

Offprint:

The Old Testament Apocrypha in the Slavonic Tradition

Continuity and Diversity

Edited by

Lorenzo DiTommaso and Christfried Böttrich

with the assistance of Marina Swoboda



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Propitiatorium in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*

Basil Lourié

1. Introduction

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* is a pseudepigraphon that is now fairly widely known but not very well studied. Most biblical and "parabiblical" scholars have no direct access to its Slavonic text. In fact, the Slavonic text itself is rather difficult, being a secondary version of a lost Greek version that was, in turn, translated from a lost original in either Hebrew or Aramaic. Largely unnoticed by the first generation of the Russian scholars who were working on the pseudepigraphic material embedded in the *Palaea*, the *Apocalypse* has been not studied against its Jewish background until recently. Scholars such as I. I. Sreznevskii (1861–1863), N. S. Tikhonravov (1863), and I. Ya. Porfir'ev (1877) were content with the publication of several manuscripts of the *Apocalypse* with scanty notes clarifying some obscurities of the Slavonic text.¹ Shortly afterwards, in 1887, M. Gaster published a medieval Romanian version of the *Apocalypse* from Slavonic.²

Interest in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* emerged only within modern post-Qumranic scholarship. Its main results are two critical editions with studies and

¹ I. I. Sreznevskii, "Knigi otkroveniiia Avrame," *Izvestiia Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk po otdeleniiu russkago iazyka i slovesnosti* 10 (1861–1863), 648–65; N. S. Tikhonravov, *Pamiatniki otrechennoi russkoi literatury* vol. 1 (Supplement to: *idem, Otrechennye knigi drevnei Rossii*; St. Petersburg: Tipogr. Tovarishchestva Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1863) (Supplement to: *idem, Otrechennye knigi drevnei Rossii*), 33–77; I. Ia. Porfir'ev, *Apokrificheskiia skazaniia o vetkhozavetnykh lizakh i sobytiakh po rukopisiam Solovetskoi biblioteki*. (Sbornik Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, vol. 17, no. 1; St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1877) (Sbornik Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, vol. 17, no. 1) [reprint: Moscow: Indrik, 2005], 111–30. There were also, in the nineteenth century, several publications of the fragmentary manuscripts of the *Apocalypse*.

² M. Gaster, "The Apocalypse of Abraham. From the Rumanian Text, Discovered and Translated," *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archeology* 9/1 (1887), 1–32 [reprint: *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Medieval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archeology* (London: Maggs Brothers, 1925) 1.92–123].

commentaries taking into account its Jewish background.³ One of the scholars, R. Rubinkiewicz, added to his critical edition a study that advanced a rather strange hypothesis on the translation of the *Apocalypse* directly from Hebrew into Slavonic with some Karaite intermediary. His theory, however, was almost immediately refuted by E. Lipiński.⁴

Quite recently the Jewish background of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* became the focus of the monograph by Alexander Kulik.⁵ His aim was retroversion into Hebrew (or, sometimes, Aramaic) of a number of phrases from the *Apocalypse*, with a due attention to the intermediary Greek version. As to the original language of the text, Kulik opts for Hebrew rather than Aramaic. Be that as it may, Kulik acknowledges a relatively high level of the Aramaisms in the text. He admits that "in the period under discussion elements of these languages [*i.e.*, Hebrew and Aramaic] could be mixed in a single text."⁶ As to the Aramaisms of the *Apocalypse*, Kulik notifies a series of the Aramaic proper names, and, then, certifies that "As well as the proper names, most Semitic forms in our document may reflect an Aramaic original as well as a Hebrew one. In very rare cases we can indicate Hebrew forms impossible or unattested in Aramaic." Only these latter are supporting Kulik's hypothesis of the Hebrew original of the *Apocalypse*.⁷ In sum: regardless of our decision as to the original language of the *Apocalypse* (Hebrew with many Aramaisms or Aramaic with many Hebraisms), *a priori* we have to suppose either an Aramaic or a Hebrew original behind any obscure term of the Slavonic version.

