyptic and eschatological knowledge – is very old. It dominates the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Book of Enoch no less than the various Hekhalot tracts four or eight centuries later.[19]

Indeed, in *3 Enoch* 45[20] the translated seventh antediluvian hero reveals to R. Ishmael the heavenly entity on which this visionary, like Abraham, is able to see the whole span of the human history.[21] *3 Enoch* 45:1–6 reads:

> R. Ishmael said: Metatron said to me: Come and I will show you the curtain of the Omnipresent One, which is spread before the Holy One,[22] blessed be he, and on which are printed all the generations of the world and all their deeds, whether done or to be done, till the last generation. I went and he showed them to me with his fingers, like father teaching his son the letters of the Torah; and I saw:
>
> Each generation and its potentiates;
> Each generation and its heads;
> Each generation and its shepherds;
> Each generation and its keepers . . .
> And I saw:
> Adam and his generation, their deeds and their thoughts . . .
> The Messiah the son of Joseph and his generation, and all that they will do to the gentiles . . .[23]

[19] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 72.

[20] The disclosure of the curtain to R. Ishmael in *3 Enoch* is not a unique rabbinic tradition. Other rabbinic materials also make reference to visionaries that were privileged to behold *Pargod*. According to the Babylonian Talmud and the *Book of Zohar*, the protoplast was the first human being who received a peculiar vision of every generation and its leaders. Thus, *b. Sanh*. 38b reads: "And that is what Resh Lakish meant when he said: What is the meaning of the verse, This is the book of the generations of Adam? It is to intimate that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed him [Adam] every generation and its thinkers, every generation and its sages. When he came to the generation of Rabbi Akiba, he [Adam] rejoiced at his learning but was grieved at his death, and said: How weighty are Thy friends to me, O God." Epstein, *Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud. Sanhedrin* 38b. In the *Alphabet of R. Akiba* the famous tanna receives the revelation of the future sages of Israel on the curtain. Cf. A. Jellinek, *Beth ha-Midrash*, 6 vols. (Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1967), 3.44.

[21] According to *b. Sanh*. 38b a similar vision was given to Adam when to the first human was shown every generation with its learned man. Odeberg compares this tradition to the revelation of the *Pargod* to R. Ishmael. See Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 141.

[22] It is intriguing that this reference to the Omnipresent Deity in the beginning of the narration might implicitly reaffirm that the curtain spread before Him will include everything in creation.

[23] Alexander, "3 Enoch," 1.296–9. Jewish mystical lore attempts to explicate how the omniscient historical and physical reality can be constantly present before the eyes of the creator. In *The Zohar* 1.90b–91b this tradition takes the following form: "See now what R. Simeon has told us, in explanation of the verse 'This is the book of the generations of Adam,' that God showed Adam every generation and its students, etc. This does not simply mean that he saw through the spirit of prophecy that they were destined to come into the world, like one who in wisdom foresees the future, but it means that he literally saw with his eyes the form in which they were destined to exist in the world. He was able to do this because from the day on which the world was created all the souls which

It is curious that the mystical screen of *3 Enoch*, like the medium of revelation in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, unveils the order of events from the generation of the protological couple until the generation of the Messiah. It is also noteworthy that the vision of the curtain *Pargod* in *3 Enoch*, similar to the developments found in the Slavonic apocalypse, is surrounded by a plethora of distinctive sacerdotal motifs. Both texts underscore that the recipients of the unique revelation are high priestly figures. The cultic credentials of the main angelic character of *Sefer Hekhalot*, Enoch-Metatron, are well known from early Enochic and rabbinic materials.[24] It also appears that the angelic protagonist of *3 Enoch* and his human apprentice, R. Ishmael, similar to Yahoel and Abraham in the Slavonic apocalypse, are interconnected with each other through the set of peculiar visionary and sacerdotal motifs that underline the cultic pedigree of the human seer.[25] In this respect it is not coincidental that the recipient of the *Pargod*'s vision in *Sefer Hekhalot* is the tanna who is attested in *b. Ber.* 7a as a high priest.[26] Rachel Elior indicates that in *Hekhalot Rabbati*, this rabbinic authority is portrayed in terms similar to those used in the Talmud, as a priest burning an offering on the altar.[27]

Further, it is not coincidental that in *3 Enoch*, as in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the revelation of the *Pargod* occurs in the course of the sacerdotal instruction and more precisely, during the reenactment of some Yom Kippur settings, when the angelic guide endowed with the priestly credentials leads the human seer into the celestial Holy of Holies. As one can see, both accounts are permeated with the dynamics of sacerdotal instruction and initiation, where the revelation of the celestial curtain plays a pivotal role.

Before we proceed to the analysis of the *Pargod* traditions in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, a short excursus into early Jewish *Pargod* traditions is needed. Although the aforementioned attestations to the *Pargod* traditions are found in later rabbinic and Hekhalot accounts, scholars previously

were destined to come to life among mankind were existing before God in that very form which they were destined to assume on earth (in the same way that the righteous after death are clothed in a form similar to that which they wore in this world), and so Adam saw them with his eyes . . . When God showed Adam all future generations, he saw them all in the Garden of Eden in the form which they were destined to assume in this world . . ." Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 1.298–9. As we can see the revelation to Adam has very similar content to the revelation given to R. Ishmael in *Sefer Hekhalot*. The first human too sees each generation and "its students."

[24] On the priestly role of Enoch-Metatron, see Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 113–20.

[25] See, for example, *Synopse* §3: "Metatron replied, 'He [R. Ishmael] is of the tribe of Levi, which presents the offering to his name. He is of the family of Aaron, whom the Holy One, blessed be He, chose to minister in his presence and on whose head he himself placed the priestly crown on Sinai.'" *3 Enoch* 2:3. Alexander, "3 Enoch," 1.257.

[26] See also *b. Ketub.* 105b; *b. Hul.* 49a.

[27] Elior, "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines," 225.

argued that their early roots are possibly traceable to the imagery of the heavenly tablets found in Mesopotamian and early Enochic materials. Several Second Temple Jewish materials report that these media of revelation, as in later *Pargod* tradition, are able to communicate to the seer a disclosure of the "ages." Thus, for example, according to 4Q180 1.1–3 "all ages" are engraved on the heavenly tablets:

> Interpretation concerning the ages which God has made: An age to conclude [all that there is] and all that will be. Before creating them he determined [their] operations [according to the precise sequence of the ages,] one age after another age. And this is engraved on the [heavenly] tablets [for the sons of men,] [for]/[a]ll/the ages of their dominion.[28]

Moreover, as in the aforementioned tradition found in *3 Enoch*, where the seer is able to see a record of every act of each generation, "whether done or to be done," the heavenly tablets are also able to reveal the record of every individual act. Thus, according to *1 Enoch* 81:1–2, by looking at the heavenly tablets the seventh antediluvian hero is able to learn about every human action:

> And he said to me: "O Enoch, look at the book of the tablets of heaven, and read what is written upon them, and learn *every individual act*." And I looked at everything in the tablets of heaven, and I read everything which was written, and I noted everything.[29]

In *1 Enoch* 93:2 and 106:19 the same visionary is depicted as acquiring the eschatological mysteries through the media of the heavenly tablets – an important subject of the disclosures in later rabbinic *Pargod* accounts:

> And Enoch said: "Concerning the sons of righteousness and concerning the chosen of the world and concerning the plant of righteousness and uprightness I will speak these things to you and make (them) known to you, my children, I Enoch, according to that which appeared to me in the heavenly vision, and which I know from the words of the holy angels and understand from the tablets of heaven." (*1 Enoch* 93:2)[30]

> But after this there will be yet greater iniquity than that which was committed on the earth before. For I know the mysteries of the holy ones, for that

[28] García-Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 1.371. It is intriguing that further in this passage, similarly to the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the seer receives a revelation about Azazel and his angels.

[29] Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.186. Cf. also *1 Enoch* 103:1–2: "I swear to you that I understand this mystery. And I have read the tablets of heaven and seen the writings of the holy ones, and I found written and engraved in it concerning them." Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.240.

[30] *Ibid.*, 2.223.

> Lord showed (them) to me and made (them) known to me, and I read (them) in the tablets of heaven. (*1 Enoch* 106:19)[31]

These striking portrayals did not remain unnoticed by the perceptive students of the *Pargod* traditions. Thus, Hugo Odeberg has previously argued that the depictions of revelations on the heavenly tablets found in early Enochic writings correspond to the revelation of the *Pargod*.[32] Recent illuminating studies by Daphna Arbel also highlight the formative importance of the heavenly tablets imagery for the development of the later Jewish mystical accounts about the celestial curtain.[33]

Furthermore, the descriptions of the veil of the terrestrial temple found in Philo and Josephus might also attest to possible early developments formative for later *Pargod* imagery. In these traditions the earthly counterpart of the celestial curtain, the veil guarding the terrestrial Holy of Holies, appears to be understood as the fabric that somehow mirrors the entire universe. This view appears to reflect Mesopotamian and biblical notions that the temple "was a microcosm of the entire heaven and earth."[34] Scholars trace the early roots of this idea to such biblical texts as Psalm 78:69, where the psalmist tells his audience that the Deity "designed Israel's earthly temple to be comparable to the heaven and to the earth."[35]

The tradition found in Josephus's *Jewish War* attests to this belief that the veil somehow represents the entire created order, being like "an image of the universe":

> Before these hung a veil of equal length, of Babylonian tapestry, with embroidery of blue and fine linen, of scarlet also and purple, wrought with marvelous skill. Nor was this mixture of materials without its mystic meaning: it typified the universe. For the scarlet seemed emblematic of fire, the fine linen of the earth, the blue of the air, and the purple of the sea; the comparison in two cases being suggested by their colour, and in that of the fine linen and purple by their origin, as the one is produced by the earth and the other by the sea. On this tapestry was portrayed a panorama of the heavens, the signs of the Zodiac excepted. (*B.J.* v. 212–14)[36]

[31] *Ibid.*, 2.247–48. [32] Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 141, 147.