2. One *hapax* as a Problem to Resolve

The complicated history of the text of the only accessible version of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* is the reason why we still have to re-examine its culmination scene, where Abraham receives the revelation after having reached the seventh heaven (chapters 21 and 22). Abraham looks at some object where some scenes from the future are shown, especially the scene of Judgment (*ApocAbr* 21.7). In

³ B. Philonenko-Sayar and M. Philonenko, "L'Apocalypse d'Abraham. Introduction, texte slave, traduction et notes," *Semitica* 31 (1981), 1–119; R. Rubinkiewicz, "Les semitismes dans l'Apocalypse d'Abraham," *FO* 21 (1980), 141–8, *idem.*, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et commentaire* (Źródła i Monografie, 129; Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1987).

⁴ E. Lipiński, [review of Rubinkiewicz 1987] *FO* 26 (1989), 199–201. As to a fragmentary reconstruction of the lost Greek *Vorlage*, see A. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha. Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004). I am very grateful to Andrei Orlov for sending me a copy of this book.

⁵ Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 63, cf. 61–4.

Slavonic this object is called *образование*, sometimes in slightly different forms *образъ*, *образство*. Even if the words *образ* and *образование* are not unknown in Slavonic, now they are used in an unusual way, and, in this sense, we are now in presence of a *hapax legomenon*.

All previous translators have dealt with these words in a similar manner, conjecturing their meaning from the context: "tableau" (Rubinkiewicz), "représentation" (Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko), "picture" (Box⁸ and Kulik⁹), and so on. Only few of the scholars attempted to indicate the kind of device this *образование* is. Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, referring to an alleged parallel in 3 *En* 45.1, suppose that *образование* is a curtain before the Holy of Holies, where the names of all the people were inscribed – the names of those to be saved at right and of those to be perished at left.¹⁰ Indeed, there is a parallel between this distribution to right and to left with the scene of Judgment in the *ApocAbr* 21.7, but the text says nothing about the mere names of the judged people. So, the parallel put forward by Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko is far-fetched.

Larry Hurtado approached the same problem in a more systematical way, taking into account the whole corpus of the intertestamental literature describing the structure of the heaven and the Throne of God. His conclusion was that *образование* is nothing but the Throne of God itself.¹¹ I am in basic agreement with Hurtado. From the cosmological perspective, it is difficult to say more. (Indeed, the Throne of God is a notion pertaining to the cosmology). However, his interpretation says nothing about the exact meaning of the term *образование*. What is especially strange is the way the Throne of God works as a television screen to show to Abraham apocalyptic visions.

3. Avenues of the Present Research

To go further, we have to explore two more avenues. First, we shall discuss possible equivalents of our Slavonic *hapax legomenon* in the Semitic original of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, and second, we shall examine the device in question more closely, from a more human-sized point of view than a cosmological one.

All the three Slavonic synonyms – *образование*, *образъ*, and *образство* – are derived from the same root, the word *образъ* being quite common in Slavonic.

⁸ G. H. Box, *The Apocalypse of Abraham. Edited, with a Translation from the Slavonic Text and Notes* (London/New York: SPCK, 1918), 18 *et passim*.

⁹ In his thorough monograph covering many difficulties of *ApocAbr* Kulik nevertheless overlooks the problem of our term.

¹⁰ B. Philonenko-Sayar and M. Philonenko, "L'Apocalypse d'Abraham: texte traduit, présenté et annoté," *La Bible. Écrits intertestamentaires* (ed. A. Dupont-Sommer and M. Philonenko; Bibliothèque de la Pléiade; Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 1691–1730, esp. 1720, n. 9.

¹¹ L. W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord. Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia, 1988), 87.