[33] See Arbel, *Beholders of Divine Secrets*, 39, 100; D. Arbel, "Divine Secrets and Divination," in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. A. D. DeConick, SBLSS, 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 355–79, esp. 372.

[34] Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 31.

[35] *Ibid.*, 32. See also J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 87–8; V. A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House*, JSOTSS 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 335–37.

[36] Thackeray and Marcus, *Josephus*, 3.265.

As we can see, the account emphasizes the combination of the colors of the veil that in the author's view symbolize the four elements of the universe – fire, earth, air, and water. In Josephus' reflection on the curtains of the Tabernacle in his *Jewish Antiquities* one can find a similar portrayal, which again alludes to the cardinal elements and corresponding to the colors:

> The tapestries woven of four materials denote the natural elements: thus the fine linen appears to typify the earth, because from it springs up the flax, and the purple the sea, since it is incarnadined with the blood of fish; the air must be indicated by the blue, and the crimson will be the symbol of fire. (*Ant*. III. 183)[37]

Moreover the early roots of the curtain imagery as a representation of the universe might be reflected not only in the imagery of the *paroket*, but also in the symbolism of priestly garments. In this respect it is also noteworthy that both in Josephus and in Philo the robe of the celebrant is often paralleled with the veil of the temple, since the high priest is understood as the temple and his garments as the veil of this anthropomorphic sacred entity.[38] It parallels later Hekhalot developments where the robe of the chief sacerdotal mediator, often represented by the angel Metatron, corresponds to the curtain. In *3 Enoch* 10 the heavenly veil is described in almost identical terms as Metatron's robe in *3 Enoch* 12, being depicted as decorated with "all kinds of lights":

> R. Ishmael said: Metatron, the Prince of the Presence, said to me: All these things the Holy One, blessed be He, made for me: He made me a Throne, similar to the Throne of Glory. And He spread over me a curtain of splendour and brilliant appearance, of beauty, grace and mercy, similar to the curtain of the Throne of Glory; and on it were fixed all kinds of lights in the universe. (*3 Enoch* 10:1)[39]

[37] *Ibid*., 5.405.

[38] Robert Hayward reflects on this parallelism between the temple and its distinguished celebrant who is also understood as a temple. He argues that "the cosmos itself may be viewed as a Temple . . . yet the cosmos, which is the macrocosm, finds its microcosm in human beings, who themselves may function as a Temple." Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 110–11. This idea appears to be reflected in one passage found in Philo's *De Somniis* 1.215: "For there are, as is evident, two temples of God: one of them this universe, in which there is also as High Priest His First-born, the divine Word, and the other the rational soul, whose Priest is the real Man; the outward and visible image of whom is he who offers the prayers and sacrifices handed down from our fathers, to whom it has been committed to wear the aforesaid tunic, which is a copy and replica of the whole heaven, the intention of this being that the universe may join with man in the holy rites and man with the universe." Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 5.413.

[39] Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 27–28.

> He made me a garment of glory on which were fixed all kinds of lights, and He clad me in it. And He made me a robe of honour on which were fixed all kinds of beauty, splendour, brilliance and majesty. (*3 Enoch* 12:1–2)[40]

The early roots of these later Jewish correspondences can be traced to some Second Temple accounts. Thus, in the already mentioned passage from the Third Book of the *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus' portrayal of the veil mirrors his description of the sacerdotal garments of the celebrant:

> The high-priest's tunic likewise signifies the earth, being of linen, and its blue the arch of heaven, while it recalls the lightnings by its pomegranates, the thunder by the sound of its bells. His upper garment, too, denotes universal nature, which it pleased God to make of four elements; being further interwoven with gold in token, I imagine, of the all-pervading sunlight. The *essen*, again, he set in the midst of this garment, after the manner of the earth, which occupies the midmost place; and by girdle wherewith he encompassed it he signified the ocean, which holds the whole in its embrace. Sun and moon are indicated by the two sardonyxes wherewith he pinned the high-priest's robe. As for the twelve stones, whether one would prefer to read in them the months or the constellations of like number, which the Greeks call the circle of the zodiac, he will not mistake the lawgiver's intention. Furthermore, the head-dress appears to me to symbolize heaven, being blue; else it would not have borne upon it the name of God, blazoned upon the crown – a crown, moreover, of gold by reason of that sheen in which the Deity most delights. (*Ant.* III.184–7).[41]

Robert Hayward brings attention to a very similar tendency in Philo by noticing that in *De Specialibus Legibus* 1.95–6 the great Hellenistic exegete "remarks that the garments are a copy of the universe, an 'icon' of the all which the high priest wears, so ... the whole cosmos may perform the liturgy with him."[42] Philo's *De Specialibus Legibus* 1.84 affirms the same idea even more forcefully:

> The high priest is bidden to put on a similar dress when he enters the inner shrine to offer incense ... it would seem to be a likeness and copy of the universe. This clearly shewn by its design.[43]

[40] *Ibid.*, 32. [41] Thackeray and Marcus, *Josephus*, 5.405–7.

[42] Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 116. *De Spec. Leg.* 1. 95–96 reads: "The order in which the parts [of the high priest's garment] are arranged is also admirable. At the very top is what he calls the breastpiece in which are placed the stones, a copy of heaven because heaven also is at the top. Then under it the full length skirt, dark blue right through because the air also is black and occupies the second position below the heaven, and the flower-work and pomegranates at the extremities because to earth and water is allotted the lowest place in the universe. Such is the form in which the sacred vesture was designed, a copy of the universe, a piece of work of marvelous beauty to the eye and the mind." Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 7.153–5.

[43] *Ibid.*, 7.149.

In *De Vita Mosis* II.117–21, Philo offers more elaborate description of the high priestly garment:

> Such was the vesture of the high priest. But I must not leave untold its meaning and that of its parts. We have in it as a whole and in parts a typical representation of the world and its particular parts. Let us begin with the full-length robe. This gown is all of violet, and is thus an image of the air; for the air is naturally black, and so to speak a robe reaching to the feet, since it stretches down from the region below the moon to the ends of the earth, and spreads out everywhere. And, therefore, the gown, too, spreads out from the breast to the feet round the whole body. At the ankles there stand out from it pomegranates and flower trimming and bells. The earth is represented by the flowers, for all that flowers and grows comes from the earth; the water by the pomegranates or flowing fruit, so aptly called from their flowing juice; while the bells represent the harmonious alliance of these two, since life cannot be produced by earth without water or by water without the substance of earth, but only by the union and combination of both. Their position testifies most clearly to this explanation. For, just as the pomegranates, the flower trimming and the bells are at the extremities of the long robe, so too what these symbolize, namely earth and water, occupy the lowest place in the universe, and in unison with the harmony of the All display their several powers at fixed resolutions of time and at their proper seasons. This proof that the three elements, earth, water and air, from which come and in which live all mortal and perishable forms of life, are symbolized by the long robe with the appendages at the ankles, is supported by observing that as the gown is one, the three said elements are of a single kind, since all below the moon is alike in its liability to change and alteration, and that, as the pomegranates and flower patterns are fastened to the gown, so too in a sense earth and water are suspended on the air, which acts as their support. (*Mos.* II.117–121)[44]

It is noteworthy that some parts of the garments of the chief cultic celebrant of the Jewish tradition symbolize not only the earthly realities but also other details of the cosmic order, including the zodiac and planets. Thus, according to Philo, the details of the ephod contain symbolic references to the celestial bodies:

> As for the ephod, consideration following what probability suggests will represent it as a symbol of heaven. For first the two circular emerald stones on the shoulder-pieces indicate, as some think, those heavenly bodies which rule the day and night, namely the sun and the moon, or, as may be said with a nearer approach to truth, the two hemispheres of the sky. For, just as the stones are equal to each other, so is the hemisphere above to that below the earth, and neither is so constituted as to increase and diminish as does the

[44] *Ibid.*, 6.505–7.

> moon. A similar testimony is given by their colour, for the appearance of the whole heaven as presented to our sight is like the emerald. Six names, too, had to be engraved on each of the stones, since each of the hemispheres also divides the zodiac into two, and appropriates six of the signs. (*Mos*. II.122–3)[45]

In respect to this tradition Robert Hayward notes,

> the emeralds again feature as representing the hemispheres and the divided zodiac in *Quis Heres* 176; *QE* II.109. Set into the ephod is a breastplate, Hebrew *hôšen*. According to *De Spec. Leg*. I. 86, 94, both these items symbolize the heaven. The breastplate contained twelve precious stones in four rows of three. These are of different colors, and symbolize the circle of the zodiac, each group of three stones indicating the four seasons which recur according to stable principle. (*Mos*. II.124; *De Spec. Leg*. I.87)[46]

Moreover, like in aforementioned depictions from Josephus, where the cosmic nature of the terrestrial veil is reflected in its colors symbolizing the four elements of the universe (air, water, fire, and earth), Philo's portrayal of the priestly robe also contains this allusion to the elements and colors of the created order:

> Thus is the high priest arrayed when he sets forth to his holy duties, in order that when he enters to offer the ancestral prayers and sacrifices there may enter with him the whole universe, as signified in the types of it which he brings upon his person, the long robe a copy of the air, the pomegranate of water, the flower trimming of earth, the scarlet of fire, the ephod of heaven, the circular emeralds on the shoulder-tops with six engravings in each of the two hemispheres which they resemble in form, the twelve stones on the breast in four rows of threes of the zodiac .... he wears a vesture which represents the world .... (*Mos*. II.133–5)[47]

Although the descriptions found in Philo and Josephus are different in several details,[48] they nevertheless share a common ideological tendency in which both the veil of the sanctuary as well as the garments of the highest cultic servant are understood as the reflection of the entire creation.

Wisdom of Solomon 18:24 seems to be reflecting a similar tradition by giving a description of Aaron's priestly robe as containing the depiction of

[45] *Ibid*., 6.507–9. [46] Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 115.

[47] Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 6.513–15.

[48] Thus, Hayward points out that while in Josephus "the blue robe signifies both earth (being made of linen, like the Temple and Tabernacle veils) and heaven, since it is blue in color," in "Philo, however, this robe is symbolic of the air and of the regions below the moon (*De Vit. Mos*. II. 117 ff.) ... The ephod, which Philo understood as representing heaven (*De Vit. Mos*. II. 122 ff.), [in Josephus] indicates the universe made up of four elements, its golden parts symbolizing sunlight." Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 150.

the whole world and "the glories of the fathers": "For upon his long robe the whole world was depicted, and the glories of the fathers were engraved on the four rows of stones, and thy majesty on the diadem upon his head."

This projection of the entire creation on the sacerdotal fabric representing the veil of either the cosmic or anthropomorphic sanctuary is intriguing as it might represent an important contribution to the concept of the heavenly curtain *Pargod*, which shows to apocalyptic or Hekhalot seers the entire universe. Yet it should be noted that, while the early Jewish descriptions of the veil found in Josephus and Philo attempt to underline more abstract cosmological aspects, the later *Pargod* accounts put their main emphasis on biblical history, trying to depict generations of famous characters of the protological and Israelite history.

Some early Christian traditions also appear to be cognizant of the *Pargod*'s imagery.[49] Thus, scholars previously noted that in the temptation story found in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is depicted as a recipient of a peculiar disclosure on the cultic mountain when his eschatological opponent shows him the vision of all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. Here in Satan's ability to show Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, one might have a possible reference to a revelatory medium similar to the celestial curtain *Pargod*, the sacred veil of the divine Face, which in *3 Enoch* 45 is described as an entity that "displays" all generations and all kingdoms simultaneously in the same time.

After this short excursus into early *Pargod* traditions it is time to return to the developments found in the Slavonic apocalypse. Before we proceed to a close analysis of the revelation given to the patriarch, several words must be said about the enigmatic settings that surround this disclosure. *Apoc. Ab.* 21:1–2 reports about the Deity's command which the visionary receives immediately before the disclosure was given to him:

> And he said to me, "Look now beneath your feet at the expanse and contemplate the creation which was previously covered over. On this level there is the creation and those who inhabit it and the age that has been prepared to follow it." And I looked beneath the expanse at my feet and I saw the likeness of heaven and what was therein.[50]

Here the Deity orders the seer to look beneath his feet in order to receive the most recondite revelation. At first such arrangement of the vision appears to

[49] On this tradition see A. Orlov, "Satan and the Visionary: Apocalyptic Roles of the Adversary in the Temptation Narrative of the Gospel of Matthew," in A. Orlov, *Dark Mirrors: Azazel and Satanael in Early Jewish Demonology* (Albany: SUNY, 2011), 110.

[50] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26.

be strange and quite different from the customary appearances of the *Pargod*, the revelatory medium which in rabbinic accounts is usually situated in vertical and not horizontal dimension. Yet, it appears that in the Slavonic apocalypse the curtain of the celestial Holy of Holies, unlike the *paroket* of the earthly adytum, is depicted not as vertical but as a horizontal entity. The arrangement of vision underlines the fact that Abraham looks down from the heavenly Holy of Holies on the medium of the divine revelation which is situated under his feet. It affirms a paradoxical spatial structure of the celestial sanctuary in which the upper Holy of Holies is separated from the lower realms by the horizontal boundary labeled in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* as "a spreading under one's feet" – in Slavonic, простертие ножное.[51] This tradition of the horizontal placement of the heavenly veil is not unique to the Slavonic apocalypse and can be found in other Jewish documents. Thus, for example, in some rabbinic traditions one of the heavens is sometimes understood as a veil that separates the celestial Holy of Holies from lower realms/heavens which often are envisioned there as the less sacred chambers of the heavenly Temple. Thus, George MacRae, in his in-depth investigation of the imagery of the heavenly veil,[52] draws attention to a passage from the Babylonian Talmud in which the lowest heaven, Wilon (וילון),[53] is understood as the cosmic veil.[54] The passage from *b. Hag*. 12b reads:

> R. Judah said: There are two firmaments, for it is said: Behold, unto the Lord thy God belongeth heaven, and the heaven of heavens. Resh Lakish said: [There are] seven, namely, Wilon, Rakia', Shehakim, Zebul, Ma'on, Makon, 'Araboth. Wilon serves no purpose except that it enters in the morning and goes forth in the evening and renews every day the work of creation, for it is said: That stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Rakia' is that in which sun

[51] Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 84. The Slavonic term простертие can mean "spreading." It is reminiscent of an already mentioned passage from *3 Enoch* 45 where the heavenly curtain is spread before the Deity: "which is spread before the Holy One." Another Slavonic term used for the description of the medium of revelation is образование or образ – an image, a picture.

[52] MacRae makes an important distinction between two concepts of the celestial veil: one horizontal and the other vertical. In his opinion, "two types of veil emerge: the Wilon or curtain dividing heaven from earth (or noetic world from sense-perceptible), and the *Pargod* or curtain before the divine throne in heaven." MacRae, "Some Elements of Jewish Apocalyptic and Mystical Tradition and Their Relation to Gnostic Literature," 68.

[53] The term is derived from Lat. *velum*. Alexander, "3 Enoch," 1.269.

[54] MacRae, "Some Elements of Jewish Apocalyptic and Mystical Tradition and Their Relation to Gnostic Literature," 49.

> and moon, stars and constellations are set, for it is said: And God set them in the firmament [Rakia'] of the heaven.[55]

Here according to the rabbinic tradition, the cosmic curtain, represented by the lowest of the seven firmaments,[56] Wilon, draws in every morning, revealing the light of day to the world. In the evening the same cosmic veil draws out and hides the daylight.[57] The important detail of the Wilon's description is that this cosmic curtain appears to be understood as decorated with the constellations of stars and planets, including the sun and moon. It recalls aforementioned portrayals of the sacerdotal veils found in Philo and Josephus where both the actual curtain and its anthropomorphic replica, in the form of garments of the highest sacerdotal servant, are said to be decorated with symbols of the Zodiac and the astronomical bodies.

The biblical roots of Wilon's imagery is usually traced to Isa. 40:22, where the Deity is depicted as stretching heavens like a curtain: "It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in."[58]

Another talmudic passage found in *b. Ber*. 58b also connects the imagery of the celestial veil with Wilon: "R. Huna the son of R. Joshua said: Wilon was torn asunder and rolled up, showing the brightness of Rakia."[59] For our investigation it is significant that in both talmudic passages the symbolism of Wilon coincides with the imagery of firmament (רקיע). This connection

[55] Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Hagiga* 12b.

[56] Sometimes all the firmaments are understood as "curtains." Thus, *The Zohar* 2.164b unveils the following tradition: "R. Hiya discoursed on the words: Who covers thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain (*yeri'ah*) (Ps. CIV, 2). Said he: 'These words have been interpreted as follows: When the Holy One was about to create the world He robed Himself in the primordial light and created the heavens . . . He stretched them out like a curtain, and formed them into the letter *vau*. From this letter the light spread, so that 'curtain' became 'curtains,' as it is written: 'And thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains' . . . The ten curtains of the Tabernacle symbolized the ten firmaments." Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 4.67–8. Cf. *The Zohar* 2.209a: "There are heavens and heavens; to wit, lower heavens with an earth beneath them, and upper heavens also having an earth beneath them. They constitute upper grades and lower grades, the two being counterparts of each other. The lower heavens are identical with the ten curtains, to which allusion is made in the words: 'Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain'(Ps. CIV, 2)." Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar* 4.210.

[57] Cf. MacRae, "Some Elements of Jewish Apocalyptic and Mystical Tradition and Their Relation to Gnostic Literature," 50. In this regard Philip Alexander observes, "It would seem, then, that the first heaven is regarded as a sort of veil or curtain which either conceals the heavenly world from human eyes, or which, by being opened and shut, is the cause of daylight and darkness." Alexander, "3 Enoch," 269.

[58] Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes*, 21.