This latter word may be rightly translated as “picture” (Box and Kulik) or “tableau” (Rubinkiewicz); this is its synonymy with two previous ones that creates a problem. Notwithstanding an apparent clarity of the word *образъ*, it is still absolutely unclear why its meaning may be identified with two others. An attempt to seek the possible Greek prototypes would not be much help. There are several Greek words that can be rendered with the same root as in the word *образъ* in Slavonic, including *εἶδος*, *σχῆμα*, and *παράδειγμα*, among others.¹² The difference between the Slavonic synonyms may reflect either a morphological difference between some Greek derivatives from the same root, or a difference between unrelated lexemes. It is hardly probable that such a variability of the term in the Slavonic version has had no support at all in its Greek original. The issue, therefore, is why the Greek terminology applied to our device was so varied. We do not know the exact Greek terms, but we do know that in the Greek original of the existing Slavonic version there were some different terms for the same device. Some of these terms probably looked equally strange in Greek as their equivalent *образство* in Slavonic (that is, combining a recognisable root with unusual inflexions). Without running ahead too far, let us admit that even the Greek text under our Slavonic terms was probably not quite easy.

What we can say about the Semitic original(s) of these terms? We have to find some Hebrew or Aramaic term(s) fitting two frame conditions: i) applicability to the Throne of God or something else that would be at place on the seventh heaven; and ii) with literal meaning close to the meaning of Slavonic *образъ*, that is “view,” “appearance,” and “picture.” We can neglect the meanings like “manner (of acting),” because our device is certainly something to be viewed. I assume that our predecessors undoubtedly would have already identified such a word if it were extant in either the Hebrew or the Aramaic lexicon. Therefore, we have to look deeper.

At first, I will put forward a plausible hypothesis based on linguistic grounds only. I hope to demonstrate that an Aramaic term for the propitiatorium *could* be rendered in Greek by some roots with the literal meaning connected to the action of “viewing.” Then I will attempt to verify this hypothesis by extra-linguistic means, namely, demonstrating that it is the propitiatorium that would be exactly at place on the Throne of God as a kind of a television screen (or, as Halperin said, “as a sort of motion picture screen”¹³) for the apocalyptic visions.

¹² See M. I. Chernysheva, “Vyrashenie idei podobii v ranneslavianskikh perevodakh s grecheskogo,” *Vizantinorossika* 3 (2005), 217–32.

¹³ D. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), 1988), 103–13, esp. 112.

4. Linguistic Hypothesis: Aramaic ܠܚܫܐ as a Prototype of Slavonic образование

Anyone dealing with the Jewish “matrix” of the Christianity constantly works in a complex Hebrew-Aramaic linguistic milieu. The *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which is certainly a work borrowed from Judaism by Christianity, is a perfect case in point. Of course, neither *Targumim* and *Talmudim* nor the Qumranic texts exhaust the full range of the cultic terminology of pre-Christian Judaism.

4.1. A Genuine Aramaic Term for “Propitiatorium”: ܠܚܫܐ

The cultic realities of this epoch are partially reparable from the much more late Christian tradition. In fact, one of them is the only channel by which the *Apocalypse of Abraham* itself came down to us. As to the late Jewish Aramaic terminology, one of the channels of its transmission is Christian Syriac. Syriac-speaking Christian milieu was developing on the ground of early Semitic-speaking communities, and their Western Aramaic dialects were influencing early Christian Eastern Aramaic dialect, the ancestor of medieval Christian Syriac.¹⁴ The only Western Aramaic term for “propitiatorium” known to us through the accessible Targums and the Jewish rabbinic tradition is a Hebrew loanword, כפרת.¹⁵ It is of no help to us, nor has it left a trace in Christian Syriac. In Christian Syriac the term for “propitiatorium” is ܠܚܫܐ or its derivative ܠܚܫܐܐ. It is also important to note that Syriac ܠܚܫܐ is the only term for “propitiatorium” known to this language. There is no alternative term that might be borrowed from Greek, despite the fact that Christian Syriac is very rich in Greek loanwords. It is *a priori* likely that Syriac ܠܚܫܐ belongs to the earliest layer of the Christian vocabulary of the Syrians, that is, it reflects the language of the earliest Aramaic-speaking Christian and pre-Christian communities.