[59] On similar traditions about Wilon in *Midrash Konen* and other rabbinic materials, see *ibid.*, 20–1; MacRae, "Some Elements of Jewish Apocalyptic and Mystical Tradition and Their Relation to Gnostic Literature," 50.

is important in the light of the tradition found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, where the seer beholds the mysteries of creation and human history by gazing on the firmament at his feet:

> And he said to me, "Look now beneath your feet at the *expanse* (простертие) and contemplate the creation which was previously covered over. On this level there is the creation and those who inhabit it and the age that has been prepared to follow it." And I looked beneath the *expanse* (простертие) at my feet and I saw the likeness of heaven and what was therein. (*Apoc. Ab.* 21:1–2)[60]

It is noteworthy that in the biblical materials the firmament or expanse (רקיע) is often understood as the diaphragm that separates the upper waters from the lower waters. From Gen. 1:6 one learns that the Deity created a firmament (רקיע) in the midst of the waters in order to separate "the waters from the waters." Some midrashic materials, similar to the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, also appear to envision the firmament's separating function as the cosmic curtain, by tracing the etiology of the sacerdotal veil to the division of upper and lower waters at the crucial point of creation. Thus, in *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati* on Exod. 26:33 the veil of the terrestrial sanctuary is put in parallel to the firmament as the dividing line between the upper and the lower waters:

> In the Tabernacle the veil divided between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, and in body the diaphragm divides the heart from the stomach, and in the world it is the firmament which divides between the upper waters from lower waters.[61]

Numbers Rabbah 12:13 preserves a similar conceptual development:

> It is written, In the beginning God created the heaven, etc. (Gen. 1, 1), and it is written, Who stretchest out the heaven like a curtain (Ps. CIV, 2), while of the Tabernacle it is written, And thou shalt make curtains of goat's hair for a tent over the Tabernacle, etc. (Ex.XXVI, 7). It is written in connection with the second day, Let there be a firmament . . . and let it divide, etc. (Gen. 1, 6), and of the Tabernacle it is written. The veil shall divide unto you (Ex. XXVI, 33). Of the third day we read, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together (Gen. 1, 9).[62]

[60] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 82–4.
[61] *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati*, ed. H. Albeck (Jerusalem: Mekitse Nirdamim, 1940), 32.
[62] Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 5.483.

The passage from the *Book of Zohar* underlines the sacerdotal significance of the firmament as the curtain by telling that it separates the more sacred realm from the less sacred:

> Said R. Judah: "From this we learn that every division (of opinion) in which both sides act for the glory of heaven endures, since here we have a division which was for the sake of heaven. Through the firmament the heavens were established, as it is written, 'and God called the firmament heaven,' since this divides the more from the less holy, like the curtain in the Tabernacle." (*The Zohar* 1.33a)[63]

It appears that in the aforementioned passages from *Midrash Rabbah* and the *Zohar* one can find a peculiar parallelism in which the dividing line between the upper and the lower waters is understood as the cosmic veil. This rabbinic understanding of the curtain as the cosmic diaphragm between more sacred upper regions and less sacred lower realms, a boundary represented either by lowest heaven or firmament, appears to have quite early conceptual roots. George MacRae draws attention to some Nag Hammadi materials in which the cosmic veil is understood as the threshold that separates the divine Pleroma from the world of matter. This belief is accentuated, for example, in the *Hypostasis of Archons* 22, which tells that "a veil exists between the world above and the realms that are below; and shadow came into being beneath the veil; and that shadow became matter; and that shadow was projected apart."[64] Similar to the portrayal of the Wilon imagery in aforementioned Jewish texts, the veil is understood here as the horizontal entity dividing the divine realm from its material "shadow." Another passage from the *Hypostasis of Archons* 28 again envisions the cosmic veil as the dividing border between upper and lower abodes: "And Sophia and Zoe caught him up and gave him charge of the seventh heaven, below the veil between above and below."[65] In these heterodox Christian traditions, similar to the aforementioned rabbinic developments, where the lowest firmament Wilon serves as the macrocosmic veil, the lowest region/aeon of the divine Fullness, Sophia, is often understood as the curtain separating the realm of the Pleroma from the realm of humans. Thus, another Nag Hammadi text, *On the Origin of the World* 4, informs its readers, that "she (Sophia) functioned as a veil dividing mankind from the things above."[66]

[63] Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 1.124.
[64] *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, ed. B. Layton *et al.*, 2 vols., NHS 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 1.253
[65] *Ibid.*, 1.255. [66] *Ibid.*, 2.31.

Now it is time to return to the Slavonic text. The horizontal spatial arrangement of the macrocosmic "veil" in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, in the view of the sacerdotal conceptual thrust of the text, might have not only cosmological but also cultic significance. Such arrangement might suggest that the lower realms portrayed in the patriarch's vision can be understood as exterior chambers of the temple of the universe, which corresponds to the less sacred chambers of the terrestrial sanctuary known as *devir* and *hekhal*.[67] Moreover it appears that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the courtyard of this cosmic temple might include not only the earthly realm but also the underworld.

As we recall from his exalted position in the celestial Holy of Holies, the patriarch beholds not only events of the earthly abode but also realities of subterranean realm when Abraham sees the Leviathan and its surroundings. If it is indeed the case, these developments might correspond to a tradition found in Josephus[68] and rabbinic accounts,[69] in which the heaven, earth and subterranean realm of the sea are understood respectively as corresponding to the Holy of Holies and less sacred chambers of the temple.[70]

Medium of revelation

Several words must be said about the unusual ways in which the miraculous horizontal medium under the feet of the patriarch unveils its revelations. As we have already learned in this study, in later Jewish mysticism the *Pargod* is not only one of the most curious revelatory subjects received by the visionaries but also, and more importantly, it is the most effective tool of the revelation – an instrument that allows the Deity or his vice-regent to unfold revealed subjects to a seer more expeditiously and effectively. It can be seen as a sort of celestial presentation device with help of which the Deity

[67] It appears to be not coincidental that in these lower "sacerdotal" chambers the patriarch also sees some cultic settings including the aforementioned theophany of Azazel.

[68] Cf. Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* 3.180–1: "Thus, to take the tabernacle, thirty cubits long, by dividing this into three parts and giving up two of them to the priests, as a place approachable and open to all, Moses signifies the earth and the sea, since these too are accessible to all; but third portion he reserved for God alone, because heaven also is inaccessible to men" (Thackeray and Marcus, *Josephus*, 4.403).

[69] Scholars note the parallelism between the realm of sea and the sacerdotal realm of the courtyard in *Numbers Rabbah* 13:19, where the courtyard encompasses the Tabernacle as the sea encompasses the world: "His offering was one silver dish, etc. The dish was in allusion to the court which encompassed the Tabernacle as the sea encompasses the world." Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 6.546. On the similar tradition in *Midrash Tadshe*, see MacRae, "Some Elements of Jewish Apocalyptic and Mystical Tradition and Their Relation to Gnostic Literature," 55.

[70] *Ibid.*

or his appointee can quickly and masterfully make his point while initiating a human recipient into the content of the protological or eschatological mysteries or disclose other complex pivotal subjects including, for example, the revelation of the Torah. Thus, in the *Alphabet of R. Akiba* the *Pargod* is attested as the medium of revelation which displayed to Moses a preview of the Torah.[71] In Jewish mystical accounts the heavenly curtain is predestined to reveal to human seers the most esoteric secrets of the universe. Yet, it appears that not only humans but the Deity himself can benefit from such an effective instrument. Thus, the *Pargod*, with its remarkable ability to reflect everything, appears to be used occasionally by the Deity as a kind of a celestial device that helps the creator to oversee the totality of his creation simply by beholding its mystical embroidery. In this respect it is not coincidental that some later rabbinic accounts suggest that the embroidery in fact is present on both sides of the curtain in such a way that not only the seer but also the Deity has access to the picture. Thus, in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 4 the celestial veil seems to be envisioned as a tool which gives the Deity a unique opportunity to monitor the earthly realm:

> He [God] has a scepter of fire in His hand and a veil is spread before Him, and His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, and the seven angels, which were created first, minister before Him within the veil, and this (veil) is called *Pargod*.[72]

As one can see, the Deity has an access to the revelation almost in the same manner as an apocalyptic visionary. The curtain thus provides the universal meeting point between the "reality" of the Deity and the seer.

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* where the patriarch, like Metatron, is allowed to be present on God's side of the curtain,[73] the Deity is able to illustrate his points with the help of the portrayals appearing on the firmament. They serve as an important vehicle of disclosure that allows the Deity to unfold effectively his revelation to the seer with distinct interpretations and explanations. The reality of the unique revelatory

[71] *Ibid.*, 59. [72] Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 23.

[73] In this respect another important function of the *Pargod* should be mentioned, that is, its role not only in revelation but also in concealment of the Deity and its secrets. In some rabbinic materials the *Pargod* is associated with a theophanic cloud or a bright light emitted by the divine form which serves as a screen protecting the sovereignty of the Deity. Later rabbinic materials even associate the *Pargod* with *hashmal:* "That Unique Cherub, sitting on his throne of glory, has a *pargod* of colored *hashmal*, whose name is Ishael, and it is like light blue, and this is the *pargod* which surrounds the throne of glory on three sides except the West." J. Dan, *"Unique Cherub" Circle: A School of Mystics and Esoterics in Medieval Germany*, TSMEMJ 15 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1999), 113. As Philip Alexander reminds us, another function of the *Pargod* is protective as "it shields the angels from the destructive glare of the divine Glory (*Targum of Job* 26:9; *3 Enoch* 22B:6)." Alexander, "3 Enoch," 1.296.

medium in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* thus endows the Deity with the role of an interpreting angel.

Another important conceptual point that brings the depictions found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* very close to the *Pargod* tradition is that the visionary sees not just a revelation, but a revelation depicted on a physical medium. In this respect it is intriguing that the text repeatedly refers to the disclosures received by the seer as "pictures" or "portrayals" (Slav. образы). Thus, in *Apoc. Ab*. 21:7 the seer refers to his visions as portrayals: "And I saw there a great crowd of men, and women, and children, and half of them <on the right side of the *portrayal* (образа), and half of them> on the left side of the *portrayal* (образъства)."[74] In *Apoc. Ab*. 22:1 a reader encounters this description again: "And I said, 'Eternal Mighty One! What is this *picture* (образование) of creation?'"[75]

Moreover, in several other passages the Deity himself forces the seer to behold the "picture." It looks like both the human and divine recipients are situated before the same screen that allows them to access the shared reality.[76] This depiction of God who interacts with the seer through the medium of the *Pargod* is reminiscent of the depictions found in *Sefer Hekhalot* in which Enoch-Metatron's revelation of the curtain to R. Ishmael is described as a father's teaching of the letters of the Torah to his son: "I went and he [Enoch-Metatron] showed them [the generations] to me with his fingers, like a father teaching his son the letters of the Torah."[77]

Furthermore, some descriptions found in the Slavonic apocalypse suggest that the unique revelatory medium allows the patriarch to behold several "events" simultaneously on one picture. Such a spatial arrangement allows the seer to look in the different corners of the "screen" and see different revelations. Thus in *Apoc. Ab*. 23:7 the seer reports: "And I looked at the *picture*, and *my eyes ran to the side* of the garden of Eden."[78] Here, as in the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, where the Deity is able to move his gaze from one

[74] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 84.

[75] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 86.

[76] See *Apoc. Ab*. 23:1 "Look again at the picture (в образовании), who is the one who seduced Eve, and what is the fruit of the tree." *Apoc. Ab*. 24:1–3: "you will see in the picture, what is destined to be with them. And I shall tell you what and how it will be in the last days. Look now at everything in the picture (въ образование)." *Apoc. Ab*. 26:7: "Look at the picture (въ образование)!" Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 27–30; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 86, 90, 94.

[77] Alexander, "3 Enoch," 1.296.

[78] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 27.

part of the picture of creation to another, the seer is also able to see different "historical" events at the same time.

Other illustrations of the same unusual properties of the revelatory medium that allow an "operator" to navigate between different spatial parts of the "disclosure" can be found also in *Apoc. Ab.* 22:3–5, where the Deity himself draws the visionary's attention to the right and left portions of the depiction, specifying the subjects:

> And I said, "O Lord! Mighty and Eternal! Who are the people in the picture on this side and on that?" 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."[79]

In the Slavonic apocalypse the pictures revealed by the Deity to the seer appear to represent not merely still images but rather dynamic realities, swaying pictures which are similar to the movie clips in which the seer is able to see the progression of the events:

> 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. (*Apoc. Ab.* 27:1)[80]

Here the personages of the human history undergo historical and eschatological transitions, which are depicted as moving from the left portion of the "screen" to its right part.[81] Such dynamic presentations are typical in the depiction of the *Pargod*'s revelations in *Sefer Hekhalot*, which has been often compared by scholars to "a motion picture film depicting the history of Israel."[82]

[79] *Ibid.*, 26–7. [80] *Ibid.*, 30.

[81] The question, however, remains what kind of reality is reflected on the screen under the feet of the patriarch: does Abraham see the ideal projections of the protological and eschatological events and characters or their "real" souls present before the divinity? As we remember in the aforementioned passage from *The Zohar* 1.90a–91b, Adam sees all the generations with their actors. Reflecting on this Zoharic tradition, Isaiah Tishby observes that "the *Zohar* makes it quite clear that what Adam saw was not a vision of the future, nor an inspired view of souls that existed only within the divine thought, but souls that actually existed at that particular time, and were going to continue to exist." Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2.699–700.

[82] MacRae, "Some Elements of Jewish Apocalyptic and Mystical Tradition and Their Relation to Gnostic Literature," 68.

Mystical features of patriarch's revelation

It is now time to examine more closely some mystical details of the revelation given to the patriarch during his vision in the throne room and their paradigmatic significance for the development of early Jewish mysticism.

One of the intriguing features of this disclosure is that from his most exalted position near the abode of the Living Creatures of the divine throne, the patriarch receives an enigmatic vision of the creature of a quite different level – a monster called Leviathan.[83] This paradoxical juxtaposition of the emblematic "animals" of two realms appears to be not coincidental as it provides important reaffirmation for a paradoxical correspondence between the lower and upper domains, the parallelism that is already hinted at in the double duties of Abraham's celestial guide in Chapter 10 of the Slavonic apocalypse. As we remember from our study, that chapter unveils the visionary's initial encounter with his celestial guide, Yahoel. From the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 10:9–10 one learns that the Deity appointed the great angel to rule not only over the Living Creatures of the divine throne but also over the Leviathans. Here, again, we have an enigmatic juxtaposition of the iconic creatures of the upper and lower domains. It appears to be not coincidental that the beginning and the end of Abraham's initiation into the heavenly mysteries are both marked by this constellation of peculiar traditions.[84]

In view of these connections it is worthwhile to examine Abraham's vision of the lower realm more closely. As we remember during his

[83] On the Leviathan traditions, see C. H. Gordon, "Leviathan: Symbol of Evil," in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 1–9; J. Schirmann, *The Battle between Behemoth and Leviathan according to an Ancient Hebrew Piyyut*. Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities 4 (Jerusalem, 1970); M. A. Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 41–55; idem. A, Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 273–85; M. Idel, "Leviathan and Its Consort: From Talmudic to Kabbalistic Myth," in *Myths in Judaism: History, Thought, Literature*, ed. I. Gruenwald and M. Idel (Jerusalem: Z. Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2004), 145–86 [Hebrew]; Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*; J. Yahalom and B. Laffer, "'Mi lo Yirekha Melekh': A Lost Siluk by Kalir for Rosh Hashanah," in *Studies in Hebrew Poetry and Jewish Heritage: In Memory of Aaharon Mirsky*, ed. E. Hazan and J. Yahalom (Ramat Gan, 2006), 127–58; A. Kulik "'The Mysteries of Behemoth and Leviathan' and the Celestial Bestiary of *3 Baruch*," *Le Muséon* 122 (2009), 291–329.

[84] As one remembers in the ninth chapter of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, right before the *Hayyot* and the Leviathans are mentioned, God promises to Abraham to reveal the utmost secrets of the universe. Scholars previously noted that the peculiar terminological formulation of these mysteries betray subtle similarities with early Jewish mystical conceptual developments. Thus, Alexander Kulik previously argued that the terminology of secrets used in here in *Apoc. Ab*. is reminiscent of the terminology found in the Hekhalot tradition. See Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 86–7.

contemplation of the mysteries of creation, Abraham looks down at the expanse and beholds the lower domain resting on the Leviathan. The focal point of this puzzling disclosure is the Leviathan himself,[85] depicted in the vision as the cosmic foundation of the lower realm. References to the Leviathan's "holding" and the idea that "the created world (universe) . . . lies upon him" are especially important.[86] These depictions that portray the Leviathan as the "holder" and "the foundation" of the lower created order are intriguing. From the highest point of everything, the throne of the Deity, held by the efforts of the Living Creatures, the hero of the faith beholds another mysterious "holder"[87] of cosmic dimensions in the lowest point of creation, the abyss. This curious correspondence between the upper and lower points of the universe with their respective "sustainers" or "holders" does not appear coincidental. Similar to the *Hayyot*, the Living Creatures that are predestined to sustain the upper foundation of the Deity's throne, Leviathan, too, can be seen as the pivotal holder of the lower foundation.

In light of these correspondences, there seems to be no coincidence that earlier in the text, in the introduction of Yahoel's duties, the Leviathans are mysteriously paired with the *Hayyot*, with a suggestion that the Leviathans might fulfill the same function in the lower realms as do the *Hayyot* in the upper realm. The parallelism between the *Hayyot* and the Leviathans in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* is also reinforced in the already mentioned terminology of "likeness," when the seer beholds the realm of Leviathan as the "likeness of heaven."

The positioning of the enigmatic conjecture of the realms of the Chariot and the realm of the Leviathan(s) at the starting and final points of the patriarch's initiation into the heavenly secrets appears to be deliberate and might be of special significance to the writers or editors of the text. The conjecture appears to reveal some similarities with the Jewish understanding

[85] Or maybe even a pair of Leviathans. Louis Ginzberg previously argued that *Apoc. Ab.* 21:4, which tells about the Leviathan and "its possession," might represent a mistranslation of a Hebrew phrase – "the Leviathan and his mate." Ginzberg notes that "the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 10 speaks of Leviathans (i.e., the male and female monsters), which the archangel Jaoel holds in check; in another passage (21; the text is not quite clear) Leviathan and his possession are spoken of, where, perhaps, the Leviathan and his mate should be read. In case this apocalyptic work was originally composed in Hebrew, the present text can easily be explained as being due to the translator's confusion of קניתו = קנעתו 'his mate' with קניתו = קנינו 'his possession.'" Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 5.45, n. 127. See also Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 51, n. 73.

[86] Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 84.

[87] It is intriguing that in later Jewish mysticism the fin of Leviathan is compared with the role of the righteous as the pillar of the world. On this tradition, see Y. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar* (Albany: SUNY, 1993), 16–17, 72.

of esoteric subjects in some pseudepigraphical and rabbinic materials. This correspondence, therefore, should be explored more closely in the light of relevant pseudepigraphical and rabbinic sources.

Secrets of the *Hayyot* and secrets of the Behemoth and Leviathan

It is possible that the juxtaposition of the *Hayyot* and the Leviathans amid the revelation of secrets is intended to identify two subjects of esoteric knowledge, one of which is tied to the vision of the Chariot and the other to the vision of the creation. An important question arises, however: how unusual is this conjunction of the secrets of the realms of the *Merkabah* and the realm of the Leviathans in Jewish pseudepigraphical and rabbinic literature?