In rabbinic Aramaic a liturgical connection of the corresponding root (*hws*) reveals only obliquely. In rabbinic Western Aramaic there is a verb חוּס with the basic meaning “to protect, pity, spare,” with no specific liturgical connections, as the case with its homographic counterpart in Biblical Hebrew with the same

¹⁴ See R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom. A Study in Early Christian Tradition* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004); K. Beyer, *The Aramaic Language. Its Distribution and Subdivisions* (trans. J. F. Healey; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986 [= ch. II of K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer samt den Inschriften aus Palästina, dem Testament Levis aus der Kairoer Genisa, der Fastenrolle und den alten talmudischen Zitaten: Aramäische Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung, Deutung, Grammatik, Wörterbuch, deutsch-aramäische Wortliste, Register* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1984), 77–153].

¹⁵ J. Levy, *Neuhebräisches und chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim* 4 vol. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1876–1889).

basic meaning.¹⁶ We shall return to the Hebrew verb with the root *hws* in the next section. Oddly enough, a derivate of the same root, an exact equivalent of Syriac ܠܚܫܐ, has in rabbinic Aramaic a meaning apparently unrelated to “protecting,” namely, “lettuce.” However, both Syriac ܠܚܫܐ and Western Aramaic ܠܚܫܐ go back to the Jewish liturgy. In fact, in rabbinic Aramaic, ܠܚܫܐ is a more liturgical than a botanic or culinary term. There is a normal term for the corresponding botanic species, חזרת, and so, another term, ܠܚܫܐ, is used only as superfluous and needing to be explained. This is what has been done in the Babylonian Talmud (*bPesachim*, ch. II, 39^a): “Even Rabha said that lettuce (חזרת) is called *hassa* (ܠܚܫܐ), which signifies, ‘God has mercy on us’.” The context is a discussion on the bitter herbs necessary to the preparation of the lamb for the Pesach.

This etymology of ܠܚܫܐ connected to “mercy of God” is exactly the same here as that of the Syriac ܠܚܫܐ. Moreover, it is the same as in Greek ἡλασθήσιον, calquing Hebrew כפרת “propitiatorium.” It is important to note, that there is something more here than mere linguistic etymology to a root with general meaning of “protection” or “having mercy.” The “mercy” here is precisely the mercy of God. The mercy of God is the main theme of the *Yom Kippur*; the only feast when the propitiatorium was in work, but the same theme is not foreign to the Pesach as well, not to say, that in some pre-Christian Judaisms the feasts of the Pesach and *Yom Kippur* were interferential in such an extent that even the expiation performed by Christ Himself, the main ritual of the *Yom Kippur*, has been presented as a sacrifice of the Pesach lamb. Without going deeper, I note this here only to point out that we should not overestimate the distance between the Pesach and the *Yom Kippur* in the pre-Christian Jewish traditions.

As a result, we have to consider the meaning of “lettuce” as a rather late acquisition of Western Aramaic ܠܚܫܐ and specific to the rabbinic tradition only. Before this (*i. e.*, before its rabbinical use), the word was a liturgical term connected to the rituals of asking of mercy or forgiveness.

The very existence of the same word in Syriac with the meaning “propitiatorium” makes it very likely that such was an original meaning of Western Aramaic ܠܚܫܐ, even if its initial spectrum of meanings might have been broader. This supposition is corroborated by the fact that in rabbinic-era Aramaic the only term for “propitiatorium” is the Hebrew loanword כפרת. A native Aramaic term for the same liturgical device, ܠܚܫܐ, has been almost completely (while still not completely!) “de-ritualised.” Therefore, I believe that there was a genuine Aramaic term for “propitiatorium,” which was preserved by the Christian Syriac vocabulary and was still faintly discernible in the rabbinical sources as ܠܚܫܐ or *ܠܚܫܐ, like the Syriac ܠܚܫܐ.

¹⁶ Levy, *Neuhebräisches und chaldäisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 2, 85–6.