A well-known formative tradition in *Mishnah Hagigah* 2 outlines several fields of esoteric knowledge delimiting strict boundaries for their study. The mishnaic passage specifically mentions the Account of Creation and the Account of the Chariot, saying that "the forbidden degrees may not be expounded before three persons, nor the Story of Creation before two, nor the Chariot before one alone, unless he is a Sage that understands of his own knowledge."[88] These two important esoteric subjects, one tied to *Maʿaseh Merkabah* and the other to *Maʿaseh Bereshit*, will eventually form prominent interpretive traditions in later Jewish mystical speculations. It is intriguing that in later rabbinic materials the theme of the great primordial monsters, the Leviathan and Behemoth, became very important, and it was often developed in the course of *Maʿaseh Bereshit* speculation. Further, the great monsters became an emblematic feature of the Account of Creation to the point that some rabbinic passages even speak, not about *Maʿaseh Merkabah* and *Maʿaseh Bereshit*, but about the secrets of the Chariot and the secrets of the monsters. One of the examples of this peculiar juxtaposition is *Midrash Rabbah* on the Song of Songs 1:28, where the revelation of the secrets of the Chariot is conflated with the revelation of the secrets of the Behemoth and Leviathan. The text reads: "For whence was Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite to know how to reveal to Israel the secrets of Behemoth and Leviathan, and whence was Ezekiel to know how to reveal to them the secrets of the Chariot. Hence it is written: The King hath brought me into his [secret] chambers."[89]

In his analysis of the first part of this passage about the secrets of Leviathan and Behemoth, Michael Fishbane suggests, "we are not informed just what this disclosure consists of; but it undoubtedly involves the esoteric

[88] Danby, *The Mishnah*, 212–13. [89] Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 9.47–8.

nature of these monsters as part of the work of creation, since this instruction[90] is mentioned together with the fact that Ezekiel will reveal to them the secrets of the Chariot."[91] Fishbane argues convincingly that the lore about the great monsters often serves in the rabbinic materials as an important marker of the subject of the *Maʿaseh Bereshit* that is often juxtaposed there with the subject of the *Maʿaseh Merkabah*.[92]

Why then did the account of the great monsters play such a paradigmatic role within the Account of Creation? It appears that already in the first chapter of Genesis the importance of creating the great creatures of the sea is highlighted through the usage of the verb ברא, which is used only in relation to the entire creation in Genesis 1:1 and then to great creatures of the sea in v. 21 and to humans in v. 27.

The later Zoharic tradition underlines the importance of this usage by suggesting that creation of the great monsters paradoxically repeats the whole creation, functioning as a kind of a negative counterpart of the entire created order.[93] Thus, in *The Zohar* 2.34b Rabbi Simeon says the following: "It is written; 'In the beginning God created . . .' and also 'And God created the great dragons.' This indicates that all the ten acts of Creation had their counterpart in these ten rivers,[94] on each of which one of the dragons breathes heavily . . . Verily, though the members of the Fellowship are students of the story of Creation, having knowledge of its wonders . . . yet

[90] In relation to this passage other scholars also suggested that "it is conceivable that just as there was a *baraita* devoted to the subject of *Maʿaseh Merkabah*, so some kind of compilation may have existed containing material relating to Behemoth and Leviathan." I. Jacobs, *The Midrashic Process: Tradition and Interpretation in Rabbinic Judaism* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 158.

[91] Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 278. [92] *Ibid.*, 273–85.

[93] For discussion of this feature, see *ibid.*, 276.

[94] It is intriguing that both *Apoc. Ab.* and the *Book of Zohar*, in their accounts of Leviathan, operate with the imagery of overflowing rivers. Thus, *Apoc. Ab.* 21:4–6 reads: "And I saw there the sea and its island<s>, and its animals and its fishes, and Leviathan and his domain, and his lair, and his dens, and the world which lies upon him, and his motions and the destruction of the world because of him. I saw there the rivers and their overflows, and their circles. And I saw there the tree of Eden and its fruit<s>, and the spring, the river flowing from it, and its trees and their flowering, and I saw those who act righteously. And I saw in it their food and rest." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26. The *Book of Zohar* too connects the Leviathan's account with the symbolism of overflowing rivers. Thus, *The Zohar* 2.34a reads: "Said R. Simeon further: 'It is written: "And God created the great dragons (*taninim*) and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind" (Gen. 1, 21). This verse', he said, 'we have already discussed, but the words "He created the great dragons" contain a yet more special and particular mystery: they refer to the Leviathan and his mate, which last was slain and is preserved by the Holy One for the regaling of the righteous (in the days of the Messiah). The great dragon reposes between nine rivers, the waters of which are turbulent.'" Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 3.110. As one can see, the *Book of Zohar* tells about turbulent waters, while *Apoc. Ap.* tells about overflowing rivers.

even among them there are few who know how to interpret it in connection with the mystery of the great dragon."[95]

Further, in some Zoharic materials, similar to the developments in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, not only Leviathans but also the *Hayyot* serve as the conceptual marker for esoteric subjects, positing there as a symbolic sign for the Account of the Chariot. Moreover, in these materials one can find a peculiar view very similar to the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, in which the monsters are envisioned as counterparts to the holding angels. Thus, for example, *The Zohar* 1.34b juxtaposes esoteric knowledge about the *Hayyot* and Leviathans in which the sea monsters are envisioned as the Living Creatures of the lower realm.[96] *The Zohar* 2.48b again conflates tradition about the *Hayyot* with the tradition about the Leviathans. In this comparison, as in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the Leviathans are understood as the lower counterparts of the *Hayyot*.[97]

It should be noted that the speculations found in *The Zohar*, similar to the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, repeatedly include the symmetrical correspondence between the two realms situated above and beneath, which are marked by their respective emblematic creatures, the *Hayyot* and the Leviathans.

It might be tempting to view these later rabbinic testimonies about the *Hayyot* and the Leviathans as inventions that have little to do with the pseudepigraphical traditions about the great monsters. A close analysis of the early sources, however, demonstrates that already in some Second Temple materials esoteric knowledge about the Leviathans became juxtaposed with the secrets of the Chariot. These important developments should be explored in detail. We will begin our investigation of this early evidence by returning to the already mentioned tradition from *Mishnah Hagigah*. There one can find a cryptic warning on the study of esoteric subjects: "Whosoever gives his mind to four things it was better for him if he had not come into the world – what is above? what is beneath? what was beforetime? and what will be hereafter."[98]

What this formula means has long been debated among scholars.[99] Some argue that this mishnaic formulation of esoteric subjects encompasses two dimensions: first spatial, realms above and beneath, and second, temporal,

[95] Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 3.111. [96] *Ibid.*, 1.128–9. [97] *Ibid.*, 3.147–49.
[98] Danby, *The Mishnah*, 213.
[99] See S. Löwenstamm, "On an Alleged Gnostic Element in Mishnah Hagigah ii.1," in *Yehezkel Kaufmann Jubilee Volume: Studies in Bible and Jewish Religion*, ed. M. Haran (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1960), 112–21 [Hebrew]; H. F. Weiss, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palästinischen Judentums*, TU 97 (Berlin: Akademie, 1966), 79–83; W. A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King. Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, NovTSup 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 208; G. A. Wewers, *Geheimnis und Geheimhaltung im rabbinischen Judentum*, RVV 35 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 46ff.;

which includes protological and eschatological markers (what was beforetime and what will be hereafter.) Others recognized in the formula only one spatial dimension, suggesting, for example, that the mishnaic expression might intend to describe the dimension of the divine body.[100] The provenance of the formula was also debated in an attempt to trace the roots of the mishnaic tradition to biblical, pseudepigraphical or gnostic materials. It has been also suggested the mishnaic formulae might stem from Mesopotamian materials.[101]

It appears also that the mishnaic formula reflects some settings found in early Jewish visionary accounts. If so, the formula found in *m. Hag*. might serve as the crucial link between the early visionary traditions contemplating the subjects of the Account of Creation and the Account of the Chariot and later rabbinic developments. Let us first turn our attention to some early Jewish apocalyptic accounts.

Scholars have previously noted that the mishnaic formula appears to be reminiscent of the description of esoteric subjects conveyed in a vision to Moses in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian.[102] Preserved in fragmentary form by several ancient sources,[103] *Exagoge* 67–90 describes Moses' vision on Mount Sinai. In his dream, the seer beholds a noble man sitting on the great throne with a crown and a large scepter in his left hand. In the course

Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 75–6; P. van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist," *JJS* 34 (1983), 28; Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 4, 252; A. Goshen-Gottstein, "One Does not Expound the Story of Creation: Why?" in *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, August 16–24, 1989* (Jerusalem: The World Union of Jewish Studies, 1990), Div. C, Hebrew Section, 61–68 [Hebrew]; G. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Princeton University Press, 1990), 33; D. H. Aaron, "Polemics and Mythology: A Commentary on Chapters 1 and 8 of 'Bereshit Rabba'" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1992), 186–92; A. Goshen-Gottstein, "Four Entered Paradise Revisited," *HTR* 88 (1995), 69–133, at 75ff.; C. Fletcher-Louis, "4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology," *DSD* 3 (1996), 236–52, at 246; M. Brettler, "Memory in Ancient Israel," in *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism*, ed. M. A. Signer (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2001), 1–7, at 3; J. Schofer, "Spiritual Exercises in Rabbinic Culture," *AJSR* 27 (2003), 203–25, at 213; Rowland and Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God*, 221–7.

[100] Cf. Goshen-Gottstein, "One Does Not Expound the Story of Creation: Why?" 61–8; Schofer, "Spiritual Exercises in Rabbinic Culture," 213.

[101] Cf. Löwenstamm, "On an Alleged Gnostic Element in Mishnah Hagigah ii.1.," 112–21; Brettler, "Memory in Ancient Israel," 3.

[102] Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 208. See also van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist," 28; Fletcher-Louis, "4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology," 246.