4.2. How to Read ܠܚܫܐ with the Connotation of “Viewing”?

Our Aramaic term for “propitiatorium,” ܠܚܫܐ, had no contemporary connotation of “viewing” or “appearing.” However, in the Hellenistic milieu, and especially in a text with preponderance of Hebrew over Aramaic, the situation might be different. First of all, in Hebrew, the verb ܠܚܫ (root *hws*) that is the exact equivalent of Aramaic ܠܚܫܐ, has not only a general meaning of “to pity”, but especially “to look with pity”. So, it is normally used together with words like “eye” and “upon.” However, these words are sometimes disappearing in ellipsis, as in 1 Sam 24:11 (for the ellipsis of the word “eye”: ותחם עליך).¹⁷ Taking into account that the language of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* was closer to Hebrew than to Aramaic, we have to admit that our term ܠܚܫܐ “propitiatorium” was to be appreciated with some visual connotations, notwithstanding the lack of such connotations in the original Aramaic term.

These connotations might be enforced by a phenomenon well attested in the Hellenistic Semitic texts, although, alas, not properly described and interpreted by the linguists. I mean the interchange between *s* and *z* in the Semitic proper names. (As it goes without saying, the very specific Aramaic technical term for “propitiatorium” was to be treated rather as a proper name, especially within a mainly Hebrew context). We have, from the Hellenistic epoch, a number of examples of the interchanges between *s* and *z* in the Semitic (Hebrew and Aramaic) proper nouns. (An Aramaic term for “propitiatorium” is also to be considered as something like a proper noun.) So, in Aramaic fragments of *1 Enoch*, we have the name ‘Asa’el in two forms: עשאל and עסאל on the one hand, and עזאל and עזאל on the other. The latter spelling is the same as it is in Leviticus 16.¹⁸

Dealing with the Greek transliterations, we have an even more representative corpus of the interchange between *s* and *z* in the Semitic proper nouns. In the same *1 Enoch*, 1 En 6, 7 (and cf. 1 En 69, 2): the Aramaic equivalent to Greek form Σααυήλ is ܠܚܫܐ.¹⁹ The editor supposes some mistake in the order of the names,²⁰ but there is no need in such a supposition. The magical texts are rich in such interchanges. For instance, the same name Σααυήλ has its Hebrew equivalent in the word זריאל, while the Hebrew original of the name Ζαλαμαρλαλθ is supposedly reconstructed as שלם אור לילית (“Peace [upon you], light of Lilith [or “(Lady) of Night”]). Whatever the case, it is clear that the first element of

¹⁷ F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and Ch.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as Translated by Edward Robinson* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 299.

¹⁸ M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch. A New English Edition with Commentary and Textual Notes by Matthew Black in Consultation with James C. VanderKam with an Appendix on the “Astronomical” Chapters (72–82) by Otto Neugebauer* (SVTP 7; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 121.

¹⁹ M.A. Knibb in consultation with E. Ullendorff, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch. A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea fragments* vol 2 (Oxford, 1978), 71.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 74–5.

the reconstruction should be read as שלם.²¹ These interchanges between *s* and *z* are hardly explicable from the Greek of the Hellenistic epoch, but do have correspondence in some cases on the Semitic ground. In this case, our term חסא might be read as a derivate of a root with middle *z* instead of middle *s*. For instance, in Aramaic, חזיא ("mirror"), is an exact "parallel" to our reconstructed form *חסיא,²² and even the חזה which Jastrow lists as an alternative form to חזי ("view, appearance").²³ There are some other Aramaic words with the same root which are of interest to us, such as חזיון "vision, prophetic revelation" (with the same spelling in biblical Hebrew, where only the vowels can differ).²⁴

To sum up: in the Hellenistic epoch our Aramaic term חסא, especially within a text with preponderance of Hebrew over Aramaic, might be read as an equivalent of חזה and understood as "view, appearance, vision." The Greek translator thus was able to render it by some word (probably, several slightly different words) with the same basic meaning, that in turn was rendered into Slavonic as *образованіе* or *образ*. For these Slavonic words, we are putting forward retroversion into the language of the Semitic original, while omitting the step of retroversion into Greek. Indeed, we are dealing here with one of the cases when, according to Kulik, such an operation is justified, *i. e.*, where the Slavonic version reproduces Semitisms or misinterpretations of the Semitic original "which were not found in any extant Greek texts."²⁵ Such linguistic considerations are not sufficient to prove that the device in question is the propitiatorium, but only have value of a decision *nihil obstat* issued by a linguistic censorship. The final decision belongs to the analysis of the liturgical tradition. If it will be not in contradiction with the above linguistic conclusions, then we will obtain a decisive argument to establish both our main hypothesis and its linguistic aspect.