[103] The Greek text of the passage was published in several editions, including: A.-M. Denis, *Apocalypsis Henochi Graece/Fragmenta pseudepigraphorum quae supersunt graeca*, PVTG 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 210; B. Snell, *Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta I* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 288–301; H. Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 54; C. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 3 vols. SBLTT 30, Pseudepigrapha Series 12 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 2.362–6.

of the vision the noble man vacates his exalted seat and instructs Moses to sit on it, transferring to him his crown. Then Moses is given a vision of the whole world: he has been enabled to see above the heaven and beneath the earth. Further, a multitude of stars fall before Moses' knees as he counts them. The stars parade past the dreaming prophet like a battalion of men.[104]

After the son of Amram receives this revelation, his mysterious interpreter, Raguel, informed the seer that his vision of the whole earth – the world below and above the heavens – signifies that he will see what is, what has been and what shall be. Several scholars have previously suggested that the formula is closely connected to the rabbinic formulation from *Mishnah Hagigah* 2. It encompasses a distinctive spatial dimension, the world below and the world above, as well as a temporal dimension, "what is, what has been and what shall be." It is interesting that the *Exagoge* is not unique in its attempt to connect Moses with enigmatic formulae. A later rabbinic tradition also ties Moses with the mishnaic formulation. Thus, in *Exodus Rabbah* 3:1 one can find the following utterance: "Moses did not do well in hiding his face, for had he not done so, God would have revealed to him what is above and what is below, what has happened and what will happen."[105]

Let us return to the *Exagoge*. Scholars' suggestion that the expression found there is reminiscent of the mishnaic formulation should be examined more closely in the context of the entire passage. The first thing that catches the eye here is that in the *Exagoge* the seer beholds the vision of the Chariot, represented by the divine throne with an anthropomorphic figure on it. Further, in the course of the vision the seer himself becomes enthroned on the Merkabah. Scholars have previously argued that the *Exagoge*'s passage represents a specimen of the Merkabah mysticism.[106] It is significant that, similarly to the expression found in *Mishnah Hagigah*, the *Exagoge* formulation is also conveyed in the context of the Merkabah tradition.

[104] *Exagoge* 67–90 reads: "Moses: I had a vision of a great throne on the top of Mount Sinai and it reached till the folds of heaven. A noble man was sitting on it, with a crown and a large scepter in his left hand. He beckoned to me with his right hand, so I approached and stood before the throne. He gave me the scepter and instructed me to sit on the great throne. Then he gave me a royal crown and got up from the throne. I beheld the whole earth all around and saw beneath the earth and above the heavens. A multitude of stars fell before my knees and I counted them all. They paraded past me like a battalion of men. Then I awoke from my sleep in fear. Raguel: My friend, this is a good sign from God. May I live to see the day when these things are fulfilled. You will establish a great throne, become a judge and leader of men. As for your vision of the whole earth, the world below and that above the heavens – this signifies that you will see what is, what has been and what shall be." Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 54–5.

[105] Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 3.58.

[106] Van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist," 21–2.

Another noteworthy detail is that the *Exagoge* passage mentions that Moses had a vision of things not only above the heaven but also "beneath the earth." This reference to the secrets of the underworld is intriguing and it is possible that the sentence following it that deals with the "stars" is somehow connected with mysteries of the underworld. As may be remembered, the text tells that Moses saw a multitude of stars falling before his knees as he counted them and parading before him like a battalion of men. It has been previously noted that the *Exagoge* passage might be influenced by the Enochic traditions and attempts to rewrite the Enochic motifs from the Mosaic perspective.[107] In view of the Enochic connections, the imagery of the stars falling before Moses invokes the memory of the peculiar symbolism found in some Enochic writings where stars often signify the fallen Watchers. Moreover, in some Enochic texts, the Watchers imprisoned in the underworld or lower heavens are sometimes depicted as "falling down" before the seventh antediluvian hero during his visitation of the regions of their punishment. One of the specimens of this tradition is found in *2 Enoch*, where the fallen Watchers are depicted as bowing down before the patriarch Enoch.

This reference to the relevant Enochic developments and their connection with the enigmatic formulae found in the *Exagoge* and *Mishnah Hagigah* does not seem far-fetched, and it is possible that the early forms of the formula might have originated inside Enochic lore, which portrays the seventh antediluvian hero traveling through the upper and lower regions and receiving knowledge about the protological and eschatological events. Later Enochic traditions often connect the knowledge received by Enoch-Metatron to the formulations echoing the famous mishnaic expression. Thus, in Chapter 10 of *Sefer Hekhalot* the Deity orders the Prince of Wisdom and the Prince of Understanding to instruct the visionary in "the wisdom of those above and of those below in the wisdom of this world and of the world to come."[108]

In view of these connections, I have previously proposed[109] that already in the early Enochic lore one can find a very similar designation of esoteric knowledge reminiscent of the formula from *Mishnah Hagigah*. Thus, in

[107] *Ibid.*; Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 262–8; K. Ruffatto, "Polemics with Enochic Traditions in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian," *JSP* 15 (2006), 195–210; K. Ruffatto, "Raguel as Interpreter of Moses' Throne Vision: The Transcendent Identity of Raguel in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian," *JSP* 17 (2008), 121–39.

[108] Alexander, "3 Enoch," 1.264.

[109] A. Orlov, "In the Mirror of the Divine Face," in A. Orlov, *Selected Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, SVTP, 23 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 165–82, at 173.

Chapter 60[110] of the *Book of the Similitudes*, which deals with an interesting constellation of esoteric subjects, the interpreting angel reveals to the visionary a secret described as "first and last in heaven, in the heights, and under the dry ground" (*1 Enoch* 60:11).[111] This remarkable saying is reminiscent of both the above-mentioned tradition from the *Exagoge* and the expression from *Mishnah Hagigah*. Similar to the *Exagoge* and the mishnaic formulation, it appears to encompass the temporal ("first and last") and spatial ("in the height and under the dry ground") dimensions. The reference to the first and last is especially noteworthy as it appears to be laden with protological and eschatological overtones.

It is even more intriguing that the formula found in the *Similitudes* 60:11 is situated in the narrative dealing with the revelation of two peculiar esoteric subjects already mentioned in our study, the Account of the Chariot (*1 Enoch* 60:1–6) and the Account of Leviathan and Behemoth (*1 Enoch* 60:7–10). In view of these peculiar correlations, we should explore Chapter 60 more closely.

In *1 Enoch* 60:1–6 the seer, like Moses in the *Exagoge*, describes his vision of the Deity sitting on the throne of his glory and his own transformation during this vision.[112] This visionary Merkabah account is situated right before the tradition about two primordial monsters. The text then talks about the eschatological time when the two protological creatures will be separated from one another: a female monster Leviathan will dwell in the depths of the sea above the springs of the waters and a male monster Behemoth will occupy an immense desert named Dendayn.[113]

It is intriguing that the authors of the *Book of the Similitudes*, like the authors of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Midrash Rabbah* on the Song of

[110] Chapter 60 of *1 Enoch* represents a mixture of Enochic and Noachic traditions. Since Dillmann's pioneering research, scholars have argued that this chapter represents a later interpolated "Noah apocalypse." Cf. M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, SVTP 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 225. For a discussion of the composite nature of Chapter 60 see F. García-Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic. Studies on Aramaic Texts from Qumran*, STDJ 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 31–3. An in-depth discussion of the editorial history of Chapter 60 transcends the boundaries of the current investigation. It is important for our study that the final constellation of esoteric traditions in Chapter 60 most likely took place before the composition of *Mishnah Hagigah* 2:1. On the date of the *Book of the Similitudes* before the second century CE see *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed. G. Boccaccini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007). In his conclusion to the volume Paolo Sacchi writes: "In sum, we may observe that those scholars who have directly addressed the problem of dating the Parables all agree on a date around the time of Herod. Other participants of the conference not addressing the problem directly nevertheless agree with this conclusion." *Ibid.*, 510.

[111] Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.144.

[112] The text says that the visionary saw "the Head of Days sitting on the throne of his glory, and the angels and the righteous were standing around him." *Ibid.*, 2.142.

[113] *Ibid.*, 2.143–4.

Songs attempt to conflate two esoteric subjects, the Merkabah vision and the vision of Leviathan and Behemoth. This constellation is then followed in the Enochic pseudepigraphon by the enigmatic expression about the secret described as "first and last in heaven, in the heights, and under the dry ground."

It should be also noted that in *1 Enoch* 60 the formula is surrounded with a rich, distinctive vocabulary that is applied not only to the disclosure of secrets but also their concealment. Thus, just before the formula is given in v. 11, in v. 10 an angel tells the seer that he will receive knowledge of the secret things, to the degree it is permitted. This dialectic of revelation and concealment is reminiscent of traditions in the *Mishnah Hagigah* with its aesthetics of concealment.[114]

It is time to return to the Slavonic apocalypse. Our study points to the possibility that understanding the mysteries found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* might constitute a formative conceptual background for the later formulations of esoteric subjects found in *m. Hag*. and other rabbinic materials. It might point to a possible visionary background of the early formulations of esoteric subjects reflected in the passage from *m. Hag*. and might support some previous insights of the scholars who argued for the continuity between the early apocalyptic visionary accounts and later rabbinic mystical speculations about the Account of Creation and the Account of the Chariot.

In view of the mishnaic formula that speaks about the mysteries encompassing "what is above? what is beneath? what was beforetime? and what will be hereafter" it is noteworthy that in the throne room the hero of the faith receives the revelation that exactly follows this pattern. Thus, in *Apoc. Ab*. the visionary sees what is above: the Chariot and angelic hosts (Chapters 18 and 19); then what is beneath: earth and underworld (Chapters 21–3). This "spatial" disclosure then follows chronological revelation. The beginning of this revelation of the temporal dimension starts in *Apoc Ab*. 24:4, where Abraham utters, "And I looked and saw there what had been in the world before."[115] Further, in Chapter 24 he beholds what "was beforetime": "And I saw, as it were, Adam, and Eve with him, and with them the Evil Adversary and Cain, who acted lawlessly because of the Adversary, and the murdered Abel, the perdition brought and given to him through the Lawless One."[116] Then this protological disclosure follows

[114] On concealment in *m. Hag*., see Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 25.
[115] Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 28.
[116] *Apoc. Ab*. 24:5. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 28.

in Chapters 27–31 with the eschatological revelation when the seer beholds "what will be hereafter" – the destruction of the temple, the exile, the advent of the false and true messiahs, judgment and salvation, punishment of heathens and the gathering of Israel. This peculiar unfolding of the esoteric subjects that follows the pattern from *m. Hag.* is intriguing.

It is also noteworthy that the mystery of creation and the mystery of the Chariot are surrounded in the Slavonic apocalypse by the peculiar cluster of the sacerdotal motifs and themes. It points to the possibility that this cluster of peculiar esoteric traditions about creation and the Chariot stemmed from the revelatory context that was given to the celebrant of the Yom Kippur ceremony when he was able to see not only the place of the divine presence but also a picture of the entire creation.

Conclusion

To conclude our study we must again draw our attention to the unique role that the Slavonic apocalypse plays in the history of early Jewish mysticism through its novel and radical reformulation of the central sacerdotal symbol of the Merkabah tradition – the heavenly Temple represented by the divine Chariot.[1]

A broad scholarly consensus now affirms the significance of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* for the history of early Jewish mystical developments. Moreover, many researchers see this enigmatic writing as a manifestation of an important religious paradigm shift, considering it to be a conceptual bridge[2] between the worlds of Jewish apocalypticism and early Jewish mysticism.[3] Indeed, as we saw in this study, the Abrahamic pseudepigraphon opens before the eyes of its readers an impressive cluster of the unique

[1] Thus, for example, Ithamar Gruenwald argues that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* "is unique in the significance that it bears . . . for the study of ancient Jewish mysticism in general." Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 52. David Halperin also views the *Apocalypse of Abraham* as one of the most important evidences for understanding of the origins of the Merkabah tradition: "The Apocalypse of Abraham is in some ways the most uncertain and problematic of the texts with which we have to deal . . . and yet the Apocalypse of Abraham is so important for any study of the merkabah." Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 103.

[2] Thus, for example, Michael Stone notes that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* "is . . . particularly significant as providing a link between the apocalypses and the Merkabah mystical books." Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 418. Similarly Mary Dean-Otting believes that "In the Apocalypse of Abraham is found a text which bridges the gap between the biblically-rooted, earlier heavenly journeys, such as *1 Enoch, Testament of Levi* and *3 Baruch*, and the later esoteric texts of the Hekhalot literature." Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys*, 255. Recently Alexander Kulik affirms these early insights, arguing that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* can be seen as "representative of a missing link between early apocalyptic and medieval Hekhalot traditions." Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 1.

[3] On the Jewish mystical traditions in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, see: Box and Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham,* xxix–xxx; Dean-Otting*, Heavenly Journeys*, 251–3; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 55–6; Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 103ff.; Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 83ff.; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 28–33; Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 86ff.; Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave*, 76–83; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 52, 57–61, 72; *Jewish Gnosticism*, 23–4; G. Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Quadrangle, 1974), 18; Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 383–441.

motifs formative to the symbolic universe of early Jewish mysticism. The intensity and scope of this arcane lore is truly breathtaking, to the point that some scholars envision the Slavonic apocalypse as a sort of esoteric manual *par excellence* – which attempts, through the unfolding story of the famous hero of the faith, to describe the steps of initiation into a mystical praxis. Indeed, the portrayals of Abraham's initiations appear to be laden with paramount formative significance for the esoteric patterns found in later rabbinic accounts. In this respect Gershom Scholem notes,

> in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* . . . Abraham is . . . the prototype of the novice who is initiated into the mystery, just as he appears at the end of the *Sefer Yetsirah*, the "Book of Creation" . . . In the *Apocalypse* we find him being initiated into the mysteries of the Merkabah, just as in the *Sefer Yetsirah* he is allowed to penetrate into the mysteries of its cosmogonical speculations.[4]

Scholars' emphasis on the role of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* as a compendium of mystical initiation formative to the development of early Jewish mysticism is significant, yet for our study it is also important to underline that this initiation takes the form of sacerdotal instruction when the seer becomes not merely a mystical adept but a high priestly figure. In this respect the Slavonic apocalypse can also be seen as an esoteric manual of *sacerdotal* initiation, when the practitioner is able to learn and then to reenact the actions of the high priest in crucial liturgical ceremonies, including the rites of the central festival of the Jewish tradition, which is known to us as Yom Kippur.

This observation again brings our attention to a portentous detail that has so often been missed in the previous scholarly analysis of the formative mystical patterns found in the Slavonic apocalypse: namely, the importance of priestly and liturgical dimensions for the transition from apocalypticism to mysticism. This cultic dimension of the unique mystical mold became especially transparent in the central disclosure that was revealed to the hero of the Slavonic apocalypse, the vision of the celestial Chariot, the revelation where mystical and sacerdotal aspects appear to be closely tied together.

The ancient apocalyptic symbol of the great prophetic book receives here a novel dramatic reformulation both in its visionary and cultic aspects, leading the Merkabah tradition from its apocalyptic stage into a new mystical dimension.

[4] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 69.

It has already been emphasized in the course of our study that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* enhances the symbolism of the Chariot trend by adding some new features borrowed from the aural paradigm of the *Shem* tradition to the traditional imagery of the visionary paradigm. This conceptual reformulation of the classic visionary mold with novel aural imagery is laden with paramount significance for later Jewish mystical developments where the seers' ascent to the Merkabah is often accompanied by theurgical practices. In this respect Abraham's ascent to the Merkabah via his song anticipates the future appropriations of the theurgical means that will play a prominent role in later rabbinic and Hekhalot accounts.[5] Here again the liturgy is closely intertwined with the mystical praxis, revealing the cultic backbone of the visionary experience.

Another important lesson that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* holds for later Jewish mysticism is its emphasis on the sacerdotal dimension of the demonic realm. This development in itself constitutes a formative conceptual shift which endows the "other side" with forceful cultic significance. In this respect the Slavonic apocalypse develops some earlier traditions found in prophetic and apocalyptic writings like *1 Enoch*, where the chief antagonist of the Enochic tradition, Asael, is envisioned as the cosmic scapegoat. The further eschatological reformulation of the scapegoat ritual found in the Slavonic apocalypse will play a formative role for the later Jewish mystical developments where the Yom Kippur rite is often understood as an allotment of a special portion of sacrifices to the demonic realm.

As has been shown, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* offers a complex mix of the *Kavod* and *Shem* conceptual developments where promulgation of the theology of the divine Name and the praxis of the divine Voice become linked with the theophanic imagery from the priestly source, Ezekiel, *1 Enoch* and some other Second Temple accounts. The consequences of this polemical encounter between two important revelatory trends appear to have exercised lasting influence on both traditions. The developments found in the Slavonic apocalypse should not be interpreted simply as a rejection of anthropomorphic theism through the aural paradigm of the divine Name. Rather, they should be seen as an adaptation of Merkabah imagery into the framework of this aural paradigm that has led to the construction of a new symbolic universe in which two trends can coexist with each other. This synthesis is intriguing and might provide important insights for understanding the character of later Jewish mystical developments where the traditions about the divine Form and the divine Name

[5] Cf. *Ibid.*, 68–9; Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 417.

appear to undergo creative conflation. The famous protagonist of the later Hekhalot and *Shiʿur Qomah* accounts, the supreme angel Metatron, is often depicted in these materials as the celestial choirmaster who instructs the Living Creatures on fitting ways of praising the Deity. These later mystical traditions also portray him as יהוה הקטן,[6] the lesser manifestation of the divine Name, the office which is reminiscent of the role of Yahoel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.[7]

These later conceptual developments bring to mind Scholem's hypothesis that two streams of thought constitute the background of the Metatron figure: one connected with Yahoel's figure and the other with the figure of the seventh antediluvian patriarch Enoch.[8] The roles and offices of these two apocalyptic heroes, who can in many ways be seen as exemplars of the revelatory paradigms of the divine Form and the divine Voice, later became reconciled in the figure of the chief protagonist of the Merkabah lore. In view of these important developments attesting to the afterlife of the *Shem* and the *Kavod* trends in the later Hekhalot mysticism, the changes that take place in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* should not be underestimated. It is possible that the Slavonic apocalypse, in which the mystical praxis of the divine Name was unfolded amid the familiar Merkabah imagery, can be seen as an important conceptual nexus wherein the traditions of the divine Name become polemically engaged with the visionary Merkabah paradigm, thus anticipating the process of the gradual unification of both conceptual streams in later Jewish mystical lore.

[6] On Metatron's title יהוה הקטן, see Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 136–43.

[7] John Collins notes that "in all, Jaoel bears striking resemblance to Metatron in Hekhalot literature. Metatron is 'the little Yahweh' (*3 Enoch* 12), whose name is like the name of God himself (*b. Sanh.* 38b)." Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 228.

[8] The classic study by Gershom Scholem differentiates between two basic aspects of Metatron's lore which, in his opinion, were combined in rabbinic and Hekhalot literature. These aspects include the Enochic lore and the lore connected with the exalted figures of Yahoel and Michael. Scholem writes that "one aspect identifies Metatron with Jahoel or Michael and knows nothing of his transfiguration from a human being into an angel. The talmudic passages concerned with Metatron are of this type. The other aspect identifies Metatron with the figure of Enoch as he is depicted in apocalyptic literature . . . When the *Book of Hekhaloth*, or *3 Enoch*, was composed, the two aspects had already become intertwined." Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 51.

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