5. Propitiatorium as a Means of Revelation

It is clear that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the patriarch is visiting the heavenly Temple, its Holy of Holies. Hurtado's analysis demonstrates that it is, naturally, the place of the Throne of God. In the earliest layer of the so-called Priestly tradition, the propitiatorium is the main place of God's revelation. There are the cases of God's appearing "on the propitiatorium" in Lev 16:2 and also in Ex 25:22

²¹ M. Schwab, *Vocabulaire de l'angéologie d'après les manuscrits hébreux de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1897) [Extrait des *Mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*. 1^{re} sér., t. X, 2^e partie] 306 [418], 288 [400].

²² Levy, *Neuhebräisches und chaldäisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 2, 28–9.

²³ M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Leipzig: W. Drugulin/London: Luzac & Co./New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 4308.

²⁴ Levy, *Neuhebräisches und chaldäisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 2, 29.

²⁵ Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 64.

and Num 7:89.²⁶ Milgrom even calls the propitiatorium "the Priestly 'picture of Dorian Gray'."²⁷ During its development, the role of the propitiatorium was becoming more and more preponderant over the role (and even the sanctity) of the ark.²⁸ "The chest containing holy objects is the ark itself; the throne [of God] is symbolised only in its cover, the *kapporet*, on the side of which two cherubim spread their wings." The *kapporet* is not a part of the ark at all.²⁹ In the intertestamental period the *kapporet* develops into an apparently quite different device, the magical chalice with oracular capacities and, ultimately, into the Christian chalice of the Eucharist. Since I am tracing these tendencies at length in another place and *à propos* another Jewish-Greek-Slavonic pseudepigraphon, namely, an inscription over the so-called "Chalice of Solomon,"³⁰ I shall limit myself to several illustrations. It is symptomatic that in one case, Lev 16:13, the Vulgate translates *kapporet* as *oraculum*. We do not know the ultimate source of this translation, but it would be reasonable to seek it somewhere in the intertestamental exegetical traditions. More important, however, is the testimony of the Greek version of Ezekiel, where it describes the ceremony of consecration of Ezekiel's eschatological Temple (Ezekiel 43–44).³¹ (As to the Hebrew book of Ezekiel, it must have been known that there was neither the ark nor propitiatorium in his eschatological Temple, reflecting a correct representation of the state of affairs in the First Temple in the time of Ezekiel³²).

Elsewhere in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Kulik has already highlighted a passage (25.1) where the Slavonic text quotes Ezekiel (40:3) according to the Septuagint text where it differs from that of the Hebrew Bible.³³ Now we will have to see a case of the fidelity to the Greek text in spite to the Hebrew one in much more important matters, namely, in the arrangement of the Holy of Holies. In Septuagint version (Ezek 43:14 and 17), there is no ark in the Temple, but there are two different devices called "propitiatorium" (ἱλαστήριον), the great one and the small one. This "small propitiatorium" corresponds exactly to the

²⁶ In general, on the propitiatorium in the early priestly tradition and especially in Leviticus, see J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991) and I. Knoll, *The Sanctuary of Silence. The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 150.

²⁷ J. Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly 'Picture of Dorian Gray'," *RB* 83 (1976), 390–9 [reprinted in: *idem, Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983), 75–84].

²⁸ See L. Monloubou and F. M. du Buit, *Dictionnaire biblique universel* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1984), 603 (s. v. "Propitiatoire"), and esp. M. Haran, *Temple and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel. An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 247–51 and especially 248.

³⁰ V. Lur'e, "Chasha Solomona i skiniia na Sione. Ch. 1. Nadpis' na Chashe Solomona: tekst i ontekst," *Vizantinerossika* 3 (2005), 8–74.

³¹ For details see *ibid.*, 39–41.

³² Haran, *Temple and Temple-Service*, 276–88.

³³ Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 64.

role of the propitiatorium in the rest of the Priestly tradition, being the upper part of the whole altar structure.

With the Greek book of Ezekiel we are now very close to our *Apocalypse of Abraham*. Our *Apocalypse* has been already treated in the vein of the late Jewish Ezekiel traditions by David Halperin.³⁴ Now, taken into account also Hurtado's treatment, we have to express that in the Temple of Ezekiel its propitiatorium (I mean only the "small propitiatorium" of the Greek version) is indeed the seat of God; in Ezek 44:3 a messianic divine figure is entering the Holy of Holies and seating here. But, according to the Greek version, the only surface to sit here is the "small propitiatorium." Needless to say, the eschatological Temple of Ezekiel has a lot in common with the heavenly one. The author of the *Apocalypse* is dealing with the latter, but takes his knowledge from the former, that is, from an intertestamental-era interpretation of the Ezekiel Temple. So, in the heavenly Temple of the *Apocalypse*, there is no ark – but there is a propitiatorium. It is also the Throne of God. Moreover, as in the rest of the Priestly tradition, it is the main device of transmitting the divine revelation. The main contents of such a revelation are, of course, the sins of Israel and judgment of God. I say "of course" because the propitiatorium is a device to be used on the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*. Our *Apocalypse* is no exception.

The *Apocalypse of Abraham*, being a precious source on the liturgical devices of the heavenly Temple according some late form of the Priestly tradition, is not a source on the rites themselves. So, I omit here the correspondences between the liturgical structure of the heavenly Temple of the *Apocalypse* and the atonement rites in several other Jewish traditions, including that of the Greek book of Ezekiel. I consider all of them in my article on the "Chalice of Solomon."³⁵ Needless to say, the aforementioned affinity between the *Apocalypse* and the Greek Ezekiel has to be explained by the acquaintance of the author of the *Apocalypse* with the lost Hebrew original of the Greek version, not by a direct influence of the Greek text of Ezekiel. I am not in position to go in this field deeper, and so would prefer to limit myself by pointing out the potential importance of the *Apocalypse* for the textual criticism of Ezekiel.³⁶

Let us review what we have demonstrated in this section. The Throne of God in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* is identical to the "small propitiatorium" in the Greek book of Ezekiel. It is a propitiatorium indeed. This has been demonstrated without referring to linguistic considerations.

³⁴ Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 103–13.

³⁵ Lur'e, "Chasha Solomona."

³⁶ Cf., for the present *status quaestionis*: *Ezekiel and His Book* (ed. J. Lust; BETL 74; Leuven: Peeters, 1986).

6. Conclusions

The mystical "Television screen" showing to Abraham the visions of the future is the propitiatorium, also the Throne of God. This is the propitiatorium of the heavenly Temple whose liturgical devices in the Holy of Holies are basically the same as in the eschatological Temple of Ezekiel, according to the Greek version of the book. The main distinctive feature of this propitiatorium is the lack of the ark at all. The term for the propitiatorium in the Semitic original of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* was a genuine Aramaic term, ܥܕܬܐ, which was unknown to the Targumic and Rabbinic traditions but preserved in the Christian Syriac one. For some reason, it was read in the Hebrew (or, at least, preponderantly Hebrew) original of the *Apocalypse*, with the connotations of "view" or "appearance" that later resulted (through a Greek intermediary) in *образование, образъ*, and *образство* in the Slavonic version. One can enumerate two kinds of reasons: i) really existing connotations of "seeing" in the Hebrew verb having the same root as Aramaic term ܥܕܬܐ; and ii) possibility of interchange between *s* and *z* in the Semitic proper names (and so, also the terms) in the Hellenistic epoch.